

Louisiana Youth Pilgrimage to the
March for Life
From Womb to Tomb – We Stand for Life

LEADERSHIP MANUAL

PILGRIMAGE OVERVIEW

FORMATION GOALS:

- ✝ Deep Personal Conversion
- ✝ Vocational Discernment
- ✝ Pro-Life Advocacy
- ✝ Fellowship & Fun
- ✝ To form the next generation of pro-life leaders through a life-changing pilgrimage experience

PRINCIPLES & ACTIVITIES:

1. **“PRAYER AND SACRIFICE”** - The primary means to our formation goals are “prayer and sacrifice”. This mantra is repeated constantly to help participants prepare for the thousands of ways they will make personal sacrifices during the pilgrimage. It becomes something of an automatic response to every pain, annoyance, or hassle, and although it seems like a running joke at times, it becomes a central lesson of the trip.
2. We are **PILGRIMS, NOT TOURISTS**. Our goal is not a typical “educational tour,” but a life-changing spiritual pilgrimage.
3. **PERSONAL CONVERSION** - To meet the goal of personal conversion, we will visit several spiritual places and shrines, attend daily mass, daily rosary, evening praise and worship and a prayer vigil with Eucharistic adoration. Every year, we will attend Mass in the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. Other places we might choose include the Franciscan “Pilgrimage/Holy Land” Monastery in D.C, St. Matthew’s Cathedral in D.C., the Cathedral of Mary our Queen in Baltimore, the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia, the Shrine of St. John Neumann and St. Katherine Drexel in Philadelphia, the Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, AL, and the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, MD. In the future, we might look at other national shrines along the East coast or that are on the way to the March.
4. **VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT** - To meet the goal of vocational discernment, we bring seminarians, priests, and sisters who spend many dozens of hours hanging out with the teens and helping them to see that religious vocations are for people who are ordinary, “down-to-earth,” and real – just like the teens. These interactions play an irreplaceable role in giving teens the ability to imagine and picture themselves choosing a religious vocation. We also try to visit a seminary like Mount St. Mary’s and St. Charles Borromeo. We will also try to get a group like the Sisters of Life from New York to present at our evening youth ministry events.
5. **PRO-LIFE ADVOCACY / CIVIC EDUCATION**- To meet the goal of pro-life advocacy, we look towards America’s pro-life roots in places like Gettysburg (Lincoln’s Address) and Independence Hall (where Declaration was signed). We also will visit the Holocaust Museum each year to draw connections between the eugenic efforts of the Nazis and the targeting of our weakest citizens in the unborn, especially the targeting of potentially disabled unborn children. We take advantage of Martin Luther King Day by presenting the pro-life issues through the lens of civil rights and drawing comparisons between MLK’s D.C. March and our own. We will also have evening guest speakers who provide pro-life formation related to the moral, political, psychological, and spiritual effects of abortion. Speakers include adoptive couples, sidewalk counselors, politicians, women who have suffered from post-abortion syndrome, etc.. The homily at each Mass centers around a pro-life theme and connects to the pilgrimage experiences of that day.
6. **FELLOWSHIP & FUN** - To meet the goal of fellowship and fun, we will play games, watch skits, enjoy music, do faith sharing, and other youth oriented activities.

7. **TIME ON THE BUS** – This is critical and can't be wasted because it makes up such a large percentage of the pilgrimage. Moreover, the spirituality of pilgrimage demands that we focus on both the "Journey" and the "Destination". On each bus, we will play games, do ice breakers, do faith sharing, talk about and process the places we've been, watch videos that are either pro-life or that relate in some way to the theme of the Pilgrimage. We also follow a detailed pilgrimage curriculum which provides for prayer each hour, faith sharing, and talks on saints, vocations and draws out the pro-life meanings for each place we go. Films we might choose from include, "Entertaining Angels, the Spitfire Grill, Spiderman II, Evan Almighty, the story of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, The Ultimate Gift, The Blind Side, Life is Beautiful, The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, Prince Caspian, Walle, Amazing Grace, Incredibles, Cars, Princess Bride, Lion King, Horton Hears a Who, Enchanted, Kung Fu Panda, National Treasure, Bella, the Lord of the Rings, and documentaries on pro-life issues and on Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream" speech.
8. **MUSIC** - Music is an essential part of everything we do. In addition to praise and worship, we try to teach specific songs to the teens by playing and singing them throughout the pilgrimage. These songs are sung during the March itself in addition to praying the rosary and other chants and prayers. We set up a sound system on the each bus which allows a talented musician or youth minister to lead the teens in singing and doing some praise and worship as well. By the time we have arrived in D.C., the teens should be thoroughly initiated into the "charism" of the experience.
9. **SCHOLARSHIPS** – One of our most important goals is to ensure that this pilgrimage is available to all, not just the wealthy elite. We do this by keeping the costs low, and by providing advice and financial resources to needy students. A limited number of need-based scholarships are given to needy teens. The Knights of Columbus Pro-Life Oratory Contest may also be connected to scholarships for the March for Life.

PERSONNEL:

10. **1 PILGRIMAGE DIRECTOR**
11. **3 BUS GROUP DIRECTORS** – one for each of the three bus groups. They know everything the Pilgrimage director knows and can run the trip without him or her.
12. **GROUP LEADERS** (One for each school or parish) – play a key role in resolving bigger discipline issues and are involved in any "phone calls to parents".
13. **PILGRIMAGE PHYSICIAN** – (Usually our most valuable player)
14. **MUSICIANS** - Ensure that liturgies are powerful and moving, lead adoration, praise and worship, and music on the busses. Masses are usually private masses for our group held at public cathedrals, shrines, and churches.
15. **MENTORS** – Seminarians, religious sisters, and mature college students that are assigned to each chaperone group. Mentors do NOT have to be involved in discipline. Instead they provide fellowship and informal spiritual formation. Again, the role of seminarians and religious sisters in particular are essential to achieving the goal of vocational discernment.
16. **CHAPERONES** - Chaperone Groups consist of a chaperone, teens from the same parish or school, plus one or two mentors. Busses and sleeping arrangements are organized according to chaperone groups. Required ratios are 1 chaperone per 6 students.

For each bus there is a

- a. **BUS LEADER #1** – Directions, Pre-Teaching, & Discipline on the bus. Knows the name of every teen on the bus.
- b. **BUS YOUTH MINISTER** - Bus Spiritual/Fellowship. Processes each experience, leads music and faith sharing. Acts as Scout as needed. Knows the name of every teen on the bus. Can replace Bus Leader #1 any time as needed.
- c. **PACKING COORDINATOR** – Coordinates a group of guys to load and unload luggage and other equipment.
- d. **BUS MEDIC** – Works with kids who deal with minor aches and illness. Communicates with Pilgrimage Physician when needed.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(Spiritual & Personal FAQs)

- 1. I have something from my life that I want to share but I don't want to monopolize everyone's time on the bus. I'm also not sure if it is inappropriate given the context and the age of the kids on the bus. What should I do?**
 - *Always discuss your thoughts with the bus director before sharing personal information with your chaperone group or with the rest of the bus.*
- 2. A youth wants to talk about a personal problem or struggle in their life. How should I respond?**
 - *These conversations can be very important sources of support for the youth on the trip, but they are best done with a second adult present and always in a public area (in sight of others).*
 - *Often it is more important to be a good listener than to give advice. If this conversation lasts more than a few minutes, you should direct the youth to one of the priests for spiritual counseling and/or confession. Also, be sure to get someone else in a position of authority involved in counseling the youth.*
- 3. A youth asks if I will keep what they say confidential. What can I legally and ethically say in response?**
 - *You must explain to the youth that you are required by law not to keep secret anything that may present a source of risk or harm to the youth. Again, get a second adult involved in the conversation early on so that you and the youth are protected.*
- 4. How can I prepare spiritually for this pilgrimage?**
 - *We know that the March for Life is one the most effective tools for helping young people to grow closer to Jesus. As adults, we play a key role in faith sharing and helping the youth to understand the good news of the Gospel, the pearl of great price for which we would sell everything. We need to be ready to answer their questions about Catholicism, and encourage them in the faith.*
 - *We also know that Satan will do what he can minimize our openness to grace and our own readiness for conversion.*
 - *Every adult should spend time daily in prayer during the weeks leading up to the March. In particular, you should consider praying the March for Life Novena, which starts 9 days prior to our departure on January 20th. This novena can be found on the youthmarchforlife.com website.*
- 5. If I don't know the answer to a teen's question about the faith, what should I do?**
 - **DO NOT GUESS.** And do not feel bad. Just explain to the youth that they have asked a great question and that you think one of the youth ministers or priests on the trip would do a better job of answering it. Be sure to pass on the question to another adult and get them in touch with the youth. Answering faith questions as they arise is one of the most important things we do on the trip.
- 6. How can we ensure that every youth feels connected in with the trip – that no one feels left out or isolated?**
 - *First, it is the specific responsibility of each chaperone, group leader, and bus youth minister to keep a watchful eye on the youth under their care. Notice when your kids are "checking out" and seemingly disinterested. Notice when your kids are moody or not enjoying parts of the trip. Be sure that you know every one of your youth by name and call them by their first name as often as possible.*
 - *Second, every adult has the responsibility for recognizing the needs of the kids around them and bringing these needs to the attention of their chaperone, group leader, or bus youth minister.*

7. How do we build community on the bus?

- *The most important part of the pilgrimage is the journey, and the bus ride in particular. This is where we get to know one another, have fun, and pray together. Through their example, attitude, and the activities they lead, the bus youth ministers will help the youth to relax, to worry less, to be less self-conscious, and to just be themselves.*
- *The activities on the bus are specifically designed to form friendships, create a sense of group identity, and ensure that no one is left out.*
- *ICE BREAKERS include activities like two truths & a lie; come up with your own words to the Lion King song; make a pro-life rap or song (3 groups per bus) then pick the best one to represent the whole bus on one of the youth ministry nights; cards tournaments; Apples to Apples games; Irish fire drills several times during the first 24 hours of the trip; faith sharing and prayer leading.*

(Medical FAQs)

8. How can we avoid illness spreading on the bus, given the “close quarters”.

- *Lots of hand sanitizer! Wash hands regularly. Lysol is your friend.*

9. How do we ensure that youth have access to their medication?

- *Chaperones, who are with the youth at almost all times will keep and manage their medications. This includes all pills, over the counter or otherwise, and all other medications except “emergency” medications like inhalers. Every time a youth receives their medication, the chaperone indicates this on the notecard in the ziplock bag that holds the medication.*

10. What should I do if I see a youth with pills in their pocket or purse?

- *Immediately get another adult, preferably a person in a position of authority, and ask the youth to hand you their pills. You can explain gently but firmly that he or she will be given to their group leader who, with a bus director or the pilgrimage director, will address the youth. This is an offence that, depending on the situation, can lead to a youth being sent home. In no case can you ignore something you see.*

11. If a youth or adult falls ill, what should we do?

- *Depending on the seriousness of the illness, all of the following can be done to assist:*

- Adults should work together to minister to the student.*
- The chaperone should be involved for the dispensing of the youth’s medication.*
- The Trip Physician should be brought in to give advice and care for the youth.*
- Stop the bus at the nearest emergency room for care.*

At all times, chaperones must carry with them the youth medical releases and copies of their insurance cards on their person. It is recommended that group leaders also have copies of these forms and insurance cards.

[Please note that most insurance companies will not pay for medical care given out of state unless they are called and give approval before care is given. While care for the sick is the most important thing, we are doing the parents a great service by involving them and their insurance companies as early as possible.]

- Call 911. Please note that each youth’s medical conditions, emergency contacts, and allergies are listed on the back of their name tag in their neck wallet.*

(Behavior and Discipline FAQs)

12. How can we prevent youth from acting inappropriately or not following directions.

- *Prevention is the key. The youth will generally do very well moving from fun activities to solemn and reflective moments, but they need clear directions and lots of “pre-teaching” about expectations for each place we go.*
- *At each stop or visit, all adults need to know the time frame and be able to help direct and encourage the youth to follow the schedule.*

13. How do we handle student’s who are using cell phones or ipods at inappropriate times?

- *Pre-teaching and consistent consequences. We enforce “Technology Free Zones” (T.F.Z.s) during Mass, large group presentations, faith sharing times, and any other time we want them to “take a break” from technology. Parents know that there will be many times during the trip that their kids will not be able to respond to a text or call. When a youth has their phone out or their ipod on at the wrong time, an adult should take it and give it to the student’s group leader or bus leader. It will be returned to the student sometime later in the trip or in some cases after we return back home.*

14. If I am uncomfortable with the behavior of a youth from a different group, what should I do? Who is responsible for addressing inappropriate behavior for a given youth?

- *Discipline for a specific youth is the direct responsibility of his chaperone, group leader, and bus director. Nevertheless every adult has the responsibility to address inappropriate behavior whenever it is seen.*
- *Be sure to inform the chaperone or group leader if you address one of their youth.*

15. What if I have a disagreement with another adult during the trip – whether it is over youth behavior or some other matter?

- *It is absolutely essential that no adults ever argue in the presence of youth. Disagreements must be resolved quietly, in Christian charity, and under the direction of the next highest level of authority.*
- *The levels of authority on the trip are*
 - 1) Pilgrimage Director (Peter Fletcher)**
 - 2) Bus Group Director (There are 3 bus groups)**
 - 3) Bus Leader (1 per bus)**
 - 4) Church or School Group Leader**

16. If a youth is sent home for violating the code of behavior, how is this decision made?

- *The Pilgrimage Director makes this decision in consultation with the youth’s Church or School Group Leader. Parents are contacted, two plane tickets are purchased, and a chaperone from the Church or School group will accompany the youth on the flight back to Baton Rouge.*

17. Knowing that we will spend upwards of 50 hours in close quarters on the bus - how do we maintain appropriate boundaries between boys and girls on the trip?

- *During the day, boys and girls do not share adjoining seats (that are connected).*
- *During the night, boys move to the front of the bus, girls move to the back, and chaperones sit in the seats in between them.*

18. What about appropriate boundaries between adults and youth?

- *Generally, youth and adults don’t sit in adjoining seats. Exceptions for periods of time may be made at the discretion of the bus director, but not during the overnight hours when boys are separated from girls.*

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

Introduction:

Each Catholic Diocese requires that we follow specific safe environment guidelines and policies. Those Diocesan guidelines supersede and determine our March for Life safe environment policies and procedures, which are detailed below.

1. Mandated Reporters.

- a. Every adult 21 years or older that attends the March for Life is a mandated reporter. This means that you are required by law to report any evidence of abuse or risk of abuse that you see or hear.
- b. If you think a situation might need to be reported, you must explain the situation to the group leader, the bus director, and the pilgrimage director.

2. Maintaining Boundaries.

- a. Chaperones, Mentors, and Seminarians (ADULTS) play an important role in the formation of the youth on the trip. Part of this role involves getting to know the youth and ministering to their spiritual and personal needs. However, when youth seek to form the kinds of friendships which compromise these boundaries, it is the responsibility of the adult to step back from this kind of relationship and re-establish appropriate ways of interacting.
- b. **Being alone with youth.** No youth can be alone in a private place with an adult. For example, when leaving your cabin, you must ensure that the last few teens or adults leave as a group to ensure that no one is left behind with just one adult or youth.
- c. **Showering in common bathrooms.** Youth participants will always shower at different scheduled times or in different areas from adults.
- d. **Revealing Personal Information.**
 - i. There may be times when it is appropriate for a chaperone or presenter to illustrate a concept by sharing a story from their personal life.
 - ii. Nevertheless, mentors and other adults are not free to share specific mistakes they may have made in relation to drugs or their sexual history. Specific questions about this can be addressed to the pilgrimage director.

3. Email and Text Messaging.

- a. **Risks and Guidelines.** Communicating with youth via email or text messaging falls into an area where there is a greater risk of misunderstanding and weakened boundaries between youth and adults. Accordingly, adults who determine that they need to communicate with youth via email and text messaging must be especially careful to guard the tone and content of this communication:
 - i. **Tone:**
 1. Avoid any language that may be interpreted as unprofessional.
 2. Avoid any tone that might come across as casual or personal.
 3. Avoid emailing or texting content that might come across as social or friendly.
 4. Many benign, friendly conversations that might be appropriate in a public context may be inappropriate for the “private” nature of emails and text messages.
 - ii. **Content:**
 1. Adults should only communicate via email or text messaging about matters that are clearly and directly related to their role such as:

- a. Reminders about time schedules
 - b. Clarifications about where we are meeting
 - c. Factual information about upcoming activities or events
2. Topics covered in the context of offering personal counseling or advice are never appropriate for emails or text messages.

4. **Confidentiality.**

- a. No adult can ask a minor to keep confidential something they say or do.
- b. Confidentiality among several adults and teens may be appropriate in a faith sharing context, but NEVER ABOUT ANY INFORMATION REGARDING A RISK OF HARM TO A YOUTH.

5. **Overnight accommodations and personal areas:**

- a. Adults cannot share a room overnight with youth.

6. **Modeling appropriate behavior.**

Adults cannot:

- a. Listen to music that is degrading of any person or race, with or in the presence of a minor or group of minors.
- b. Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of minors.
- c. Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates a minor or group of minors.
- d. Make any type of statement or comment about a minor's body type, shape, build, and looks.
- e. Make any type of statement or comment that degrades or puts down in any way any other adult, minor, or group of people. This would include, for example, but not be limited to: any type of racial joke or slur or degrading comment about any race, person, or group of people.
- f. Use profanity in the presence of a minor or group of minors.
- g. In general, all staff members are required to avoid scandal whereby their personal example or lifestyle is contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church. This is a requirement for every person who serves an organization or institution of the Catholic Church.