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Strength for the Journey with Youth: High School Theology Programs and the Universal Apostolic Preferences

Darby Ratliff
Canisius College, ratliffd@canisius.edu

Stephen Chanderbhan
Canisius College, chanders@canisius.edu

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Darby Ratliff
Co-Director, Be the Light Youth Theology Institute
Canisius College
darby.ratliff@slu.edu

Stephen Chanderbhan
Co-Director, Be the Light Youth Theology Institute
Canisius College
chanders@canisius.edu

Abstract

In 1993, the Lilly Endowment launched an initiative for seminaries and divinity schools to host high school theology programs (HSTPs) with two goals: to engage youth in theological learning and to foster a generation of youth interested in vocations in Christian ministry. This initiative was then extended in 2015 to include colleges and universities. This paper examines one such program, the Be the Light Youth Theology Institute (BTLI) at Canisius College, as a case study to illustrate the synergy between these programs and the Society of Jesus' four Universal Apostolic Preferences. By considering well-established research about high school theology programs in general, as well as reflecting on the specific aims, structure, and outcomes of the BTLI itself, we claim that programs such as BTLI and its sister institutes are particularly potent means to help accomplish one of the Jesuits' four Universal Apostolic Preferences: specifically, to "journey with youth" and, in so doing, address the other three Preferences in a meaningful way.

Introduction

The Be the Light Youth Theology Institute (BTLI) at Canisius College is a week-long summer program for high school students to become exposed to the "faith that does justice" and, accordingly, motivated to live it. BTLI was founded in 2015 and ran the first of four iterations during the summer of 2016. Through justice immersions, academic sessions on Catholic philosophy and theology through an Ignatian lens, and workshops, participants are empowered and educated to become leaders to bring light to dark corners of injustice in their own communities. This endeavor was funded by a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., as part of its initiative to found theology programs for high school students at colleges and universities of any Christian denomination throughout the United States. By considering well-established research about high school theology programs in general, as well as reflecting on the specific aims, structure, and outcomes of BTLI itself, we claim that programs such as BTLI and its sister institutes are particularly potent means to help accomplish one of the Jesuits' four Universal Apostolic Preferences: specifically, to "journey with youth" and, in so doing, address the other three Preferences in a meaningful way.

Journeying with Youth—and the Other Universal Apostolic Preferences

In 2019, the Jesuits published their Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs), which are to guide the efforts and intentions of the Society and all its institutions and apostolates for the next ten years. The third of these UAPs is "To accompany the young in the creation of a hope-filled future."[1] Fr. Arturo Sosa, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, observes:

> Youth is the stage of human life when individuals make the fundamental decisions by which they insert themselves into society, seek to give meaning to their existence, and realize their dreams. By accompanying the young in this process, teaching them discernment and sharing with them the Good News of Jesus

> Christ, we can show them the way to God that passes through solidarity with human beings and the construction of a more just world.[2]

Seeing how the young are intimately in touch—generally more so than those older than them—with the realities of a world increasingly suffused with and run by technology, Sosa notes that the experiences of the young are uniquely instructive to all at this time in history. At the same time, powerful cultural, economic, and even environmental forces pull young people in various directions, many of them quite harmful; this effectively forces young people to mature more quickly and face uniquely harsh realities in the world that previous generations may not easily or well understand. In this context, it is crucial that youthful energy be harnessed and directed well, while being respected in itself. Hence, the Jesuits have committed, via their apostolic works, to "creating and maintaining spaces that are open to young people in society and the Church"—specifically, such spaces are to be "open to youthful creativity" and "foster an encounter with the God of life revealed by Jesus," as well as "deepen the Christian faith of the young."[3]

All four UAPs are interconnected with one another; it is no surprise that the themes referenced in the Preference to journey with youth are reflected in the other three UAPs. The Preference that Jesuits should strive "to show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment" refers to the perennial wisdom of Ignatian spirituality, which is reflected in Ignatian pedagogy and oft-used heuristics like the Pastoral Circle—tools that certainly can be used to engage the fruitful imaginations and furtive minds of young people. The Preference that Jesuits should strive "to walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice" refers to that "way to God that passes through solidarity … and the construction of a more just world" that Sosa references above in reference to how many young people will endeavor to see and know God. Also, referencing the work of the 2018 Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith, and Discernment, Sosa writes, "The poor and the young are a complementary and interwoven *locus theologicus*," insofar as the issues they face are often functionally similar.[4]

Finally, the Preference that Jesuits should strive "to collaborate in the care of our Common Home" highlights how broader, structural causes of sinful and unjust realities must be addressed, drawing on the insights of Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. Even if one were to start just with environmental concerns, as is the focus of much of the encyclical, one will soon realize that comprehensive solutions must reach deep into the social, cultural, and economic factors that generate sinful realities and injustices being faced throughout the world. Such comprehensive solutions are of particular concern in the context of accompanying young people; the creation of a "hope-filled future" depends on the implementation of certain solutions now. Further, if the older generations will not do this now, then perhaps the younger ones can. As Pope Francis writes in his apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, "You [young people] are the ones who hold the future! Through you, the future enters into the world. I ask you also to be protagonists of this transformation. You are the ones who hold the key to the future!" [5]

A critical question, then, is how exactly ought the Jesuits and the universal church accompany youth? What kinds of spaces are structured so as to encourage faith, educate broadly, and tap into and direct youthful imagination and energy to generate a greater future? Research shows that high school theology programs hold great promise as one such kind of space.

High School Theology Programs

Since 1993, the Religion Division of the Lilly Endowment has funded theological programs for high school youth at seminaries, theological schools, and other institutions of higher education across the United States. It started when Lilly raised questions about exactly who was growing the future of the Christian faith, asking "Who will be the next generation of Christian pastors? Who will lead the church in the next millennium? When and how will young people be recruited, called, and trained?"[6] Candler School of Theology at Emory University piloted this initiative with its Youth Theological Institute Summer Academy.

Since then, almost two hundred programs have been funded. Lilly's two primary aims of this initiative are as follows: "Stimulate and nurture an excitement about theological learning and inquiry" and "identify and encourage a generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry."[7]

The first round of grants was given entirely to forty-seven seminaries and divinity schools, beginning with a pilot program at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Then, in 2015, a request for proposals went out, calling on colleges and universities to submit their visions for these programs. Now, just under one hundred programs, some of which have garnered funding outside of the Endowment, are hosted each summer. The denominations stretch across the Christian continuum, and programs span in length from residential stays of one week to one month.

Reflection upon observations and assessments of these programs has demonstrated several positive general trends among these high school theology programs (HSTPs). Foremost among them, these program have tended to generate authentic experiences of community for young people that engage them socially, spiritually, and intellectually. They have provided a unique place in which students with a shared interest in faith and ministry gathered together among like-minded peers, usually away from home in a space that Proffitt and Church Young call "learning accelerators."[8] They note that community complements every other practice of these institutes, and, likewise, the unique fact that HSTPs form their own distinct communities, sharing an immersive experience by living, learning, and worshiping together. Their findings echo the participants in the Youth Theological Initiative Summer Academy whose responses named community as an integral part of the program and were recorded and reported on by White.[9] The fact that students are all together in community provides a "learning space with pedagogical agency, which calls the whole self to engage ideas and practices for the sake of spiritual and vocational formation."[10]

Further, within these communities, high schoolers typically are given an early experience of being respected for their own viewpoints, experiences, and challenges on questions of faith and vocation. Kaster emphasizes that finding a balance between experiential learning and intellectual engagement with high schoolers' own thoughts, beliefs, and questions is crucial for them to become fully and truly engaged in the communities that these HSTPs generate.[11] For example, one student from the HSTP at Lancaster Theological Seminary emphasized the importance of feeling like they were a part of an intellectual community, saying, "They want to know how we look at it from our point of view too…. Sometimes when you're in your teens, I feel like you're in between [being] the kid and adult, and […] some people still treat you like a kid, but here we're [treated] like full-on adults."[12] This respect of high schoolers' agency and perspective perhaps is a result of the seminary (in the first iteration of these grants) and/or university (in the second) settings in which these programs take place, where students learn from undergraduate- and graduate-level faculty members, who tend to be more receptive to dialogue rather than mere lecture.

Third, there is reason to believe that HSTPs have positive effects beyond the times of the programs themselves. Lang Hearlson has explored the lasting effects of students' experiences with HSTPs.[13] For the youth that were interviewed by the research team of the High School Theology Program Seminar, the programs were reported as being transformative, introducing them to new perspectives, to new vocations, and to new skills to grow and develop their faith. Importantly, for these changes to last beyond their time in the program, it was important to connect them to their communities. Other assessments likewise showed the startling effects of these programs. Creasy Dean and Lang Hearlson noted that, according to the National Study of Youth and Religion, only 37 percent of American teenagers consider themselves to be "strong" in their faith.[14] However, Douglass determined through interviews that HSTPs build a "significant space in which young people can reflect on and build a sense of Christian identity around their calling."[15] Students felt that they were able to "name" their own vocation and in turn be named as something that they themselves may not have considered before. Building on this and on past research, Kaster drew from pre- and post-testing surveys to find growth in youth. Both the pre- and post-

testing were administered to four cohorts (approximately 88 students), and results showed promising growth had taken place.[16] While only 48 percent agreed that they were considering the priesthood or religious life when they first came to YTM, 78 percent agreed in the post-test. Likewise, only 22 percent considered themselves to be "extremely committed" to the Catholic Church in the pre-test; 38 percent thought of themselves in this way in the post-test.[17]

Research and assessment data from these programs also indicate the importance of connecting experiential learning back to reflection. Steers writes that "communities that both challenge and support give young people opportunities to explore what they believe, who they are, and how they want to live in the world."[18] Creasy Dean stresses that "giving them a team to practice with, rather than merely instructing them about these practices" allows them to become agents of their own faith. By pairing this with experiential learning found in so many programs, students are able to go out into the community to engage in social justice work and then return to the HSTP community and take part in this "practice."[19]

In sum, Creasy Dean highlights the fact that HSTPs offer the following to youth today: organic forms of community; early stage theological education; expanded leadership skills; and skills for lifelong vocational discernment.[20]

Over the past twenty-five years, the Lilly Endowment has seen the ways in which programs have accomplished the two goals the grant set out manifest in many different ways. While D'Antonio's 2005 study[21] "did not find a single young adult Catholic […] high on the commitment index,"[22] Kaster found that nearly 40 percent of participants in St. John's School of Theology and Seminary's Youth in Theology and Ministry program had a "very high religious salience" and "nearly 70 percent indicat[ed] their faith as 'very important' or 'extremely important.'"[23] It is clear that students' experiences in these programs can provide lasting change in youth when it comes to both their orientation toward faith and ministry.

Literature Review: Connections between HSTPs and the UAPS

The second of the aims of the Lilly Endowment's initiative to create HSTPs—to "[i]dentify and encourage a generation of young Christians to consider vocations in Christian ministry"—speaks directly to the work of the 2018 Synod.[24] The final document of this gathering emphasizes the importance of vocation, calling it "the hinge around which all dimensions of the person are integrated."[25] Since their beginnings, HSTPs were specifically cognizant of this, and they worked to incorporate vocational discernment, broadly construed, into youth ministry. This is something the 2018 Synod saw as incredibly important, ultimately proposing that a "Directory of Youth Ministry" be created "to help diocesan leaders and local workers to offer good formation and action with and for the young" at the level of National Episcopal Conferences.[26] For Lilly, the creation and annual gathering of the Youth Theology Network (YTN) offers opportunities for those working with youth as part of an HSTP to do just this. The shared focus on youth as the future of the Christian church here provides the clearest connection between these programs and the Universal Apostolic Preferences.

High school-aged youth are at an especially vulnerable point in the process of their own faith development where, among other things, they are beginning to make connections to vocation. Parks provides one model for faith development that is a particularly apt lens through which we can think about where high school students are when they enter an HSTP.[27] It also provides a direction in which HSTPs may hope their students are more oriented upon leaving. Parks investigates the ways in which people develop their perceptions of the "truths" of the world and their conceptions of God by identifying their forms of knowing, dependence, and community that permeate their everyday lives. High school students that are in what Parks refers to as the "adolescent/ conventional" phase typically derive their "Truth" from an authority figure outside of themselves, be it a parent, teacher, or religious leader.[28] Logically, their sense of self and world are also dependent on such authority figures. However, adolescents at this time also develop counterdependencies, which Parks calls a "move in opposition to

Authority."[29] Experiences of counterdependence allow for students to push against what they believe is an ultimate authority while still ultimately returning to dependence. Finally, adolescents also experience a conventional form of community, meaning one that is marked by conformity. It is also during this time period, though, that students move through a phase of diffuse community, in which one "will begin to see a more adequate pattern of meaning—a place of commitment within a relativized world. It is here that access to an appropriate network of belonging plays a key role because it serves to confirm a new sense of self and supports the composing of a new (and sometimes hard-won) faith."[30] HSTPs help students progress in their faith development in part by being one such faith-based community of belonging where their natural push and pull with authority is respected but faith still structures the community in which their minds, lives, and vocations are incubated.

A key aspect of their next phase of development, the emerging adult phase, is the mentoring community. At this point, Parks writes, "young adulthood is nurtured into being and its promise is most powerfully realized through participation in a community that embodies a trustworthy alternative to earlier Authority-bound knowing."[31] A person typically enters this phase in full in their late teens and early twenties. HSTPs can also serve as such mentoring communities. As noted above, they provide a setting in which young people are introduced to a higher education context, in which their active participation and questioning is encouraged and their agency and role as an equal in forming community are fostered. All the while, they are guided by mentors who help them explore these questions authentically, in part by drawing upon the resources of their faith traditions. For some, it may be the first time that they are in a community that is interested in engaging questions on faith and honoring their perspectives on reality. Such a community has transformative potential, according to Parks:

> … [i]t is the combination of the new developmental stance of the emerging adult with the challenge and encouragement of a mentor, grounded in belonging to a compatible social group that ignites the transforming power of the emerging adult era. A mentoring community can confirm the hope that meaning can be reconstituted beyond the Abyss—there will be a new home.[32]

Fowler, on whose work Parks builds, has insisted that such a community can have a lasting effect on the formation of a sense of vocation in youth.[33] After all, vocation implies that one is an active agent within the church in some fashion. Hence, honoring, encouraging, and guiding that agency is crucial in this time as youth prepare to take greater responsibility for many of their choices, including choices about how they engage with faith, as an adult.

Given this and Parks' model, it appears that HSTPs are uniquely well-suited to meet young people where they are in their journey of faith and to help accompany them well going forward as they gain a more concrete sense of their vocation—that is, their agency within the context of faith. This article is not trying to suggest that students who attend HSTPs necessarily move more quickly through Parks' model of faith development; rather, it appears that they introduce elements that are apt to contribute to a participant's continued development.

A perhaps unexpected result of Lilly's call for proposals is that many of these programs either focus on or emphasize the inclusion of social justice issues as part of the mission of their programs. For example, the Theology of Healing Earth in Action (THEA) Institute at Loyola University Chicago centers its work on "demonstrating that theology, alongside other fields of study, plays an important role in changing the world and that religion is a powerful tool with which to address contemporary social challenges."[34] Likewise, the Youth Theology Institute at Loyola Marymount University "seeks to capture young imaginations, cultivate students' spiritual growth, facilitate intellectual development, and promote leadership that is ethical, multicultural, and seeks justice in a broken world."[35] The four characteristics of HSTPs listed above complement the substantive social justice work and education that can be accomplished through these programs. For institutes in the Catholic tradition in particular, the inclusion of theological education allows for what may be

many students' first encounter with Catholic social teaching. Furthermore, for the six institutes hosted within the Catholic and Jesuit tradition, there is a greater opportunity to educate students about "the faith that does justice" by introducing them to the Jesuit mission and to Ignatian spirituality. [36] Within this, it is clear that HSTPs can provide one embodiment of the Universal Apostolic Preferences by accompanying young people in their exploration of Ignatian spirituality, introducing them to those on the margins, and emphasizing to them the importance of caring comprehensively for all of God's creation.

Furthermore, the mentoring community element of HSTPs is especially apt for conversations regarding social justice and the development of genuine fraternity and solidarity. Within primarily educational settings, research has shown that service-learning and community-based research experiences "force [students] to consider their own privilege […] and makes them aware of their responsibilities to the larger community."[37] Steers builds on this by emphasizing that successful educational communities both challenge and support students. Connecting this to a theological perspective, Steers refers to it as "*diakonia,*" citing that, in building these "supportive and challenging communities,"[38] HSTPs respond to the needs of the church by modeling the type of community each parish works to offer to its youth through a distilled experience. This echoes the call from the 2018 Synod, which said that "[t]he young can help renew the style of parish communities and build a fraternal community that is close to the poor […] Often the young are sensitive to the dimension of *diakonia*."[39] Parks offers one potential explanation for this sensitivity as the unqualified relativism characteristic of the move between the Adolescent/Conventional and the Emerging Adult phases; during this time, students encounter new perspectives.[40] Of course, the Synod's statement also echoes through to the work the Universal Apostolic Preferences hopes for by bringing together the need to walk both with the young and with those on the margins. HSTPs that name social justice as part of their mission likewise combine these Preferences. Others, still, incorporate elements of environmental justice, such as Loyola Chicago's THEA program or Gonzaga University's Francis Youth Institute for Theology and Leadership, which "offers high school students transformative experiences that enable them to see the connections between theology, ecology, and economics, empowering them to respond creatively and compassionately to contemporary ethical challenges as emerging leaders in their communities."[41]

Leadership also provides a key connection between youth theology programs and the UAPs, exploring the importance of journeying with youth, the literal future of the church. HSTPs often frame Christian leadership within the context of vocation. Creasy Dean and Lang Hearlson name three forms of leadership that appeared most regularly in HSTPs: servant, witness, and steward.[42] The first of these, servant leadership, is typically imparted to students through service opportunities in which students learn from and encounter those on the margins to form leaders defined by their empathy and compassion. Second, developing students' facility at witnessing allows students to not only "identify places of injustice and suffering in the world; they also help students see their own culpability in dehumanization."[43] Lastly, stewardship refers to the idea of naming, developing, and deploying a community's gifts for the good of all. Creasy Dean and Lang Hearlson connect this to a "theology of gifts," connecting it to St. Paul's view that a gift is a "'grace given to us' so that the community may flourish."[44]

Douglass, referenced above, examined the importance of naming and missioning students. Her research team conducted interviews at thirteen different youth theology programs. The study found that helping students to recognize these gifts, especially within the context of ministry, is advantageous in identifying and orienting students toward attending divinity school or seminary. However, it also suggested that incorporated practices of naming youth as leaders "connect young people in congregations with broader, more formal systems of leadership formation."[45] Douglass further cites the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and its decision in 1998 to intentionally utilize pedagogies of naming at all levels of its ministry. In 2016, it was clear that the results of this paid off, as the Virginia Annual Conference not only had the highest number of young clergy

within the denomination but also a robust and committed team of youth leaders.[46]

That said, while not all youth need to be leaders, the declining number of youth connected with the church today[47] indicates a need for youth who feel empowered by and willing to engage with and actively live their faith, as they "are the bearers of this new form of human life that can find, in the experience of encounter with the Lord Jesus, light for the path toward justice, reconciliation, and peace."[48] Furthermore, recognizing that many young people "face enormous challenges in our world today," this close connection with the church allows them to have access to resources to help address some of these challenges.[49] Additionally, many youth theology programs have scholarships available for youth who may otherwise be unable to afford to attend one of the institutes, ensuring equity in access and hopefully providing some tools for when students return home. Above all else, though, these experiences help to call and name them as leaders part of a community working for justice and, in so doing, choosing and living out a vocation within the "faith that does justice."

The links between HSTPs and the UAPs is not limited to what has been illustrated here, given that institutes vary so widely depending on their institutions. However, the primary aims of the Endowment's initiative line up with and provide opportunities for the manifestation of all of the UAPs within each program, and many have indeed been doing this work even before the UAPs were published in 2019, having seen similar realities to be addressed as those embodied in the Preferences. The following section offers one illustration of this by examining the work of the Be the Light Youth Theology Institute (BTLI) at Canisius College, a Catholic and Jesuit institution in Buffalo, New York.

An Example: Be the Light Youth Theology Institute at Canisius College

BTLI is one example of a program that embodies the unique strengths of youth theology programs mentioned above and is intentionally designed so as to draw upon the wisdom of Ignatian pedagogical techniques and, ultimately, help fulfill the aspirations of the UAPs. This can be proven by considering both the programmed elements of each typical day of the Institute as well as the way that the order of themes addressed during the week of the Institute is patterned after the Pastoral Circle. Ultimately, a brief consideration of BTLI's assessment results will further indicate the strengths of this program's approach.

A Typical Day

This Institute contains five days of instructional content, with a half day each at the start and end of the week to check participants in and send the participants forth, respectively. Each of the five days of content involves three substantive elements: an immersion experience in the morning, instruction in some aspect of Catholic philosophy or theology (and how this informs the Ignatian charism) in the afternoon, and guided reflection and prayer on all they've experienced and learned in the evening.

Each of these substantive elements has been included for a specific purpose. The immersion experience is included to give students a first-hand experience from which to draw when relevant instruction will occur later in the day. Each day's immersion experience is selected and designed to align with the themes to be addressed during the day as well as possible. Importantly, these experiences are *not* service projects. Rather than allowing participants to focus on doing some small task to "help" in a situation and, thus, maintain mental and emotional distance from those who are in need, participants are asked instead to actively and attentively witness what is being presented and the people who are sharing their experiences and knowledge. In so doing, participants are encouraged to shift from a mere charity mentality towards a justice mentality. Such structured experiences afford participants concrete knowledge of the context of issues of justice and an experience on which to anchor further theoretical explanations and questions about such issues. Also, these experiences are designed to be an opportunity for participants to embody the experiences of others—specifically, others who experience injustice. They provide the opportunity for the only sufficient means of establishing solidarity, that integral part of a Catholic conception of justice that reaches its fulfilment when members of the human family "recognize

one another as persons."[50] As Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., quoting Pope St. John Paul II, notes, "solidarity is learned through 'contact' rather than through 'concepts'."[51]

The instruction is meant to provide the intellectual, or theoretical, background of the immersion experiences and the themes exemplified by those experiences. Expert instructional leaders present lessons on these deep and sometimes complex topics. In addition to instruction in some basic elements of Catholic philosophy and theology, we have included instruction on particular ways in which the Jesuits embody these Catholic ideals. This element is meant to emphasize the relationship between what is considered "Ignatian" with its Catholic theological moorings, as well as to introduce Ignatian spirituality and pedagogy as a particularly helpful way of understanding how and where the Divine call for justice is being raised. It is in this portion of each day's content that the most explicit (though not the only) links to theological inquiry are made. Through various modes of instruction (e.g., Socratic lecture, video, activity, etc.), participants develop skills to frame the problems that they have witnessed first-hand in philosophical and theological language. This helps them to see how much Catholic philosophy and theology and Ignatian spirituality all pervade and help to explain even seemingly ordinary aspects of experience, and so much more the extraordinary aspects.

The guided reflection and prayer allow participants the space to process the experiences of the day—both personally and with an eye towards its uniquely spiritual dimension. To guide this process along, BTLI utilizes instructional leaders who have demonstrated success in youth faith formation. Participants are encouraged here to both become aware of how they are individually affected by what they witnessed and discern the kinds of actions that they could do to effectively address the problems illuminated by their experience and instruction. In the most recent Institute, this manifested itself in a project proposal. Participants had workshop sessions each day, again guided by instructional leaders and college-aged mentors, devoted to the step-by-step development of a project that would address an injustice they identified in their own communities. This fulfills the Ignatian pedagogical steps of reflection, action, and evaluation. Prayer and faith-sharing conclude the formal programming of the day; there, mentors lead students in various kinds of Ignatian prayer (e.g., the Examen), further deepening participants' awareness in and exercise of particularly Ignatian practices to develop one's ability to see the spiritual, to see God in all things and where God needs to be in all things.

Use of the Pastoral Circle in BTLI

The Pastoral Circle of experience, social analysis, theological reflection, action, experience again, etc., is the heuristic that BTLI has employed to order and structure the various elements and themes addressed throughout the week. In so doing, BTLI has intentionally modeled through its design the very methodology of witnessing and addressing injustice it hopes to pass on to participants. In so doing, BTLI has also placed its own trust in the efficacy of this model to help participants discover and live out their vocations as men and women truly with and for others.

The Pastoral Circle is a methodology for integrating experience, knowledge, reflection, and action recursively, thus ensuring that each of these elements is seen as irreducibly interrelated to the others. This continues to be used by Jesuits (and others) as a useful heuristic for understanding real injustices and how to address them fruitfully; it captures neatly how "the faith that does justice" can in fact be done.[52] One engages in this Circle by first receptively attending to *experience*, which ensures that one's further steps are in contact with the "gritty reality" of the world, most especially the reality of the poor and marginalized. Next, one engages in *social analysis*, marshaling scholarly expertise and knowledge to explain the causes, individual and systemic, of the experience of injustice being considered. Third, in light of all these factors, one engages in *theological reflection*, drawing upon spiritual and philosophical resources to understand what the eyes of faith must see as most salient in the experience at issue and what our Catholic, Christian duty is in addressing it. Fourth, one engages in intentional and well-planned *action*, concretely breaking into the situation one experienced and using one's understanding of the situation, knowledge of its causes, and conviction in the duty of one's faith to

intervene intelligently. The effectiveness of this intervention must be gauged; this is guaranteed by the return to the first step of the Circle, *experience*, to engage in the process anew. The Pastoral Circle, when employed faithfully, ensures that the pursuit of justice in service of faith is a calling that lasts a lifetime—indeed, a vocation.

The first full day of the Institute has been used to introduce our participants to the city of Buffalo in order to prime them for further experiences of the city that they will have during the week, since a good number of the participants have not been from the Buffalo area. The immersions for the second and third programming days of the Institute have focused on specific injustices really present in the city of Buffalo and its surrounding areas. Here, participants witness and *experience* the reality of those who are the victims of real injustices in our city, such as racism and its legacy, xenophobia, rural poverty, etc. Immersions have ranged from a walk led by a local community activist through an underprivileged neighborhood (The Fruit Belt) in the shadow of a gleaming new Medical Complex, to a visit to community gardens and a small business hub on the West Side of Buffalo set up by resettled refugees living in those neighborhoods, to a boat ride down the Buffalo River where extensive environmental cleanup efforts led by local community organizations were highlighted.

Participants transition into the second element of the Pastoral Circle, *social analysis*, through some of the workshops and reflections on our second and third programming days. For example, to unpack and analyze the reality of racism in America, participants have done a "privilege walk;" they have also heard presentations from Canisius professors about the legacy of redlining in Buffalo. To unpack and analyze the injustices surrounding immigration to the United States, participants have engaged in a simulation of the immigration process. To unpack and analyze certain stumbling blocks to true solidarity with others, participants have engaged in a "stereotype activity," where they think about and reflect on labels assigned to certain groups of people and how they preclude knowing them as persons. For each of these, small group reflection led by student leaders has helped participants process what they have gone through at a more personal level, pull out lessons from it, and use said lessons to analyze what they have experienced in the immersions.

The transition to the third element of the Pastoral Circle, *theological reflection*, is primed with some instruction on the first couple days in relevant basics of Catholic philosophy and theology (e.g., a basis for natural human rights grounded in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, a brief history of Catholic social thought), as well as the Ignatian charism (e.g., a brief history of the Jesuits, an introduction to Ignatian spirituality and themes therein). Of particular note has been a discussion of the parallels between systemic causes of injustice and the notion of "structures of sin" introduced in the social encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*.[53] Relevant passages from Scripture and brief witness talks on the integration of faith and justice in the lives and experiences of friends of the Institute help to reinforce this foundational material. With this background, theological reflection proper is prompted by instruction on the third and fourth programming days. Here, the focus is on precisely where in Scripture and the Tradition the faithful are obligated to participate in the rectification of injustice. Reflection on scripture passages such as Matthew 25:31-46, James 2:14-26, and the like help to drive home the theological basis for participants' obligations in faith to rectify injustice. Nightly community prayer, modeled on the Jesuit Examen, and faith-sharing help participants process what they have witnessed on their own terms and what they plan to accomplish in a theological context as well.

Finally, participants plan for *action* by developing a project to take home to their communities. Much like the immersions, the projects BTLI has encouraged participants to plan are not service-oriented but, rather, justice-oriented. Participants have been encouraged not to go it alone but, rather, to ally with like-minded peers and community organizations and also to incorporate advocacy and some kinds of activism at a community level into their projects.[54] During the fourth and fifth full programming days, the immersion experiences highlight organizations that have taken faith-based community action to alleviate real injustices, often along the lines of the act of social justice. For example, participants have engaged with the work of Voice Buffalo, an interfaith group devoted to community activism

for justice grounded in "the theology of resistance."[55] Also featured has been Canisius's own Immersion: East Side program, a special summer class for Canisius students to experience first-hand and do deep research into the social problems plaguing Buffalo's East Side and the College's unique position and obligation to witness and advocate for change here. Professionally-led instruction about advocacy has also been paired with discussions of the theological basis for speaking the truth to power (e.g., reflecting on John 18:37 and Luke 4:16-30 together), so as to reinforce the theological reflection involved in employing the Pastoral Circle.

At various points during the week-long experience, each of the steps of the Pastoral Circle is touched, and it generally proceeds from a focus on experience and analysis earlier in the week to faith-driven action by the end. BTLI thus serves as a kind of small-scale incubator for faithful and just leaders to be educated and inspired. BTLI is designed to give high school aged participants that space to question, to find their agency, and to understand how well they can make a real difference in their world. By being immersed in Ignatian prayer techniques and pedagogical strategies, these young people are experiencing and engaging with the kind of discernment referenced by the first UAP. By witnessing real injustices in Buffalo, their eyes are better trained to witness real injustices in their own communities, thus enabling them to better walk with the poor and the marginalized, fulfilling the second UAP. Finally, by being educated about and becoming attentive to the interrelated and systemic causes of all these injustices, they are being given a mind and a heart to care for our common home—environmentally and, most especially, socially.

General Trends Noted Through Assessment[56]

In 2018, BTLI's assessment strategy shifted to specifically looking at how effective it was in engaging in social justice education and building a cultural competency for social justice.[57] That year, pre- and post-tests were administered that adapted both Hackman's Five Essential Components for Social Justice Education[58] and Goodman's Cultural Competency for Social Justice Model.[59] In the former, Hackman suggests that there are five essential components for social justice education: (1) content mastery, (2) tools for critical analysis, (3) tools for social change, (4) tools for personal reflection, and (5) an awareness of multicultural group dynamics.[60] These five components are indeed seen in many models of social justice education, but the ways that they are embodied vary from model to model. Goodman's model then promotes an individual's self-awareness, in which one becomes more aware of their own identities. This model also emphasizes the importance of "understanding and valuing others," "knowledge of social inequities," "skills to interact effectively with a diversity of people in different contexts," and "skills to foster equity and inclusion."[61] While this model is not necessarily linear, the breakdown of awareness, knowledge, and skills forms a foundation for social justice education to be used in a variety of different ways. It was especially apt to use this structure, as it can be utilized to "set goals and identify what individuals need to know to be culturally competent for social justice, create plans to address the areas that need attention, and assess whether the competencies are being gained."[62] Additionally, both Hackman and Goodman's frameworks echoed the Pastoral Circle in their foci on personal reflection and self-awareness, knowledge and analysis, and skill-building. While the adaptation of two models to our faith-based program was effective to an extent, program staff observed evaluation fatigue on the part of students, and the 2019 model focused on an adapted version of Goodman's model alone due to its inclusion of skills as critical to building cultural competence. This was seen as essential in working to form young leaders through a theological education.

As illustrated above, the Pastoral Circle formed the framework through which this goal was to be accomplished, and the assessment trends indicated that students were changed after attending BTLI. In fact, there was positive change in all areas being assessed, and it was especially potent in looking at how students viewed the community, their own self-awareness about the role that they played in working for social justice, and their ability to be leaders. One of the hallmarks of promotional materials for BTLI draws on this assessment, citing that a majority of students feel more able to

make a change in their communities after attending the Institute. We also saw that students were becoming more knowledgeable of societal inequities and were gaining the skills to engage in dialogue with others on social justice issues. As co-directors, we observed students being able to articulate their passion for one issue or another during the final dinner, in which they are invited to share about the project that they are bringing home to their communities. By incorporating workshops that draw on Catholic social teaching as well as provide advocacy training and the skills to conduct research, students are able to grow their knowledge while also seeing the connection between faith and working for justice, and the effectiveness of this approach was seen in the assessment results. Finally, as the Pastoral Circle places such emphasis on reflection, the assessment also asks students to consider whether or not self-reflection is an important tool in their spirituality. The majority of students agreed that it was, suggesting that the Institute's incorporation of opportunities for reflection throughout each day demonstrated the value of this skill.

Discussion

For nearly three decades, HSTPs have demonstrated a way of proceeding that forms students who are faith-filled, community-oriented leaders, and the Be the Light Institute at Canisius College provides one example of how this approach can manifest the potentiality of all four of the Universal Apostolic Preferences. While not all HSTPs are in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition, Be the Light's denominational and Ignatian foundation makes it especially apt for consideration. The Pastoral Circle provides a valuable framework that also lends itself to this connection by engaging students in a cyclical process of experience, social analysis, theological reflection, action, and experience again, getting students into a rhythm, and Be the Light's use of Ignatian practices of discernment helps them to recognize and process what is being learned over the course of the weeklong program, while also equipping them with tools to continue this process well beyond the week they share together in Buffalo.

The social justice orientation of the Institute provides a clear connection to the Universal Apostolic Preferences. Students are introduced to the faith that does justice and learn through immersions the importance of being in solidarity and looking to learn from those that they are around rather than simply help. As the Society of Jesus describes it in the UAPs, it is critical to use "a style of life and work appropriate to the situation so that our accompaniment will be credible."[63] Students begin to understand what it means to utilize this approach through their immersions, but then this is reinforced in academic sessions in which they learn more about the theological backgrounds to working for justice before taking part in workshops where they learn the ways in which they can put this knowledge into action. Ultimately, the goal is for them to consider others' perspectives and engage in dialogue about justice issues, a hallmark of BTLI. Assessments indicated that not only did students begin to recognize and agree with the importance of these skills; they also felt that they were able to use them.

Additionally, while BTLI does not focus solely on one issue over the course of the Institute, the program has touched on many in its four iterations, environmental justice as central to care for our common home being one of them. Issues of current importance and particular salience in Buffalo are chosen each year. Regrettably, there is no lack of immersions to expose students to various injustices; that said, there is also no shortage of good community organizations working diligently to overcome them. Furthermore, because students are encouraged to work for justice in areas that they are passionate about, exploration of specific issues may come up organically from the participants. One example of this occurred when a group of students during the closing dinner revealed their intention to pursue environmental justice because of the threat rising sea levels posed to their home community. Another occurred over the course of the week when several participants from the same hometown grasped the real obstacle to accessing basic goods and services, owed as a matter of basic human dignity, that a lack of transportation in more rural areas surrounding their hometown posed. They committed themselves to work with civic authorities there towards a just solution. These are salient illustrations of the power that BTLI has to inspire action intimately connected to

these students' real life circumstances—indeed, to inspire a vocational call to respond to real needs with one's God-given gifts. Immersions, academic sessions, and workshops all allow for content in which students can learn more about those on the margins and the systemic foundations of injustice. These experiences as well as the reflection that goes with each of them pushes students to think critically about their home communities and where issues of justice can be seen in their everyday lives, and environmental justice is certainly one of them.

Finally, as noted above, reflection plays a critical role in students' development throughout the course of the week. Students are introduced to the Ignatian tradition from the first day, in which an instructor tells them the story of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the cannonball that struck his leg. Participants are then asked, "What is your cannonball?"—what brought them to Be the Light? For some students, it was because they were interested in advocating for social justice and had heard about the Institute from another social justice-oriented program. For others, it was because they wanted to explore their faith more. Throughout the week, students are asked to participate in small group discussions that debrief and reinforce the academic content that is covered in the academic sessions. At the start and end of the day, they also take part in prayer, and a variety of prayer styles and methods are introduced, including the Ignatian Examen. Finally, faith sharing in the evening is designed for students to go through their days, finding points of consolation and desolation. These different points of reflection throughout the day allow students to reflect on their experiences, the academics, and their own spirituality, all of which is woven together throughout the week as facilitators put together the pieces showing how Catholic social teaching calls for the work of justice as a necessary part of one's faith.

Beyond these content-driven connections to the Universal Apostolic Preferences, the importance of community and leadership found within these Institutes help students to not only understand what a faith-filled community looks like but also how they themselves can be leaders within it. Assessment results have indicated that students leave Be the Light more oriented toward these two characteristics than they were at the start of the week. In terms of community, this is likely because Be the Light approaches community building by balancing challenging and supporting students, as Steers suggests.[64] These "mentoring communities"[65] provide a place where students are pushed beyond their comfort zones and asked to reckon with their own prejudices, stereotypes, and biases as well as their understanding of oppression in their communities and the world.[66] Just as Parks notes that this type of community allows students to move toward unqualified relativism in which they begin to recognize how certain of their knowledge has been shaped and what other information may be available.[67] A simple example of this is a student coming to recognize the existence of systemic injustice that often operates in the background. By having student leaders, facilitators, and staff members who start a dialogue on what's happening after immersions and academic sessions in addition to evening faith sharing, students are able to be supported in what they are confronting that is challenging them. The more recent incorporation of witness talks in the 2019 Institute was added as another way of showing students that it is important to come to this self-awareness regarding various aspects of faith and justice and to incorporate their faith as they lead for justice after they leave.

Thinking about leadership, a critical part of the assessment is to see whether or not students are beginning to process and use the skills they need to make a change in their community. The next logical question from this is whether or not students will retain that commitment beyond the last day of the problem. The assessment data provides a snapshot of this transformational change, but the Institute has not engaged in a longitudinal study of participants' commitment to leadership, community, and action. In addition to the general results of HSTPs noted above, White[68] and Wheeler[69] have both incorporated studies indicating that long-term effects from HSTPs are possible; however, the difficulty with such studies is that those most likely to respond to post-assessments in months and years after programs are those who the program positively affected. Regardless, such positive results are indicative of potential for long-term commitment to action within the context of their vocation. Given the nascency of the BTLI, it would be a worthwhile

next step to begin gathering data from students on a longitudinal basis.

However, because the assessment is based on their own perception of their ability, it provides an interesting look into whether or not students are beginning to see themselves as leaders within their communities. In addition to the skills mentioned above, students do also start to see that they do have the ability to make change. As Douglass iterates above, naming students as leaders increases the likelihood that they will stay connected to their faith community.[70] On several occasions, past participants have taken their naming as leaders during the program seriously and have returned as undergraduate students once they enter college. Ultimately, whether or not they return to the Be the Light Institute as leaders, the hope is that their naming as leaders during the course of the program will help with their self-actualization and foster the realization that they are the future, not just of the church but of the world as well.

Broadly, then, BTLI has proven to be a program that attains well to the aims of the UAPs while producing results similar to other, older and more deeply studied and assessed HSTPs. It would appear, then, that its continued sustenance and study would be beneficial. It would also appear that similar programs would be worthy of support and attention. As BTLI is one instance of an institute that marries the benefits of HSTPs with the specific goals of the UAPs, there is some indication that BTLI's successes can be replicated elsewhere. The most direct analogue, of course, is the Jesuit university sponsoring a program targeted at high school youth; BTLI and each of the other five programs housed at Jesuit schools provide unique templates of how other colleges/ universities can fashion a program and thus contribute to the attainment of the goals of the UAPs. Further, as BTLI in particular shows, there is power in paying attention to place—that is, wherever in the world said college/university may be, focusing on realities of justice and injustice right where one stands allows students' experiences and reflections to be thoroughly grounded in reality they can see, hear, and touch and, thus, will be much more transformational. Since engaging high schoolers in higher education environments is so crucial to the unique successes of HSTPs in accompanying them in their faith journey, connections to such institutions in some way will be crucial to mirror the successes of BTLI in other places. For example, Jesuit parishes or parishes with a Jesuit-adjacent focus on issues of social justice may be able to contribute to the goals of the UAPs in a similar way, should those parishes have clergy and/or parishioners and friends who teach at a collegiate level and can facilitate social justice oriented immersions and lessons in Catholic social teaching and Jesuit spirituality. Finding a space that aligns with the efforts of diocesan youth ministry offices can yield some fruitful collaborations and fertile grounds for recruiting participants and engaging students who may easily be overlooked in years after Confirmation and before college.[71] Similar remarks can be made for Jesuit high schools, especially those with no native connections to Jesuit colleges in their city. At root, the key for any institution trying to emulate the successes of BTLI and/or HSTPs in general is to foster genuine community among high school students, respect their agency, energy, questions, and perspectives, and mentor them by harnessing their energy to employ the resources of their faith in service of the broken and unjust world right on their doorstep.

Conclusion

Engaging youth in theological education through both the academic strengths of the higher education setting in which HSTPs take place as well as the transmission of skills for spiritual discernment (and showing the connection between the two) can accomplish the hope that "we can show them the way to God that passes through solidarity with human beings and the construction of a more just world."[72] These Institutes too recognized the importance of youth for the future of the church, and this synergy between HSTPs and the Universal Apostolic Preferences again renews the importance of youth for the church today, especially for programs working with youth at all ages at Jesuit institutions. Furthermore, due to the justice-oriented nature of most if not all of these programs, there are added opportunities for connection.

High school theology programs are certainly not the only ways in which the Universal Apostolic

Preferences can be realized. However, they are uniquely oriented to do the work that the Society of Jesus is calling for in its ministries through the UAPs. In the Preferences, Father General Arturo Sosa writes that "responding to the call of the Universal Apostolic Preferences necessitates that we strive more than ever for the intellectual depth that our foundational charism and tradition demand; such depth must always be accompanied by attendant spiritual depth."[73] The fact that the Lilly Endowment first made grants to seminaries and divinity schools and then to colleges and universities shows how educational institutions are uniquely positioned to show the connection between education and faith. While these lessons can be applied to any denomination within the Christian faith, high school theology programs and their ability to fulfill the potential of the Universal Apostolic Preferences is indicative of a bright future for the church, one that is led by its youth. HJE

Notes

[1] Fr. Arturo Sosa, S.J., "Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019-2029," February 19, 2019, 4, https://www.jesuits.global/sj_files/2020/05/2019-06_19feb19_eng.pdf.

[2] Sosa, 4.

[3] Sosa, 4.

[4] Sosa, 4.

[5] Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, *Apostolic Exhortation* (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), §174, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html

[6] Carol Lytch, "Summary Report I: Strategic Advances in Theological Education: Theological Programs for High School Youth, 1999-2004," *Theological Education* 42, no. 1 (2006): 2, http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/publications-presentations/theological-education/2006-theological-education-v42-n1.pdf.

[7] Lytch, 4.

[8] Anabel Profitt and Jacquie Church Young, "Catalyzing Community: Forming the Community as Catechist" in *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education—If We Let It,* eds. Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 76.

[9] David White, *The Long-Term Influence of the Youth Theological Initiative Summer Academy on the Faith Development of High School Youth* (Atlanta: Candler School of Theology at Emory University, 2004).

[10] Profitt and Church Young, "Catalyzing Community," 76.

[11] Jeffrey Kaster, "Fuel My Faith: Pedagogies of Theological Reflection in High School Theology Programs," and Profitt and Church Young, "Catalyzing Community," in *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education—If We Let It,* eds. Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016).

[12] Kaster, 169.

[13] Cristy Lang Hearlson, "Taking It Home: Separation and Reintegration as Teachable Moments," and Profitt and Church Young, "Catalyzing Community" in *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education—If We Let It,* eds. Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016).

14 Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson, "Taste Tests and Teenagers: Vocational Discernment as a Creative Social Practice" in *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education—If We Let It,* eds. Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 7.

[15] Katherine M. Douglass, "Holy Noticing: The Power of Nomination and Commissioning for Missional Formation" in *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education—If We Let It,* eds. Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 111.

[16] Kaster, "Fuel My Faith."

[17] Kaster, 159.

[18] Judy Steers, "Let Me Try: Experiential Learning in the Theological Formation of Young People" in *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education—If We Let It,* eds. Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 218.

[19] Kenda Creasy Dean, "Hitting It Out of the Park: Why Churches Need Farm Teams," in *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education—If We Let It,* eds. Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 287.

[20] Creasy Dean, 265-287.

[21] Willam V. D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge, and Mar L. Gautier, *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church* (Lanham, M.D: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 39, quoted in Jeffrey Kaster, "Assessing Christian Discipleship in Catholic Youth Ministry" (EdD diss., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 2008), 132.

[22] The commitment index was a measurement of individuals' commitment to their respective faith tradition (D'Antonio et al., *American Catholics Today*, 39).

[23] Jeffrey Kaster, "Assessing Christian Discipleship," 132.

[24] Lytch, "Summary Report I," 4.

[25] Synod of Bishops, *Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment* (Vatican City: Italy, 2018), http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/final-document-of-the-synod-of-bishops-on-young-people--faith-an.html.

[26] Synod of Bishops, *Final Document.*

[27] Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Emerging Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith,* 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011).

[28] Parks, 72.

[29] Parks, 99.

[30] Parks, 120.

[31] Parks, 121.

[32] Parks, 121.

[33] James Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Franscisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 142-145.

[34] "About Us," THEA Institute, Loyola University Chicago, accessed January 12, 2021, https://www.luc.edu/thea/aboutus.

[35] "Youth Theology Institute," Youth Theology Institute, Loyola Marymount University, accessed January 12, 2021, https://bellarmine.lmu.edu/youththeologyinstitute/.

[36] These institutes include: Be the Light Youth Theology Institute (Canisius College), Ever to Excel (Boston College), FaithActs (Loyola University New Orleans), Francis Youth Institute for Theology and Leadership (Gonzaga University), Theology of Healing Earth in Action (Loyola University Chicago), and the LMU Youth Theology Institute (Loyola Marymount University).

[37] Donald W. Harward, "Examining the Outcomes of the Bringing Theory to Practice Project," *Peer Review* 9, no. 3 (2007): 9-10.

[38] Steers, "Let Me Try," 218.

[39] Synod of Bishops, 2018.

[40] Parks, *Big Questions,* 75.

[41] "The Francis Institute for Theology and Leadership," College of Arts & Sciences, Gonzaga University, accessed January 12, 2021, https://www.gonzaga.edu/about/our-mission-jesuit-values/office-of-mission-ministry/the-francis-youth-institute.

[42] Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson, "Calling as Creative Process; Wicked Questions for Theological Education" in *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education—If We Let It,* eds. Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 43.

[43] Creasy Dean and Lang Hearlson, 46.

[44] Creasy Dean and Lang Hearslson, 47.

[45] Douglass, "Holy Noticing," 120.

[46] Douglass, 119.

[47] "Importance of Religion in One's Life," Religious Landscape Study, Pew Research Center, 2014, https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/importance-of-religion-in-ones-life/.

[48] Sosa, "Universal Apostolic Preferences," 4.

[49] Sosa, 4.

[50] John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,* Encyclical Letter (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987), §39, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html

[51] Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education" (lecture, Santa Clara University, San Jose, CA, October 6, 2000), https://www.scu.edu/ic/programs/ignatian-worldview/kolvenbach/. Quotation is from Pope St. John Paul II.

[52] According to the Ignatian Solidarity Network (ISN), whose shared resources have been used liberally by BTLI, the origins of the Pastoral Circle are in Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J., *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980). The ISN's graphic and explanation of the Pastoral Circle may be found at https://ignatiansolidarity.net/immersion/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2012/08/pastoral_circle.pdf. The explanation that follows in this paragraph generally mirrors this.

[53] John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, §36.

[54] In this way, participants have been encouraged to perform together what has been called the "act of social justice." See Fr. William Ferree, C.M., *The Act of Social Justice* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1943), Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris,* Encyclical Letter (Vatican City, Italy: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1937), especially §53, http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370319_divini-redemptoris.html.

[55] "Faith Leaders Caucus," Voice Buffalo, accessed January 15, 2021, https://voicebuffalo.org/faith/.

[56] This was not a formal study, and the trends indicated above come from generalized data. For future research, a formal study could be conducted with a statistically significant number of participants in order to measure exactly if change

is occurring and how much. For the purposes of this article, these trends are instead meant to reinforce the aptitude for youth theology programs to fulfill the goals of the Universal Apostolic Preferences.

[57] Prior to this point, different evaluation models had been used, and they lacked a specific social justice focus in what they were trying to assess.

[58] Heather W. Hackman, "Five Essential Components for Social Justice Education," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 38, no. 2 (2005): 103-109, https://doi.org/10.1080/10665680590935034.

[59] Diane J. Goodman, "Cultural Competency for Social Justice: A Framework for Student, Staff, Faculty, and Organizational Development," last modified 2013, https://acpacsje.wordpress.com/2013/02/05/cultural-competency-for-social-justice-by-diane-j-goodman-ed-d/.

[60] Hackman, "Five Essential Components," 106.

[61] Goodman, "Cultural Competency."

[62] Goodman, "Cultural Competency."

[63] Sosa, "Universal Apostolic Preferences," 3.

[64] Steers, "Let Me Try," 218.

[65] Parks, *Big Questions,*121.

[66] Goodman, "Cultural Competency."

[67] Parks, *Big Questions*, 75.

[68] White, *The Long-Term Influence,* 1-45.

[69] Barbara Wheeler, "On Our Way: A Study of Students' Paths to Seminary," *Auburn Studies* 17 (February 2014): 31-32, https://auburnseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/OnOurWay-FinalDoc.pdf.

[70] Douglass, "Holy Noticing," 120.

[71] In BTLI's case, BTLI's directors communicated with the Office of Youth Ministry in the Diocese of Buffalo, so as to ensure that BTLI would not overlap or compete with existing diocesan programs oriented towards high schoolers. Owing to its social justice focus, BTLI ended up occupying a complementary niche in the space of youth ministry in the Diocese that drew upon the college's unique mission and institutional capacity. We agreed to cross-advertise each other's programs to our local participants, which proved mutually beneficial for recruitment.

[72] Sosa, "Universal Apostolic Preferences," 4.

[73] Sosa, 9.