

National Charter

YOUTH TEAMS OF OUR LADY CANADA



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Introduction

Youth Teams of Our Lady (YTOL) is a movement of spiritual formation which offers youth a way of Christian and human growth in a community, a team. Through a way of prayer, sharing and study, the member searches and deepens the values by which life's choices are made. For this, the movement entrusts itself to Mary, choosing Her as a model of openness and availability to the work of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of the Youth Teams of Our Lady is to help its members to live the double dimension of the Christian life: being with Christ and being sent on a mission into everyday life.

The path proposed by the movement is founded on the notion of a spirituality of passage: passage from a handed-down faith to a living, deeper, more mature faith. This will lead to the discovery of one's vocation and to the undertaking of commitments with confidence. Each member is independent and free to choose the activities in which he/she wants to get involved, depending on the cultural diversity and the formation of the team, so as to develop their gifts and discover their vocation.

One of the goals of YTOL is to show youth different ways of living their faith, within the framework of statutes as outlined in the International and National Charter of the movement.

I. Youth Teams of Our Lady

1. Teams

Following the example of the small group of apostles who accompanied Jesus, the team is a living cell in the Church. The team is the medium chosen by YTOL to live in the Church, with Christ and as His witnesses.

2. Youth

Team members can differ greatly in their personal and spiritual experiences, in the level of their faith, in their culture, in their way of life and in their undertakings. Because they are young and living as single people, they are at a moment in life when many decisions have to be made. They desire to deepen their faith, to live the Gospel in their everyday

life and to discern their life choices (concerning their studies, careers and way of life) with the help of the light of the Holy Spirit.

3. Our Lady

The name “Our Lady”, inherited from the Teams of Our Lady (Equipes Notre Dame), gives each member the desire to understand the role of Mary in the Mystery of Christ, and, consequently, in the Mystery of Salvation. Thus, all will find the role God gave Mary in their lives. This is the reason for which YTOL placed itself under the protection of Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church. The life of a team develops the spiritual and human values for which Mary is the model.

II. The Team

The team is the smallest unit of the movement. It is the first place where the life of the movement takes place. Members join between the age of 14 and 30 years. It is the responsibility of the national secretariat to oversee the homogeneity of the teams in the movement.

Unique to Canada’s YTOL teams is the existence of two types of teams. Young Adult (YA) teams which are comprised of youth in post secondary studies or in the working world while High School (HS) teams are comprised of youth who have attended the first March Break Retreat and are students in the secondary education system.

1. The Team: A Christian Community

Consisting of 6-12 single young people, an accompanying married couple and a spiritual counselor, a team forms a small community of people who want to share their spiritual quest with others. This sharing, extending to all parts of members’ lives, helps them to fully live their vocation as human beings and to acquire the freedom of the children of God.

In recognizing the diversity which makes up the richness of the team, each member strives to welcome and to listen to the others in the spirit of mutual help, in order to get to know each other better.

2. The Team: Development under Mary's Wing

The team is a community, open to all youth in search of a Christian life. The team is not a goal in itself, but an offered means for the team members to grow together choosing Mary as a model of openness and availability to the work of the Holy Spirit. A team is not simply a group of friends, but a cell in the Church gathering in the name of Christ.

While following their personal paths to their meeting with Christ, members try to better understand their faith and to live it more fully on a daily basis. YTOL wants to help individuals in finding their vocation and their role in the life of the Church.

There are many reasons why the youth in a team meet. Some meet because they have experienced the difficulty of living their faith alone in the world, while others meet because they are aware that their faith can only grow stronger by meeting with other youth who are also searching for the Lord. Therefore, they welcome the witness and help of their peers.

III. The roles within the team

Within YTOL, all responsibilities in a team are assumed by the youth. Involving themselves in this manner is above all, an interior response to a calling. It is not a matter of carrying out a duty, but of saying a personal “yes” to God. The responsibilities in YTOL are therefore not obligations, but rather services that one accepts for others.

1. The team animator

The animator is a member of the team, chosen by all the other members, who serves the team and the movement for at least a year. Preferably, this position is held by all the team members in turn.

Through a connection with the secretariat and with the help of the spiritual counsel and the accompanying couple, the animator makes sure that the team stays faithful to the spirit of YTOL. The animator pays particular attention to each team member to help them progress. The animator's responsibilities take root in prayer.

2. The spiritual counsel

The spiritual counsel is a witness of the consecrated life for the team. This role may be fulfilled by a priest, religious or even a seminarian at the end of his education. Their presence reminds the team members of the presence of the resurrected Christ, as well as of their tie with the Roman Catholic Church. They accompany the team on its path of spiritual development. They encourage members to tackle issues from the spiritual and theological point of view. The spiritual counsel helps each of the team members to deepen their faith and their knowledge of God.

3. The couple

The Christian experience of the couple brings a richness which compliments the gifts brought to the team by the spiritual counsel. The couple testifies to its spiritual life with the graces it receives through the sacrament of marriage. The couple gives witness to their mutual enrichment in prayer and to their involvement in the world as lay people. The couple is also an example of openness to dialogue in our movement and a symbol of acceptance in the Church.

4. The Pilot

High school teams are piloted by a member of a young adult team. The pilot is there to assist the animators with the logistics of running a meeting and to provide valuable feedback. The pilot's role also ensures that the burden of running the team does not fall on the couple. The pilot is there to support the animators in tasks they may need help with. For example, preparing the topic and organizing the team. This should only take place within the first few months of meetings at which point the animator should fully take on these tasks.

IV. The Life of a Team

The life of the team thrives partly on the regular monthly meetings and partly on the informal meetings which help to establish a friendly environment and a mutual confidence in each other. The life of the team is also enriched by participation in local activities, and national and international gatherings/retreats.

1. The Meeting

Each meeting is conducted with the same structure which has been developed through many years. With the spirit of Mary present throughout the meeting there are four key parts to the meeting: prayer, sharing of life, reflection on a theme and a rule of life.

A. Prayer

Prayer is the meeting with Christ who is present amongst those who are meeting in His name. Prayer allows a personal encounter with Christ, allowing each member to get to know Christ better and to become a child of the Father more fully. Prayer in a team is the communion of the team and the manifestation of the connection with the Church. It finds its source in the meditation on the Word of God. Prayer in the team is prayer in a community, prepared in turn by each of the team members, expressing their intentions and addressing God together.

B. Sharing


Sharing is an essential moment, where, in the presence of God and in the attitude of mutual confidence, everyone shares the important events in their personal life: difficulties and efforts, joys and expectations in all areas of a person's life (concerning their family, spiritual life, studies, work, projects and undertakings, etc).

C. Topic Study

The study and discussion of topics are important in order to acquire a mature faith and to claim one's Christian identity. The topic is chosen by the team for young adult teams and by the secretariat for high school teams and focuses on a recent event or issue or on a document of reference: Holy Scripture, the catechism, an Encyclical or other Church documents.

D. Rule of Life

The aim of the rule of life is to awaken in us the attitude that enables us to transform our lives. It is asking members to make real their love for Christ by choosing to share with their team something that they will try to improve on in

their life in order to help them become stronger in their spiritual life, no matter what stage they  open to be at, gradually and without guilt.

Being a part of a team involves not only participation in meetings, but most importantly it implies that one is truly trying to find unity between Christian faith and everyday life. Continuity in prayer, sharing, reflection and spiritual progress must be maintained by the team member between the meetings. By giving oneself up to the grace of God, each member is encouraged to make the effort to reach out to the Lord and to others, and to share with each other during the meetings. Far from being a judgment of others, the balance sheet that is made is, above all, a mutual encouragement to spiritual growth.

2. Retreats

A retreat is meant to be a time of prayer, a time spent in communication with God.

Retreats are organized for youth throughout the year in order to bring members of the movement back to the essence of what it means to be a Catholic youth in our world. It is hard for young people to sometimes make the time and reflect on what God is asking of them, where they are heading and why.

At the retreat, the participants explore these, and other, issues facing youth, in a safe and secluded setting supported by a spiritual counsel and the Sacraments of Reconciliation, as well as the celebration of the Eucharist. These are times where members of the entire movement grow together and learn from each other.

V. Service: Opening to the world

YTOL is a movement which allows all youth to nurture their faith and reflect on their commitment as Christians. Being part of a team is not preparation for future involvement but rather youth is encouraged to get involved now, while they are in a team. In wanting to serve a community bigger than that of the Catholic Church and in order to be open to the world around it, YTOL encourages each member to put his/her gifts at the disposal of others. They are encouraged to do so by taking on a personal apostolic commitment in the service of the Church or of the city they live in. A team may want to adopt a common commitment and is encouraged to do so at least a couple times a year. These

commitments are sources of enrichment and even a guarantee of the durability of the life of the team. They are also a sign of authenticity of the development of team members.

VI. The YTOL Movement and its Structure

YTOL is a movement in the Church, for youth, where responsibility for the movement is taken completely by its members. The life of the movement, therefore, cannot be assured unless the youth, individually and as a team, accept to take responsibility and to actively participate in its growth. All members participate in the material realities of life and of the development of the movement by an annual contribution. This contribution is a sign of the seriousness of the commitment. The Secretariat Team must decide on the minimum amount of the contribution, according to the particulars of the movement.

1. Regional Teams

Each team has its own path of development. A team, however, is not isolated. All the teams belonging to the Youth Teams of Our Lady form a bigger community in the Church: the YTOL movement. The knowledge that other youth in the world are following the same International Charter is uplifting. The diversity of experiences in the teams enriches the movement as a whole. The existence of teams in many countries and cities allows the movement to be better known and creates better means of formation and animation.

The life of the movement starts at the city, or individual parish level. Under the responsibility of an animation team and with the help of a spiritual counsel and a couple, the following is encouraged and expected from each team:

- Links between High School teams and Young Adult Teams in each city
- Deepening team and personal spiritual life through Adorations, Masses, Retreats etc.
- Help to other regions through prayer, pilots, monetary funds etc.
- Connections with local churches and communities
 - Involvement in parish and community, helping other youth in the diocese, meetings with other movements, participate in Catholic groups, National and International gatherings (i.e. World Youth Day, Eucharistic Congress, March for Life, Catholic Campus Groups) etc.

2. Secretariat

The secretariat is made up of the national responsible, a priest, an accompanying couple and several other YTOL members from different teams (both Young Adults and High school). The secretariat works to maintain the spirit of YTOL and makes decisions concerning the spirituality and the life of the movement.

The objective of the Secretariat is to stay in contact with the members in different countries, to support those who need support, to help the growth of the movement in our country and to propose and execute tasks and changes that help the YTOL movement grow in Canada and internationally. The development of documents of reference of the movement on the national level and the preparation of national gatherings are important aspects of the work of the Secretariat. The following is a timeline of when each document should be updated:

National Charter	Every 2 years with the change of National Responsible
Retreat Manual	Every 2 years
Bishop References	Every year
Song Book	Every 2 years electronically, 4 year print copies
High School Meeting Topic Program	Every 3 years

VII. The wealth of an international movement

Our desire to belong to the mystical body of Christ and the universal dimension of the Church justifies the universality of our movement. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:12)

Though we share the same International Charter and a common goal to meet Christ, the fruits of the movement are different according to the realities of each country, but it is the same Christ who reveals himself to all. This universality invites us to discover our own identity with the goal of mutual enrichment and a more perfect communion.

The national and international gatherings are always key moments in the life of the movement. They are open to all youth who want to participate and display this through participation in the movement nationally. Participation nationally means regularly attending monthly meetings, being involved in service projects and team socials, organizing or attending retreats, being involved in fundraising and/or community building events. They can find a renewal in their spiritual search or their faith, discover life in a team and get to know YTOL. The gatherings allow the sharing of friendship and strengthen the movement as a whole.