

Assessing VEYM's Mission

Linh Nguyen, Ed.D.

INTRODUCTION

The 40th anniversary (1984-2024) of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement in the USA (VEYM) is a celebration and presents a pivotal moment to reflect upon and diagnose its mission. According to organizational scholars, mission statements state an organization's purposes, visions, values, and philosophy (Pearce & David, 1987; Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Vogt, 1994; McNamara, 1999; Schermerhorn, 2006). Kamfer (1991) found that organizational mission statements enhance the commitment of the employees whose core values align with their organization's and impact the organization's behaviors. Diagnosis is a traditional key event in an organization's development process and an instrument for penetrating organizational information to generate data on the current state of the organization and the interrelationship between organizational functions and performances. It allows members to gain insights into the organizational culture and behavior patterns and helps the organization maintain continuous improvement (French & Bell, 1984; Beer & Spector, 1993).

VEYM is a Catholic youth organization and a nonprofit in the USA. It originated in 1964 in Vietnam from the Eucharist Crusade (established in 1915 in France), a branch of the Apostolic Prayer (Bylaws, 2019). It accepts Jesus in the Eucharist as the source of spiritual life, center, and ideal model to serve the Catholic Church and society through educating youths to become better people and virtuous Christians and organizing and guiding them to spread the Good News of Christ while helping to build a just society. Grounded in the Word of God in Sacred Scripture and the magisterial teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, VEYM's activities aim to foster spiritual growth and societal contribution among the youth (Bylaws, 2019). This milestone anniversary offers an opportunity to diagnose VEYM's missions by assessing its current state, evaluating its impact on members, identifying challenges, and exploring avenues for continuous improvement to enhance its noble purposes further.

THE CURRENT STATE

1. Mission

The Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement accepts Jesus in the Eucharist as the source of spiritual life, center, and ideal model for living and serving the Catholic Church and society through two primary missions: (1) educating youths to become well-rounded individuals and virtuous Christians and (2) organizing and guiding youths to evangelize the Good News of Christ while helping to build a society. Grounded in the Word of God in Sacred Scripture and the magisterial teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, VEYM's

activities aim to foster spiritual growth and societal contribution among the youth (VEYM, 2019).

2. Vision

Evangelization, the mission of bringing Christ to others, is the duty of all Christians. Since VEYM was founded in Vietnam in 1964, its theme song originally focused on the Vietnamese population. The song's lyrics inspire members to embrace Jesus in the Eucharist as the center of their lives, contribute to society, and bring Christ to Vietnamese youth. In 2010, upon becoming the general chaplain of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement in the USA, Fr. Binh Thanh Nguyen, SVD, noticed that the last verse of the song, "tuổi trẻ Việt Nam đem Chúa cho giới trẻ Việt Nam" (Vietnamese youth bring Christ to Vietnamese youth), was no longer appropriate, especially in the United States. He consulted with many priests and leaders in Vietnam and the USA about changing this verse to "tuổi trẻ Việt Nam đem Chúa cho giới trẻ mọi nơi" (Vietnamese youth bring Christ to youth everywhere). His proposal was approved by the National Leadership Council in 2014, setting a broader vision for VEYM to reach out to youth of different ethnicities worldwide.

3. Goals

In 2021, the National Leadership Council established five-year goals in alignment with the National Eucharist Revival of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, demonstrating VEYM's dedication to broader church initiatives and reaffirming VEYM's mission. These goals include:

- Strengthening members' belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.
- Enhancing leaders' knowledge of Church teachings and catechism, additionally focusing on morality.
- Deepening youth's understanding of the Eucharist and the Mass.

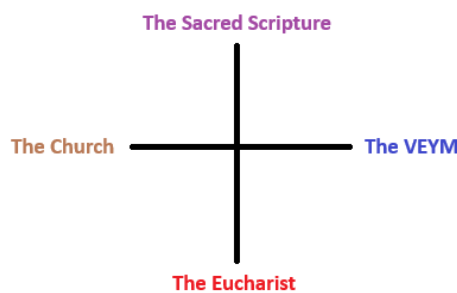
4. Resources

a. Human resources:

- **Staff:** According to the latest member report (VEYM, 2024), VEYM has about 4150 volunteers, including priests, religious brothers, sisters, youth leaders, lay chaplain assistants, and one paid part-time employee. According to IRS.gov, which has VEYM's tax filing records (Form 990) available from 2014 to now, VEYM has no full-time paid employees.
- **Governance Body:** The organization's highest committee is the National Leadership Council (NLC), which provides oversight, strategic direction, and fiduciary duties. NLC's members include the General Chaplain as a presider, Vice General Chaplain, Division Chaplains, elected officers, appointed officers, invited members, and a president and a chaplain from each league of chapters representing their region.

- **Advisory Board:** VEYM is fortunate to have three bishops on its advisory board, which provides visions and guidance for the National Leadership Council.
 - (1) Most Reverend Thanh Thai Nguyen, Auxiliary Bishop of Orange County
 - (2) Most Reverend Larry Silva, Bishop of Honolulu
 - (3) Most Reverend John Nhan Tran, Auxiliary Bishop of Atlanta
- b. **Physical resources:** In 2019, VEYM acquired its first building in Anaheim, California, to serve as its headquarters through fundraising and a private loan from members and their families. VEYM uses 90% of the office space for meetings and online sales distribution and the remaining 10% for generating rental income. Local chapters do not have any facilities and instead rely on parish facilities for their meetings and activities.
- c. **Financial resources:** Most of VEYM's financial revenue comes from general uniform sales, membership fees, donations, and fundraising events among members, families, and friends. Additionally, VEYM receives approximately \$3,300 monthly from AT&T for leasing the roof space for its cellular tower and a small office of the headquarters building—a lease contract that VEYM assumed from the previous owner. Although VEYM wants more funding to hire full-time employees, it cannot find any public funding or grants for nonprofit organizations serving Catholic and Vietnamese members.
- d. **Governance resources:** VEYM operates under three official documents and additional policies that govern its daily operations and activities:
 - **VEYM Bylaws (2019):** This comprehensive document is a carefully written, revised, reviewed, and approved set of rules by the National Leadership Council. It outlines organizational structure and rules for electing, appointing, and promoting directors, officers, and leaders and handling conflicts of interest.
 - **Servant Leader Training Manual (2014):** This document regulates all training camps for servant leaders, including apostolic team leaders, executive officers, youth leaders, and trainers. It provides complete training requirements for different roles and levels of leadership. Because of the changes in the bylaws, it has undergone multiple revisions (e.g., 2004, 2011, and 2024).
 - **Ceremony Manual (2014):** This manual provides detailed guidance on the formation movements and procedures for salute, flag, reward, and promotion ceremonies. Like the Servant Leader Training Manual, it has undergone three revisions (1996, 2001, and 2024) to simplify formation movements and revise reward and promotion ceremonies because of the changes in Bylaws and the cultural adaptation.
- e. **Training resources:** Over the years, VEYM leaders developed various lessons and training materials for youths, youth leaders, and trainers, including:
 - **Youth Curriculum:** This document sets minimum standards for different youth levels, categorized as Seedling (ages 7-9), Search (ages 10-12), Companion (ages 13-15), and Knights of the Eucharist (ages 16-17). It is based on the framework Dao and Nguyen (2004) developed in their dissertation paper for a youth-leader

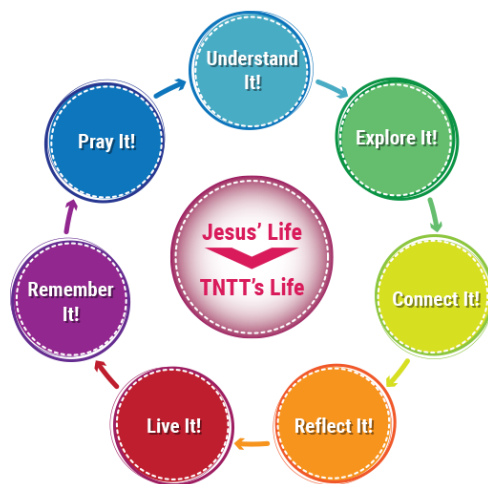
trainer level 3, the highest rank in VEYM's academia. The framework contains four primary areas of learning for youth: (1) The sacred Scripture, (2) The



Eucharist, (3) The Church, and (4) The VEYM. This framework is positioned as the cross. The vertical line (with the Eucharist at the bottom and the sacred Scripture at the top) represents the learning focus on the vertical relationship with God. The horizontal line (with the Church on the left and the VEYM on the right) focuses on learning about a horizontal relationship

with the Church, including the domestic church and the VEYM.

- **Youth-Leaders Training Camp Booklet:** These booklets provide lessons and objectives for training camps, as regulated by the Servant Leader Training Manual (2014). The purpose of a training camp booklet is to guide trainers while planning a lesson to ensure the outcomes meet the lesson's objectives defined by NAC. It helps trainers define learning goals, structure their lesson flow, and design engaging activities to achieve those goals. Besides, it allows students to read the lessons before the training. Recently, NAC completed five booklets for youth leaders training camps: level 1, level 2 of Seedling, Search, Companion, and Knight of the Eucharist. They are now available to download from the VEYM's website.
- **Weekly Gospel Lesson Booklets:** Grounded in the Word of God in Sacred



Scripture, VEYM wants its members to read and bring Scripture to life. In 2014, the National Leadership Council approved the National Academic Committee (NAC) proposal to create Sunday Gospel lessons that make it easier for youth to understand the Scripture's passage, explore it, connect it, reflect upon it, live it, remember it, and pray with it. With the help of many leaders and trainers, NAC completed and published 12 books covering the Church's three liturgical years (A, B, & C)

for four youth divisions. Each book contains 52 lessons in a year. Recently, NAC submitted these books to the Diocese of Orange's Censor Librorum office to review for the *Imprimatur* (Latin: "let it be printed") decree, which is the official approval to print and publish in the Roman Catholic Church. In December 2024, Bishop Kevin Vann, Bishop of Orange in California has approved and granted

both decrees, *Nihil Obstat* (Latin: “nothing stands in the way”) and *Inprimatur* to VEYM Weekly Gospel Lesson Booklets (year C-A).

- **The Wonders of the Mass:** In response to the new five-year goals of the National Leadership Council, NAC mobilized a team of dedicated leaders and two chaplains to produce a series of 52 videos exploring different aspects of the Catholic Mass to help youth understand and love the Mass more. Guided by the research paper of a professor at Duquesne University School of Law regarding distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Oranburgs, 2020), the team developed a 5-minute video clip for each episode to deliver the content to VEYM’s members effectively. Church leaders and pastors from different dioceses, including the Eucharist Revival committee, highly praised the efforts and requested to feature it for their parishioners. These Wonders of the Mass episodes are now on the Eucharist Revival YouTube channel for Vietnamese (<https://www.youtube.com/@PhucHungThanhThe>) with Vietnamese closed captions.
- f. **Information resources:** The IT team develops and maintains three official websites and a membership portal under the direction of the National Executive Committee (NEC).
 - veym.net – an official website for public information,
 - store.veym.net – an online eStore for general sales (e.g., uniforms, books, gifts)
 - educenter.veym.net - an education center, a learning management system.
 - members.veym.net – a membership portal to manage and track adult members.
- g. **Social media and communication resources:** NEC utilizes the following platforms to communicate with its leaders and promote VEYM’s initiatives and activities to young adult members.
 - www.facebook.com/veym.usa.tntt
 - www.youtube.com/@VEYMUSA
 - www.instagram.com/veym.usa.tntt
- h. **Sponsor and Partner resources:** VEYM received tremendous support from the following sponsors and partners, enabling it to access discounted IT platforms and software and collect donations for charity work.
 - **Microsoft.com** and **techsoup.org:** These organizations help nonprofit organizations and charities access great software discounts. Microsoft annually provides free 2000 Office365 licenses and a discounted Azure platform, the core platform for the VEYM website and membership portal.
 - **Benevity.org:** It allows VEYM to receive donations from members through their employer’s matching program. Most companies are willing to match 100% of the money their employees donate to a nonprofit organization.
 - **Network for Good:** This partner provides a platform for collecting donations, matching them up to 100%, and sending them to a designated nonprofit organization. Doing charity work is one of the four mottos of VEYM (i.e., prayer,

Holy Communion, sacrifices, and apostolic work) to bring Christ to others, especially the poor and needy.

5. Population and Geography

Starting with the first chapter in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1977, VEYM has 135 chapters around the States, with about 20,000 youths and 4,150 registered adults, including chaplains, assistant chaplains, trainers, and youth leaders (VEYM Membership Report, 2024). These 135 chapters are grouped into 12 leagues of chapters and spread over 31 states (see Figure 1). These numbers are a testament to the hard work and dedication of VEYM's chaplains and leaders, who have been instrumental in its growth and success.

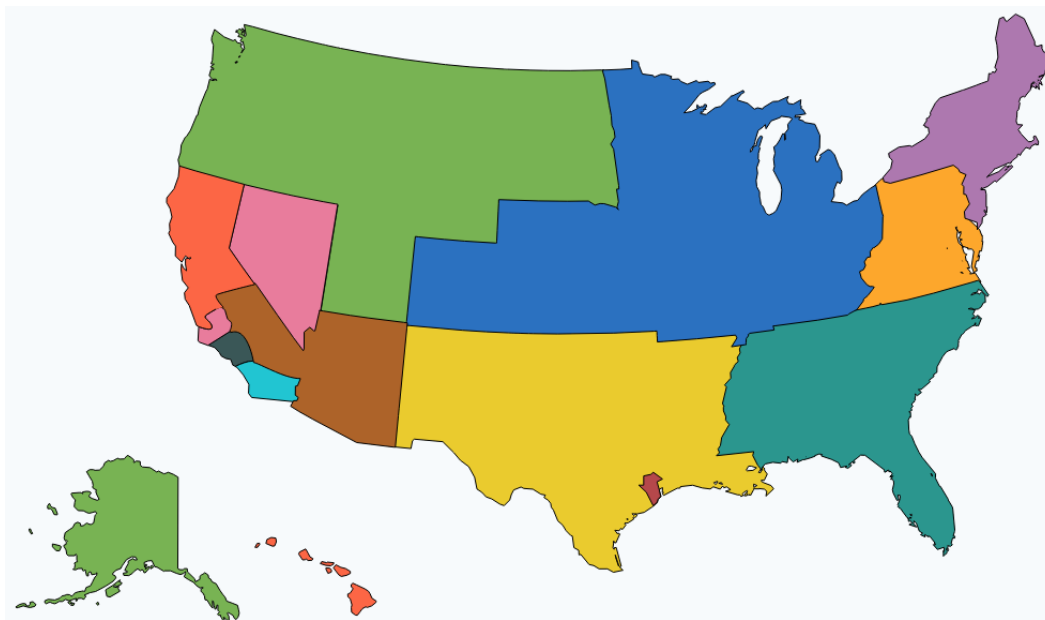


Figure-1

(source: <https://veym.net/about/leagues>)

Green:	Inhaxio	Red:	Holy Family	Brown:	Sinai
Blue:	John Paull II	Pink:	Sail to the	Yellow:	Benedict
Orange:	Dominic Savio		Open Sea	Light brown:	Rosary
Purple:	Paul Hanh	Dark green:	Source of Life	Light green:	Joan of Arc
		Light blue:	San Diego		

THE IMPACT

One function of a mission statement is communicating with stakeholders what the organization is doing (Bartkus, 2000). Organizations also find ways to communicate with their stakeholders by creating a motto or slogan (Economist, 2009). VEYM has four mottos: prayer, Holy Communion, sacrifices, and apostolic works to help VEYM members live their spiritual lives daily, called Living the Eucharistic Day.

1. Living the Eucharistic Day

In 2023, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Georgetown University, conducted quantitative and qualitative research through a survey with 385 youth leaders, 98 priests/religious persons, two focus groups with fourteen people, and two interviews with a priest and a religious sister (Do & Wiggins, 2024). They found that VEYM has a positive impact on participants' faith life. 87% of participants grew in their relationships with Jesus and participated more in parish life. As for prayer, 82% of participants said they now pray more (morning, lunch, and night) and recite the rosary often.

Attending the Mass and receiving Holy Communion is VEYM's second motto. While the Pew Research Center reported that 28% of Catholics attend Mass weekly (Nortey et al., 2024), CARA found that nearly 94% of participants, as youth leaders, attend Mass almost every week and more frequently. Almost nine in ten participants (84%) said they participate more in the Eucharistic Adoration, the worship of God, particularly Jesus in the Eucharist, outside the Mass. Believing Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist among adult Catholics has been an issue in the U.S. According to the analysis by Pew Research Center in 2009, only 31% of Catholics believe that "during Catholic Mass, the bread and wine truly become the body and blood of Jesus" (Smith, 2009). VEYM youth leaders are more likely than U.S. adult Catholics to strengthen their belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist (84%), as reported by CARA (Do & Wiggins, 2024).

Next is living the third motto, sacrifices. Dictionary definitions of *sacrifice* include "to give up something that is valuable to you in order to help another person," "the act of giving up something that is valuable to you in order to help someone else," or "to choose not to do or have something useful or important, in order to have something that is more important" (Cambridge Dictionary). VEYM asks all members to make at least one sacrifice daily to offer to God and pray for their intentions. Although we do not yet have data to report this daily activity from members, all youth leaders spend hours meeting with their youth every weekend to learn, play, and pray with them at their local parishes. National executive officers and directors reported to the IRS that they spent a minimum of ten hours weekly doing administrative work.

Lastly, praying for others or doing charity work is apostolic work, the last motto. VEYM asks all members to pray for others and others' intentions, especially the Pope's monthly intention daily (Ramiere, 1874; Sacred Heart Offices, 1874). Adult members are called to do more and beyond, particularly charity work, helping and serving the poor and needy. The study from CARA reported that 82% of participants were doing charity work. In addition to the individual's work, as led and reported by the VEYM National Executive Committee, since 2018, VEYM has raised funds among members through Facebook GivingTuesday to help the unfortunate and needy. It sends all donations, including Facebook's matching amounts, to the many non-profit organizations in the USA and Vietnam (see Table 1 for a list of non-profits that received the fruit of VEYM's charity works).

Year	Organization	Amount
2018	American Foundation for Suicide Prevention	\$7,500.00
	Catholic Relief Services	\$1,000.00
	Catholic Charities USA	\$1,000.00
	A VEYM chapter in North Vietnam	\$1,000.00
	A VEYM chapter in Central Vietnam	\$1,000.00
	A VEYM chapter in South Vietnam	\$1,000.00
	Two VEYM families in financial need	\$1,000.00
	One Body Village	\$500.00
2019	Kontum Missionary & Friendship in Vietnam	\$10,000.00
	Blind Vietnamese Children Foundation in Vietnam	\$10,000.00
	The Federation of Vietnamese Catholics in the USA to support flood victims in Vietnam	\$10,000.00
	VEYM in Vietnam	\$4,183.00
2020	VEYM in Vietnam to support flood victims	\$21,817.00
	VEYM Philippines to support flood victims	\$5,000.00
	VEYM Guatemala to support flood victims	\$5,000.00
2021	St. Luke Foundation through Fr. Rick Frechette's charity to support the children in Haiti	\$20,000.00
2022	Society of Divine Word missionary in Thailand through Fr. Truong Le, SVD	\$24,000.00
2023	Mái Ấm Mai Ân, Holy Cross Lovers, Gò Vấp, Vietnam	\$25,000.00

Table-1

VEYM's existence and success hinge on its members' commitment to living the Eucharistic day through its four mottos: praying, attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion, sacrificing, and doing apostolic work. By practicing and living these mottos daily, from morning to night, members develop a stronger relationship with God. Additionally, VEYM's success is bolstered by its education program for youth (ages 7-17) and its leadership training program for adults (ages 18+). These programs help shape members to become better versions of themselves.

2. Becoming a better/well-rounded and virtuous person

VEYM developed a youth curriculum to educate and train youth on multiple subjects, including religious studies (e.g., Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the Mass), skillsets (e.g., semaphore, Morse, knots, directions), and soft skills (e.g., leadership, interpersonal, communication, creativity, management, problem-solving, teamwork). It has two distinct methods: natural methods (e.g., camping, group activities, games, outdoor activities) and supernatural methods (e.g., bible sharing, attending Mass/Adoration, living the Eucharistic day) to educate youth and uses the natural to lead youth to the supernatural methods (Bylaws, 2019).

The study from CARA showed that nine in ten participants reported that VEYM helped them develop their interpersonal and communication skills. 86% found a positive

impact on their leadership and pastoral skills development. In addition, participants from the two focus groups shared that VEYM enables them to develop communication, teamwork, organizing, and management skills (Do & Wiggins, 2024). According to the report from NEC, VEYM trains, certifies, and contributes to the church and society about 500 new leaders annually.

Becoming a virtuous Christian is a mission of all members (Bylaws, 2019). 83% of participants reported that VEYM helped them increase their understanding of the Bible and follow the Catholic Church's teachings. 82% said they pray more often and live their faith daily (Do & Wiggins, 2024). Furthermore, the focus group's participants shared that VEYM helped them connect more with God and bring them closer to God.

As teachers and educators, VEYM leaders are called to go beyond and be role models for youth and others. Chung (2020) discussed the importance of teachers as role models for children's behaviors. People learn new behaviors by observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1997). Many participants from the two focus groups shared that they witnessed other youth leaders, priests, religious brothers, and sisters actively engaged in VEYM activities as role models and received older youth leaders as their role models. They found that these role models positively impacted their personal development. Moreover, having been to the VEYM to witness the lives of married and religious leaders, 83% of participants found God's will in their lives. Seven in ten participants (74%) better discerned their life's vocation. 48% of participants ignited their vocation to the priesthood or religious life (Do & Wiggins, 2024).

In summary, VEYM's mission has positively impacted its members' behaviors. It helps members grow deeper in a relationship with God, especially with Jesus in the Eucharist. Through its natural and supernatural methods, VEYM increases members' knowledge about God and the church's teachings, develops their skills for personal growth, and helps them better discern their vocation.

THE CHALLENGES

Today, VEYM faces many challenges to its mission in social, cultural, religious, and ecclesial contexts.

1. Generation Gaps:

Language Challenge: Many youth leaders who might not have been born in the States need strategies to address language barriers in writing and teaching to support their American-born youth.

Age Gap: VEYM now has four generations of people in leadership roles. Its leaders' ages range from 18 to 70 and can be divided into four groups, as shown below. The age of leaders will have different communication styles and platforms (e.g., telephone, face-to-face, email, cellphone, text/message), leadership styles, views, and expectations. To

close generation gaps, VEYM must train its leaders to embrace open communication and foster mutual respect (Heng & Yazdanifard, 2013).

- a. 18-25: 50%
- b. 25-40: 35%
- c. 40-50: 20%
- d. 50+: 5%

Cultural Differences: Vietnamese people who grew up in Vietnam and those who grew up in the States are exposed to very different cultures. Leaders must be trained to be culturally sensitive and aware of diverse customs, traditions, and values. To be more effective in teaching, they must learn to adapt their communication and teaching styles to these values while avoiding stereotypes and fostering an inclusive environment.

2. Parental Involvement:

Cultural and Religious Expectations: Cultural and religious expectations regarding parental involvement in education may vary. Youth leaders face the challenges of engaging and including parents in their children's mental and spiritual development.

3. Faith Challenge:

Balancing Secular and Church Beliefs and Teachings: In contexts where ecclesial education is present, youth leaders encounter challenges balancing secular and Church teachings. Recently, many young people left the Church. 69% of adult Catholics do not believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist (Smith, 2019). Striking a balance that respects religious beliefs and social norms while meeting our goals and missions is crucial.

Spirituality Development & Continuation: Youth members' transition to college poses the continuity issue. Without the support system of a local chapter, some college students find it difficult to continue living their faith and practicing VEYM's spirituality.

4. Digital Challenge:

Access to Technology: Utilizing technology is crucial in the modern education environment. Disparities in accessing digital resources and connecting with youth via social media have become challenges for youth leaders and youth. Additionally, with artificial intelligence, it becomes more difficult for both leaders and youth to decipher facts from fiction.

5. Diversity in Learning Styles:

Cultural Variations: Youth leaders and youth from different cultural backgrounds may have diverse learning styles and preferences. Youth leaders must navigate these differences to ensure inclusive teaching practices.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the VEYM has significantly impacted its members' personal and faith lives. Over the past forty years, it has greatly served the Church and society in the U.S. by educating and training its members to become well-rounded leaders and virtuous Christians. Research has shown that VEYM's methods and practices have successfully increased their youth leaders' faith in God, strengthened their belief in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, brought them closer to God, and enhanced their knowledge about God and the Church's teachings. However, VEYM faces several identified challenges that require attention. Navigating these challenges necessitates ongoing professional development, cultural competence, and a steadfast organizational commitment to creating inclusive and safe learning environments for youth.

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