

This communication contains initial information concerning the Diocesan Youth Conference for 2026. Please read all the information contained in this communication to ensure you have a full understanding of the event.

What is the Diocesan Youth Conference?

The Diocesan Youth Conference (DYC) is an annual weekend event that gathers high school youth from Diocese of Richmond parishes in one central location. DYC is a highly energetic and engaging opportunity for our high school teenagers to gather as a larger Church community and celebrate the richness of our Catholic faith.

What are some highlights during the Diocesan Youth Conference?

- **Sacraments.** Mass will be celebrated on both Saturday and Sunday. In addition, opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available on Saturday.
- **Free Time.** Do something unique on Saturday afternoon. Want to climb a rock wall? Meet-and-greet college students from your future campus ministry? Dive deep into a hot topic? There's something for everyone.
- **Breakout Sessions.** We will offer 2 rounds of breakout sessions for adults and teens focused on a variety of topics – pick your own adventure! We will also have men's and women's sessions.
- **Diocesan Youth Choir.** Do you have a teen who sings? Invite them to be part of the Diocesan Youth Choir that sings at the Sunday Mass. Music is sent out before the conference, but rehearsals occur during DYC.
- **Rise Against Hunger.** Saturday afternoon includes a meal-packing service project event with Rise Against Hunger, giving teens a way to put their Catholic faith into action during the conference. These meals are sent to our brothers and sisters in need in the international community.

Who should attend the Diocesan Youth Conference?

DYC is open to youth who are in 8th through 12th grade for the 2025-2026 academic year. Those who have graduated high school and are older than 18 are not allowed to attend DYC; these individuals should be encouraged to attend the College Summit. *We ask all youth ministers to use appropriate pastoral judgment to determine if their 8th graders are mature enough to socially and spiritually be fully present during the conference.*

Where and when is the Diocesan Youth Conference?

DYC will be held on Friday, February 20 through Sunday, February 22, 2026 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center in Richmond, Virginia.

All parishes are asked to arrive between 5:15pm and 6:00pm on Friday. Youth Ministers will check in with our conference staff while the rest of the group waits together in our holding room. Parishes are asked to travel and arrive as one complete group; this aids us in the check-in process and guarantees youth are with their chaperones.

Most parish groups will be housed in the Richmond Marriott Downtown hotel located at 500 East Broad Street in Richmond. Some parish groups will be housed in our overflow hotel across the street from the Marriott, the Hilton Richmond Downtown located at 501 E Broad Street. All hotels are within walking distance of the Greater Richmond Convention Center. Parishes who will be housed in overflow hotels will be notified at least 3 weeks prior to the event.

I've heard that college students interact with the Diocesan Youth Conference? Is that true?

Yes and no. The “Campus Ministry Summit” will be happening concurrently with DYC at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. While most activities will remain separate, both the high school youth and college students will gather together for our Saturday morning Mass with the Bishop. A few hand-selected college students help to run our Campus Ministry Fair that happens during Free Time at DYC. All college students will have hotel accommodations in an off-site location. All registrations for the Summit are independent from the Diocesan Youth Conference.

A college student in our parish is attending the College Summit, can they travel with our parish to Richmond?

No. While the College Summit and DYC are both happening in Richmond, the start and end times, as well as the start location for each event, is very different. We are unable to accommodate transportation around Richmond for College Summit participants who travel with your parish. In addition, we cannot allow college-aged students to attend the Diocesan Youth Conference, including staying in hotel rooms with youth or adult participants from the Youth Conference. College students who want to attend the College Summit should reach out to their local campus minister or to our office to find out about registration.

What is the theme this year?

The theme this year is **REJOICE**, based primarily on two central Scripture passages:

- **Philippians 4:4-7**

Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

- **Romans 12:12**

Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.

As the Church leaves the Jubilee Year of Hope, the theme of **REJOICE** calls Catholics around the diocese to live each and every day in joyful hope. Sometimes we are in a season of blessing and thanksgiving, and it can be easy to remember to rejoice in the Lord. Sometimes we are in a season of adversity and hardship, where it is challenging to see reasons to rejoice in the Lord. In all seasons, we are called to remember the goodness and justice of God. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we have been redeemed, He has purchased for us everlasting life; that alone is reason to **REJOICE**.

Too often we hide our faith under a basket. Propelled by the graces given to us in the Jubilee Year of Hope, we are called to go into the world sharing our faith, our hope, and our love. Let us no longer contain our joy in our own hearts and instead let it burst forth as we **REJOICE!**

What is the registration fee?

The registration fee per participant is listed below:

Registration closes on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 12:00noon.

Base Registration Fees:

- Youth Participants: \$225 (based on 4 youth per room)
 \$275 (based on 3 youth per room)
 \$325 (based on 2 youth per room)
- Adult Participants: \$250 (based on 2 adults per room)
 \$420 (based on 1 adult per room)

Discounts:

- Early Bird Discount: \$50 off registration fees if entered online by November 30, 2025 at 11:59pm*

**Any registrations not fully completed in the online system by November 30, 2025 at 11:59pm will not qualify for the early bird rate. This includes any names that are not correctly entered, or anything entered as "TBD".*

Additional Fees:

- Optional Sunday Box Lunch: \$9/participant

Cancellations & Substitutions

- Each participant cancellation on or before 12noon on **January 6, 2026** Full Refund
- Each participant cancellation after 12noon on **January 6, 2026** No Refund
- Each participant substituted on or before 12noon on **January 6, 2026*** No Add'l Fee
**Substitutions made before registration closes can be of the opposite sex, but they must choose the same rooming option. Only youth can substitute for youth, and only adult chaperones can substitute for adult chaperones.*
- Each participant substituted between **January 6, 2026 and February 10, 2025 at 12noon*** \$75
**All substitutions made after registration closes on Tuesday, January 6 must be the same sex as the participant they are replacing. Please note, correct t-shirt sizes and dietary accommodations for these substitutions cannot be guaranteed. On-site substitutions for youth of the same sex can occasionally be granted on a case-by-case basis and are also charged the substitution fee; please contact our office for more details.*
- Each participant admitted from the waitlist after 12noon on January 6, 2026* \$225/\$250
**All participants admitted from the waitlist are only offered the 4 youth per room or 2 adults per room registration options. Admittance from the waitlist is not guaranteed; waitlisted individuals who are offered a spot have a set amount of time from notification (typically 48 hours) to accept the spot. If the spot is not accepted in the allotted amount of time, they will not be given the spot and will not be admitted into the event. The amount of available waitlist spots is determined after our staff have assessed basic logistics (hotel rooms, meals, etc.). Accepted waitlisted individuals are not guaranteed rooming with their parish group, though they will be in the same hotel.*

What does this registration fee cover?

The registration fee will cover lodging on Friday and Saturday evenings. Saturday breakfast, lunch and dinner as well as Sunday breakfast are included. A late-night snack on Friday and Saturday as well as a conference T-shirt are also included in the registration fee.

What is the lodging situation?

Most hotel rooms have 2 queen-size beds OR 1 king-sized bed with a pullout couch. Each room will be assigned 2 adults OR 4 youth of the same gender unless your parish opts for smaller numbers of participants per room. The Office for Evangelization will combine parishes with odd numbers to maximize the room allocations.

All participants are required to stay at a hotel assigned by the Office for Evangelization for security reasons. There is NO day-only option available.

What are the requirements for adult chaperones?

For this event, 1 adult is required for every 8 youth (or part thereof) who are participating in the Diocesan Youth Conference. Adult chaperones must be at least 21 years of age. Each adult chaperone must be in compliance with the Diocesan Safe Environment Policies, which includes completing the following:

- Screening One Volunteer Form (every year)
- VIRTUS training (once, plus any required refresher trainings)

What do I need to do to complete the Safe Environment process for my adults?

In an effort to streamline the Safe Environment verification process, we use a two-step process for some of our larger Office for Evangelization events.

- **STEP 1:** On the registration forms for adult chaperones, we ask for the date that the adult completed their VIRTUS Training along with their legal name and if they are employed by the Diocese.
- **STEP 2:** After registration closes on Tuesday, January 6, we will ask each youth minister/group leader to complete the *Safe Environment Parish Verification Form*. This form can be found at the top of the event webpage and should be completed with the parish safe environment coordinator. All participating parishes need to return this form within 2 weeks of registration closing.

Why have we implemented this additional form? This form will significantly cut down on the back-and-forth communication about getting chaperones cleared through safe environment. With the parish safe environment coordinator signing off on the form, parishes can verify dates quickly as well as directly manage any situations where an adult needs to renew or complete a piece of the process prior to the event.

As a Group Leader, are there pre-event meetings I need to attend?

There are 2 pre-DYC virtual meetings that all Group Leaders are asked to attend:

- **MEETING #1:** Tuesday, December 2 from 12:30-1:30pm on Microsoft Teams
 - Meeting ID: 224 830 517 889 5
 - Passcode: RR6Zg2Sn
- **MEETING #2:** Tuesday, February 3 from 12:30-1:30pm on Microsoft Teams
 - Meeting ID: 247 546 418 676 2
 - Passcode: Ps3Vd95S

More information will be sent about these meetings at a later date.

How do I register?

All youth and adults must register through their parish Youth Minister OR Catholic school coordinator. The registration process includes:

1. **Registration Form:** Print out and distribute the registration form from www.evangelizerichmond.org. A copy should be maintained by the Youth Minister in case of emergency. **DO NOT SEND THESE TO THE OFFICE FOR EVANGELIZATION.**
2. **Register Participants via the Online Registration System:** If you are the parish Youth Minister, contact the Office for Evangelization to get the event-specific password for the online registration system. All parish Youth Ministers are emailed the password when registration opens.
3. **Send payments to the Office for Evangelization** (*if you did not pay via credit card on the online registration system*): Be sure to include your parish/school name along with a list of participants for whom the payment applies. All outstanding registration fees will be invoiced to the parish after the event.

Questions?

Contact the Office for Evangelization via email (evangelization@richmonddiocese.org) or phone (804-622-5159).