



Office for Youth
and Young Adults

DIOCESE OF GARY

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Memo

TO: Superintendents, Principals, Athletic Directors, Coaches, and Activity Directors

FROM: Kevin Driscoll, Coordinator, Diocese of Gary Office for Youth & Young Adults

RE: Absence for Catholic Diocese of Gary TAPT Retreat

Each year since 1989, the Catholic Diocese of Gary Youth Ministry office has sponsored the *Teens Are Praying Together* ("TAPT") retreat for high school teens. Held at Camp Lawrence in rural Valparaiso, teens from across Lake, Porter, La Porte and Starke Counties gather together to explore and deepen their faith, and to be inspired for religious leadership. It is staffed by youth ministry leaders from across Northwest Indiana, and is a ministry of the Most Reverend Donald J. Hying, Bishop of the Diocese of Gary, who also attends.

The Diocese of Gary Office for Youth & Young Adults realizes that attending this event will entail absence from school and extracurricular activities. **I am writing to request student participation in the TAPT retreat be counted as an excused absence due to the nature of the program.**

TAPT is an opportunity for young people to join together to strengthen their Catholic identity, to meet other young people striving to live out positive values, and to be inspired to bring Gospel values into an increasingly-challenging world. For many, their participation is not only life-affirming, it is life-changing.

I appreciate the conflict: as a parent of a high school athlete, I know the commitments that coaches, activity-leaders, and teens make for each other, and the positive values extracurricular activities provide. We hope you'll appreciate that our retreat leaders are similarly trying to foster an atmosphere of passionate conviction for their faith. Because of the intimate nature and intentional process of the TAPT small group dynamic, partial attendance is not allowed at TAPT, requiring the teens to be fully-present to the retreat—and their fellow teen participants—from Friday evening (7pm) until Sunday afternoon (1pm).

Without support from administrators like you, many teenagers would find themselves unable to attend as they and their families are committed to your activities. If TAPT was an experience that would regularly take students from their playing fields, performances, and practices, I would not ask you consider excusing their absence. However, a teen may only participate in TAPT once (they may also apply to serve as a peer leader afterward), meaning that this commitment is a fraction of the requirements for their extracurricular activities.

Further, I must point out: this retreat is completely voluntary. What a powerful witness that teens *choose* this retreat! I hope you will agree that it is a positive thing for students to want to take a few days to explore their faith. **I believe that TAPT helps make them a better person**, and this world needs faith-filled teens.

Your cooperation in enabling attendance for the TAPT retreat is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact information is listed above in the letterhead. You may also visit the TAPT retreat website at garytapt.com to learn more.

2019 TAPT dates: March 15-17

"Through attending TAPT my faith has grown in a huge way. I have become closer to God and I am ready to take my faith to the next level."

~ former TAPT participant

"What can I say? Moving, life-changing, emotional, awakening, unexplainable."

~ former TAPT participant