



YOUNG ADULT
MINISTRY
Diocese of Gary



BISHOP'S COUNCIL ON YOUNG ADULT EVANGELIZATION
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO YOUNG ADULT ENGAGEMENT

A number of parishes have included young adults in their Synod action plans, and others would also like to better engage young adults in the life of their parish.

In an ongoing desire to assist our parishes and better equip them to respond to the needs of young adult Catholics—single, married, college-aged, 20's and 30's—we asked representatives of the Bishop's Council on Young Adult Evangelization to answer these discussion questions. The results of the conversations have been summarized below.

“What are some obstacles to young adult engagement in the Catholic Church?”

(Representatives brainstormed multiple answers, and all answers are listed below, in alphabetical order.)

- A desire for more engaging, thought-provoking, and at times entertaining programming.
- A lack of young adults at church events.
- In general, young adult ministries invite a broad range of aged and life stages, and therefore participants lack things in common.
- Ineffective and inefficient communications: email is increasingly ineffective.
- It's difficult to meet people and reach out of a comfort zone.
- People are stressed, and don't see church as a stress relief.
- Single mothers and young families with children are not made to feel welcome; feel “like a burden.”
- Those who are fresh out of college feel lonely; lack a community.
- Those with children are reluctant to participate because of a lack of childcare, particularly during evening hours.
- Time. Busy lifestyles make scheduling church activities difficult. Young adults don't always work weekday “9 to 5” hours, making even evening and weekend activities challenging.
- Transient young adults who relocate; trying to find a “home parish” isn't easy.
- Websites are not updated frequently.
- Young adult activities seem more geared to singles; families and young married couples left out.
- Young adults feel intimidated. They feel that “aren't Catholic enough.”
- Young adults feel judged.
- Young adults simply don't know their faith.



“What are some intentional strategies that could be used to overcome those obstacles?”

(Of the obstacles brainstormed above, representatives examined the most challenging and discussed possible strategies to address them.)

Young adults feel intimidated. They feel that “aren’t Catholic enough”

- provide a process for mentoring. Eg. Sacramental prep: parishioners walk with young adults during that time of spiritual growth
- network within local communities, share resources, build relationships
- provide evangelization training
- provide information on parishioners to use when contacting people
- improve communications: text and social media are more effective than e-mail
- face-to-face, personal invitations
- examine all methods of communication, marketing, and promotion
- simplify messages
- practice nonjudgmental listening; let’s talk/interact

In general, young adult ministries invite a broad range of aged and life stages, and therefore participants lack things in common.

- parishes should adopt a more intentional outreach when it comes to all aspects of the parish, creating a “preferential option for young adults”
- create a range of options within ministries
- leadership should be aware of the inherent differences in life stages; just knowing the needs of different Catholics will go a long way toward meeting needs
- establish contact/relationship when they are registering, or whenever they visit for various reasons.
- for just-out-of-college-young adults, do things that are unconventional, hold events/meetings away from the church building (eg: Theology on Tap, outdoor events, social outings)

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- adopting an attitude of “preferential option for young adults,” make sure that young adults are consulted on matters of scheduling
- there’s never going to be a “perfect time” in this fast-paced culture, so perhaps church activities have to be scheduled with multiple attendance options (just like Mass)
- keep things simple (timing, format)
- build intergenerational bridges between and amongst ministries within the parish; “older” ministries/Catholics support young adults, and vice-versa
- leadership should ask, “Do I know what people are busy with?” and go to where the people are



Young adults simply don’t know their faith.

- meet people where they are, and provide activities and formation in which all levels of faith can participate and feel welcomed
- more catechetical opportunities
- more intentional invitations to young adults to attend existing adult faith formation programs
- “Q & A” with clergy and religious
- expose laity to all forms of vocations discernment and how young people can use their gifts in service to the church; we feel that sisters are barely visible, vocations is for men seeking priesthood only, no attention to single life and/or lay ecclesial ministry

The insights above were recorded during the October 8, 2018 meeting of the Bishop’s Council on Young Adult Evangelization, held at the Diocese of Gary Pastoral Center, Merrillville. The Council consists of representatives from young adult-serving parishes and ministries across the Diocese of Gary. To make sure your parish or ministry is represented, contact Kevin Driscoll at 219-796-8016, kdriscol@dcgary.org, and visit garyoyya.com/bcoyae for more information.