



YOUNG ADULT
MINISTRY
Diocese of Gary



BISHOP'S COUNCIL ON YOUNG ADULT EVANGELIZATION INSIGHTS FROM FACILITATED DIALOGUE SESSIONS

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 small groups, discuss these questions, and provide insights.

“What advice would you give to a parish looking to intentionally evangelize young adults? (Be specific!)”

- Don't get caught up on numbers: a lot of times we get so disappointed we don't get big crowds for events: focus on the individuals that show up.
- Agree with above re. numbers: too often a parish won't try a young adult ministry because they think there aren't enough YA's to justify it. But young adult ministry at a parish could be one simple small faith sharing group. That could be life-changing for someone and could engage them in other areas of the parish.
- Figure out what works for your parish.
- Plan to do a day pilgrimage to the Shrine of Christ's passion.
- Be flexible and be willing to change when and where you meet.
- If there are any challenges or push-back, that's just part of the ministry. Don't think the ministry you're starting is bad. Perseverance is important. There may be resistance from older folks, or a "We've always done it this way" vibe. Water that stays in one place becomes stagnant.
- A personal invitation is important for people. Millennials get a Facebook or general invite because they don't think they're important. But a personal message or personal e-mail will get more people to come around.
- Keep your website up to date. Trying to find information is frustrating when it's old.
- Tell us why it's important. Be willing to have others share their story about how the faith is positively impacting their life.
- Networking is important
- What does a prayer community look like? You have to have both prayer and community. You have to focus on the sense of community before you go deep. Then, figure out how the prayer aspect can work into the community.



- You have to be super flexible with not just when you meet, but the sort of thing that you do. “Young Adults” – college, 20’s, 30’s—includes rapidly-changing life situations: moving, entering relationships and marriages, babies, careers. More bible-study focus and social focus. College students are a little more targeted. Millennials are looking more for community and connections.
- Getting people involved, getting parishioners, invite them, get input and give them some ownership. Important to see young adults not only attending Mass, but in roles: lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, on Pastoral Council, on committees, etc.
- Timing is perfect with where we are in our society: Pope Francis just had his synod on young adult ministry. The data from the local synod was overwhelming.
- “We tried that before and it didn’t work” but that might have been 15 years ago. Try again.



- “We’re not going to do that because of... whatever reason” and you need to try everything. So many things have been done and have proven to be extremely valuable in their work.
- Being social and having community itself can bring about spiritual things. Make it personal, and something that people can enjoy on multiple levels.
- Parish leadership has to be willing to accept new people, new perspectives, “get younger.” Young adults have to be willing to make a commitment to parish (it’s a two way street).
- Young adults will not volunteer to serve as a leader, because they think leadership roles are reserved for older Catholics. Parish has to be willing to make a concerted effort to personally invite young leaders, and explain to them what their role will be.
- Young adult ministry is not just about planning young adult activities and events, but about engaging young adults in all areas of parish life, Sunday through Saturday.
- Nothing is more effective than good prayer experiences, but we can’t assume that YA’s know HOW to pray. We have to meet them where they are, and pray WITH them.
- Listen to people’s stories, even and perhaps especially from those that don’t attend Mass regularly. There might be a reason for that. Their stories can shock and amaze and are sometimes heartbreaking. Maybe apologize if the Church has hurt people. Be a positive presence in their life.
- Learn how to intentionally welcome people. Different styles work different ways. Different cultures, different people and different backgrounds.

“If a parish does not have a ministry specifically for young adults, what are some strategies they might use to get one going?”

- Establish small faith sharing groups, which create a peer community. Have a clearly-defined timetable: when do gatherings start, end? For how long will they run? Be specific about what topics/themes the sessions will cover. Cover topics and themes that allow faith to connect with our daily lives.
- Start with social events to build a relationship and grow together and get comfortable with people.

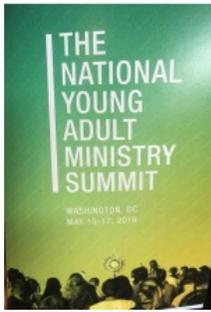
- Find a person with a passion for young adult ministry and have them speak with the parish priest(s) about getting something started. Once a plan is established, make announcements at mass, put something in the bulletin.
- Know your demographics, understand who attends your church, engage people who show leadership potential
- Have preferential option for young adults with parish activities and ministries.
- Keep young adults involved (in all areas of the parish). Make it a goal for every ministry leader to ensure that they invite young leaders in their 20's and 30's.
- Events do NOT have to be flashy or non-traditional. Maintain Catholic identity. Allow young adults to show up together to existing parish events, celebrations, Masses, etc.
- Understand and accept that young adults come with different levels of faith. Educate in new ways. Teaching Mass, or some kind of education on the Mass (talk about why we are doing what we are doing, as we do it)?
- Keep it challenging.
- Create a list of former youth ministry participants and/or Catholic HS students from the past ten years, create a committee to make phone calls and do inventory, and invite them to a listening session. Be willing to say "we want to know what we can do for you."
- Identify leaders is an important first step. To find an engaged young adult, even if it's just one, someone who's faithful, available, contagious, and teachable, and then really invest in them and provide support. Starting small and then building a solid base from there can make a big difference. Only after that base is strong and sustainable can we look into events and bigger programming, but still not forgetting the importance of constantly identifying and investing in leaders on a small scale.

“What could the Bishop’s Council on Young Adult Evangelization do to assist parishes seeking assistance?”

- Getting information to the diocese so they can help advertise.



- Advertising its existence. Encourage parishes that are not currently represented to come on board by sharing its mission.
- Meeting with or contacting Synod commissions (think tanks), make sure they are aware that a group of young adults in the diocese is meeting regularly to engage young adult Catholics at the local and diocesan level
- Apologetics training, courses? Formation
- There is a need for parishes to work together, as so many parishes in our diocese simply don't have the resources or manpower to support a YA ministry on their own.



NATIONAL YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY SUMMIT

May 15-17, 2018 • Saint John Paul II National Shrine, Washington, D.C.



Representing the Diocese of Gary:

- Kevin Driscoll, Diocesan Director of Young Adult Ministry
- Victoria Hathaway, St. Edward (Lowell), member of Bishop's Council on Young Adult Evangelization

- 133 people representing parishes, dioceses, and national organization from the United States and Canada.
- Event consisted of plenary sessions, breakout sessions, and prayer opportunities
- Theme of the Summit followed the cornerstones of USCCB 2017 document *Living As Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization*: Encounter, Accompany, Form Community, Send

Observations and insights from the Summit:

- There's no best way to do young adult ministry. Each parish and diocese is different. To do young adult ministry well, you need to have passionate people willing to walk with young people.
- Every parish and diocese is struggling in some way to minister to young people.
- The Diocese of Gary is ahead of many other dioceses with the Bishop's Council on Young Adult Evangelization: , giving young adult leaders a network to share their joys and struggles.
- There is a larger network of people working with young adults out there. We just have to reach out.
- Take into account cultural differences. Learn how to welcome the stranger.
- One constant theme heard over the week was that we are called to walk with others. Like Jesus on the Road to Emmaus, we are called to walk side by side with each other, learning from one another. Young adult leadership—discipleship—isn't walking in front and hoping they follow, it's walking alongside those we serve.
- A favorite quote: "Jesus didn't say to his followers, 'There's a program in Jerusalem you should attend.' He walked with his followers and made personal connections."
- Consistent call for peer mentors and older mentors: showcase those who are practicing the faith and encourage them to share their story.
- "There is no program on its own that will make a difference unless Christ is present in that program." ~ Bishop Caggiano
- Don't look for magic program or ministry, quick-fix.
- Young adult ministry isn't just about a "young adult club." It's about engaging young adults in all areas of a parish (and also about gathered programs that allow YA's to gather in community).
- Shared-parish models seem to make sense for certain gathered events, but fail to connect with other areas of a parish, including Sacramental life and Mass. It's important for YA's to be seen at Mass and on Councils/committees, not just bowling, going to bars, doing social activities, etc.
- Heard in table group discussions: "Today's emerging adults are wounded. Don't be surprised if they respond to a more 'Good Friday' theology, as they are seeking healing. Adopt a pastoral approach that provides both a Good Friday and Easter Sunday Church."
- A need for leadership training. (BCOYAE will seek to include time for in-services to help educate and form leaders.)
- Be bold! Be creative! Take a chance!