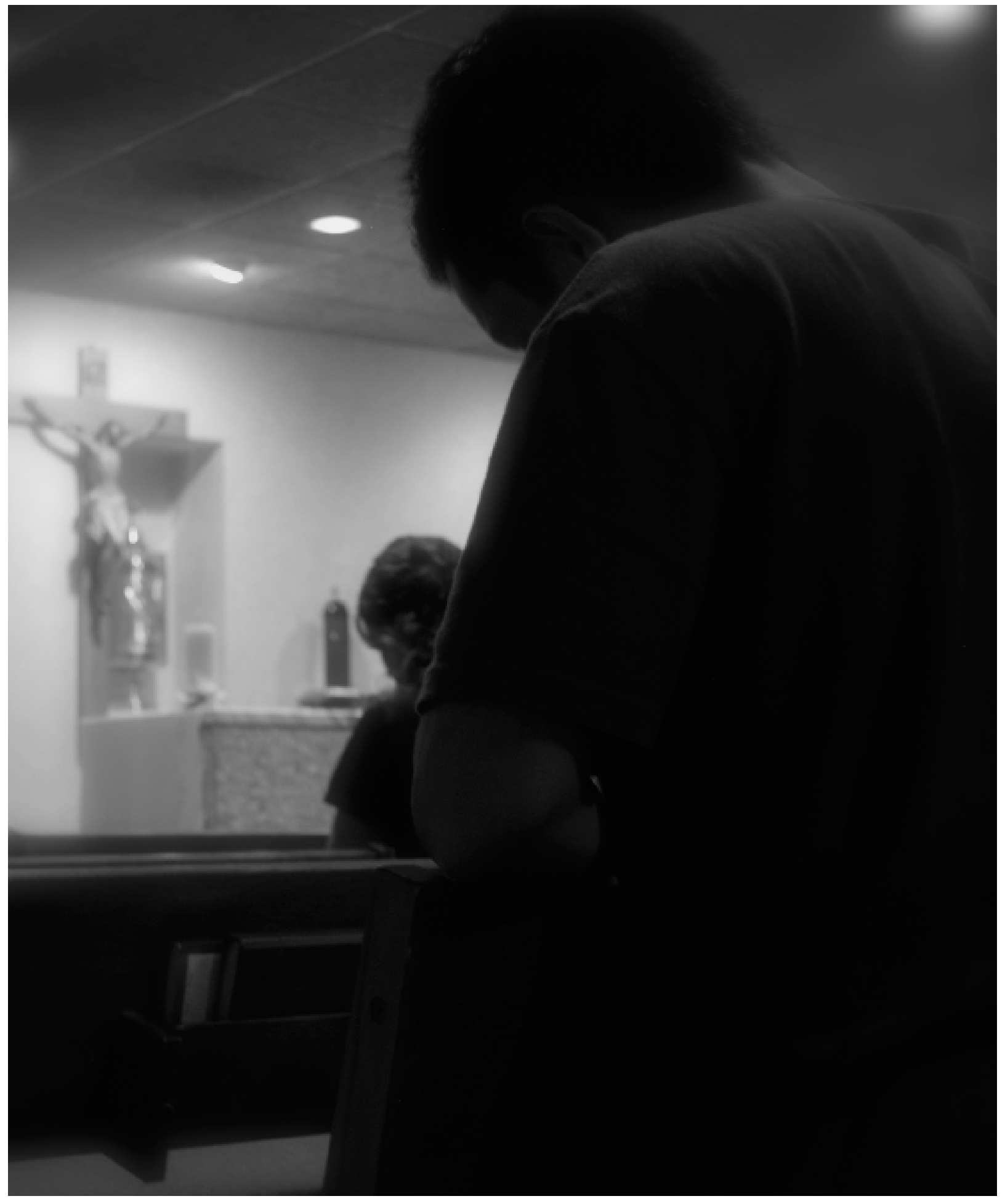


GENERATION
CHRIST ↩

Diocese of Gary's *Generation Christ*
Symposium for Catholic Young Adults:
summary of findings, recommendations for action



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F O R W A R D

“Young adults are looking for their place in the Church. They desire to know more about Catholicism. They have a respect for the sacred. They have many gifts to offer the Church, and they possess a sense of enthusiasm along with the ability to reach others through technology and personal invitation. They care about the future of the Church.”

Most Reverend Joseph W. Estabrook
Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese for the U.S. Military Services
as published in *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders:
What the Church Needs to Know*, 2010, by D. R. Hoge & M. R. Jewell

On February 13, 2010, a group of nearly fifty young adults gathered at Calumet College of St. Joseph in Whiting, IN for *Generation Christ: Symposium for Catholic Young Adults*. The event was presented by the Diocese of Gary Office for Young Adults.

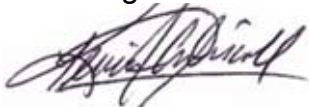
The young adults present represented many cities and towns, cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, careers, and life situations. Divided into three age groups—single young adults in their 20's & 30's, married young adults in their 20's & 30's, and college-aged young adults (mostly 18-23)—young men and women from Hammond to Valparaiso, Munster to Cedar Lake, Griffith to Wanatah all gathered for one common purpose: to explore their place in the Church of Gary.

Our pews may not always show it, but there are Catholic young adults in Northwest Indiana who are proud of their faith, willing and anxious to get more involved in church ministries, and who crave greater Catholic formation. Perhaps most of all, they seek opportunities to connect with other committed Catholics.

This summary report seeks to not only capture the spirit of the recent symposium, but to begin to look forward: how can we, as church leaders, harness the many gifts today's young adult Catholic church provide us in our attempts to build the Kingdom of God in Northwest Indiana?

I thank you for taking the time to read this report, and your willingness to reach out to this very important segment of today's Catholic Church.

Blessings in Christ



Kevin J. Driscoll
Coordinator, Office for Youth & Young Adults

1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A
CATHOLIC YOUNG ADULT TODAY?

Summary of keynote address, presented by Jorge Rivera, Coordinator for Hispanic Young Adult Ministry, Archdiocese of Chicago:

Rivera had a dual role at *Generation Christ*: to provide the opening keynote, as well as to inspire young adults with his musical gifts. He is an award-winning contemporary Catholic Christian artist with World Library Publications. He set the tone for his keynote by singing a bilingual version of “Nada es imposible para tí/Nothing is Impossible for You.”

Rivera painted a portrait of today’s Catholic young adult: ambitious, mobile, and socially-conscious. Two young adults from Chicago joined him and gave witness talks within the keynote. One, Maria Luevanos, shared her journey of finding God in the midst of a whirlwind search for identity and career. Another, Narciso Arriaga, gave examples of how Chicago young adults are being politically active as they rally for Catholic social issues.

Rivera acknowledged a growing Hispanic presence in the Church, and the need to use collaborative skills to reinforce that we are Catholic—universal—which means embracing, not fearing, multiculturalism.

Rivera’s keynote was filled with hope, centered around a belief that young adults will embrace Catholicism and young adult ministry—if young adult leaders are willing to step up to lead and evangelize their faith.

Key points from Keynote 1 subgroup processing sessions:

College-aged young adults:

- At college, we are surrounded with persons with different beliefs and from other faiths. “It’s difficult to distinguish Catholic doctrine from (non-Catholic) faiths.
- There is significant pressure to live a “traditional college lifestyle” (i.e., drinking, partying, sex), and it is more difficult to meet people who put faith first.
- We are very accepting of persons with non-Catholic faiths or beliefs.
- Even when we attend Mass we are discouraged because we don’t see people our age in attendance.
- We’d like to see a diocesan event style-approach to programs, i.e. not limited to one parish; we’re willing to travel to one place to see a bigger group of like-minded young adults.
- We know that we are not teens anymore, and we know it is up to us to evangelize and encourage more of our peers to come to Mass & church programs.

Single young adults in their 20's & 30's:

- It is difficult to integrate faith into our daily lives. Finding balance between church and “social norms” is a struggle.
- Even if there is not a formal young adult ministry in a parish, there are many opportunities for young adults to get involved in other ministries.
- We value fellowship, which leads to friendships and prayer support.
- We are looking to define what it means to be Catholic. How do we enter into dialogue, proper instruction, and a better understanding?
- We spent much time lamenting a lack of opportunities for young adults, then we all agreed that “if there is nothing, we need to start it...People need to take initiative in their parishes.”

Married young adults in their 20's & 30's:

- We owe it to church to give back, either through involvement in ministries or in financial stewardship.
- “Once you have children, their activities come first.”
- Those of us with children seek events that include children (or offer babysitting). Couples want to attend activities together.
- “Some people may have ideas for ministries but may not know who to take their ideas to or where they can get support.” (Note: seeking an awareness of how parish pastoral councils, programming staffs and other leadership bodies operate. Are they cultivating ideas?)
- We are searching for a connection between the Gospel and the lives we live the rest of the week.



2. CHURCH AND YOUNG ADULTS: OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES

Summary of keynote address, presented by Father Kevin Huber, Diocese of Gary Vocations Director/Director of Priestly Life, and Kevin Driscoll, Coordinator of the Diocese of Gary Office for Youth & Young Adults:

In their keynote, Huber and Driscoll attempted to address some of the most commonly-heard obstacles standing in the way of greater young adult engagement in the Catholic Church. They displayed a number of statistics that prove overwhelmingly that young adult Catholics are not only spiritual, but proud to be Catholic, and loyal to their faith. In one 2007 study, just over half of all Catholic young adults say they would never leave the church (*American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church*, W.V. D'Antonio, J.D. Davidson, D.R. Hoge, M. Gautier).

Yet it is a commonly held belief that very few young adults regularly attend Sunday Mass. Clearly there is a disconnection between young adults seeking a religious experience and the Catholic Church that seeks to reach them. Huber and Driscoll used the image of an incomplete bridge under construction, with two sides of the bridge failing to meet in the middle.



Huber and Driscoll cited five challenges:

- A lack of young adults in leadership roles
- A lack of engaging preaching
- Overall attitudes toward organized religion (not limited to the Catholic Church)
- Fractured relationships between lay young adults and clergy
- Overall lack of young adult programming

Huber and Driscoll distributed pens and paper to participants and asked them to answer one simple question: If you could improve one area of your Catholic faith experience, what would it be? (See Appendix)

Key points from Keynote 2 subgroup processing sessions:

College-aged young adults:

- We agreed wholeheartedly that a good homily is essential to a good Mass experience. If a priest can relate the homily to my life I leave church feeling like I got something out of it.
- All parish pastoral councils should have young adult representation.
- “Some people really do not know where the church stands on certain issues because they were never told.” We want the church to make its teaching more accessible.
- We question whether adolescents are really learning about what the church teaches in religious education and Catholic schools. “(Young adult Catholics) are leaving the church because they do not like the teachings, but they do not actually know the teachings.”
- We are willing to participate in adult religious formation programs that allow us to learn why the church teaches what it does.



Single young adults in their 20's & 30's:

- We want to be engaged in programs that allow us to explore not just what the church teaches but why.
- “The Eucharist is important, but at the same time we also need more dynamic homilists. We need to hear a message that pertains to us.”
- “We want to learn the truth about our faith from knowledgeable sources and people.”
- We need to be willing to start programs and promote them, not wait for others to do it.
- If there are programs out there, we need to know about them. We encourage the diocese to improve its communication so we can attend programs. “We want to learn!”

Married young adults in their 20's & 30's:

- We recognize the value of having young adults on parish pastoral councils. Some people would be great for the job, but may need to be asked.
- We think the most effective homilies are when priests can relate to our current life situation. Using current events and media is also effective.
- Catholic young adults “don't know how to respond when people challenge their faith.” We want more education about our faith.
- Previous generations were more apt to accept church teaching and traditions without question. We want to know why the church teaches what it does, and the meaning behind the traditions.
- We desire more young adult-friendly events and programs, and do not believe these should be limited to one parish. Why can't parishes work together?

3. WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM YOUR CHURCH?

Summary of keynote address, presented by Paul Jarzembowski, Executive Director of the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association & Director, Diocese of Joliet Office of Young Adult Ministry:

In his keynote, Jarzembowski urged young adults at the symposium to begin to explore ways to improve ministry to, with, by, and for young adults throughout northwest Indiana. Through his work with the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association, he cited national trends that supported much of what had already been surfaced at the symposium.

Jarzembowski has been part of two recent and substantial national efforts that have sought to better understand Catholic young adults in the U.S.A. The first, the *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership* project, of which the Diocese of Gary was an active participant, asked young adults frank questions about the church. The results were mostly positive, and confirmed that young adults at the Diocese of Gary symposium were not unlike young adults studied nationwide: they seek more and better formation programs and desire leadership roles. Jarzembowski also contributed to *Marriage: Life and Love in the Divine Plan*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter on marriage, approved in November of 2009. He acknowledged that we have a marriage crisis, and a way to build healthier marriages is to become rooted in Christ, and young adult ministry can provide that.

Jarzembowski delivered marching orders to young adults at the symposium: simply put, it's up to you. He affirmed their presence at the symposium, and reminded them that by their mere presence they have already established themselves as proactive church leaders. He gave examples of best practices that are working nationally, but any program requires committed young adults willing to lead.

Key points from Keynote 3 subgroup processing sessions:

College-aged young adults:

- We believe fewer young adults would leave the church if they felt truly invited. We need to seek creative ways to reach out and invite.
- An ideal church is actively involved in the community, not limited by parish or town, using every resource to help others and make the world a better place.
- Young adults can bring energy and fresh perspectives if our voice is heard, "but we are drowned out by the voices of other members of the parish."
- We can be the physical hands of Christ, able to perform service that perhaps others cannot.
- We appreciate the need to take more initiative in becoming more involved in all ministries in our churches, not just ones that specifically reach out to young adults.



Single young adults in their 20's & 30's:

- An ideal church is truly welcoming. All churches will say they are welcoming and inviting to new members, but few really celebrate their new members.
- What challenges us in living as a unified parish/church community—diversity of cultures, expressions of faith, etc.—is also what is beautiful about the Catholic Church. We must continue to embrace diversity.
- We offer the church a greater awareness of technology—internet-based technologies specifically—and how to utilize it in church settings.
- We offer the church a global perspective. We don't think in terms of one parish, one town, but rather “we connect with people across the country, across borders, across the sea.”
- We have a real desire to help our community, and are willing to go to bars and other non-church related places to spread the Gospel.
- We seek a real spiritual depth.
- “We have a vision. We are here. We want to do something. We have the drive!”

Married young adults in their 20's & 30's:

- We are fortunate that even if our Catholic friends don't actively practice, they still identify themselves as Catholic. That gives us hope.
- With so much attention placed on children's programs, most notably education, it begs the question, “Are there any resources left for adult programs?”
- We desire adult education programs. “We want to continue to learn so we can educate our children as they are growing up and be that positive reinforcement that is missing in the church.”
- “If a priest can relate more to our generation and current pop culture, it may make more young adults comfortable attending Mass.”
- We seek community. We'd like to see efforts to connect young adults in similar life situations, i.e. parents with young children, etc.
- If we want programs, we have to start them. “It starts with us.”



C O N C L U S I O N S A N D R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

By Kevin Driscoll

Conclusions

While there were three separate groups processing the keynotes through the lens of their different life situations, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the needs and desires of the young adults present at the *Generation Christ* symposium were not much different. While I believe that future efforts to reach out to Catholic young adults—diocesan, parish, or regional—should accommodate for the distinct lifestyle differences among college-age, married, and single young adults, the symposium produced some uniform attributes:

Desire to network beyond parish: While it remains the philosophy of the Diocese of Gary that the parish is the most effective model for meeting the needs of the community, today's young adult is not bound by parish boundaries. For a generation that connects online with friends far beyond its hometown, and likely commutes across several towns to and from work, a parochial attitude toward church programs is foreign and inefficient. Many individual parishes struggling to gather momentum with certain programs should collaborate to form stronger regional or cluster programs. There is strength in numbers, and to quote one symposium participant, "We are willing to travel to find good programs."

Desire for adult faith sharing and/or adult education: Throughout the symposium, young adults shared a desire to learn more about what the church teaches, but also why the church teaches what it does. Vatican II has succeeded in placing Catholics in the modern world (*Gaudium et Spes*), and young adults have grown up in a world tolerant and accepting of other faiths. Perhaps what has been lost is an understanding of what makes us unique, and overwhelmingly young adults at the symposium expressed that they seek an understanding.

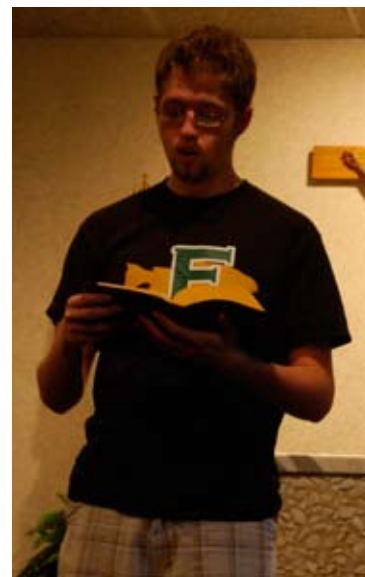
Desire to lead: In the young adult portion of the *Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership* initiative, young adults surveyed showed overwhelmingly they are willing and able to assume leadership roles in church, and the symposium confirmed that. Symposium participants accept that to gain a greater voice in church matters, they themselves have to be willing to commit to starting, promoting, and sustaining ministries, and the existing multigenerational parish community has to be willing to welcome, invite, and share leadership roles.

Eucharist means little if it is not relevant outside of Sunday: Young adults present expressed frustration at homilies that fail to connect the Gospel to their lived experience at home, work, and in their daily relationships with others, including non-Catholics. It begs the question, "Is Eucharist enough?" I would posit it is not. The true Presence of Christ in Eucharist, which requires Mass participation, is centered on both what happens at the altar, but also around the altar. Who is not present speaks as loudly as who is present. Young adults desire to live the Eucharist in the world: they are idealistic and want to become engaged in social justice and evangelization. The mission of Eucharist is not rejected, but the other elements of Sunday liturgy: preaching, music, hospitality, environment, etc. appear to be every bit as important to young adults as the Eucharist itself. To quote a symposium participant, "Don't just tell me I have to go to church. Give me a reason to want to go."

Recommendations

Parish Pastoral Councils: All councils (and its commissions) should place as a high priority having young adult representation.

Involvement in all parish ministries: The easiest way for young adults who are present on Sunday to feel welcome is to see others like them actively engaged in the life, mission, and work of the faith community. If your liturgical and other ministries do not have 20-30 year olds on them, seek them out.



Improve your means of communication: If a parish's primary means of communication is through a bulletin, that parish is not connecting with young adults, whose primary means of communication is via the internet. Nominate a young adult or a team of young adults to explore ways to enhance your parish's internet-based communications, including but not limited to social networking. Parishes willing to invest a relatively small amount of money might consider utilizing the internet and social networking consulting services of Northwest Indiana-based Higher Ground Creative Media. Founded by two active Catholics, the company has experience working with Catholic parishes and organizations to maximize their outreach. (www.highergroundcreative.com)

Shortly after the symposium, the Diocese of Gary Office for Young Adults created a new Facebook site to allow parishes/ministries a chance to promote their activities. It can be found by searching "*Generation Christ*" at facebook.com, or through the diocesan young adult ministry site. (garyoyya.org > "Young Adults" link)

Cultivate programs internally: Develop strategies that will minister to registered young adult Catholics in your community, including but not limited to adult education programs. These strategies might include specific young adult ministries, but also include integrating young adults into existing ministries.

Cultivate programs externally: Collaborate with nearby parishes to develop young adult outreach programs. The best young adult ministries are comprehensive in nature, and include elements of spirituality and prayer, social activities, formation, and service projects. While some parishes may be equipped to coordinate such all-inclusive ministries, many are not, and since young adults are "willing to travel to find good programs," perhaps an effective strategy would be to establish a cluster or regional young adult ministry with one parish serving as a "hub," and other parishes sharing in event hosting.



Minister to your base: even if it is a small percentage, do not take for granted who IS present! Take every opportunity to nurture them, engage them, and give them a voice. Ask what works for them, and ask them how they can reach out to who is not there. One example: religious education and Catholic school parents. Develop personal relationships and ministries that aren't focused on their children, but on helping to make them better Catholic parents and spouses.

Then reach out to the community: Explore creative ways to be seen in the community. This means thinking outside of your property. Be seen at community parades and festivals, sponsor little league teams, and find ways to get in the newspaper. Young adults—even the ones who aren't practicing—are proud to be Catholic. Show them that good things are happening at their church; show them what they're missing. Example: sponsoring a "Theology on Tap" at a local tavern or restaurant is a creative way to reach out to the community with solid Catholic teaching in a social environment. (www.garyontap.com, theologyontap.com, or contact Kevin Driscoll, Diocese of Gary, 219-769-9292 x229)

Develop young adult faith sharing communities: While the most thorough avenue for connecting young adults to the church is by developing comprehensive young adult ministries, these require many resources, both human and financial. The burden is great for the coordinator(s), and young adult participants will still struggle to participate in events, for no other reason than because of the natural busy lifestyle of the young adult, balancing career, family, friends, and interests. In my experience, comprehensive young adult ministries start with grandiose ambitions, and falter quickly when they fail to live up to those expectations.

Small young adult Christian communities (including faith-sharing groups, scripture studies, etc.) start with a more realistic goal: to connect a manageable number of young adults in a manageable time frame. The symposium showed that young adults wish to connect with others and explore the depth of Catholic teaching. The small Christian community is an easy way to accomplish both.

In a direct response to young adult trends and the findings of the *Generation Christ* symposium, the Diocese of Gary Office for Young Adults is launching the "CYAback" initiative, with the small Christian community concept playing a critical role. "CYAback" stands for "connecting young adults back" to church.

In the fall of 2010, the Diocese of Gary Office for Young Adults will seek parishes wishing to host a CYAback group. Groups must be affiliated with at least one diocesan parish, and while any parish can host a group, hosting parishes are urged to think regionally. Short term goals include reaching out to better serve area young adults. Long term goals are to connect the CYAback groups through periodic diocesan events such as retreats, conferences, reflections days, etc.

Training on cultivating these young adult Christian communities will take place at the Diocesan Ministry Congress (October 1-2, 2010), and as needed through Kevin Driscoll, Office for Young Adults. CYAback groups are slated for launch in Winter, 2011. Any parish that is interested in launching a CYAback group is urged to contact Kevin Driscoll at 219-769-9292 x229.

Recommended Reading

Hoge, Dean R. & Jewell, Marti R. *The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders: What the Church Needs to Know*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2010.

Committee for Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes: Best Practices in Catholic Young Adult Ministry*. Washington, D.C.: USCCB Publishing, 2010.

Smith, Christian and Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Suggested processing questions for parish leaders

- Does anything in the document surprise you? Why?
- Based on this document, is there a generation gap in our community regarding how we define church?
- In what ways does this document affirm efforts already at work in our parish community? In what ways does it challenge?
- What existing ministries could benefit from more young adult involvement? What kind of ministries could be created that would better address the needs and desires of young adults here?
- Could we create a CYAback group here, or collaborate with (a) nearby parish(es) to create one?
- Identify five young adults that could be personally invited to become more involved in church ministries.



APPENDIX: IF YOU COULD IMPROVE ONE
AREA OF YOUR CATHOLIC FAITH
EXPERIENCE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

COLLEGE:

To continue the sense of community, togetherness – to become one body in Christ.

That the diocese offers programs for young adults similar to CYX for teens. I lost my faith when I was in high school, I went to CYX and regained my faith.

When invited to young adult activities, priest often doesn't participate. Priests are often personable at Mass but they need to be seen outside of Mass.

I would improve the relationship of my church and the people in the church. They are not always on the same page.

To strengthen religious education for everyone, not just children.

For the church to put the majority of church collections towards helping the needy, charities, etc. instead of spending millions of dollars on expensive architecture and fancy statues.

SINGLE:

Education and fellowship to understand my faith; to evangelize to others a sense of community and belonging.

Lack of young adult programs in the churches. In this area I want more socialization and gatherings. I would make an effort to come. I want to meet people who share my Catholic values which is hard to find in today's society.

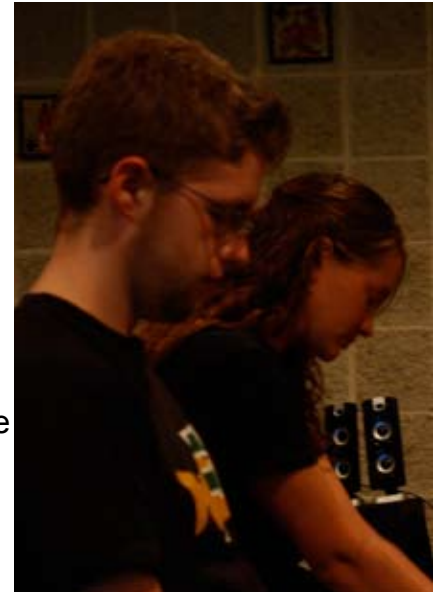
Bible Study

The opportunity for more reflective prayer – experiences to grow in community with people outside of the Eucharistic celebration.

Have a young adult community. I would help lead, but I would need help to do it. The parish would need to be open to it.

Maybe more activities that will create a knowledge and depth to my faith experience – fill in the void, I guess.

Preaching throughout the whole Mass. Put some feeling and meaning into the preaching and sermon.



SINGLE continued:

The Sermon! I would like the actual message to be longer, more in depth and more related to life. Does the priest have to deliver the sermon?

A need to be inspired.

Feeling more a part of a community outside of regular Mass on Sunday with other young adults.

Lack of community/fellowship.

I would love to be able to share my faith. To talk, learn and discuss it with people my own age. Especially the education part. There are many websites that condemn faith and religion. We need a peaceful dialogue.

Focus on the foundation of the Catholic Church: Why do we believe? What do we believe?
How does being Catholic affect my life?

Getting the people in the church more involved so they are more likely to get those others not in the church involved.

How to find and reach other young adults in the Diocese – outside of my home parish.

MARRIED:

Allocate more money for young adults: they are 40% of population! Take money from schools, children and give it to young adult ministry.

Bible study groups geared toward working young adults.

Fellowship to share faith journeys and what it means to be Catholic in today's society.

Put Young Adults on Parish Council. Listen to them. Take their advice.

Daily prayer.

Make Pastoral Council/Leadership more accessible, so that ideas can be freely given/received. Ex: a suggestion box.

The clarification of why we as a church are very particular on beliefs/rules: contraception, sex before marriage, living together before marriage, etc.

More motivation by the parishioners.

I would love to plan events and actually have people show up. To me this would be very encouraging and entice me to plan more and do more. From this, I could create a large community of young adults to praise God with – to socialize with, etc.

I would like young adult couples to be able to come together and socialize where there is consideration for child care, as well as places or events for families with children around the same age to socialize together. I would like these groups to be consistent so there is consistency in these relationships.

MARRIED continued:

Find a way to make Mass more appealing to Young Adults while not taking away from anyone else.

How does the Gospel message relate to me as a spouse and parent.

For my parish to simply acknowledge that young adults exist. It seems they're so convinced they'll never attend Mass, so they don't even try to reach out.

More Bible/Scripture study and how it relates to today.

To come to Mass and actually feel like it is a joyous celebration, not a monotonous routine.

A format in which young adults can ask questions about the church and clarify misunderstandings in a comfortable format – reconnect to the church as a whole.

Having an approachable Parish Council.

Understanding of traditions.

More relatable priest.



A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S . . .

Thank you to all who somehow assisted in making this symposium a reality, including, but not limited to:

- **Most Reverend Dale J. Melczek**, who supports the increased development of young adult ministry, and who celebrated Mass and joined young adults for food and fellowship afterwards at *Generation Christ*.
- *Generation Christ* Keynote presenters and panelists **Jorge Rivera, Rev. Kevin Huber, and Paul Jarzembowski**.
- *Generation Christ* subgroup processing facilitators **Jennifer Curtin, Alfredo Flores-Carillo, and Dan Mills**.
- The many *Generation Christ* symposium participants and the parishes that supported this project.
- Our facility hosts at **Calumet College of St. Joseph in Whiting**, most especially **Dan Lowery and Diane Bailey**.
- *Northwest Indiana Catholic*, **Steve Euvino**, editor, for pre and post-event coverage.
- Carrie Shelhart, summary report layout and production.
- All who support the **Diocesan Catholic Services Appeal**. Without you we would not have efforts like these.



