

Parish Young Adult Ministry

**A manual for parish-based ministry for and with
young adults in their 20's and 30's.**

ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE

This manual was prepared by:
Mr. Nick Eve, Office of Stewardship and Development
Dr. Carole Goodwin, Office of Lifelong Formation and Education
Mrs. M. Annette Turner, Office of Multicultural Ministry



OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

Archdiocese of Louisville

212 EAST COLLEGE STREET • P.O. BOX 1073 • LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40201-1073
(502) 585-3291 • FAX (502) 585-2466

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Young adults need Christ and His Church, and the Church needs young adults. This concern was a consistent theme of the listening phase of our strategic planning process. As a result, the 2009 strategic plan calls for several new initiatives to help parishes in their young adult ministry, especially strategies designed to call forth the untapped potential of young adults' gifts and talents.

We know that Christ continues to call. Even though there are many competing voices, the call to discipleship, which begins at baptism, is at work in the hearts of our young adults, inspiring them to something and Someone greater. This call is both an invitation to deepen the gift of faith and an invitation to deeper involvement in the Body of Christ, the Church.

Our parishes have much to offer our young adult population, but many on parish staffs experience uncertainty about where to begin to address the religious needs of their young adults. As parishes seek best practices on how to create a promising environment and appropriate programs in which this call can be realized, I am pleased to announce the publication of this manual. It addresses needs expressed by young adults in our own Archdiocese and identifies principles, strategies, and techniques for parish programs focused on the young adult population.

I thank Dr. Carole Goodwin, director of youth and young adult ministry in the Office of Lifelong Formation and Education, Mr. Nick Eve, director of our Office of Stewardship and Development and Mrs. M. Annette Turner, executive director of our Office of Multicultural Ministry for their fine work on this manual.

With respect and challenge, the outreach ideas described in this manual provide a true movement of the Holy Spirit and address our Holy Father's call to the new evangelization. I look forward to seeing the fruits of this effort.

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.
Archbishop of Louisville

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Introduction

Parish young adult ministry, by definition, is located in the parish. Parishes are often the first stop when a Catholic young adult is looking for a faith connection. It is critical for parishes to be aware that young adults are present, whether they are active or not. Young adults are not always on the radar screen of many parish leaders, but they are often found in the pews on Sunday; living in apartments in the parish neighborhood; joining the summer sports leagues; attending the parish picnic; preparing to wed or looking to have their first child baptized. The parish is the first stop and parishes should put tremendous energy and resources into assuring it is their last stop.

The Catholic bishops of the United States, in their pastoral “Communities of Salt and Light”, describe the parish this way: “The parish is where the Church lives. Parishes are communities of faith, of action and of hope. They are where the Gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth. Parishes are the place where God’s people meet Jesus in word and sacrament and come in touch with the source of the Church’s life.”

This description of a parish challenges all pastoral leaders to embrace the call to become a community that offers all its members the place to grow in faith, providing inspiration, hope and opportunities to connect daily life to faith. Young adults are searching for just that kind of parish faith community.

Who are young adults?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) had defined young adults as “people in their late teens, twenties, and thirties; single, married, divorced, or widowed; and with or without children.” This includes people in Generation X (born between 1963 and 1979) as well as the Millennial Generation (born between 1980 and 1990). Those in college who are 18 – 21 years olds are also considered by the Church to be in the Young Adult population. Within this incredibly broad category, there are several dimensions and demographics including, but not limited to:

- College Students
- Young Adult Singles
- Dating & Engaged Couples
- Young Adult Married Couples
- Lay Ecclesial Ministers
- Parent Couples and Single Parents
- Suburban/Urban & Inner City Residents
- Interfaith Relationships
- Military Personnel & Veterans
- Unemployed & Under-employed
- Divorced and Widowed Individuals
- Seminarians, Clergy & Religious
- Rural and Small Town Residents

Young adults are members of different ethnicities and cultures, economic and social classes, and various degrees of connection to the Catholic faith.

But what connects all these men and women together is the experience of **transition** – to discover their identity as adults; to find a place of love and belonging; to achieve a sense of purpose in their work; and to spiritually explore the meaning of life and the divine.

To help young adults in their journey through this period in their lives, the Roman Catholic Church has developed an intentional outreach and pastoral ministry to men and women in their late teens, twenties, and thirties – called “**Young Adult Ministry.**”

The Basic Goals of Young Adult Ministry

Connect young adult to God through Jesus Christ.

Connect young adults to the Church and the Christian community.

Connect young adults to the mission of the Church in the world.

Connect young adults to a peer community to further support and nurture their faith.

Connect young adults to a vibrant parish so that the parish is enriched by their gifts and they are enriched by membership in parish life.

Where are our young adults?

Sociologists say about 20% are registered in our parishes, attend weekly Mass, want to be more involved in parish life and will still be in the pews 10-15 years from now.

So where are the other 80%? Only about 5% have permanently left the Church. Most of the rest have ceased being an active participant in parish life, especially when they move away from home and find a job in a new city.

Where do we find them?

We find them at Mass but not registered; in our neighborhood schools including our Catholic schools as teacher; coaching sports for our children and teens; as participants in RCIA groups; at Pre-Cana; when they bring their babies to be baptized attending Baptismal preparation sessions; as parents of the youngest children in our schools; at Kwanza celebrations; Quinceañera, the Moon Festival; Our Lady of Guadalupe or Our Lady of Cobre celebrations; Harvest Festival; Umoja gathering, etc. (*See Appendix A for description of these ethnic/multi-cultural celebrations)

They are also found: in neighborhood coffee shops and pubs; in gyms and fitness centers; playing intramural sports; volunteering at Habitat or one of the soup kitchens; on Facebook or YouTube; at your work place; at concerts; back in school-especially in evening classes; in the apartment or the house next door; and at parish picnics.

“Young adult men and women experience a spiritual tension arising from the contrast between contemporary society and the desire to live according to the will of God. They speak at times of a wariness toward organized religion. Although they desire a deeper spiritual life, this attitude and other influences from contemporary society push them to questions and doubt what has been part of their lives. The Church needs to respond to this doubting and questioning by encouraging a dialogue that welcomes challenges from the young adult to the Church and from the Church to the young adult, so that each may grow in discipleship.” “Sons and Daughters of Light”, p. 13

It is the hope of the diocesan leaders in the Archdiocese of Louisville that parish based young adult ministry flourishes and grows and that a parish setting becomes the primary location for this invaluable ministry.

For the past several years, the Archdiocese of Louisville has focused efforts in ministry for and with young adults on developing young adult leaders through Archdiocese of Louisville Ministry Institute (ALMI) and one-on-one consultations with individual parish leaders. The Archdiocese has intentionally refrained from offering gatherings and direct services to young adults themselves. Parish-based ministry is the ideal venue for bonding most young adults to their parish communities. The Archdiocese has supported regional efforts to offer some gatherings such as “Theology on Tap”, and most recently young adult leaders themselves formed a group, Louisville Young Catholics (LYC). The focus of Louisville Young Catholics has been to offer once a month gatherings on a topic of interest led by a speaker who engaged the assembled into animated dialogue. These gatherings have drawn a faithful few and multiple efforts are drawing their leadership to consider, “What next?”

The 2009 Strategic Plan for the Archdiocese of Louisville calls for several new initiatives for young adult ministry. They are:

4.2.4 Create a multicultural tool kit for parishes that would invite young adults to share their interests, gifts and talents with the church.

5.1.3 Evaluate how parishes currently address young adult needs and identify strategies for improvement and ways to integrate young adults into parish life.

5.3.1 Identify avenues, venues, and opportunities for current college students and other young adults to expand their theological knowledge and skills for ministry.

This manual provides the grounding and some key theological and ministerial principles to guide parishes in their efforts to develop effective outreach to their young adults.

Chapter 1

Principles for ministry with young adults in the parish.

(Adapted from Sons & Daughters of Light)

The following principles are offered to guide the development of effective ministry with young adults. Keep these in mind when planning new pastoral initiatives or evaluating current ministries.

1. Young adults are able to explore, deepen, and share their beliefs and values when they are part of a supportive parish community.
2. Young adults seek opportunities for relationships with those who are of similar age group and life experience, e.g. student, young single, married without children, married with children.
3. Young adults understand both the message of faith and the traditions of the Church when these are communicated through words, symbols, and activities that are concrete, understandable, and relate to life experiences.
4. Young adults respond positively when the parish seeks their participation in the planning of activities for the spiritual life of the community.
5. Effective young adult parish ministry includes a commitment by the parish community of resources for the evangelization, catechesis, and pastoral care of young adults.
6. Effective young adult parish ministry reaches out to young adults using relevant technology and the tools of media that permeate their culture. Effective Young Adult parish ministry also invites them to participation by being present where young adults are found: e.g. in the pews, the larger community, the college campus, including the internet.
7. Effective young adult parish ministry extends a personal invitation into the life of the parish and collaborates with young adults to identify specific initiatives for the young adult community.
8. Effective young adult parish ministry assists young adults in their spiritual formation by helping them develop a holistic and healthy understanding of life and one's relationship with God.
9. Effective young adult parish ministry engages young adults with opportunities to ask questions and discover answers present in the teaching and tradition of the Catholic

Church.

10. Effective young adult parish ministry engages young adults in peer ministry.
11. Effective young adult parish ministry acknowledges, respects, and celebrates the diversity found among this group as well as the multigenerational and multicultural nature of the parish community and universal Church.
12. Effective young adult parish ministry promotes an awareness of Catholic social teaching and invites young adults to the work of justice, peace, and compassion.

Young adults are not children, they are adults. They are single or married, living at home or on their own. Some are successful in their careers and some are just starting out. Some may be unemployed and need skills for adult living. Many are not in our churches but are in our work places, in our neighborhoods or our families. All are sons and daughters of God, need the Church and deserve our pastoral attention.

Young adults seek to:

- Develop a meaning of work
- Develop relationships
- Develop a spiritual life
- Develop a personal identity

Young Adult Ministry is not about clubs. Pastoral ministry to and with young adults must move beyond “clubs” to full integration into parish life.

The real target of young adult ministry is to integrate young adults into the life, mission, and work of the Catholic Church. To accomplish this, parishes must intentionally invite, welcome, and include young adults to a wide variety of opportunities to become involved in their parish.

Diversified Age Groups

College Age (18-21)

The first group, ages eighteen to twenty-one, includes those who are in college, the military, or their first full-time job. They are the least likely to be present in parish life—possibly because they are figuring out their own faith, independent of their parents' influence. The responsive parish looks for ways to stay connected with these young adults as they graduate from high school so that they know they always have a home for their faith. Ritualizing their passage into young adulthood, offering an open house on parish grounds at Christmastime, sending birthday cards, or e-mailing the bulletin or online daily meditations are several ways in which parishes can maintain their connection with the youngest adult population. Using podcasts to share the daily Word or various prayer experiences is another way to address the spiritual needs of this age group. Strategies for evangelizing the youngest adults that do not center on meeting as a group are often more likely to engage them than are group programs located at the church.

The college age young adult has a unique set of needs. They rarely are on their own and often are still living at home or return to their homes and parishes only at summer or other breaks from school. They need short one-time programming and visits to their college campuses. If they do attend college, they need encouragement to become active in their campus ministry programs. If they are not away, invite them to monthly gatherings of peers for food and conversation. Keeping them involved in parish life is critical for keeping them connected to the Church.

Whereas they can be included in activities that are held for older young adults the legal issue of alcohol consumption is one that proves problematic for certain festive activities. Separate activities for this age group are ideal, especially if other scheduled social activities aimed at older young adults involve alcohol. This may seem labor-intensive but once an older young adult group is established some of their leaders may be willing to host gatherings for the 18-21 age groups during the time of year that college-attending young adults are home from school.

21-29 year olds

The second young adult age group consists of those in their middle to late twenties. Since many in this group are still single, they are the most likely to attend programs and events and are eager to discuss faith issues with their peers. Responsive parishes look for ways to involve these young adults in leadership and to offer them opportunities to share faith with each other. In today's society, most people discern their vocational call in the period from the middle twenties to early thirties. Consequently, parishes have a tremendous opportunity to provide workshops and retreats on discernment that will give young adults a prayerful setting in which to discern God's call. (See Appendix B-Discernment)

30's +

The third group includes young adults in their thirties, who are likely to be the busiest and most settled of all young adults. Because so many of them are starting families or establishing themselves in their careers, they are more likely to attend events and programs targeted to their unique needs (e.g., young mother or fathers) than to come to generic programs. They are ready to make a long-term commitment to a faith community that addresses their needs and invites them to share their gifts.

Listening sessions

A parish must determine what will appeal to its young adults so several listening sessions with the three age groups is a start. A parish might choose to begin with the age group that is actively present; focus on that age group first, and then engage the other two age groups when possible.

Target and gather 10-12 young adults to listen to their thoughts on their needs, ideas and desires for the direction of a young adult focused ministry in your parish. An invitation to a meal hosted by the pastor, other pastoral staff and possibly the parish-council chair is one of the most successful techniques for gathering young adults for a “listening session.”

Possible questions to ask: (It is critical for parish leaders to listen and not to rebut!)

- Why do people your age need the Church?
- What do you feel is the most positive aspect of our parish for young adults?
- What do you find to be the least-engaging aspect of our parish life for young adults? Why?
- Name three social activities that would interest young adults drawing them to be more involved in the parish.
- Name three spiritual or faith-enhancing activities that would engage young adults if offered by the parish.
- Name one or two service activities that would interest young adults.
- What gifts do you have to offer the parish? How could you use these gifts in the parish?
- What has stopped you from being more fully involved in parish life?
- What can we (parish leaders) do to get more young adults involved in parish life?

A national project by the US Bishops Committee on Laity and Family, held listening sessions with young adults across the country to determine how they characterize a young adult-responsive Church. When asked, “What are you looking for in the Church today?” young adults named the following ten elements:

1. A sense of community and belonging (a faith community where “everybody knows your name”)
2. Dynamic liturgies
3. Spiritual growth and enrichment
4. Religious education and Catholic identity
5. Guidance and direction in life
6. Acceptance and support
7. Opportunities for service and leadership
8. Social activities
9. A community that share common values

10. Inspiration and rejuvenation

The following are quotes from young adults from the Archdiocese of Louisville's Listening Sessions:

"Consider how to enliven liturgy to attract young adults. We respond well to contemporary music and many of us are musicians and would share this gift. I would like to see a regional Mass for young adults where the homily is aimed at us and our faith and life issues. The Mass should be followed by a social so we could all gather to worship together and then to get to know other young adult Catholics." (22 year old college graduate)

"The parish could offer programs for young adults that intentionally gather us. The programs would be highly effective if they provided opportunities for us to pray together and to talk substantively about our faith. Child care is a necessary bonus." (26 year old young married father)

"Many of my friends gather at each others' houses and watch movies, watch sports, play games, etc. If my parish offered some house gatherings for people my age, many of my peers would be very willing to "check it out." Keep our commitment short-term (3-4 weeks rather than a longer time commitment would be best!) (30 year old single young adult man)

"It is important for young adults to have pastoral presence from Church leaders. For Latino people having the priest who speaks Spanish and can understand the culture of the people is very important. We are willing to be leaders in our own programs but we love having our church leaders present." (30 year old man)

"My advice to parish leaders is to work hard at knowing the young adults in your parish. We have gifts to offer and are willing to give to our parishes. We can take care of ourselves and can provide leadership for programs focused on our needs, but we need someone in parish leadership to direct us and encourage us. Also I need child care if I am involved." (32 year old single mother)

"As a young adult, I would love my parish to extend a warm invitation to me and other young adults to be involved in parish committees and programs. We want to feel we are a part of the larger church. It often seems that my parish is focused only on school families and I am not always sure where I fit." (27 year old single woman)

"We are an engaged couple who will marry later this spring and we have been told by friends who are newly married that there is not much offered for us in our parish after we are married until we have children. There needs to be programs (Bible study groups, co-ed sport teams, social gatherings, etc.) focused on those who are newly married." (Young couple in their twenties from a rural parish)

"We want opportunities to gather with other young adults who represent our diversity. We

suggest that young adults from parishes in the west end of Louisville gather with young adults from parishes in the south or east end so that we interact as one Church.” (a group of west-end young adults)

We have found that we enjoy being with a group of other Catholic young adults. It is a setting that lends itself to conversations that can't be had in other peer groups. We also feel a void of educational opportunities where we can really learn about the traditions and the meaning behind the rituals of the church. Our generation got a very “fluffy” version of religious education, and now we feel a strong desire to understand what we have never been taught. Also, through sputtering attempts at starting a young adult group in our own parish, we have learned that those in college, those without children, and those with children are all groups that have distinctly different needs. (Married couple, both 27 years old)

As you conduct your own listening sessions, compare the answers from your own young adult with those from the national project and the local listening sessions.

(The following section is from *Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes*, pages 87-98)

Best Practices

Parish leaders have many practical opportunities to welcome, invite, and encourage young adults to become part of the parish community. Below are seven areas to consider when working in pastoral care with young adults. Many are self-explanatory; the key is to be creative and effective.

I. Gain Perspective

Can your parish see the world through the eyes of a young adult? If so, what do you see? What priorities, needs, talents, and desires do you identify? To learn more about what issues are important to young adults, sit down with young adults in your own parish and listen to their stories.

II. Assess What You Can Offer

Assess what your parish community has to offer young adults. A lively liturgy? Engaging adult faith formation? A gym or available meeting rooms? A nearby coffee shop? A parish picnic or welcoming committee? When building a community that is responsive to young adults, build on your strengths. What programs and activities are available in your community to help young adults grow in the spiritual, social and service dimensions of their lives?

III. Communication

Stay in touch with young adults. Make sure that contact continues beyond the initial invitation. Consider the following strategies.

- *Assign contact people.* Often, the young adult ministry leader or welcoming chairperson assumes this role, but consider having many individuals share the task. Designating contact people is a helpful way to welcome all newcomers and to keep a unified presence with the community. Contact people can also ensure that questions and requests are directed to the correct person.
- *Personal invitation.* Personal invitation is an essential outreach tool to effectively engage young adults in parish ministry.
- *Return e-mails and phone calls promptly and pleasantly.* It takes a lot of courage for some young adults to request information about a parish's resources. A prompt and pleasant reply reaffirms their interest and makes their first visit more comfortable.

- *Develop and maintain a Web site.* Web sites are an easy and inexpensive way to post information—and young adults are likely to use online resources. Ensure that your parish Web site has an event calendar or a page for young adults. Posting your information can allow it to reach a broader audience.
- *Start a Facebook group for your parish young adults.* Facebook is the most used social network at the time of the printing of this manual. (Search out current networking tools).
- *Start an e-mail group.* Many companies (for example, Yahoo!, Gmail, and coolist.com) offer free services for running e-mail groups. People can sign up or remove themselves from the list as they wish. An e-mail list makes it very easy to send out e-newsletter, calendars, and even last-minute reminders and invitations; just send the information to the group's single e-mail address, and the service redirects the e-mail to everyone in the group.
- *Remind young adults about upcoming events.* Don't nag—just renew the invitation.
- *Set up an e-zine (short for "electronic magazine").* An e-zine can serve as an inexpensive, convenient point of contact with young adults in the community and a way to remind them about what their parish home has to offer. Its content can inform them about upcoming parish events, connect them with regional happenings, and guide them toward scriptural and spiritual Web sites. Post photographs of current activities here or on parish web site.
- *Keep a guest book at events.* Offering a guest book allows interested newcomers to sign up and also provides you with their contact information—and the opportunity to invite them back personally. Also keep a "social list", a shared list that allows young adults to contact each other, get together socially, and further build friendships and community. When newcomers join your mailing list, allow them to indicate whether they would like their cell phone number and e-mail address shared with others on the social list.
- *Make use of free advertising.* Bulletin announcements, pulpit announcements, parish newsletters, neighborhood bulletin boards, the local newspaper's event calendar, the diocesan newspaper, free online ads, and radio public service announcement can all serve to spread information about special events to welcome young adults.

IV. Welcome and Get Acquainted

Parish leaders can reach out and welcome young adults through one or more of the following

strategies:

- *Personally greet young adults.* The simplest ways often work best. Reach out before or after Mass, or contact them by phone.
- *Makes contact with young adults when they move into the area.* Post a newsletter at nearby apartment complexes, self-service laundries, or coffee shops to explain the activities and ministries of the parish and invite young adults to “come and see.”
- *Offer fun events to draw newcomers.* For example, try having a picnic for young adults, perhaps after the late Sunday Mass. Ask for volunteers to help grill the food. Provide music, board games, soccer or volleyball. Start off with group prayer, and then let the fellowship begin. This is an excellent opportunity for making friends, offering subtle evangelization, and brainstorming future events.
- *Communicate by listening rather than talking.* Start a conversation, but spend most of the time listening. Find things in common to talk about. A helpful tip (when meeting anyone, not just young adults) is to learn one interesting aspect about the person, such as a hobby or favorite sports team, leaving the door open for future discussions. Discover the person’s background. Is he or she new to the area and perhaps searching for a support network? Learn young adults’ individual and collective strengths, needs, and goals.
- *Hold a town-hall meeting that includes food, mingling, and conversation.* Town-hall meetings can accomplish several goals. They connect young adults with other young adults; they can help parish leaders determine which young adults are potential leaders; and they can inform organizers about young adults’ needs and interests in order to guide future ministry efforts.
- *Conduct a survey or census.* Content is key. Structure the survey so as to learn the demographics and desires of the group, get general feedback, and ask for referrals for other prospective members. Be sure that the census is easy to complete, and distribute it widely (e.g. sent by mail and e-mail, place in the pews and on the parish website, inserted in the bulletin). Advertise often, and allow for easy return (e.g. via collection basket, pre-addressed envelope, fax, e-mail, or web site). Finally, be sure to request feedback from inactive members and from non-members. Their demographics and needs are equally important, and they may pass the word along to interested friends.

V. Invite Young Adult to Leadership

As the bishops assert in Sons and Daughters of the Light, “Young adults will participate when

they perceive that the invitation is authentic and that their participation is constructive.”

- *Ownership belongs to young adults* - Identifying, training and empowering young adults to leadership with their peers. Will lead to strong young adult involvement.* See appendix E
- *Personal invitations are the most effective and preferred method—whether issued after Mass or over the phone.* Issuing a positive invitation, one that offers the person a wonderful opportunity, is always effective. Add a warm, friendly feel to your message. Ask the person to just give it a try—no strings attached.
- *Reach young adults in their comfort zone.* Use Facebook, mailings, bulletin announcements, e-mail, online postings, and local advertisements. Use friends and family members as messengers. Since 29 percent of young adults consider a parent their best friend, church-going parents are excellent messengers and PEER INVITATIONS are the most effective way of inviting.
- *Pulpit announcements* are very effective, especially when made by young adults. People pay attention when someone new is speaking.

VI. Encourage Involvement: Offer Activities That Meet Specific Needs

Invite young adults to spiritual, social, and service events in the parish. These “three S’s” form a foundation for a place where a young adult’s faith can find a home. Make intergenerational activities more responsive to young adults, and develop new activities to meet the particular needs of young adults. Some people may initially take to a single type of activity, but over time, a variety of offerings will challenge young adults to stretch and grow.

- *Ask all parish ministries and activities to assess their needs and offerings for young adult participants.* Encourage them to recruit young adults to join the leadership team, and make sure that parish-wide events help young adults feel included and welcomed.
- *Offer enriching liturgies that attract young adults.* Preach homilies that include everyday examples of faith in action. Offer good liturgical music—traditional or contemporary—at Sunday Mass. Assess whether Masses are offered at convenient times for young adults (such as late Sunday morning or early Sunday evening). Include young adults as ushers, lectors, and Eucharistic ministers.
- *Provide young adults with opportunities for self-improvement.* “Pastoral care” means taking care of the whole person and the person’s whole being—social, economic, emotional, and spiritual. Invite young adults to current programs in the parish that support healthy, holy lives. Try offering workshops or one-on-one assistance in career

planning, financial planning, budgeting, time management, relocating, and relationship building. Qualified parishioners can volunteer to teach these classes—if young adults are qualified, invite them to give presentations to their peers.

- *Host social events to draw young adults who have moved into the area and are looking for ways to meet people.* Invite young adults to already planned intergenerational parish events (e.g. parish picnic, fall festival, Mardi Gras party). Organize dances, trips to sporting events, holiday parties, local festivals, or summer picnics for young adults. Create social sports teams that change every week so that newcomers never feel like outsiders.
- *Engage young adults through service opportunities.* Parish service projects, such as Habitat for Humanity, nursing home or hospital visits, or visits with parishioners confined to their homes, have successfully involved young adults in parishes across the country. Ask young adults to lead the intergenerational community in a canned food drive or a volunteer session at a local soup kitchen.

VII. Incorporate Successful Traits

Remember that other parishes have successfully piloted young adult community efforts. Learn from their wisdom and best practices, including some listed here.

- *Cater to varying levels of spirituality.* Balance the important need to help young adult parishioners grow in spirituality with the need to welcome non-Catholic, fallen-away Catholics, or newcomers. One way to accomplish this is by challenging the already involved young adult to journey with a newcomer—for example, by being an RCIA sponsor or a table leader at programs or events.
- *Remember that many young adult Catholics are married to people of other denominations.* Catholic young adults feel only as welcome as their spouses, so it is important to reach out to both.
- *Promote ownership.* Ownership empowers and can breed dedication. Get young adults involved in leadership by personal invitation or through a gifts-discernment process. Offer them the opportunity to lead and to plan events. Ask young adults who are already involved to scout for leadership and talent within their peer communities.
- *Use nametags at events.* Many of us feel silly wearing nametags, but isn't it hard to remember everyone's name? Nametags allow newcomers to strike up a conversation.
- *Be dependable and honor commitments.* Newcomers are less likely to return if events are canceled without sufficient advance notice. If an emergency forces the last-minute cancellation of a program, provide information on why you had to cancel.

- *Adopt a regional approach.* If your parish is part of a cluster, region, discuss using your cluster as a basis for starting a young adult ministry. While a single-parish young adult ministry often gives the best small-community atmosphere, demographics are rarely sufficient for a small or rural parish to sustain a sizable young adult ministry. Inviting neighboring parishes adds not only more members, but also more leaders, more resources, and more varied activities. Collaborating also expands the opportunity to meet people of the same faith who are on a similar journey.
- *Use technology.* Young adults are tech-savvy. Sharing information and news with them electronically can be much easier, much quicker, and more effective than traditional methods.
- *Send e-mails to your young adult distribution list or text group to invite young adults to, or remind them of upcoming events.* Consider developing a young adult prayer network with a weekly e-mail listing of prayer intentions.

Cultural Implications

While it is impossible to cater to the individual needs of every young adult or every cultural group, a parish still must be sensitive to all. Remember, there are many diverse cultures-geographic-rural or suburban; religious and economic. Striking a delicate balance between general consensus and specific needs can help engage as many young adults as possible in the community life of the parish. As an illustration, some Asian cultures are more apt to value qualities such as overt humility and even passivity, and some young adults from these cultures may prefer to work only behind the scenes, rather than out in front. When planning young adult activities or asking young adults to take part in events or liturgy, be sure to take into account not just their gifts and interests, but also their values. Parishes that are responsive to young adults of all cultures and backgrounds strive to accurately reflect the diversity of the group in such areas as culture, social class, education, financial status, political stance, and physical disability.

A parish will do well to remember that a young adult's quest for identity is always spiritual, though influenced by culture, gender, and other factors. Parishes that are responsive to young adults ask themselves, "What can the Church do to create a space that is conducive to finding that identity?" These parishes remain aware of cultural factors that can affect a person's sense of self. For example, in African culture, the "I" takes its meaning in the "we". In other words, individual identity is to be found within the context of the community. This is also a common feature in African American spirituality. This principle helps young adults to see that everyone is connected. They do not belong to their families alone; they belong to their families, their parishes and the whole Church. This essential concept for pastoral care with African American young adults can apply to all young adults as well. Parishes have an opportunity to help young adults find themselves in the context of their own culture, of the parish community, and of the whole Church.

Here are some general guidelines for bringing young adults from many backgrounds into one parish community.

- *Strive for total community involvement.* Invite young adults to become part of a wider community, and exert effort to institute parish policies that are inclusive of a wide variety of cultures. This effort also shows support for the cultures that make up the parish community and affirms positive role models for young adults.
- *Offer homilies and services that emphasize solutions and coping mechanisms for issues that impact the cultural identity of the young adults in your parish.* Days of reflection and educational programs could be offered by the parish education office or local committees on leadership within a specific culture (e.g. Asian American, African American or Hispanic/Latino leadership).

- *Incorporate a system for parish networking.* This allows young adults to share their experiences and affirm other young adults' experiences, and it exposes the larger community to the different cultures of young adults.
- *Develop specific programs that foster community and expose cultures to one another.* Basic suggestions include a multi-parish young adult Mass or a sporting event with a sister parish.

The key is to ensure that existing programs and efforts towards community life and pastoral care with young adults are tailored for the particular needs of the diverse community. No one wants to reinvent the wheel; ultimately, the goal is increased awareness and sensitivity. Cesar Chavez once said, "The goal of all education should be, without a doubt, the service of others. We cannot seek fulfillment and forget the progress and prosperity of our community. Our ambitions should be broad enough to include the aspirations, needs and well-being of other as well as our own."

Hispanics/Latinos account for more than 50 percent of all Catholics under the age of thirty in the United States. Many Hispanics/Latinos young adults identify with two cultures, and sometimes with neither very well. Developing cross-cultural communication skills is essential for those leaders (both Hispanic/Latinos and non-Hispanic/Latinos) who ministers to Hispanic/Latino young adults. The following suggestions can assist those involved in pastoral care with Hispanic/Latino young adults.

- *Offer a cultural competency workshop or series like "Moving To Oneness"* for area pastors, directors of adult faith formation, young adult ministry teams, deacons, and so forth. The objectives would be (a) promoting understanding of the tremendous range of historical experiences and cultural differences between Hispanic/Latino sub-groups in the area and (b) identifying unique mental health and pastoral care needs of various persons in need (e.g. how to recognize and make effective referrals with persons who have suffered domestic violence, post-traumatic stress disorder, sexual abuse, civil war, or immigration traumas). Such workshop or programs could also be offered in an ecumenical setting sponsored by an area ministerial association and be open to health care professionals, police and city officials, and others in public service.
- *Utilize specific elements of cross-cultural training.* For example, have parishioners from different Hispanic/Latino sub-groups share their stories of family roots, immigration, struggles, and victories.
- *Contact the Archdiocese Office for MultiCultural Ministry* for workshops on diversity issues. (502-636-0296 Ext. 1245 or omm@archlou.org)

Identify groups that need focused attention in pastoral planning. Identify areas of cultural conflict for Hispanic/Latino young adults, such as attitudes toward women and how they affect

young Hispanics/Latinas' choices in areas like working, dating, establishing spousal and parental roles, and pursuing post-secondary education. Consider offering similar training simultaneously for different age groups and then bringing all ages together to share, eat and celebrate. (Recruit some area young adults—from the parish, area college service-learning classes, or a local community service center—to help with younger children so their parents can fully engage in the training.)

See Appendix A

Chapter 2

One Example of How to Start Young Adult Ministry

(The information in Chapters 2-4 is adapted from “The Catholic 20’s Group” – a manual designed by Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph, Cincinnati, Ohio 2010)

I. Overview

Starting Young Adult ministry from scratch is complex and challenging, and it requires flexibility and a willingness to try things that might not work. This chapter will make some suggestions for how to go about starting or strengthening Young Adult Ministry in your parish. These suggestions should be seen for what they are—suggestions—and each parish is invited to experiment and try what seems right to them.

II. Pray!

The first and most important step is to pray for God’s help and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And don’t just pray, ask other people to pray. Parishioners may be interested in gathering for a special time of prayer for young adults: older parishioners are often very concerned about younger Catholics and may be very pleased to be asked to pray for this intention. It may also be possible to add petitions to the intercessions during Sunday Mass. Christ assures us that this prayer will bear fruit: “Amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father.” (Mt 18:19)

III. Concrete Steps

1) Find a home-base parish, if a regional program seems best

Find a parish to sponsor and support the young adult group. The group will require some assistance from a priest or pastoral staff member, so the availability of a priest or pastoral staff member for this ministry is an important consideration. Other important considerations include the meeting facilities of the parish and the concentration of young adults living in the parish or nearby environs.

Some groups may be sponsored by multiple parishes working together as a team. Nonetheless, it seems advisable to have the weekly meeting at the same parish every week to avoid confusion. It also grounds the group more concretely in the life of the church, and helps the group to see itself as part of parish life, and not just renting space at different churches. It can be beneficial for other sponsoring parishes to host other events and regular meetings, however.

2) Gather 10-12 young adults for a listening session

3) Find interested young adults

Find a core group of young adults interested in starting a group. Ten seems to be a good threshold number. (It also constitutes a minyan, the minimum number traditionally required for Jewish public prayer.) If there are fewer than ten young adults who are nonetheless committed to making something happen, the best way forward may be to pray together for this intention, and spend time together getting to know each other better, perhaps with discussions of one kind or another. If the group remains smaller than ten, these young adults may want to try something else, perhaps a small informal bible study, or together attend an existing parish group that while not exclusively for young adults seems appropriate for them.

4) Advertise for an organizational meeting

Before holding any formal meetings, hold an organizational gathering, and advertise it through parish bulletins, pulpit announcements, diocesan newsletters, etc., and ask those young adults who have already expressed interest to invite their friends. At this gathering, a vision of what a young adult group is about should be presented and discussed. Those present should discuss their views about what their group should be about, and then try to move toward a consensus about how to proceed.

The group may want to have a special gathering to kick off the group's establishment—perhaps a cookout or a special Mass and dinner—or it may want to begin with a weekly meeting. In any case, at this organization gathering, it will be important to set a night and a time for regular weekly gathering. Various individuals will need to take responsibility for preparing whatever is decided.

5) Establish a core team

An open invitation should be extended to those interested in forming an initial core team. Volunteers may be elicited before, after, or during the initial organizational gathering. Volunteers should be asked to commit to a set period of time, something like six months. Based on their individual gifts and interests, invite each person to claim and lead one component. There may be rough spots as the group is trying to get started, but after six months, the core team should have a good sense of whether or not the group will be able to sustain itself. It may be that it can't, in which case there is not harm in acknowledging that fact, and perhaps disbanding or trying something else.

Until the group has time to settle down and get its bearings, it may be best for people to volunteer for different organizational responsibilities on an ad hoc basis, without assigning distinct roles. Or people may prefer to take on positions right from the beginning. In any case, once the core team feels like things have settled sufficiently, or as soon as growing numbers make it necessary, a chair should be appointed for one year, and other core team positions formally taken up for one year.

6) Discuss and put in writing descriptions of the group's mission, the core team's organization, and basic group policies

The core team should discuss and put in writing the group's purpose, organization, and policies. Such discussions will clarify the nature and purpose of the group, heighten the core team's sense of ownership, and prevent miscommunication. It is important that the core team's decisions be put into writing for future reference. They should also be made available to the rest of the group.

The best timing for such discussions may vary. Some may want to operate according to provisional guidelines, and then formally address these issues once the group has come into its own rhythm and the core team is up and running. Others may want to figure things out from the very beginning. In either case, the core team may find it helpful to conduct these discussions in the context of a planning retreat.

7) Begin the weekly meeting (*see Chapter 4 for a suggested format for weekly gathering)

The most important element to get started is a weekly gathering. It may be the case that there are no musicians able to provide contemporary music during prayer. If so, the group should decide whether to meet for quiet adoration or prayer or wait until a musician can be recruited. Recorded music is also a substitute for live music. For a faith discussion portion of the evening, the group may want to use only those formats that it finds easier to prepare (e.g., the Scripture Discussion format). Once things have settled down, and more volunteers come forward to help with the preparation work, other formats can be added to the rotation.

8) Advertise widely

Once the group has started to meet regularly, it is important to flood all relevant channels with publicity and advertisements. In this beginning stage, it is important to build up a critical mass of young adults as soon as possible. Ask group members to spread the word with family and friends.

Chapter 3

The Core Team

I. Overview

The administration and governance of young adult ministry is provided by a core team of young adult volunteers and a pastoral advisor from the parish staff. It does not rest on any single individual. Some core team members have particular responsibilities, while others simply participate in core team meetings and volunteer to assist with occasional events.

The core team should consider meeting monthly.

If there is a budget for young adult ministry, the core team determines how funds are disbursed, but the pastoral advisor would need to monitor and oversee the spending.

II. Description of the core team

The leadership of the group is provided by a core team of young adults and its pastoral advisor. The core team organizes gatherings and events and makes policy decisions for the group. However, the core team welcomes feedback and suggestions from the entire group. It is a non-elected body, composed of those interested in giving their time to organization and leadership. Conscious that “if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builder’s labor,” the core team’s first priority is developing and maintaining authentic communion with Christ and each other. In this spirit, members seek to pray for each other and help carry each other’s burdens – in all things, “striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3). Core team members should resolve any disagreements promptly, according to the guidelines laid out by Christ in Matthew 18:15-20, so that these disagreements serve rather than harm the group’s communion.

Leadership

Leadership will evolve and natural leaders emerge. Two leadership models have proven successful. They are: One person is designated as chair. This person should agree on two year tenure at most so that the leadership roles are shared and burn-out is avoided.

- Some ministry programs work most effectively with a leadership team where the roles are shared and the responsibility for the completion of tasks is also shared.

Each parish or groups of parishes should decide which leadership model will work best for their needs.

Chapter 4

Examples and Models

I. Format for weekly gatherings

1. Overview of a possible structure for weekly gatherings

The main weekly meeting has three parts:

- prayer
- faith discussion (or lecture)
- social gathering, usually at a local restaurant/bar/coffeehouse

Groups should feel great freedom to improvise based on particular circumstances. However, because the weekly gathering is important to the life of the group, adjustments to the format should always be made with great care and with a strong consensus among core team members.

N.B. This chapter provides many details for the actual structure of various parts of the weekly gathering that have proven effective in concrete experience. Particular groups may or may not want to follow every suggestion.

2. Elements of a successful weekly gathering

The following elements are very important:

1. Accessible and welcoming atmosphere

The weekly gathering serves as the key spiritual and social anchor for an intentional community of Catholic young adults. Moreover, it is the most natural point of entry for new members. These two primary aspects of the weekly gathering must be kept in mind at all times. Therefore, when planning upcoming gatherings, it is good for core team members to ask themselves these sorts of questions. Would adopting a certain regular practice over-emphasize a particular spirituality and marginalize those who do not share it? Would newcomers find a particular evening's gathering welcoming? Could newcomers find some aspect of it uncomfortable?

2. Open-ended participation

All young adults should feel encouraged to come to any or all of the three-parts of the evening. There should be no sense that people are obliged to come for the entire evening.

3. Variety in faith discussion

Every weekly gathering should involve some kind of faith discussion. Because the focus of the gathering meeting is the formation of community, rather than any specific intellectual objective (e.g., catechesis or bible study or theology discussion), variety is important. Any single format of faith discussion, no matter how excellent, can become stale if it is used every week without variation. Moreover, different young adults will prefer different formats.

4. Low maintenance structure

It is important that the actual weekly gatherings are low maintenance for the organizer. Otherwise, the workload will quickly lead to burn out and it cannot be sustained.

5. Delegation of organization to multiple individuals

Ideally each portion of the weekly gathering should be the responsibility of a different person – i.e. the music ministry, the prayer set-up, and each different faith discussion format should each have a different person in charge of it. This generates smooth organization, ensures that multiple people feel ownership.

3. Prayer –

Strong suggestion that this be quiet personal prayer in church or darkened room and include music (recorded or live)

Overview

Prayer is the first portion of the weekly evening. A period of relaxed, contemplative prayer before the discussion allows people to unwind after a day of work and connect with God in such a way that, afterwards, people tend to be refreshed and cheerful. This effect then lends itself to more vital discussions. It also serves a very practical function: those who come late can drift in to the prayer setting without any disruption to the group.

Prayer and music

Contemporary music is a crucial element of the prayer of most young adults. Some young adults may enjoy or even prefer silence, and others may prefer purely traditional music, the

Liturgy of the Hours, or the rosary. Nonetheless, a format centered on the use of contemporary music is essential for the prayer to have a broad appeal.

This does not mean that more traditional aspects of prayer or Eucharistic adoration should be habitually excluded. In fact, it is beneficial if this period integrates some traditional elements like *Tantum Ergo*, in English or Latin. Including these sorts of elements acquaints young adults with some of the traditional elements of the Church's prayer life in a natural way.

4. The beginning of the faith discussion

Overview

The second segment of the gathering is the faith discussion. Movement from the prayer space provides a literal change of pace and is a helpful transition. The faith discussion segment includes a welcome; introductions and an opening prayer; a talk or small group discussion; and then announcements and a closing prayer.

The welcome, introductions, and opening prayer

The faith discussion segment of the gathering ideally takes place in a parish center near the prayer space, with chairs set up in a circle (or, if there will be a talk, with chairs set up facing the speaker).

Every gathering, without exception, should begin with introductions. The opening of the meeting runs like this:

- I. A leader starts the gathering and welcomes those present.
- II. The leader invites those gathered to introduce themselves, and then answer some random question, e.g. what is your favorite picnic food, what was the last book you read, favorite childhood cartoon, etc. (see appendix for more suggestions). This sort of introduction opens the gathering in a light hearted way, without making those who are shy feel like they have to say anything particularly revealing. The importance of this opening introduction cannot be overemphasized. It gives members and newcomers a chance to inject their personality into the meeting, and to get to know each other.
- III. Afterwards the leader opens the gathering with a brief prayer.

IV. The faith discussion's rotating format

The format of the faith discussion changes every week on a monthly rotation.

A suggested rotation might run as follows:

Week One: Speaker

Week Two: Scripture Discussion

Week Three: Member Talk and Discussion

Week Four: Theology Discussion

(Week Five: Open Format)

Personal introductions when there are small group discussions

Part of the purpose of this portion of the evening is to enable young adults to get to know each other better. Therefore, if there are small group discussions (as there are with the Scripture Discussion, the Member Talk, and the Theology Discussion), it is important that introductions always precede the discussion. It is helpful to ask people to say more than just their names. For instance, one might invite people to mention a high and/or low of the past week.

Chapter 5

Other Suggested Formats for Gatherings

I. Overview

The purpose of the young adult ministry is to create a Christ-centered community of young adults. Therefore, like any authentic community, it requires a variety of gatherings and events in order to flourish. The weekly gathering provides an anchor, but it is only one aspect of a young adult ministry program. Other meetings and events are necessary to foster friendship, reach out to young adults who would not feel comfortable coming to the weekly gathering (at least at first).

Besides the regular weekly gathering, to flourish fully, the group should organize other regular contact meeting and regular service opportunities. It should also organize other one-time events that are social, service, and or/or spiritual.

This chapter outlines various regular gatherings and events that a young adult might want to consider organizing. The specific dynamics and membership of a particular young adult will determine which of them are most appropriate for a particular community.

II. Monthly Sunday Mass followed by brunch or dinner

Overview

Once a month, say on the 1st or 3rd Sunday, young adults are invited to attend a particular Sunday Mass, and then they head off to a restaurant for brunch or dinner. Alternatively the meal could be hosted in someone's home. Evening Masses often work well since they tend to get a larger crowd of young adults. Such a monthly gathering serves many purposes: it connects the group explicitly with Sunday Eucharist; it ensures that at least once a month young adults will see other young adults at the same Mass; and it provides a comfortable point of entry for newcomers.

III. Bible/Theology Study/Renew: Why Catholic?

Overview

The Bible/Theology Study offers a venue for those members interested in learning more about either scripture or theology. It meets in cycles for a few consecutive weeks on a particular topic, ideally in someone's home. Then there is a break and a new cycle of meeting begins. Renew: Why Catholic? Young Adult groups can use materials.

Selection of topic and materials

Those interested in organizing the Bible/Theology Study gather to discuss possible topics, which may either concern scripture or theology. Various study guides are available, and some of them are multi-media. Nonetheless, any text may serve as the basis for a particular study cycle. After the topic and materials have been selected, the group then determines a schedule of meetings, usually 3 to 6 consecutive weekly meetings. A volunteer usually offers his or her home for the duration of the study. Otherwise the group can meet on parish grounds.

IV. Monthly Social Event

Overview

Young Adult ministry strives to create community and foster friendship, and this objective requires a variety of social events in different contexts. A social committee oversees the planning of at least one social event per month.

Planning and suggestions

The monthly event can be anything from a cookout to a baseball game to the social aspect of a spiritual gathering (e.g., a reception or party that accompanies a special liturgy or Mass). Here are some ideas that have worked well:

- Game nights
- Texas Hold'Em poker tournament
- Paintball

- Corn maze
- Karaoke
- July 4th cookout and fireworks
- Super Bowl party
- Christmas or Epiphany party with “white elephant” re-gifting gift exchange
- Movie night
- New member night – a social gathering especially for new members to help them feel more welcome
- Bowling
- Trip to the state park
- Iron Chef style cook-off
- Semi-formal progressive dinner, charging more than needed for food to raise money for some charity

V. Service Outreach

Overview

Service should be an important element of young adult ministry. Service is not only intrinsic to the Christian life, and so the responsibility of any Christian community, it also provides an important source of spiritual vitality and joy that ultimately feeds back into young adult ministry.

Organizing the service outreach

In organizing the service outreach, a service committee should inquire to discover what forms of outreach are already going on, in the parish or the diocese. There may be some needs that have already been identified, and which the parish and diocese would warmly welcome the assistance of young adults. In general, a certain preference for inter-generational collaboration is desirable. Such collaboration benefits both young adults and older parishioners: it gives young adults an opportunity to learn from older parishioners and become more grounded in the local church community, and older parishioners become encouraged and inspired by the faith and energy of the young adults.

Practically speaking, the best way to organize the group's service outreach is through a combination of low-key, regular service that might attract fewer people, and periodic large-scale events on a quarterly basis that require and attract a larger number of people. This ensures that service outreach is a constant dimension of the group's activities, without extending members beyond their availability and energy.

Individual forms of parish service should be encouraged, such as, serving as Eucharistic ministers and lectors. This cultivates the member's connection with the concrete life of the parish. It also raises its visibility in the parish, which will draw other young adults to the parish.

Some ideas for regular service outreach

The following are some suggestions for regular, low-key forms of service that could be organized as a form of collective outreach:

- Volunteering with parish youth ministry
- Visiting nursing home residents
- Teaching Religious Education classes in the parish
- Some form of ministry to the homeless (e.g., monthly preparation of sandwiches)
- Advocacy for the needs of a local group (e.g., immigrants)
- Environmental service (e.g., cleaning part of road, maintaining public grounds)
- Contacting the diocese and making group members available to speak at schools and youth retreats about faith
- Participating in area pro-life prayer vigil or rosary walk
- Volunteering with area pregnancy center

Some ideas for one-time service events

The following are some suggestions for one-time service events, some of which could be done annually:

- Volunteering to help with annual parish picnic
- Housework or yard work for elderly parishioner identified by the pastor
- Day-long Habitat for Humanity project
- Visiting area nursing homes
- Spring or summer mission trip
- Participating in a public demonstration for a worthy cause, such as the Walk for Life in downtown Louisville or the March for Life in January in Washington, D.C.

VI. Sports and Outdoor Activities

Overview

The spectrum of the group's activities should include sports and outdoor activities. They provide a natural outlet for the energy and interests of many young adults. They also provide a non-threatening point of entry for young adults, especially those who are non-Catholic, or who are Catholic but uncomfortable about participating in the more explicitly religious meetings.

Sports

Some combination of regular and sporadic events is ideal. Softball, kickball, ultimate Frisbee, volleyball, and similar sports are particularly suited to a young adult group because men and women feel more comfortable playing such sports together.

Outdoor activities

Outdoor activities require more planning, and therefore tend to be intermittent and require organizer(s) to take charge of planning. A combination of day trips and overnight trips works best, so that those less familiar with hiking and camping can ease their way into new experiences. White water rafting trips can work very well too. The group may want to offer one big annual outing each summer, like a weekend camping trip in a nearby state park.

VII. Annual Retreat

Overview

Every year the group should sponsor some kind of annual retreat or link on to one offered by the archdiocese or a local religious community. There are a variety of formats that can be chosen. Depending on its needs and resources, the group may want to design its own retreat, or attend something offered by the Archdiocese or a monastery or retreat center.

National Organization for Young Adults

NCYAMA, the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association conducts young adult conferences and resources. Click on to their website for more information.

<http://www.ncyama.org/>

US Bishops' Documentation Young Adult Ministry

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Communities of Salt and Light."
Washington, DC, 1994.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes."
Washington, DC, 2010.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Sons and Daughters of Light."
Washington, DC, 1996.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Stewardship and Young Adults: An Invitation to
Help Change the World." Washington, DC, 2003.

Web Link: Generation Christ www.usccb.org/generationchrist/

Links to articles on: Theology on Tap; Nazareth Farm; Christ in the City; Charis Retreats; Young
Adult Catholics in the Military; Young Adult Diocesan Survey; Fast Facts.

Appendix A

Explanations of Multicultural Celebrations

Quinceañera

In Latino Culture, a girl's fifteenth birthday party is a religious and social occasion that ushers her into womanhood. Learn the traditions of this coming-of-age celebration.

The History

Celebrated by the Mayans and Aztecs, and later adapted by the Spanish Catholics that conquered South American, a girl's fifteenth birthday symbolized that she was ready for womanhood and marriage. She would spend time learning her duties, such as cooking, housework, cleaning, and child-rearing. After the fifteenth birthday party a girl was expected to get married. If she did not by the time she was sixteen or seventeen, she had options of becoming a priestess or staying home to take care of her parents. Today, girls still celebrate quinceañera as an entrance into becoming responsible, dating, and learning about their religion and culture.

The Religious Ceremony

The Quinceañera begins with the family and friends attending a special Mass dedicated to the birthday girl. During the ceremony, fourteen couples walk down the aisle behind her symbolizing the previous fourteen years of her life. Traditionally, the birthday marked the end of her childhood, and announced to the world that she was ready for married life. Today, preparing for the fifteenth birthday ceremony usually includes religion and culture classes so that the girl can begin to learn about and understand her culture.

The Party

This is what all the teenagers look forward to. A reception hall is rented or the family hosts the party in their home. Usually a DJ or live Mariachi band is hired to play while all the partygoers dance the night away. There is food and drink for everyone, and the birthday girl gets to dance with all the boys, beginning, of course, with her father.

The Dress

Considered an important, if not the most important part of the celebration, is the quinceañera dress. Traditionally, Quinceañeras wear long pink and white gowns, even though today all pastel colors are popular and girls may wear whatever color they wish. The occasion itself can be anywhere from very formal to quite casual, depending on what the family decides upon.

The Rituals

During the course of the evening, there are little rituals that are usually performed as symbols of the girl's life change. A porcelain doll is presented by the birthday girl to her younger sister as a sign that she is leaving those things behind. The Quinceañera's father also changes her shoes from flats to heels for the same reason. The first dance is performed by the birthday girl and her father, followed by a "chambelan", or boyfriend, followed by all the other boys.

Connection to Young Adult Community

The young adults in the parish can be influential in assuring that the Quinceañera celebrations stay connected to faith.

- Invite the parish young adults to pray for the girls, both individually and as a group.
- Invite the young adults to offer prayers for the girls during the Intercessions at Mass. Remind them to craft the wording of the prayers so that every listener links the Quinceañeras to faith.
- Invite young adult women to share conversations with the girls preparing for their Quinceañera that focus on the importance of a strong connection to faith as they grow into adulthood.

Kwanzaa

is a Swahili word, which means “first fruits of harvest”. Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday about the festival of the first harvest of the crops. It begins on December 26, and lasts for seven days. It is a time to celebrate family, community, and culture. We celebrate in the community in the presence of God, with prayer, drumming, dance, song, gifts, storytelling, and a community feast. It is not a replacement for Christmas nor is it a Black Christmas. Kwanzaa is built on seven principles that are commonly known as “Nguzo Saba”. These principles are:

1. umoja – unity
2. kujichagulia – self-determination
3. ujima – collective work and responsibility
4. ujamaa – cooperative economics
5. nia – purpose
6. kuumba – creativity
7. imani – faith

The point of Kwanzaa is not one of gift giving or religious celebration, but a commemoration of heritage and togetherness. Family and friends should find Kwanzaa to be a time of sharing and pulling together. The guiding principles teach values we tend to lose in a more modern and solitary society. Since the original ideas were to bring forth the harvest, the guiding principles bring people together to remind us how important we are to each other. This celebration provides opportunities for young adults as well as other family members to gather.

Community Rites of Passage process was conceived twenty years ago with a host of community leaders who discussed and challenged their individual communities to voice their concerns, criticisms, and solutions to problems as they relate to the transitional stages of a young person’s life from childhood to young adulthood. CROP is an African custom that marks a significant change in life. In an effort to reverse dismal trends negatively affecting Youth from the African Diaspora, innovative leaders are infusing Africentric beliefs with their current efforts to transform the participants. The conversion is on-going; however one stage is completed when the young male and/or female student is socialized to value Kemetite values such as spiritual attainment, education, morals, and virtue. Young Adults actively engaged as mentors, participants and worship leaders. The process is a ten month experience.

Kujenga Viogonzi is a holistic approach to developing leadership skills from an Africentric practical perspective that is rooted in God, the creator, Jesus the liberator and the Holy Spirit

who sustains us. It is reality based and offers many opportunities for young adults to enhance their Christian leadership skills. The three-day process is designed to heighten their cultural awareness, in addition to providing a solid Africentric foundation. This process takes place three times a year.

Umjoja Council represents the diverse members from the multicultural community to provide a voice and to be a vehicle for Office of Multicultural Ministries (OMM) to address matters related to faith formation, leadership and vocations. The council assist OMM's in implementing the Archdiocesan Strategic Plan from a young adult perspective. The Umjoja Council gathers for various activities to bond and share cultural experiences. They also perform various community service projects as well as assist with various OMM/CEC events and programs.

Day of Reflection is an annual gathering targeting the intergenerational population with special emphasis on Young Adults to engage them in the life of the church.

Filipino Festival

is a community event that showcases the richness of the Filipino culture and promotes a respect for and appreciation of the Filipino heritage.

Featuring prayer, music and a delectable cuisine, young adults come together to celebrate faith, tradition and family and participate throughout the entire celebration. This festival has been a part of the Louisville and Cathedral of Assumption Filipino communities for almost twenty years. It is overseen by a small group of women, calling on others in the community to assist by sharing their time, talents and treasures. This includes donating and preparing all of the food. People from Elizabethtown, southern Indiana and as far away as Chicago come to town to join in the festivities. The celebration starts with a special Mass and procession and culminates with a wonderful meal in the Undercroft of the Cathedral. The festival always coincides with the celebration of the only Filipino saint, Saint Lorenzo Ruiz. He is also the first Filipino martyred for the Christian faith. Lorenzo Ruiz was a layman, married, and had two sons and a daughter. He was born in Binondo, Manila in about the 1600's. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II in Manila on February 18, 1981 and elevated to full honors of the altar by canonization on October 18, 1987 in Rome. The feast day is on September 28th and the festival is always celebrated on the Sunday closest to the 28th. The Filipino Festival is celebrated at the Cathedral of the Assumption located at 433 South 5th St., Louisville, Kentucky 40202. There is always a small fee (\$10 or less – the price has varied over the years) and the proceeds go toward a minority scholarship fund to provide educational scholarships to minority children.

Belizean Garifuna Settlement Day Celebration

is a community-wide event where young adults celebrate the richness of the

Belizean heritage by participating in dancing, music, scripture readings and prayer. The purpose of the event is to commemorate the Garifuna Settlement. The rich, unique Garifuna culture is showcased throughout the celebration with dance, music, displays and traditional food and drink. The most important day on the Garifuna calendar is November 19th. Garifuna Settlement Day highlights the first arrival of the Garinagu (plural for Garifuna) to Belize by dory (dug-out canoe) in 1832. It is celebrated in all Garifuna communities throughout the country. Garifuna Settlement Day has been a public holiday on November 19th in the Stan Creek and Toledo district of Belize since 1943 and a country wide public holiday since 1977. In Louisville, Kentucky, the event is always celebrated on November 19th or on the Saturday closest to November 19th. It's also always celebrated at St. Martin de Porres Church located at 3112 West Broadway, Louisville, Kentucky 40211. Admission is free and all are welcome.

Haitian Independence Day Celebration

is an event where young adults come together to celebrate the independence of Haiti. They are able

to join in the festivities by providing music (song), dance and reading about Haiti's history, traditional food and fellowship. This is an occasion to honor and commemorate the history and heritage of Haiti and to remember the heroes who founded the first independent black republic. They include famous men like Toussaint L'Ouverture, General Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Francois Capois and people whose names we don't know, who stood up for their right to live as a free people. 500,000 slaves achieved their freedom under the leadership of these great men. Jan 1st is not only New Year's Day, it is also Haitian Independence Day, a celebration of freedom. On January 1st, 1804, Saint-Domingue ceased to exist and modern Haiti was born. Haiti was officially declared an independent country and we celebrate Haitian Independence Day every January 1st. In Louisville, the festivities normally take place at the Catholic Enrichment Center located at 3146 West Broadway, Louisville, Kentucky 40211. Admission is free and all are welcome.

Vietnamese New Year

–Tet Nguyen Dan't, as the Vietnamese New Year is called, is a huge celebration centered around many traditions and rituals. Tet is the abbreviation of Tet Nguyen Dan, which means the first day of the New Year. Tet marks the beginning of a new year on the lunar calendar and the beginning of Spring. This major celebration lasts for three days.

The excitement and preparation for the New Year starts weeks early. The Vietnamese go to great measures to start the New Year out right. They clean their homes to get rid of all bad fortunes from the previous year. They paint their homes, buy new clothes and shoes, pay off all debts and resolve differences between family and friends to rid themselves of all bad feelings. On New Year's Day cleaning is avoided in order not to rid the house of any good luck. Visiting people in mourning is avoided because they are associated with death, and children should not fight or cry on this day. Vietnamese are very deliberate and careful on what they do on New Year's Day. The belief is that the events on New Year's Day determine one's luck for the rest of the year.

The week before Tet is very busy, as people are shopping for food, trinkets, firecrackers, flowers and other items in anticipation of this holiday. The color red is seen everywhere, symbolizing good luck. The aroma of incense can be smelled throughout the homes of Vietnamese. Food is prepared in abundance, and like many other cultures, there are traditional foods items that are prepared. Gifts are exchanged, games are played and homes are colorfully decorated in their traditional colors of red and yellow.

Vietnamese Martyrs

, also known as the Martyrs of Tonkin, Martyrs of Annam, Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions or Martyrs of Indochina, are saints

canonized by Pope John Paul II on June 19, 1988. Thousands of overseas Vietnamese gathered to celebrate on this day to celebrate the canonization of 117 Vietnamese Martyrs. This memorial and annual event coincides with the Feast Day of the Vietnamese Martyrs, marked on Nov. 24. The actual celebration in the Archdiocese of Louisville and other dioceses takes place in October. The colorful celebration features traditional Vietnamese music, food, dancing and theater. Many are dressed in their traditional garb.

Vietnamese Moon Festival

is a mid-Autumn Moon Festival, known as *Tat Trung Thu* in Vietnam is an ancient festival that revolves around children. It dates back as far as 15-20,000 years ago in Southeast Asia, and is traditionally held on the 15th day of the 8th Lunar month. The celebration is held in September. The actual date changes according to the moon. It is always held during a full moon, which represents fullness and prosperity of life. The celebration traditionally starts in the late afternoon and goes until late at night.

Traditional thought says that this celebration came about as a way for parents to spend time with their children to make up for time lost during the harvest season. They would spend a lot of time working hard and away from their families. So the parents wanted to do something special with their children as well as celebrate the harvest. The harvest was done by September, which is August in the lunar calendar. This celebration is much like a combination of Halloween and Thanksgiving. Children parade and sing in the streets carrying colorful lanterns while performing traditional dances. It is customary to give traditional moon cakes (*Banh Trung Thu*).

Korean New Year

also known as *Seol-Nahl*, is the first day of the lunar calendar.

Seol-Nahl is used by many Koreans to return to their home towns to visit their parents and relatives where they perform the ancestral ritual known as *Cha-rye* in the morning dressed in traditional costume called *Han-bok*.

After the ceremony, *Se-bae* is followed. Children wish their parents and older relative a happy new year by performing one deep bow with the phrase "*Sae-hae bok mahn-hi-badeau-seyo*", meaning "please receive many blessings in the new year." In return, children can be rewarded with some money and/or rice cookies.

Traditional games are associated with the New Year. The family board game *Yut-no-ri* is still a popular pastime. Flying kites is for boys and even men, and *Neol-ttwi-gi* (game of jumping on a seesaw) is for women.

Korean Harvest Celebration and Day of Thanksgiving – Chu Suk

is a popular Korean Festival during the harvest season. The festival is also celebrated as a mark of respect to elders. Families visit their ancestral properties in home towns. It is a time for feasting and happiness for Koreans. Offerings are made of newly harvested foods. Songp'yon, crescent-shaped rice cakes stuffed with sesame seeds, chestnut paste or beans, are a Chu Suk favorite. The celebration lasts for three days and is generally held in October along with a mass of celebration.

Koreans hold memorial services at the graves sites of the elderly. Kang Kang Sue Wol Lae, a traditional ceremony is observed a night before Chu Suk. The women sometimes gather in circles and sing songs to mark the festival. It is a time to be thankful to God and each other.

Activities like archery, wrestling, and singing competitions are a common feature of this Korean harvest festival.

September 8 – Nuestra Señora de la Caridad de Cobre/Our Lady of Charity of Copper
Primary county of celebration: Cuba

This celebration provides an opportunity for young adults to come together and celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Charity of Cobre. Young adults take part in this celebration by planning the celebration, singing in the choir, participate as liturgical ministers, and carry the statue of Our Lady of Cobre in a procession throughout the streets. After the procession a meal is provided for the community. The parishes of Holy Name and St. Rita celebrate this day every year on September 8th, our Lady's feast day.

December 12 – La Virgen de Guadalupe/Our Lady of Guadalupe
Primary country of celebration: Mexico

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrates the appearances of Our Blessed Mother to the Aztec peasant Juan Diego in 1531. Many opportunities for our young adults to get involved and participate are available. In many of the parishes of the Archdiocese of Louisville, many young adults do all the planning and execution of this celebration. They rehearse and perform in plays of the apparitions, they form choirs and musical groups to play during the Mass celebration and some parishes have young adults dress as indigenous people and perform and indigenous dance to our Lady of Guadalupe. After the celebration of the Mass, many parishes offer a meal and provide an opportunity for parishioners to come together in to celebrate and build community. The actual Lady of Guadalupe celebrations begin the night of December 11 with a

late night prayer service and all-night vigil. Then early on the morning of the 12th, there may be Mass or a prayer and music service called the “mañanitas” (early mornings). The day ends with an evening celebration of Mass.

December 16-24 – Las Posadas/The Journey of “The Inns”
Primary country of celebration: Mexico

The Latino custom of “Las Posadas” (The Inns) is the reenactment of Joseph and Mary’s journey to Bethlehem and their search for lodging. Young adults provide the leadership for this celebration. They volunteer to dress as Mary and Joseph, guide those participating in the prayer exchange which is usually sung, provide the instruments and gather the children for the breaking of the piñatas. This celebration begins nine days before Christmas. Each day a different family or parish group provides the meeting space or their home for this celebration. The young adults usually take turns leading a decade of the rosary and leading the group in song.

Appendix B- Discernment

(In parish settings, people of all ages meet points in their lives when they face transitions. This tool for discernment can be used in group settings or with individuals when they face transitions)

Discernment – Answering the Great Questions of Life

- **What am I supposed to do with my life?**
- **How do I find purpose in my life?**
- **Am I doing what God needs me to do?**

All of us confront these questions at some point in our lives. The young adult years are often the critical years for answering these questions. As we move into adulthood often the great questions of life come to the forefront of our spiritual and psychic energy.

Spiritual discernment is closely linked to these questions: How do I find the direction of my life and how do I know I am doing what I am supposed to do?

Spiritual discernment is calling on the Holy Spirit to lead or give direction on these matters. It leads us to understand what God wants us to do and be.

There is discernment of:

- gifts
- spirits
- actions
- intents
- the course of the times we live in

Discernment is more than just a skill. Discernment is a gift from God before it is anything else. Yet there are clearly skills you can put to use when using discernment to determine what is next in your life.

Discernment is more than just a process. Even for the most ‘material’ or ‘nitty-gritty’ matters, there is a Spirit at work nudging us, leading us and even pulling us along. Discernment isn’t usually a sudden zap from beyond, but something which emerges from hard work and close attention.

These are the main things to look for in discerning about something:

- it is governed by love, for if it is not, it's worthless (1 Corinthians 13:1-3);
- it center us onto Jesus the Christ and Lord (1 Cor 12:3), and His good news;
- it directs us to Scripture, not away from it (Isaiah 8:19, 20);
- it builds up the church and its members (Ephesians 4:11-12), giving it power, wisdom, character, boldness, and unity.
- it helps create in us a love of righteousness, a heightened sense of right and wrong, and a deep desire to make a difference in our world.

Discerning God's will is not just the work of an individual person. The Spirit acts within the gathered believers (the Church) so they can discern what to do and be. Within that context, specific persons may be given the gift for leading the church as it discerns. Such gifted people matter. They listen closely, notice what's happening in the world around them, and instinctively know what place it has in God's plans. There are people trained in spiritual discernment in our own archdiocese are called Spiritual Directors. Ask your pastor or contact OLFE Faith Formation for a list of trained Spiritual Directors.

One of the keys to discernment is **surrender**. If you treat "I" the emperor of all things, you won't be in the right place to find out what God wants of you. In fact, this selfish imperial view of existence lies at the heart of all sin: we act as if we're God, even though we certainly know better. So we need to set aside what we want and what we've been taught, and join with Jesus in His prayer in the face of His most ultimate decision: "Yet not as I will, but as You will." (Matt 16:39)

Another key to discernment is a 'sense of peace' about something. That peace must take place not by itself, but within the rest of the framework of discernment. Such peace and security comes and grows with prayer. Peace is a gift God is more than happy to give. God wants us to have some sense of security about what we do.

Some hints which confirm God's activity in our lives:

- a chance encounter with just the right person;
- a thought or conviction that keeps growing;
- something from the Bible which comes to mind;
- something said in conversation which keeps coming to mind;
- an opportunity which suddenly opens up.

These hints mean nothing by themselves, but can mean a lot when taken together.

A decision empowers you to act. When you don't decide, you give power to someone or something else to make the decision. So if there is not a clear sense of direction, it could be a hint that you need to return to prayer and some spiritual listening.

You are one of God's chosen ones but you do not hold the reins of power. In fact, God does, and God will work through you and others if you get out of the way.

DISCERNING RELIGIOUS LIFE

SIX SUGGESTIONS FOR THOSE SPECIFICALLY DISCERNING RELIGIOUS LIFE:

From: *"Prayer and Discernment"* an article published in VISION 2011 Catholic Religious Vocation Discernment Guide; Chicago: TrueQuest Communications, 2010.

PRAY: A true vocation leads to a deeper, more intimate relationship with God so we need to spend time in prayer.

KNOW HOW GOD OPERATES IN OUR LIFE: Determine how you know God is present, what signs or persons God is placing in your life and in what ways are you being drawn or not to explore religious life.

CONSULT SOMEONE ELSE: Approach the vocation director of your diocese or the religious community that seems attractive to you. Sometimes it is helpful to establish a relationship with a spiritual director and/or plan to visit a religious community.

EVERY VOCATION IS HOLY: Our Church teaches that all vocations are holy and one is not better than another. Discernment is about listening to God and determining which vocation will use your best gifts for others.

TRUST: God is present in every situation in our lives so trust that God will give you the direction you need if you trust and are patiently open to where you will be lead.

KNOW YOURSELF: Reflect on your weaknesses and strengths. Consider your gifts and as you discern ask God: "Where can I use the gifts I have to best do your work and serve others?"

Appendix C: Resources

Resource for Financial Planning Skills:

Veritas Financial Ministries – (Endorsed by the Stewardship Office of the Archdiocese).

Small Group Process using book and videos:

7 Steps to Becoming Financially Free by Phil Lenahan

For more information go to: <http://www.veritasfinancialministries.com>

Print Resources on Young Adult Ministry:

Being Catholic in a Culture of Choice Thomas P. Rausch;
Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2006.

Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes Washington, DC.:
United State Conference of Catholic Bishops Publishing, 2010.

Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Life of Emerging Adults Christian Smith;
New York: Oxford Press, 2009.

Internet Resource:

- **Busted Halo** an internet site for Catholic Young Adults. For more information go to:
<http://www.bustedhalo.com>

Under the direction of Fr. Dave Dwyer, CSP, Busted Halo® Ministries helps young adults explore their spirituality, listen to and encourage one another, discover (or re-discover) the rich depths of Catholic tradition, and connect to communities of faith where their unique gifts will be respected and used, and where they will find support on their journey towards God.

- African American Young Adult Network nbcyan@aol.com
- Vietnamese Young Adults
- National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association www.ncyama.org

Appendix D:

Goals, Objectives and Some Suggested Strategies for Young Adult Ministry

Goal 1: Connecting Young Adult with Jesus Christ

Objectives

- **Spiritual Formation:** Assisting young adults to develop their spiritual life rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- **Faith Formation:** Assisting young adults to appreciate and grow in their understanding of the teachings of the Church through catechesis and provide them with faith sharing opportunities.
- **Vocational Discernment:** Assisting young adults to understand vocation as a call to holiness and Christian maturity.

Some Strategies

- Provide opportunities for participation: in sacraments, experience different forms of prayer, retreats, and other spiritual growth experiences.
- Provide wide variety of opportunities and venues for religious education and provide resources for the study of Church teachings and its relevance to daily life (study or discussion groups, etc.).
- Provide Discernment Weekends for Religious Vocation; Provide Marriage Preparation Sessions and Marriage Enrichment Sessions; Provide Parenting Sessions

Goal 2: Connecting Young Adults with the Church

Objectives

- **Evangelization:** Identify places where young adults gather, invite them personally to involvement in the Church by listening to their concerns, hopes and welcoming them into the community of faith. (This is labor intensive and needs a pastoral team to go to where they are . . . include trained young adult leaders and pastoral leaders.)

- Form Faith Communities: Invite young adults to membership on parish committees and ministries – worship, music, faith sharing groups of other adults, etc.
- Pastoral care: Provide visitations, activities and counseling opportunities that respond to spiritual and developmental needs of young adults.

Some Strategies

- Invite through personal contact, e-mail blasts, text messages, letters, via parents or siblings, etc.
- Identify places where they gather and visit those places and/or post fliers and messages about parish activities for their age group.
- Form a core team of young adult leaders and encourage them to invite their friends and work mates to church activities.
- Provide counseling or support groups for those experiencing trauma or tragedy.

Goal 3: Connecting Young Adults with the Mission of the Church

Objectives

- Forming a Christian Conscience: Exploring Gospel and Church Teachings on Moral and Social Teachings.
- Educating and Working for Justice: Provide opportunities for young adults to do service outreach and justice learning.
- Developing Leaders for the Present and the Future: Offer leadership training.

Some Strategies

- Offer religious education sessions for young adults that updates their knowledge and understanding of church teachings.
- Invite young adults on mission or immersions trips and/or provide contact info for local sites.
- Establish a group of mentors (older adults) for professional relationship and faith connectors.

- Provide leadership training workshops and weekends.

Goal 4: Connecting Young Adults with a Peer Community

Objectives

- Form Communities of Peers

- To Identify and Train a Young Adult Leadership Team

Some Strategies

- Invite young adults for form faith formation groups, prayer groups, social groups, sport teams, social teams, Facebook groups, etc.

- Allow young adults to plan their own activities.

Appendix E: 10 Pointers in Leadership Skills

(From Total Youth Ministry: Youth Leadership Development, Winoma, Minnesota: St. Mary's Press, 2004. Used with Permission)

Roadblocks to Effective Communication

Some discussion methods tend to intensify problems rather than alleviate them. Those are called roadblocks to effective communication. Twelve roadblocks are as follows.

Judging

1. Judging, criticizing, blaming: "That's really immature."
2. Name-calling, ridiculing: "You're so wrong!"
3. Interpreting, diagnosing: "You're just jealous of them."
4. Praising, agreeing: "Well, I think you're pretty (or smart or a great player)."

Sending Solutions

5. Ordering, directing, commanding: "Call me next time you have this problem!"
6. Warning, admonishing, threatening: "If you do that, you'll be sorry."
7. Exhorting, moralizing, preaching: "You ought to do this: . . ."

Avoiding the Other's Concerns

8. Advising or giving solutions: "Just go find other friends."
9. Diverting, distracting: "Why don't you just move?"
10. Lecturing, teaching, giving logical arguments: "Let's look at the facts: . . ."
11. Reassuring, sympathizing: "Don't worry, everything will work out fine."

Steps to a Win-Win Solution

Step 1: Listen to the other person and see the problem from his or her perspective.

Hints

- Put yourself in the other's shoes—see to understand.
- Give expression to the needs and the concerns of the other.
- Listen attentively and reflect what the other is saying.
- Empty yourself of your agenda and defense.

Step 2: Identify the needs (key issues and concerns—not positions) of all involved.

Hints

- Make a list of all the needs—issues and concerns.
- Move away from positions.
- Be concrete. Ask why? or why not?
- Be flexible.

Step 3: Determine what results would constitute a fully acceptable solution.

Hints

- Make a list.
- Focus on “must-haves” versus “nice-to-haves,” such as *I must* get to work on time versus *it would be nice* to have the car to get there.

Step 4: Identify possible new options to achieve those results.

Hints

- Brainstorm as many solutions as possible. Do not evaluate any idea, even if it seems unattainable.
- Think outside the box.
- Evaluate the brainstormed ideas based on the criteria arrived at in step 3.
- Consider which of these solutions meet the needs of all parties.

Steps for Effective Planning

1. Work as a team.
As you plan, who will be the facilitator, the recorder, and the timekeeper?
2. Identify the needs.
What are the needs of the group for whom you are planning?
3. State your goals.
What are you trying to accomplish through this activity, project, or program?
4. Identify partners and resources.
Who in your community can help you meet the goals of your activity, project, or program?
5. Work out the details of your plan.
The plan needs to cover the following key items in detail:
Where?
When?
What is the target audience?
Who will do what?
What is required of each part of the event (for example, prayer, activities, food, speakers)?
6. Create ownership and support.
How will you get the word out about the event? Who will you include to ensure its success?
7. Create an evaluation strategy.
How will you know if your activity, project, or program was a success and what needs to be improved?

Attending Skills

Attending skills involve total presence. To tend to the person before you is to care enough to work at being as present as possible to her or him.

Posture

- Maintain a state of relaxed alertness.
- Incline your body toward the speaker—“sit on the edge of your seat.”
- Face the speaker squarely—don’t turn a cold shoulder.
- Keep your arms and legs uncrossed—keep your body open.
- Maintain an appropriate distance from the speaker—not too close or too far.

Body Movement

- Move your body in response to the speaker—by nodding your head, and so forth.
- Avoid making distracting motions or gestures.
- Do not respond to outside things that could distract you from the speaker.

Eye Contact

- Maintain fairly constant eye contact with the speaker.
- Allow your eyes to convey emotion to the speaker.

Facial Gestures

- Use your face to communicate with the speaker—offer smiles, quizzical looks, winks, and so on.
- Avoid “hard” or angry looks.

Environment

- Reduce environment distractions to a minimum.

Reflective Listening Skills

Reflective listening skills provide a mirror to the person speaking. The idea is to reflect what the person is saying. Reflective listening includes four levels:

- **Paraphrasing** is a short response that affirms the content of what the speaker was saying. Paraphrasing says the same thing the speaker is saying, using the listener's words. It ensures that the listener is hearing the message correctly.
- **Reflecting feelings** is a response that focuses not just on content but also on underlying feelings. The listener concentrates on the body language, tone, and feeling words used by the speaker. Statement that reflect feelings can begin with "You feel sad because . . ."
- **Reflective meaning** is a response that suggests a possible meaning being conveyed. The listener expresses it as an invitation for clarification. Using this response is a way for listeners to make sure that they are correct in their assumption about underlying feelings and tone. Statements that reflect meaning can begin with "It sounds like you are . . ."
- **Summary reflection** is a response whereby the listener summarizes what she or he has heard the speaker say—not the listener's opinion on the issue. Summary reflection is used to let the speaker know that she or he is understood. Summary reflections may begin with "What I have heard you saying is . . ."

Styles of Decision Making

Voting

How it works

- For a simple majority, the choice with the most votes wins.
- For a true majority, the winning choice must receive at least 50 percent of votes plus one.

Advantages

- Voting is fast, is easy, requires no discussion, and works well with large numbers of people.

Disadvantages

- Group members may feel like winners or losers, and those who lost may not support the decision.

When is should be used

- Voting should be used when time is short, when the decision does not require that everyone be happy with it, when the group is very large and discussion is impractical, and when it is necessary to narrow down choices before discussing options.

Consulting

How it works

- For decision by authority, one person makes the choice for the group.
- For decision by authority with consultation, one person makes the choice after giving members of the group an opportunity to provide input.

Advantages

- Decision by authority is fast, is easy, and does not require discussion.
- Decision by authority with consultation allows input from group members and allows them to feel listed to, and gives the authority additional information to consider.

Disadvantages

- The group may not feel ownership for the decision and may not use their energies to act on it. They can resent the power of the authority.

- In decisions by authority with consultation, if the authority makes a different decision than that supported by the input of the group members, bad feelings and resentment can occur. Feelings of ownership among members is not guaranteed.

When it should be used

- Consulting should be used when the authority has some expertise and information not shared by the members, for routine matters and decisions that will not need a strong ownership of group members, and when there is little time or opportunity to talk with group members.

Consensus

How it works

- For consensus, everyone expresses their ideas and opinions; no one judges or asserts power over the group. People deal with the facts and information necessary to make a good decision, and stay away from opinions and personality conflicts. People do not give up their ideas to avoid conflict. In fact, they understand that conflict is inevitable and helpful for finding out new information and ideas. The group continues working until each member can support or at least live with the decision.
- For true consensus, everyone fully supports the idea.
- For limited consensus, everyone can live with the idea.

Advantages

- Consensus produces a decision that everyone is happy with and is usually very creative, results in a decision that group members are highly committed to, uses the resources of the whole group, and results in no losers.

Disadvantages

- A lot of time and energy is required, and the group members must be committed to reaching consensus or a false consensus can occur (in a false consensus, people pretend to agree with the decision but are not committed to it). The group members must have good listening and negotiating skills to reach a successful consensus.

When it should be used

- Consensus should be used when the decision is worth the time and the energy, and ownership for the idea by everyone is important.

A Decision Making Process

Leaders are responsible for decisions that require great thought and effort. Having a game plan for tackling those decisions is important because they affect the people with whom we interact. By developing and using good decision-making skills, we avoid unnecessary conflict. Decision making is the process of naming issues, identifying options, choosing solutions, and implementing decisions within the framework of our vision, values, and priorities.

1. Identify the decision to be made.

Describe the situation clearly so that you can recognize what the real issue is:

2. Determine the available options.

It is good to brainstorm several solutions without rejecting any. This is the opportunity for creative ideas to surface. Briefly name the options:

3. Choose the three most workable options from the list you have brainstormed:

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

4. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Through this discussion, a picture of *why* one option might be more suitable than another will emerge. Respect each person's opinion during this step. Encourage participants to name their tangible and moral- or value- driven concerns.

Advantages**Disadvantages**

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

5. Decide which decision to implement.

When you have explored your options and looked at the advantages and the disadvantages of each one, some things should start to fall into place. It is time to make a decision:

6. Evaluate the decision.

Set aside time for a future follow-up discussion to evaluate progress. This is important because learning and growth often happen in hindsight or while "working out the bugs." Look to make sure that the idea chosen yields the advantages you were hoping for.

How to Plan a Meeting

Consider the following elements when planning a meeting:

Purpose

Name the three most important things you hope to accomplish. The purpose for a meeting might include these points:

- planning or assigning tasks
- connecting or building community
- Completing a specific task
- learning or training
- socializing
- faith sharing, prayer, or reflection

Timing

When determining how long the meeting should last, consider these questions:

- Can we realistically cover the agenda?
- Will the group have enough energy for the agenda?
- When will the meeting start?
- When will it end?
- What is the best time to meet, as determined by these concerns:
 - availability
 - energy
 - impact on other activities

Participants

Consider whether you have invited the following people:

- those who have the authority to decide issues
- those whose commitment is needed
- those who need to know

With meetings focused on long-term planning, event planning, and the completion of specific tasks, strive for the minimum number of people because smaller numbers hold interest and increase participation.

Physical Arrangements

Consider the following questions:

- What facilities and equipment does the meeting need?

- How should the meeting room be arranged?
 - Can everyone see one another?
 - Are tables needed for written work?
 - Is the room large enough or small enough to comfortably hold those in attendance?

Role Assignments

Every meeting should include three roles:

- The **facilitator** leads the meeting, guides the conversations, and keeps the group on task. One or more people can play this role during a meeting.
- The **recorder** documents the discussions and the decisions made by the group. After the meeting the recorder provides a written report of the meeting to all those who participated, keeping a copy for reference at future meetings. The recorder should not be the same person as the facilitator.
- The **timekeeper** ensures that the meeting starts and ends on time. The timekeeper also makes sure that the group does not spend too much time on any one agenda item. Sometimes the facilitator plays this role during a meeting.

In addition, consider these roles:

- setup and cleanup
- hospitality
- prayer leader
- presenter

Follow-up Methods

Meetings often lead to additional tasks being assigned for completion in the coming weeks or months. At the end of the meeting, it is important to know the following:

- what tasks have been assigned to whom
- the deadlines for completion of those tasks
- who is accountable to whom

Also be sure to give a summary of the meeting, includes these elements:

- Describe the mutual understanding of decisions made, tasks assigned, and work completed.
- Identify items that need follow-up, and who will do the work.
- Identify any next steps and possible agenda items for the future.

You might also want to check in on these concerns:

- How are people feeling?
- Do people need anything (such as information, help or supplies) to move forward?

A Checklist for Effective Meetings

Review this checklist to ensure that you have thought through all the necessary elements of the meeting.

- The facilitator prepares an agenda before the meeting.
- The participants have an opportunity to contribute to the agenda.
- The facilitator provides notice of the meeting start time, end time, and location, and gives a copy of the agenda to each participant.
- Meeting facilities are confirmed and are comfortable and adequate for the number of participants.
- Beverages and food are available when appropriate. Water is always available.
- The meeting begins on time.
- The meeting has a scheduled ending time that is honored.
- The facilitator or timekeeper monitors time throughout the meeting.
- Everyone has an opportunity to present their viewpoints.
- No one dominates the discussion.
- Everyone has a voice in decisions made at the meeting.
- The meeting ends with a summary of accomplishments.
- The group defines and delegates follow-up task, and sets dates for completion.
- The recorder ensures that each participant receives minutes of the meeting.
- The facilitator stays in touch with the participants, following up on actions agreed upon during the meeting.
- The decision-making process used is appropriate for the purpose and the size of the group.

Leading As Jesus Did

Scripture Reading	Leadership qualities	Jesus as leader	Christian leaders
Matthew 21:12-17 (Jesus cleanses the temple.)	Principle Centered	A person of principle	Lead lives based on the values and beliefs that they embrace: walk the talk
John 1:1-11 (The wedding at Cana)	Incorruptible	A person of integrity	Demonstrate integrity by being true to values in word and action
Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes)	Vision oriented	A visionary	Establish a vision that gives direction to all members
Matthew 22:15-22 (a question about paying taxes)	Proactive	A proactive person	Hold values that determine how they will act; do not react out of feelings and situations
Matthew 15:32-39 (Feeding the four thousand)	Compassionate	A person of compassion	Respond to the needs and pains of others
John 8:1-11 (A woman caught in adultery)	Forgiving	A forgiver of past transgressions	Forgive unconditionally while pointing to the future
Luke 10:38-42 (Jesus visits Martha and Mary.)	Listening	A listener	Listen to people and really try to hear their issues, concerns, and feelings
Mark 2:1-12 (Jesus heals a person who is paralyzed.)	Interdependent	Interdependent with God and others	Rely on God; rely on the gifts of the community to complement personal gifts and weaknesses
Matthew 10:5-15 (The mission of the Twelve)	Empowering	Empowering of others	Share power; know that God has the power; bring out the best in others; equip others with the skills needed to contribute
John 13:1-8, 12-15 (Jesus washes the disciples' feet)	Serving others	A servant-leader	Meet the needs of the people they lead; don't ask others to do what they themselves are not willing to do

Appendix F: Using Technology to Reach and Connect Young Adults

The USCCB's Department of Communications offers an online resource for using technology, particularly social media, in ministry with young adults. Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for the 44th World Communication Day (2010), talks about new forms of media as ways to "offer priests and all pastoral workers a wealth of information and content that was difficult to access before, and facilitate forms of collaboration and greater communion in ways that were unthinkable in the past."

<http://www.usccb.org/comm/social-media-guidelines.shtml#guidelines>

Technology cannot be a substitute for face-to-face relationship building or personal invitation, but it also cannot be ignored. Virtual means of communication and social networking are an integrated part of the lives of a vast majority of young adults all around the world. In a parish setting, if a staff person is unfamiliar with tools for virtual communication, there is inevitably a youth or young adult in the parish with ample skills to assist the parish in its efforts to communicate virtually.

Suggestions for use of technology in ministry with young adults:

- Have an updated website. This is the "face" of your parish many young adults will see first. It does not have to be highly polished, but it does have to offer relevant and up-to-date information (such as upcoming events and the weekly bulletin). You can also use the website as a registration tool for events or programs. This key element of an updated website is really not optional.
- Offer ways for young adults to connect with the parish and each other virtually. Facebook is a widely used social networking tool and could be used for gathering information, advertising events and even allowing young adults to "meet" each other online. Be on the watch for new or updated social networking tools, technology changes often.
- Send information virtually. Twitter is one way to send out small pieces of information (DON'T overuse this) and blogs (web log) can be useful – both of these are good if you have an audience who wants to know more about a particular subject (pastor reflections, explanation of changes in the Missal, Catholic news, etc.). E-zines are inexpensive ways to send important or useful information about the parish or about faith topics as well.

Parish leaders need to become comfortable with the use of current technology and social networking sites, these are the tools of communication, the language, of our young adults!

The world of digital communication, with its almost limitless expressive capacity, makes us appreciate all the more Saint Paul's exclamation: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel." 1 Cor 9:16

Pope Benedict XVI, 44th World Communications Day message (2010)

Appendix G:
Concluding Prayer

A Prayer for Young Adult Ministry

O God, bless all of our young adults and guide our efforts to intentionally include them in our parish life.

Help our young men and women become “lights for the world” and bearers of Christ’s peace.

May they, with your guidance and our support and presence, become vital partners in the life of each of our parishes.

We ask this in Christ’s name. Amen.