

Starting and Running a Youth or Young Adult Group

Principles from the book Waking the Sleeping Giant: Effective Catholic Young Adult Ministry by Matthew Pinto

I. Why are dynamic youth and young adult groups needed?

- 1) Our hearts deepest longing is for God and Truth. In this day and age, too many hearts are preoccupied with the distractions of the world. We need to break through with the life-giving message of Jesus. Young people need to spend less time in the world and more time contemplating the things of God. Truth leads to sanity and clear thinking. We need to bring people to a deeper love of the Truth.
- 2) Young people are casualties in this cultural war. The casualties are increasing. We need more spiritual paramedics. Youth and young adult groups are these paramedics.
- 3) A strong youth or young adult group can relieve some of the pressure young people face. This pressure includes the pursuit of material success and sexual temptations.
- 4) A strong youth or young adult group offers Catholics an alternative to the lures of other faiths, including some cults. Heaven's Gate is an example.
- 5) We've lost too many young people due to poor catechesis. Young people need an inviting place to hear the clear Catholic message.
- 6) Parishes need to reach out to these groups with more expansive youth and young adult programs. Young adults represent 37% of the parish. Where is the future church going to be if the majority of young people stop practicing their faith?

II. The step-by-step methods to starting a group in your parish.

- 1) Someone (a teen, a young adult, a parent, a priest or religious) has to conclude that youth or young adult ministry is vital to the parish.
- 2) There then has to be a commitment from pastor/parish -both in spirit and by allocating resources.
- 3) You have to select the right leader or youth minister (part or full-time). I like the idea of a layman or woman leading the group, and a priest or other religious offering backup support. It will be helpful to have both a "theological" and "logistical or managerial" leader. These can be the same person, although two separate people may be more effective.
- 4) Prepare a youth/young adult ministry plan just like you would prepare a business plan. Your plan should be supported by a lot of prayer.

5) Your plan should include:

- a) The logistics, such as the specific parish facility you wish to use.
- b) The evening you want to meet.
- c) The funding you will need.
- d) The target audience you are reaching.
- e) The methods of promotion you will employ.
- f) The list of topics, speakers, videos, and group formats you will use.
- g) The proposed team leaders (music, social, outreach, prayer, etc.)
- h) Bylaws for Core Team (e.g., how long a team leader will be expected to serve, etc., expectations of conduct, etc.)
- i) The plan for keeping prayer at the core of the group.

III. Eight elements that will keep a group running and make it effective.

1) Prayer

2) Good Topics - Bring in speakers who are faithful to the Church. Vary the formats - one week have a straight lecture and a Q&A session, the next week have small group "warm and fuzzy" discussions, the third week have a large group discussion, etc, etc. In short, mix things up throughout the month.

Keep the people intrigued with a mix of "heavy" topics (e.g., abortion, capital punishment) and "light-hearted" topics (e.g., friendships, the virtues, etc.)

Also do "ice breakers" at the beginning of most (if not all) meetings. They can really help people feel more comfortable.

3) Good marketing - Perception is reality. If the group is perceived as a good place to be, it will become that. Good marketing will attract people. Here are some specific ways to promote your group:

- a) Develop a catchy group name. Try for something short and breezy - "Mission Young Adults."
- b) Develop a logo.
- c) Create t-shirts. These will build the "club" atmosphere. People like to belong to things.
- d) Get a sports team together and play in a league.
- e) Designate a PR person to consistently place announcements about group activities in the parish bulletin and local media.

f) Print up business cards with group times, location, and even a map on how to find the group.

g) Create and publish a consistent newsletter - monthly, if possible.

h) Use clever titles to promote certain topics. Be creative, but tasteful.

i) If you're a youth minister, hang out around high school and meet your youth group students there. Be on the lookout for young kids who might benefit from your group.

j) Establish a "Bring A Friend" night once a month.

k) Run a canned good collection in the neighborhood and invite people whom you meet.

4) Atmosphere - Create a comfortable, inviting, upbeat atmosphere. There should be a sense of electricity in the air. People should feel that there is something special happening at these meetings.

5) Leadership - Offer good leadership and an organized, well-run program. One person should be considered the group leader, however, switch up weekly facilitators on a regular basis. At least twice a month the group should see the normal group leader, but back-up leaders/facilitators should fill in once or twice a month. This prevents a cult of personality and grooms others to be leaders/facilitators.

6) Socials - Have a lot of good social outings, including camping trips, ski trips, pot luck dinners, and movie nights. These should be held on nights other than your normal weekly educational night. Your youth or young adult program should be a fun experience.

7) Outreach - Offer good and inspiring outreach programs - visit the elderly, work at a homeless shelter, run collections for unwed mothers homes, etc.

8) Empower - Assign people small jobs when they arrive at the meeting. Ask a new person to help with the chairs or to set up the literature display table. People like to "do" things. It's part of our addiction to "busyness." It's also a nice ice breaker for a new person. He or she feels part of the system if they're put to work.

IV. What makes a good group leader.

1) Desires to be holy.

2) Loves the Church and is not interested in tearing it down.

3) Earns the respect of others through service and hard work.

4) Knows how to delegate.

5) Can see the big picture - knows where the group should be going.

- 6) Understands the "pastoral question" - Not everyone is at the same level. Be gentle when presenting tough issues. Be caring, but be committed to the truth. Pray a lot for discernment. Pray to know when you should deliver the tough message and when you should wait for a better time.
- 7) Can make tough decisions.
- 8) Is ready to forsake popularity for truth.
- 9) Is compassionate.
- 10) Can laugh.
- 11) Does not gossip.
- 12) Can be trusted.
- 13) Asks "What Would Jesus Do?"
- 14) Knows (or is actively learning) his/her faith.
- 15) Is diplomatic in handling challenging personalities.
- 16) Is comfortable in the world, but is not "of the world."

V. 90 topics for your meetings

- 1) Creation &/or Evolution (What are we to believe about the origin of man)
- 2) Religious Freedom (May I impose my views on society?)
- 3) New Age movement (What is it? Is it dangerous to Catholics/Christians?)
- 4) Mormonism (Who are they & what do they believe?)
- 5) Fundamentalism ("Born-again" Christians - Who are they and what do they believe?)
- 6) Jehovah's Witnesses (Who are they and what do they believe?)
- 7) Why be Catholic (Does it really make a difference whether you're Catholic)
- 8) The Basics of the Faith (What do we believe? Why? What's the bottom line?)
- 9) Jesus (Who was he? What was his purpose? What does he ask of us?)
- 10) End of the World (What's the bottom line on the Catholic teaching on the "end times?")
- 11) The Structure of the Church (Pope, bishops, dioceses, etc., Is it a democracy?)
- 12) Celibacy (Is this biblical?, Is it natural?, Is it reasonable?)
- 13) Holy days and feast days (What are they?, Why do we have them?)
- 14) Role of the laity (What is the laity's function in the church?)
- 15) Sacraments (Are they symbols or do they really help change us?)
- 16) Baptism
- 17) Confirmation
- 18) Reconciliation
- 19) Matrimony
- 20) Holy Orders (The priesthood and diaconate)
- 21) Anointing of the Sick
- 22) Mass (meaning behind the rituals)
- 23) Blessed Sacrament/Eucharist (Benediction, Veneration, etc.)
- 24) Mary (Was she really God's mother? How can this happen? What role does she play?)
- 25) Saints (Can we really pray to them? Can they help us?)
- 26) Angels (Do they exist? What's their role?)
- 27) Apostles Creed (Explanation of what we say each Sunday)
- 28) Papacy and Infallibility (Why do we have a Pope? What does he do?)

- 29) Purgatory (What is it? Does it exist?, Why does it exist?)
- 30) Overview of Old Testament Story (multi-week: What happened?)
- 31) Dating (What is healthy dating? What is Christian dating? How should we date?)
- 32) Conversion stories (Catholics who left the church and came back, New converts tell their story.)
- 33) Friendships/Relationships (What are good friendships? How do we form them?)
- 34) Simple Gospel Message (What's this Christianity thing all about?)
- 35) General Q & A night (Ask any question about the Church)
- 36) Personal testimony night (Where are you in your journey in faith?)
- 37) History of the Church (multi-week: What happened over the past 2,000 years?)
- 38) Demonology (Does the devil really exist? How do the evils spirits work?)
- 39) Protestant Reformation (Why and how did it form? Was it a mistake?)
- 40) Beatification (Sainthood - How are saints canonized? What's the process?)
- 41) Apparitions (Have people really appeared from Heaven?)
- 42) Padre Pio (video, :20 min. - Modern Catholic priest who bled from hands, feet, and side)
- 43) The Crusades (Catholic Church goes to war to protect Christianity?)
- 44) The Inquisition
- 45) Overview of World Religions (What is Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism?)
- 46) 12 Steps Programs and Faith (Practical ways to handle life's challenges)
- 47) Healing (Everyone writes down hurts and discusses them. Bible can be used)
- 48) Lives of saints (videos from :20 min. to :90 min - multiple choices)
- 49) Our Lady of Guadalupe (video: 27 min. - Mary's appearance in Mexico in 1500s)
- 50) Pope J.P. II - Pilgrim to Lourdes (video: 27 min - John Paul visits Lourdes)
- 51) Proclaiming the Message of Jesus (videos of JP II talking: 33 & 20 min.)
- 52) Prayer (What is it? Why is it important? How do we pray?)
- 53) Heaven and Hell (Do they exist/ What will they be like?)
- 54) Religious life (What is it like to be a religious sister/brother?)
- 55) Faith (What it is? Is it blind or thought out? How do we develop our faith?)
- 56) The Virtues (Patience, chastity, temperance: How to achieve them)
- 57) Forms of Prayer
- 58) Scripture prayer (What are the different ways to pray with Scripture?)
- 59) Rosary (What is it? When did it start? Why did it start? How do you say it?)
- 60) Liturgy of the Hours (What is it? Why is it done?)
- 61) Novenas (What are they?)
- 62) Stations of the Cross (How do we say it? Why do we say it?)
- 63) Meditation (How can we meditate? Is this something the Christian should do?)
- 64) The Beatitudes (Blessed are the meek, etc. Discussion of Beatitudes)
- 65) Devotions (What are various devotions?)
- 66) What is interior life? (How to nourish it, What does a life of prayer mean?)
- 67) Holy Hour (Night of guided meditation followed by group discussion)
- 68) Salvation (How do we get to Heaven?)
- 69) Divorce/Annulments (Is divorce ever allowed? What are annulments?)
- 70) Homosexuality (Is it natural? Is it allowed in Christianity? What should be done?)
- 71) Abortion (Q&A night. Ask any question about the abortion issue.)
- 72) Ultrasound (Video on the development of the baby)
- 73) Meet the Abortion Providers (Hard-hitting video by former abortionists)

- 74) Operation Rescue (Video on those who block abortion clinics to save babies)
- 75) AIDS (How should it be dealt with? Does "safe sex" exist?)
- 76) Capital punishment (Should a society be allowed to put a criminal to death?)
- 77) Social Justice (What is our responsibility in helping others? How far should we go?)
- 78) Euthanasia (Should a society institute legalized "mercy killing?")
- 79) Organ donation (Can Catholics donate organs after death?)
- 80) Cremation (Is it permissible in Christianity to be cremated?)
- 81) The Great Population Hoax (2 videos:, 36 Are we overpopulating the planet?)
- 82) Gang problem (What can be done?)
- 83) Chastity (Video by Molly Kelly on premarital sex and chastity)
- 84) Youth, Sex, & Chastity (two :20 minute videos) Fr. Benedict Groeschel
- 85) Schools, Clinics, and Contraceptives (:30 min. video, Are schools the place for this?)
- 86) Capital Punishment (Can society put a criminal to death?)
- 87) Moral dilemmas (Large group discussion with theologian, "What do I do when..?")
- 88) Psychology and Religion (Are they friends or foes?)
- 89) Liturgy and Beauty (What is good worship?)
- 90) Vocations (Where is God calling you?)

VI. General principles to keep in mind (in no specific order)

- 1) At planning meetings, don't get bogged down in petty discussions. People like to go to meetings where things are accomplished. Otherwise, people will get discouraged. Be bold, make decisions. Don't debate every small detail. Assign tasks to people and let others make the smaller decisions. Have one major planning meeting a month.
- 2) The group leader should make most of the day-to-day decisions. Big decisions are left to vote.
- 3) At the actual educational night meetings, create an inviting atmosphere, but one that takes faith seriously.
- 4) Do not provide an arena for dissent.
- 5) Do not give a lot of time to opposing positions. If you do, be sure to wait several months because you want people to be formed in the faith before you allow someone or something to shake that faith. Also, wait for several months to do the topics that require a greater level of faith and understanding (e.g., tithing, birth control, euthanasia).
- 6) Invite in speakers who are faithful to the Church otherwise you are doing a disservice to the group. They need to be formed in the faith before their faith is aggressively challenged.
- 7) Make sure the primary focus of the group is education-oriented group. If you try to run a group that emphasizes "social" outings (ski trips, picnics), the group will be lackluster. A social club converts very few people. Firm belief and sacrifice bring about conversion.

8) When directing a youth core team, employ discipline. You are the leader. Do not be afraid to lose young people by sticking to your standards and expectations. Others will come in to fill the void. And, your core team will respect you for your leadership.

9) Offer a dynamic social program, especially for youth groups. Do a lot of things at the Church (volleyball games, lock-ins) to help create reverse peer pressure. You want young people associating positive experiences with church. You want the "in crowd" to be those who practice their faith. You want the youth group to be a "hip" place. This does not mean you compromise teachings. It means you balance orthodoxy with a joyful experience.

10) View the secular culture and even other non-Catholic youth programs as your competition.

11) Create a little bit of a "them" versus "us" atmosphere or mindset. It can always be tempered later, but will be very helpful in combating apathy. Talk about the "cultural war" that is going on in the world. Otherwise, you will be doing the youth a disservice (because there really is a cultural war going on).

12) Do not conduct group business (planning, financial reports, etc.) at the actual "education night" meetings. You can make announcements in the beginning or end of meetings, but do not make your large group meeting a planning meeting. The large group meetings should be dedicated to learning and socializing, not to discussing the day-to-day affairs associated with running the group.

13) Be on time. Run an organized meeting. The times I like for youth meetings are 7:00-8:30 p.m on Sunday. The times I like for young adult meetings are 7:30-9:00 p.m. on Wednesday.

Try to conclude meetings as close to the published time as possible, especially for young adults. Apologize if it goes past 9:00. Invite people to stay and ask the speaker questions after 9:00 p.m., assuming the evening is going very well. Adults need to count on getting out of a meeting by a certain time so they can be well-rested for work, get home to families, etc.

Remember the FotoMat Theory - People drive up the FotoMat, drop off their film, and pick it up two days later. They like the "in and out" convenience. Similarly, have a "packaged program" ready for the youth or young adults. The majority of people should simply come to the meeting, socialize, enjoy that night's topic or discussion, socialize a little more at the end of the night, put a few chairs away, and then leave.

14) Be consistent with your group meetings and planning meetings. People should know that your group meeting is "every Wednesday" or "the first Thursday of the month." Consistency is good marketing. You can imbed your meeting in the lives of people by having the same type of meeting on the same day or date.

15) Avoid clicks. Work hard to make sure every new person is welcomed. Designate a half dozen group "regulars" to make sure there is never someone alone during the "social" times - at the beginning of the meeting and at the end.

16) Plan topics well in advance so you can arrange for speakers and can publicize the topics. Example: Topics for June should be planned in early May or sooner.

17) Many youth and young adult leaders avoid running an "education oriented" group because they don't know their faith and, subsequently, wouldn't know what to talk about. This can't be. Leaders need to read books and listen to tapes and then use these as resources. Or, simply bring in speakers and videos to deliver the content and you just moderate the meetings.

SOME RESOURCES FOR YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Websites:

www.ncyama.org

The website for the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Organization based in Washington, D.C. Check in for updates about the upcoming National Catholic Young Adult Conference, "The Road to Emmaus, A Young Adult Journey" June 13-15, 2003 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The conference is preceded by the 2003 National Young Adult Ministers Forum June 11-13.

www.bustedhalo.com

A national website specifically for Catholic Young Adults sponsored by the Paulist Fathers. It features articles to help you learn about and live your faith, a "Church Search" page to help you find a young adult-friendly parish, and listings of events nationwide.

www.claretians.org/young.htm

A Young Adult Spirituality page which features a monthly article for young adults. The Claretians are also publishers of *U.S. Catholic Magazine*, which often contains articles of interest to young lay people, available on the web at www.uscatholic.org

www.cnvs.org

Catholic Network of Volunteer Service: Connecting Full-time Volunteers with Christian Member Programs. The website boasts that "Opportunities abound to share your talents and gifts for a week, a month, a year or more - in the U.S. or in over 80 countries worldwide.

www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html

This is the online ministry of the Jesuits at Creighton University. At this site, you can make an entire 9-month Ignatian retreat online with different helps to prayer for each week (including a meditative photo to set as your "wallpaper of the week"). Or you can pray the Stations of the Cross, read daily reflections, or consult resources on spirituality and justice.

www.mercyvolunteers.org

Mercy Volunteer Corps is a program of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas that invites women and men to a year or two of full-time service with people who are economically

poor or marginalized. Volunteers commit to compassionate service, a simple lifestyle in community, and spiritual growth.

www.oncecatholic.org

This site is run by St. Anthony Messenger Press as an outreach to those who grew up Catholic and may have drifted away or left in hurt or anger. The site is divided into rooms for those with different experiences (divorce, post-abortion, felt excluded). You can send your own comments, stories and questions to the room, and a pastoral minister will respond by posting your message on the site and writing back to you. This is a chance to gain some guidance, prayer, resources and understanding from pastoral ministers and others on the journey.

www.pallotticenter.org

This site provides information about lay volunteer service opportunities in Church-based programs through colleges, campus ministry centers, high schools, parishes, and other groups interested in lay ministry. They distribute free of charge copies of [Connections](#) to anyone interested in opportunities to serve actively in Church ministry. The Connections directory guides prospective volunteers through a series of discernment questions and evaluation as to which volunteer program may be best for them. Staff members at the Pallotti Center work with prospective volunteers to explore their personal strengths and weaknesses, talents, interests, personal and professional goals and objectives. Referrals to volunteer programs are made based on an individual's preference and the criteria of the programs. Staff members work with potential volunteers as much as possible to provide information and answer questions.

www.visionguide.org

This is the online site of the annual religious discernment guide, *Vision*. At this site you will find help on how to discern a religious vocation, information on various options and links to virtually every religious order in existence.

Books:

Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults, USCCB (1996), available from Archdiocese Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for \$10.00.

Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X by Tom Beaudoin (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1998).

The Basic Guide to Young Adult Ministry by John C. Cusick and Katherine DeVries (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000)

Young Adult Catholics: Religion in a Culture of Choice by Dean R. Hoge et al. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation by Neil Howe and William Strauss (New York, Vintage Books, 2000).

***Doing What Comes Naturally: Jobs, Career and Vocation (part of the Crossings Series for Young Adults)* by Mary Anne Reese (Denver: Living the Good News, 1998).**

***God Moments : Why Faith Really Matters to a New Generation* by Jeremy Langford (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001).**

***Leadership for Life: Discovering Your Gifts for Christian Leadership (a practical guide for young adults)* by Michael Paulin, et al. (Naugatuck: Center for Ministry Development, 1997).**

***Young Adult Works* (Naugatuck: Center for Ministry Development, 1997). 4-volume binders with programming resources and bibliography for young adult ministry.**

***The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy* by Colleen Carroll (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002).**

***American Catholics: Gender, Generation, and Commitment* by William D'Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean Hoge, Katherine Meyer. (Alta Mira Books, 2001).**

***Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* by James W. Fowler (New York: Harper Collins, 1981).**

***Losing Your Religion, Finding Your Faith: Spirituality for Young Adults* by Brett C. Hoover (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998).**

***Reconstructing Catholicism* by Robert Ludwig (New York: Crossroad, 1995).**

***The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By* by Sharon Parks (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).**

***Baby Busters: The Disillusioned Generation* by George Barna (Northfield Pub., 1994).**

Articles:

1-"**Refracting the Light: The Broad Spectrum of Young Adult Catholics**" by Mary Anne Reese in Sept. 22, 2003 issue of *America* (at www.americamagazine.org)

2-"**ELIMI-DATED: Why Can't the Church and Young Singles Hook Up**" by Renee M. 3-
3-LaReau, *U.S.Catholic*, Feb. 2003 (at www.uscatholic.org)

3-"**Beginning Afresh: Gen-X Catholics**" by Tom Beaudoin, *America*, Nov. 21, 1998.

4-“Why Young Adults Need Ignatian Spirituality” by Timothy P. Muldoon, *America*, February 26, 2001.

5-“Young Adult Catholics: Conservative? Alienated? Suspicious?” by Dean Hoge et. al, *America*, March 27, 1999.

6-“Young Adult Ministry: A Pastor’s Take” by Rev. Daniel Danielson, *Initiative Report* (Catholic Common Ground Initiative), Vol. 5, No. 3, September, 2001.

7-“Young Adult Ministry” by Brett C. Hoover, *Church*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 2002): 48-53.

8-*New Theology Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Feb 1998). Entire issue devoted to Young Adults in the Church. See especially James D. Davidson, “The Post Vatican II Catholics” and Allen M. Gustafson, “Generation X: Its Challenges and Possibilities.”

9-Archdiocese of Omaha. *A Pastoral Plan for Young Adult Ministry*. Omaha, Neb.: KP Printing, 1994. A plan of action for ministering to the young adults of the archdiocese developed by the Young Adult Advisory Board.

10-Bagley, Rev. Ron, CJM (ed). *Young Adult Ministry: A Book of Readings*. Naugatuck, Conn.: Center for Ministry Development, 1987. A collection of essays on three basic themes: foundations for young adult ministry, perspectives on young adults, and directions for ministry.

11-Fowler, James. *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984.

12-Gallup International Institute. *The Religious Life of Young Americans*. A compendium of surveys on the spiritual beliefs and practices of teenagers and young adults.

13-Gribbon, Robert. *Developing Faith in Young Adults: Effective Ministry with 18-35 Year Olds*. Washington, D.C.: The Alban Institute, 1990.

14-Muto, Susan. *Celebrating the Single Life*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982. Explores the joys of being single, the spirituality of singles in the Church, service to others as a single person, and friendships.

15-National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association. *A Blueprint for Young Adult Ministry*. Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association, 1994. A short reflection discussing what young adult ministry is and the foundational and operational principles for ministry with young adults.

16-National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Follow the Way of Love*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1994. Bishops' pastoral message to married couples and families.

17-O'Brien, Sr. Margaret. *Discovering Your Light: Common Journey of Young Adults*. Mineola, N.Y.: Resurrection Press, Ltd., 1991. A workbook for men and women in their twenties and thirties that can be used as a private journal or in small faith-sharing groups.

18-Roof, Wade Clark. *A Generation of Seekers*. San Francisco: Harper, 1993. A book addressing the baby boomer generation's search for spirituality.

19-United States Catholic Conference. *Empowered by the Spirit*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1985. This is the U.S. bishops' pastoral plan for ministry on the campus.

20-_____. *Family Perspective in Church and Society*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1987.

21-_____. *Who Are My Sisters and Brothers? Reflections on Understanding and Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1996.

22-_____. *Young Adult Ministry Resources*. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988. A short book that identifies who young adults are and their role in the Church.

ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON

DEPARTMENT OF YOUNG ADULT AND CAMPUS MINISTRY

PROMOTING VOCATIONS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

What keeps young adults from considering a vocation to the priesthood or consecrated life? 1

Some of the issues identified by young adults:

- Secular values: Materialism, Consumerism, Secularism, Affluence, Individualism
- Lack of family and peer support
- Celibacy
- Fear of commitment to the unknown
- Debt/college costs

What gives young adults hope about vocations?

- Spirituality of young adults

- Generosity of young adults as shown in service
- Eucharist, prayer
- Priests and religious who:
 - o Give a positive witness
 - o Serve as role models
 - o Are willing to talk about vocations
- Campus ministry and youth ministry
- World Youth Days

Strategies for promoting vocations among young adults²

A. Create a climate of vocational awareness

1. Pray for vocations (with weekly Holy Hour for vocations)
2. Priests and religious should show they are happy and excited about their vocation, and joyfully invite others to join them
3. Involve seminary professors, vocations directors, and men and women religious in the life of the community (e.g., celebrating mass, if priests; giving presentations; providing spiritual direction)
4. Invite seminarians and religious in formation to share their stories
5. Publicize young adults from parish or campus ministry who have vocations
6. Preach about vocations
7. Have a vocations committee and involve young adults

B. Model and cultivate a love for the Church and its mission

1. Develop love and respect for the archbishop and the local Church; campus ministries should involve him at the center as much as possible
2. Form young adults in evangelization and apologetics
3. Cultivate a global perspective (catechesis, Operation Rice Bowl, mission trips, etc.)

C. Cultivate a sense of meaningful sacrifice

1. Connect with young adult idealism
2. Speak of the sacrificial self-giving that is part of both marriage and celibacy
3. Catechize on stewardship
4. Promote short and long term volunteer opportunities

D. Retreats

1. Evangelizing retreats
 - a. Busy Persons Retreat, with involvement of vocations directors
 - b. Awakening retreats; includes leadership development and discernment
2. Vocations retreats
 - a. Publicize the vocations retreats of dioceses and religious communities
 - b. Life Awareness, for young adults seriously considering vocation

E. Make it personal

1. Identify young adults
2. Invite them personally
 - a. To serve in leadership in parish activities
 - b. To ordinations, chrism mass, profession masses
 - c. To visit convents, monasteries and seminaries (e.g., Texas A&M University's "Nun Run" and "Seminary Sprint")
 - d. To retreats, discernment groups, and to consider spiritual direction
3. Accompany them in the discernment process