

# VOICE + VISION

*National Summit for Ministries  
with Youth and Young Adults*

## Pre-Conference Papers



## **Voice + Vision**

### **The National Summit for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults**

#### **Pre-Conference Papers**

**July 31-August 2, 2019**

**Voice + Vision: The National Summit for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults** is a gathering of leaders and practitioners with pastoral and/or academic experience in Junior High, High School, College Campus, Pastoral Juvenil, and Young Adult Ministries that seeks to draw conclusions from recent national and international discussions about young people (the 2018 Synod on Young People, the V Encuentro, the National Dialogue, and Pope Francis' 2019 post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit*) on how to transform our praxis with youth and young adults in the United States. It is our hope that, through the practitioners gathered there, we would give voice and vision to the opportunities in America regarding these ministries

#### **Sponsors**

This summit is hosted by Franciscan University of Steubenville and co-sponsored with the *National Dialogue on Catholic Pastoral Ministry with Youth and Young Adults*. The *National Dialogue* is a collaborative effort between the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), National Advisory Team on Young Adult Ministry, National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana (LaRED), and Catholic Campus Ministry Association (CCMA), with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

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## From the Editors

This is a historic time for ministries with youth and young adults and we are excited for our upcoming gathering at Franciscan University of Steubenville for **Voice + Vision**. The decision to have the conference at a Catholic university was intentional, for we hope to address the numerous issues regarding those ministries in both a pastoral and an academic manner. Charitable discourse, and candor, is encouraged.

Our focus of the conference comes from *Christus Vivit*, §204-05:

*The young make us see the need for new styles and new strategies... At the same time, we should take into greater consideration those practices that have shown their value – the methods, language and aims that have proved truly effective in bringing young people to Christ and the Church. It does not matter where they are coming from or what labels they have received, whether “conservative” or “liberal,” “traditional” or “progressive.” What is important is that we make use of everything that has borne good fruit and effectively communicates the joy of the Gospel.*

To prepare for the conference, we asked a number of those in the field to write a brief article addressing an element of youth and young adult ministry they felt was important. We gave them little time to do so, and we appreciate all those who were able to make these submissions. It is one of the hopes of our conference that a more formal publication of academic papers would result.

These topics are not comprehensive of what needs to be discussed, nor do they represent the opinions of the sponsors of the event (the National Dialogue for Pastoral Ministry with Youth and Young Adults and Franciscan University of Steubenville). They are voices from leaders in the field who wish to share their perspective so as to help all of us rethink our current praxis with youth and young adults. Opportunities will be given at the conference to have discussions with these authors about what they wrote.

The papers are grouped into three general categories. The first are those that examine the “big picture”. The second specifically address issues of accompaniment, catechesis, and theological formation. The last propose specific actions in various ministry fields, which we have titled as “Dialogue as a Way of Proceeding”. It is our hope that the conference will result in actionable proposals to help the young people of the United States become disciples of Jesus Christ.

We pray these papers will generate thought and prayer as we prepare to meet in Steubenville at the end of July, so we will be able to dive right into to this important dialogue.

Dr. Bob Rice, Franciscan University of Steubenville  
Dr. Tracey Lamont, Loyola University New Orleans



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Dr. Ansel Augustine is the former Director of the Office of Black Catholic Ministries for the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Previously he served as the Associate Director/Coordinator of Black Youth & Young Adult Ministry for the CYO Youth & Young Adult Ministry Office. He is also on the Faculty of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana. Ansel has served on the board of directors for the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association (NCYAMA) and the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM). He began his career in ministry over 20 years ago when he became the youth minister at his home parish of St. Peter Claver in the Treme area of New Orleans, which he helped to rebuild following hurricane Katrina. He has presented workshops and keynotes around the country and has written various pieces related to ministry.

### **Fr. Frank Donio, S.A.C., D.Min.**

Fr. Frank Donio, S.A.C., D.Min. is Director of the Catholic Apostolate Center in Washington, D.C. and serves in leadership in the Immaculate Conception Province of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate (Pallottine Fathers and Brothers). He is a Lecturer in the School of Theology and Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America. Fr. Frank is also a Consultant to the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. His academic background, teaching, presenting, pastoral, and administrative work are focused primarily around evangelization, spiritual formation, and pastoral practice that fosters greater co-responsibility and collaboration among all the baptized.

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Tom is the Director of the Center for Ministry Development, Project Coordinator for Youth Ministry Services, and Coordinator of the Certificate Program in Youth Ministry Studies. Tom holds a Master of Arts degree in Religious Studies from Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles. Previously, Tom was the Director of Youth Ministry and the Associate Director of Religious Education for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Tom is a member of the Board of Directors for the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. Tom served as editor and author for numerous publications including, *Leadership for Catholic Youth Ministry* (Twenty-Third Publications, 2013) and *Effective Practices for Dynamic Youth Ministry* (Saint Mary's Press, 2004).

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Diana currently serves at St. Angela Merici Parish in Youngstown, Ohio as Pastoral Associate of Young Adult Ministry. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Communications from Youngstown State University and earned a Master's degree in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University of New Orleans. In addition to parish ministry, Diana serves as chairperson the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) National Advisory Team on Young Adult Ministry.

**Jodi G. Hunt, Ph.D.**

Jodi holds a Ph.D. in religious education from Fordham University, a Master's Degree in theology from Oblate School of Theology, and a Bachelor's Degree in anthropology from Texas A&M University. Prior to joining UD, Dr. Hunt taught theology and religious studies at Antonian College Preparatory (San Antonio, TX) and Fordham Preparatory (Bronx, NY) and was most recently the director of admissions at the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education at Fordham University. Dr. Hunt has also worked with various dioceses and parishes training lay ecclesial ministers as well. Most recently, Dr. Hunt joined the Neuhoff School of Ministry faculty as an affiliate assistant professor of ministry and she and her family are regular volunteers at the Holy Family of Nazareth parish in the DFW area. In her free time, Dr. Hunt enjoys blogging for *Mighty is Her Call* (a Catholic Mother's Ministry) and scrolling through #catholictwitter and Instagram. She also really loves spending time with her husband, Charles, and their three children (Luke, Emma Jo, and Zelig) on their family farm in Comanche, TX and catching up with family and friends while sharing a good meal.

**Paul E. Jarzembowski, M.A.P.S.**

Paul Jarzembowski is the Assistant Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), within the Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth. He is the national coordinator for the U.S. bishops' efforts for World Youth Day and for the Synod on Young People in advance of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit*. Paul has consulted with, written for, or spoken in over 300 dioceses, parishes, organizations, religious communities, digital platforms, and conferences across the United States, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and the Vatican. Prior to his time at the USCCB, Paul served as the Executive Director of the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association (NCYAMA) and as diocesan director of young adult ministry for the Diocese of Joliet. He has been an adjunct faculty member in the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University Chicago, where he also received his master's degree. Born and raised in Northwest Indiana, Paul, along with his wife and ministry colleague Sarah, now live in the Maryland suburbs of Washington DC.

**Tracey Lamont, Ph.D.**

Tracey is an Assistant Professor of Religious Education. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Religion and Religious Education from Fordham University and specializes in youth and young adult ministry and religious education. Before coming to Loyola University, New Orleans, Tracey served in parishes as a youth and young adult minister and Confirmation coordinator. While living in Florida, she taught religion, social studies, and epistemology in high school and taught theology and religion courses at the undergraduate level. Her research examines the intersection of psychology and religious education and develops new ways to think about young

adult moral development in a complex global society. She is a member of the Religious Education Association and presents papers and workshops on young ministry and pedagogical practices in secondary and post-secondary education. Tracey serves as the Vice Chair of Resources for the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops Advisory Team on Young Adult Ministry and is a committee member for the National Dialogue on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.

### **Rev. Alejandro Lopez-Cardinale**

Rev. Alejandro Lopez-Cardinale is a diocesan priest from Archdiocese of Caracas, Venezuela, ordained in Dec 07th, 1991. He has ministered in the Archdiocese of Boston since April 2017 and is the Chaplain for Hispanic Communities and parochial administrator of St. Benedict, in Somerville. He has two masters: in Catechesis from Catholic University, Paris-France (Institut Catholique de Paris), and in Pastoral Juvenil -Youth and Young Adult Ministry (Universidad Politécnica Salesiana, Quito). He is a doctorate candidate at Université Laval, Doctoral Ministry in Practical Theology (thesis in preparation). He currently serves as president of La RED, National Network of Pastoral Juvenil Hispana since 2013, and collaborates with Instituto Fe y Vida as member of the pastoral team since 2007. Because his involvement with Pastoral Juvenil at national level, he is part of the VELT, V Encuentro Leadership Team. Besides his parish ministry, he collaborates with the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship as Chaplain for Faith Formation and Missionary Discipleship for Ethnic Communities and V Encuentro Nacional de Pastoral Hispana/Latina Archdiocesan Sub-Coordinator.

El Padre Alejandro López-Cardinale es un sacerdote diocesano ordenado para la Arquidiócesis de Caracas, Venezuela, (1991). Desde abril de 2017 ejerce su ministerio en la Arquidiócesis de Boston (en proceso de incardinación), siendo el administrador parroquial de St. Benito, en Somerville, y Director Asistente del Ministerio Hispano en la Arquidiócesis de Boston. También es presidente de la Asociación de Directores Diocesanos Hispanos de la Región 1. Tiene dos maestrías: Maestría en Pastoral Catequética en el Institut Catholique de Paris, Francia, y Maestría en Pastoral Juvenil, Universidad Politécnica Salesiana, Quito, Ecuador. Es candidato al doctorado en la Universidad Laval, Doctorado en Teología Práctica. También continúa una colaboración estrecha con el Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, CELAM (como consultor). Es co-autor de un libro llamado "Jóvenes solidarios para el Nuevo Milenio", publicado por el CELAM, 2003. Desde 2011, pertenece a SCALA (Sociedad de catequetas latinoamericanos), representando a los Estados Unidos (actualmente se desempeña como tesorero). Es presidente de La RED, National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana desde 2013, y colabora con el Instituto Fe y Vida como miembro del equipo pastoral desde 2007. Debido a su participación en la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana a nivel nacional, formó parte del Equipo de Liderazgo del V Encuentro Nacional y forma parte del Equipo Central del Diálogo Nacional.

### **Charlotte McCorquodale, Ph.D.**

Charlotte has served the church for over three decades in parish, school, diocesan, and university ministry settings for the past 30 years. Since May of 2000, she has served as President of Ministry Training Source. MTS is a non-profit organization committed to the formation of ministry leaders by providing customized ministry formation solutions using the latest research and technology. Presently, she is an international educator, researcher, and consultant for the fields of lay ecclesial ministry, certification standards and processes, youth ministry, online and

eLearning. She has spoken in over 75 dioceses throughout the world since 1995, and she is a regular presenter at LA Religious Education Congress, The National Conference for Catholic Youth Ministry, National Catholic Youth Conference, and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles C3 Technology Conference.

### **Bishop Nelson J. Perez**

Bishop Nelson J. Perez was installed as the 11th Bishop of Cleveland on September 5, 2017. Nelson J. Perez was born in Miami, Florida, on June 16, 1961 to David and Emma Perez and is the brother of the late Dr. David Perez and Louis Martin Perez. He was raised in West New York, NJ. Bishop Perez earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from Montclair State University in 1983. He taught at Colegio la Piedad, a Catholic elementary school in Puerto Rico, prior to entering Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, where he earned Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Theology degrees in 1988 and 1989, respectively. As a part of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop Perez serves as Chair of the Bishops' Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, a member of the Administrative Committee of the USCCB, and a member of the Bishops' Committee of Religious Liberty. He is former Chair of the Bishop's Sub-Committee for Hispanic Affairs and former member of the Bishop's Sub-Committee for the Campaign for Human Development.

### **Bob Rice, Ph.D.**

Bob is a Professor of Catechetics and the Director of the Masters of Arts in Catechetics and Evangelization at Franciscan University of Steubenville. He has a PhD in Theology from Liverpool Hope University where he researched Catholic youth and evangelization. He is a highly sought-after presenter at youth conferences, young-adult gatherings, men's conferences, parish missions, and catechetical workshops. Bob has authored many books, articles, and award-winning scripts that have helped people come to a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith. He lives in Steubenville with his beautiful wife Jennifer and their seven adorable children. You can find out more about him at [bob-rice.com](http://bob-rice.com).

### **Nathan Stanley**

Nathan is a writer, speaker and full-time staff member of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) where he currently serves as the Director of Apostolic Development. He has provided training and catechesis on evangelization, discipleship, leadership, organizational culture and strategy to young people, parish staff, and clergy throughout the country. Nathan encountered Jesus Christ as a student at Benedictine College and became a FOCUS missionary upon his graduation in 2004. Nathan's passion for Christ and His Church has been the foundation of his leadership for the past 15 years in FOCUS. Nathan inspires and equips missionary disciples all over the United States and is dedicated to raising up the next generation of Catholic leaders for the Church and society. He graduated *magnum cum laude* with a M.A. in Theology from the Augustine Institute. He married, Lauren, in 2010 and they live outside of Denver Colorado, where they are raising their three children.

### **Cari White**

Cari grew up in Rochester, Minnesota where she attended the local Catholic High School. From there she went to earn a BA in theology and secondary education at the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University. She also has an MA in theology from St. John's University in



Collegeville MN and has completed a Master of Divinity equivalency from St. Mary's Seminary and Graduate School in the Cleveland diocese After college, Cari spent 5 years working as a youth minister in various parishes in the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis in MN, before transitioning to work in a high school outside of Minneapolis as a Campus Minister. After a brief, but amazing year there, Cari applied for and took the position of Director of Campus Ministry at St. Edward High School in Lakewood, and just finished her 8th year there! She will enter the Doctor of Ministry program at St. Mary's Seminary in Wickliffe in the fall. When she's not having theological discussions with people, especially students, (her most favorite way to pass the time), Cari loves to travel, read books and binge watch TV law dramas. And America's Got Talent.



## Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church

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July 8, 2019

My dear friends in Christ,

I wish I could be present with all of you for this National Summit for Ministries with You and Young Adults, but previous commitments have not made it possible. However, I am so happy to have been invited to write to you as you gather share your voice and vision for the world and the Church. If there is one message that I would like to share with you, it is one that I proclaim to young people all over the Diocese of Cleveland, where I serve as their Bishop: ***Never, never, never underestimate the power of the Spirit of God working in you, through you, and despite you . . . and most of the time, unbeknownst to you!*** It is the same powerful Spirit of God that gave birth to the Church and has guided, nurtured, and accompanied us through thick and thin, moments of holiness and sin, times of peace and turmoil, throughout of collective and personal histories.

Obviously, if you have taken time this summer to gather for this summit it is because you have experienced an encounter with Jesus Christ so powerful that, from that moment on, you have never been the same and your heart seeks to know all you can about Him, and hear and learn of even better ways of proclaiming His truth—a truth you have embraced and live passionately every day.

The truth of the Gospel lies at the very center of who we are and what we do in our ministry and profession. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, captures this truth in the very first sentence of his Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, to Young People and the Entire People of God. He writes, “Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!” (CV §1)

Like me, I know you have heard time and time again—and maybe we have said it ourselves—that our young people are the future, but as the Holy Father so rightly says in his Exhortation, “we cannot just say that young people are the future of our world. They are its present; even now, they are helping to enrich it. Young people are no longer children. They are at a time of life when they begin to assume a number of responsibilities, sharing alongside adults in the growth of the family, society and the Church.” (CV§64) So how do we

practically live that reality? How do we create opportunities to allow them to encounter us and places to encounter them, to listen and learn from them and listen to what burns deep within their hearts? While we would all like to say and believe that we run multiple programs and opportunities for this to happen, I would venture to say that it is not as vast as we would think. What I actually hear, from many of our youth, in particular our young adults, is that they often find it a challenge to simply find a time and place to meet within our churches and structures. If we could devise ways to help them find times and places to encounter us and each other, opportunities for them to know and feel that they are, as Pope Francis proclaims, not our future, but the “Now of God”, we could see even greater things happen. I know and believe that when we create these times and spaces for them the Spirit of God, who works in us, through us and despite us, will do the rest. The Bishops of the United States experienced a powerful moment of precisely this during the V Encuentro gathering last September, where a time and place of *encounter* was created for young adults and bishops to share a meal and share their thoughts. This and many other moments of encounter that we all have experienced, whether nationally or locally, in our parishes, schools, and universities, become fertile ground for the Spirit of God to continue to do His work.

And what then is the content, the message, the curriculum, of these times and places of encounter? Well, the Holy Father, in the fourth chapter of *Christus Vivit*, entitled, “A Message for all Young People”, spells it out. He writes, “Putting all else aside, I now wish to speak to young people about what is essential, the one thing we should never keep quiet about. It is a message containing three great truths that all of us need constantly to keep hearing. (CV §111) He proclaims the following three truths:

### **A God who is love**

The very first truth I would tell each of you is this: “God loves you”. It makes no difference whether you have already heard it or not. I want to remind you of it. God loves you. Never doubt this, whatever may happen to you in life. At every moment, you are infinitely loved. (CV§112)

For him, you have worth; you are not insignificant. You are important to him, for you are the work of his hands. That is why he is concerned about you and looks to you with affection. “Trust the memory of God: his memory is not a ‘hard disk’ that ‘saves’ and ‘archives’ all our data. His memory is a heart filled with tender compassion, one that finds joy in ‘deleting’ from us every trace of evil”. [63] He does not keep track of your failings and he always helps you learn something even from your mistakes. Because he loves you. Try to keep still for a moment and let yourself feel his love. Try to silence all the noise within, and rest for a second in his loving embrace.

## **Christ saves you**

The second great truth is that Christ, out of love, sacrificed himself completely in order to save you. His outstretched arms on the cross are the most telling sign that he is a friend who is willing to stop at nothing: “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end”. (CV §118)

## **He is alive!**

Finally, there is a third truth, inseparable from the second: Christ is alive! We need to keep reminding ourselves of this, because we can risk seeing Jesus Christ simply as a fine model from the distant past, as a memory, as someone who saved us two thousand years ago. But that would be of no use to us: it would leave us unchanged, it would not set us free. The one who fills us with his grace, the one who liberates us, transforms us, heals and consoles us is someone fully alive. He is the Christ, risen from the dead, filled with supernatural life and energy, and robed in boundless light. That is why Saint Paul could say: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile”. (CV §124)

The Holy Father concludes his exposition of these great powerful truths in a call to our young people in these words:

If in your heart you can learn to appreciate the beauty of this message, if you are willing to encounter the Lord, if you are willing to let him love you and save you, if you can make friends with him and start to talk to him, the living Christ, about the realities of your life, then you will have a profound experience capable of sustaining your entire Christian life. You will also be able to share that experience with other young people. For “being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction”. (CV §129)

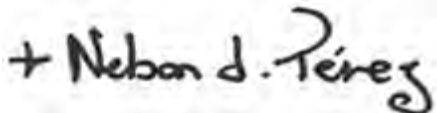
These powerful truths of the Gospel transcend the vast cultural diversity of our Church and our country. They are good for everyone, without distinction, at every place and time in history! However, the work of the missionary disciple requires of us, in imitation of the Master, a personal encounter with those we seek to evangelize and accompany in their journey of faith. We too must come to the side of the road and seek them out, walking with them even at their lowest points, in times of sorrow, anger and desperation, when all hope seems lost — much like Jesus encounters the disciples on the road to Emmaus—, and offering to each person the same Gospel of salvation.

Attention to the diversity of circumstances, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, religious and social upbringing of the young people we are called to work with, will help us recognize where they are in their journey of life and faith, so that we can be more effective in our work with them and the guidance we provide, but also more attentive, to discover and put to work the many gifts and talents God has given them for the benefit of the Church. This encounter, particularly the more we move towards the existential peripheries of church and society, will probably also lead us to realize that different circumstances may require different approaches, and even processes, for the mission. May the Holy Spirit effect within us the necessary pastoral conversion, and grant us the missionary zeal, patience and holy imagination needed for the work of evangelization with all youth and young adults in the United States today.

The task, then, and our challenge is how do we continue to create times and places of encounter to share about these truths in a way that is accessible to those we so passionately serve —our youth and young adults — in a way that goes beyond just knowledge, but in a manner that reaches their hearts, and never underestimating the power of the spirit of God working in us, through us, and despite us, and often times, unbeknownst to us!

Thank you for all you do and the generosity of spirit with which you serve. Be assured of my prayers for you, for your families, and those you so faithfully serve.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Nelson J. Pérez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez  
Bishop of Cleveland  
Chair, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

## Language Matters: Understanding How Young People Are Defined in *Christus Vivit* and Implications for the Church in the United States of America

Paul E. Jarzembowski, M.A.P.S.

Language matters. During the 2017-2018 synodal process that led up to the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment” and the 2019 post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, one of the key points was understanding and defining the term/phrase, “young people.”

In the various documents released throughout the synodal process, the issue of identifying the focus demographic was repeatedly raised<sup>1</sup>, which caused Pope Francis to note in his exhortation:

We might attempt to draw a picture of young people today, but first I would echo the Synod Fathers, who noted that “...The worlds of today’s ‘youth’ are so many that in some countries one tends to speak of ‘young people’ in the plural. The age group considered by the Synod (16-29 years) does not represent a homogeneous category, but is composed of distinct groups, each with its own life experience.”<sup>2</sup>

The concept of speaking of young people “in the plural” is a reality for the Catholic Church in the United States. Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston and, at the time of the Synod, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), affirmed this with his brother bishops in his executive summary to the Holy See on the pre-synodal consultations, carried out throughout 2017 across the country. In that summary, he noted:

What we knew going in and what was reinforced in the reports is that, in our country, the age-range of “young people” identified by the Synod Office, that is, those ages 16 to 29, is comprised of several different groups including high school youth, college students, and young adults, and they come from many ethnic and cultural communities. Each grouping has distinct developmental, emotional, and spiritual needs and experiences, including those arising from cultural diversity. The reports confirmed our understanding that ministry with these age groups is unique and should not be lumped together.<sup>3</sup>

The origin of this linguistic confusion is the cross-cultural translation into English of the Italian word “giovani” and the Spanish word “jóvenes.” These words, which speak to specific cultural realities in Europe and Latin America, respectively, are the source terms used throughout the synodal process to describe the young people in question. In many non-American texts, these

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<sup>1</sup> The *Synod Preparatory Document* lays it out in the following manner: “In many ways, it is fair to say that there is a multiplicity of worlds, when speaking of young people, not a single one... In the following pages, the word “youth” refers to persons who are roughly 16 to 29 years old, while bearing in mind that the term needs to be adapted to local circumstances. In any case, it is good to remember that the term “youth,” in addition to referring to persons, is a stage of life that each generation understands in an unequal, original manner.” *Synod Preparatory Document*, (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2017), Introduction, §2, §3.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, March 25, 2019), §68.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, “Presidential Address on the Synod Preparatory/Consultation Process,” (Baltimore, Maryland: United States Conference Catholic Bishops, November 13, 2017).



words are roughly translated as “youth.” For instance, in the United Nations, the word “youth” is defined as those 15 to 24.<sup>4</sup> The Synod Office, in considering this age group, set the age parameters at 16 and 29.<sup>5</sup> In Hispanic-Latino culture, the context from which Pope Francis emerged (as the former Archbishop of Buenos Aires), the concept of “jóvenes” is generally understood as those ages 16 until the age of marriage (usually during a person’s 20s or 30s).

In the 1980s, Pope John Paul II developed an annual international gathering of young people that began with a Palm Sunday meeting in 1984 with 500,000 young Catholics in conjunction with the Church’s Jubilee Year of Redemption (1983-1984). That first meeting was echoed one year later, on Palm Sunday of 1985, in conjunction with the United Nations’ *International Year of Young People*. Another 500,000 came to Rome for that second gathering. Because of the success of these meetings over two consecutive years, Pope John Paul II decided to institutionalize the event with the formation of “Giornata Mondiale della Gioventù” which was translated into English as “World Youth Day” (WYD). These gatherings, aimed at those roughly 16 to 35, were held annually in every diocese, and every two or three years in a global setting such as Santiago de Compostela, Spain (1989), Manila, Philippines (1995), Toronto, Canada (2002), Sydney, Australia (2008), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2013), Kraków, Poland (2016), and most recently, Panama City, Panamá (2019).<sup>6</sup>

The age-ranges at World Youth Day and those used at the U.N., in Latin America, and elsewhere, stem from the cultural and ecclesial circumstances and educational pathways within their respective regions or countries, as well as what defines a young person’s full entrance into “adulthood.”

Due to these competing terms and age-ranges, confusion abounds. In the United States, this confusion is further amplified due to its own cultural, educational, and legal realities – and how terms have been used in religious and secular settings over the past century.

In 1996, the bishops of the United States released *Sons and Daughters of the Light*, their national pastoral plan for ministry with young adults, whom they defined as “people in their late teens, twenties, and thirties: single, married, divorced, or widowed; and with or without children.”<sup>7</sup> This document was itself a response to the emphasis put on young people by the Holy Father through the World Youth Days, in particular in the wake of the pope’s visit to Denver for WYD 1993. Then one year later, the U.S. bishops released *Renewing the Vision*, a national framework for youth ministry, which was focused on the Church’s outreach towards “adolescents”<sup>8</sup> (i.e., the teenage years, marked by puberty and high school education).

By distinguishing these two key groups (youth or adolescents and young adults), the Church in the United States was making a statement: there are *multiple* ways of understanding this demographic (or as Pope Francis and Synod Fathers noted: “in some countries, one tends to

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<sup>4</sup> Defined by the United Nations: “Today, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 16 per cent of the global population.” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. (New York: United Nations, 2018),

1, [www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/WorldYouthReport-2030Agenda.pdf](http://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/WorldYouthReport-2030Agenda.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> *Synod Preparatory*. Introduction, §3.

<sup>6</sup> *Chronicle of World Youth Days*, Vatican: [http://www.vatican.va/gmg/documents/gmg\\_chronicle-wyd\\_20020325\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/gmg/documents/gmg_chronicle-wyd_20020325_en.html)

<sup>7</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults*, (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996), §1.

<sup>8</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997), §1.

speak of ‘young people’ in the plural”<sup>9</sup>). Different than the United Nations, Europe, Latin America, and the WYD phenomenon, the bishops of this country were drawing a clear dividing line at age 18.

The age division of 18 has been a key marker for the developmental, educational, financial, and legal life of young people in the United States, making the U.S. Bishops’ choice of this dividing line fitting with the cultural realities of their country.

Sociologists Erik and Joan Erikson noted the developmental distinctions between “adolescence” and “early adulthood,” divided at 18 or 19. For instance, while youth were primarily focused on the search for identity and finding large peer groups to support their journey beyond their childhood and families of origins, young adults were seeking intimacy with just one or a few people, with which they could form a new family.<sup>10</sup> Other key factors surrounding the age-18 barrier include legal adulthood (the Supreme Court, in *Roper v. Simmons*, in 2005, ruled that those under 18 could not be executed by the state<sup>11</sup>); the civil right to vote and serve in the U.S. military; graduation from high school and entrance into college; and the “age of majority” (that is, U.S. society considers one to be a “minor” until age 18).

These trends impact other countries and cultures as well. In the course of the synodal process, which was coordinated by the Vatican (within Europe), the representatives at the Pre-Synod Meeting (in March 2018), the auditors at the Synod of Bishops (in October 2018), and the post-synodal International Forum (in June 2019) all had to be over age 18, even though the programs were focused on all young people (that is those 16 to 29). However, for some undisclosed reason, the Synod organizers opted for the age-18-minimum.

All these factors related to the definition of “young people” (or “giovani” or “jóvenes”), which seem to be culturally and circumstantially specific, have led to great confusion over the translation and reading of the synodal documents and Pope Francis’ *Christus Vivit*. As written, the young people referenced in the documentation are truly “youth and young adults,” on both sides of the U.S. “age of majority.” Likewise, the ministries referenced therein are inclusive of several ministries of the Church in the United States: junior high and high school youth ministries; high school and college/university campus ministries; pastoral juvenil hispana; and young adult ministries, to name a few. Such recognition of the wide diversity of ecclesial approaches is especially important in reading the seventh chapter in *Christus Vivit* (officially translated into English as “Youth Ministry,” though meaning so much more than that).

Further study will need to be done to explore the particulars of how *Christus Vivit* and the synodal documentation apply to both youth and to young adults (and to the various sub-groupings within each) and their respective ministry outreach efforts. For now, while it is not the entirety of the focus of this synodal process, language will be a critical first step. Beginning with a strong and clear understanding of who “young people” are, regardless of the specific generation in question, will be important for the planning and implementation phases that follow.

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<sup>9</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §68.

<sup>10</sup> Erik H. Erikson and Joan M. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version* (New York, NY: Norton, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> David R. Senn; Richard A. Weems, *Manual of Forensic Odontology 5<sup>th</sup> ed.* (Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press, 2013), 212.

## Young People and the Universal Call to Mission, Holiness, and Apostolate as Missionary Disciples

Fr. Frank Donio, S.A.C., D.Min.

Over the last two decades and intensifying greatly this past year, the Church in the United States continues to grapple with scandals involving clergy sexual abuse and financial impropriety as well as issues associated with leadership that is lacking in transparency and accountability. Trust of some Church leaders has become difficult, if not almost impossible, particularly in ministry with young people. Many have called for greater co-responsibility in the Church, but what does this really mean in a hierarchical body? Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit* offers an indication of a way forward that is done through youth and young adult ministry. He states:

Youth ministry has to be synodal; it should involve a “journeying together” that values “the charisms that the Spirit bestows in accordance with the vocation and role of each of the Church’s members, through a process of co-responsibility... Motivated by this spirit, we can move towards a participatory and co-responsible Church, one capable of appreciating its own rich variety, gratefully accepting the contributions of the lay faithful, including young people and women, consecrated persons, as well as groups, associations and movements. No one should be excluded or exclude themselves.”<sup>1</sup>

The basis of this understanding is not new. It comes directly from the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, particularly *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity). Three major and interconnected themes lead to the development of an understanding of co-responsibility in the Church – mission, holiness, and apostolate. All three could have the modifier “catholic” or “universal” placed in front of them. The first two are mentioned so often that sometimes they have lost the power of their meaning. The third, while discussed prior and after the Second Vatican Council and emphasized in the teachings of St. John Paul II, particularly in *Christifideles Laici*, has somewhat fallen out of use but seems to be making a bit of a return, especially among young Catholics.

Mission is rooted in the teaching that the People of God are sharers in the mission of Christ as priest, prophet, and king.<sup>2</sup> Mission is not done alone, it is done in and through the Church, the People of God. The Church goes forth not simply as an institution, but each and every baptized (and particularly baptized and confirmed) person. The Word of God and the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, provide us with what we need, particularly the Mass, from which we are dismissed at the end by being told “Go.”<sup>3</sup> Go do what? Live the mission of Christ

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, March 25, 2019, §206 [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html)

<sup>2</sup> See Pope Paul VI, *Dogmatic Constitution on The Church (Lumen Gentium)*, November 21, 1964, chapter 2, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) and Pope Paul VI, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem)*, November 18, 1965, §2, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops), 18.

and his Church, be apostles, or as Pope Francis teaches in *Evangelii Gaudium*, missionary disciples – followers of Christ who are sent into the world.

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are 'disciples' and 'missionaries', but rather that we are always 'missionary disciples.'<sup>4</sup>

The "encounter with the love of God in Christ Jesus" that transforms one's life is at the center of growth in holiness. Pope Benedict XVI in *Deus Caritas Est* clearly articulates this *metanoia* or conversion of heart to Christ: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."<sup>5</sup> People learn how to live lives of holiness through the example and witness of others, including the communion of saints. The community of faith, the Church, is called to accompany, especially young people, in deepening holiness, particularly in daily life. In *Gaudete et Exultate*, Pope Francis offers some clear guidance:

We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.<sup>6</sup>

"Bearing witness" is the apostolate of the baptized. In fact, "through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself ... that they may witness Christ throughout the world."<sup>7</sup> Christ, in and through his Church, therefore, sends forth the baptized as apostles or missionary disciples accompanied by the Holy Spirit to continue his work until he comes again.

An apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one's way of life; a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view to leading them to faith, or to the faithful with a view to instructing, strengthening, and encouraging them to a more fervent life. 'For the charity of Christ impels us' (2 Cor. 5:14).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*, November 24, 2013 §120, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

<sup>5</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *God is Love (Deus Caritas Est)*, December 25, 2005, §1, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html)

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, *Rejoice and Be Glad (Gaudete et Exultate)*, March 19, 2018, §14, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exultate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exultate.html)

<sup>7</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, §6.

Youth and young adult ministries need to review every action, program, and formative experience in light of how it accompanies young people into deeper living of the universal call to mission, holiness, and apostolate so that they can live more fully as apostles or missionary disciples of Christ. One place to start is with programs. Are they forming missionary disciples who are co-responsible for the mission of Christ and the Church or are they simply about how many people come? Pope Francis reminds us of the goal: “Filled with the love of Christ, young people are called to be witnesses of the Gospel wherever they find themselves, by the way they live.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §175.

**New Wine into New Wineskins:  
The Need for a New Document on Ministry with Youth and Young Adults**

**Bob Rice, Ph.D.**

It could be said that this is one of the most difficult times to be in the field of youth and young adult ministry: sexual scandals, dioceses going bankrupt, and a rise of the religiously unaffiliated are just a few of the pressing issues. However, in response to this, there has been an outburst of conversation and collaboration in the field, as seen in the National Dialogue, the *V Encuentro*, and the Synod on Youth, Faith, and Vocational Discernment. Both the Synod and the *Encuentro* have concluded, and we have our first papal exhortation on ministry to youth in the two thousand year history of the Catholic Church.

Though the discussions have been fruitful I believe we are still lacking clarity on how to respond to these movements. One idea that I would like to propose is the creation of new document on youth and young adult ministry.

I am not so naive as to think that a document will solve all the problems that need to be faced. Even if one should be published, it would be words and not actions. However, words are necessary to inspire action. Maps are needed to guide people who are lost. Though the Catholic Church in America needs *more* than a new youth ministry document to deal with the lack of faith and Catholic identity in today's teenagers, *it still needs a new document*.

As a rudder is a small part of a ship but essential for it to reach its intended destination, a revised vision of youth and young adult ministry is necessary to guide the Catholic Church in America toward effective practices in youth evangelization.

**Current documents in youth and young adult ministry**

Currently, we have numerous documents to draw from: *Sons and Daughters in the Light* (1996), *Renewing the Vision* (1997), *the National Directory of Catechesis* (2005), *the Final Synod Document* (2018), and *Christus Vivit* (2019).<sup>1</sup> All of them offer important direction, but also have lacunae that need to be addressed.

*Renewing the Vision*

As some who has been active in doing and teaching youth ministry for over two decades, I've been incredibly blessed by *Renewing the Vision*. At the time of its publication, it was a "game changer". It united those in youth ministry with a common language, raised the professionalism of the field, and helped everyone think of ministry to the young in a more holistic, "comprehensive" way. It has been one of the most popular documents released by the U.S. Bishops—tens of thousands were printed, hundreds of thousands have been downloaded. Numerous countries around the world patterned their language regarding youth ministry off of the document.

Yet for all its many strengths, it has some weaknesses that I propose are significant enough to warrant a new document. It did not give evangelization the primacy reflected in other

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of this writing, the conclusions of the *V Encuentro* have not been published, but that can be added to this list.



Church documents.<sup>2</sup> It barely mentioned vocational discernment.<sup>3</sup> Arguably, its most serious deficiency was that it did not speak to the needs of pastoral juvenil.<sup>4</sup> Twenty years later, those in the field of youth ministry are dealing with issues the document could not have predicted, such as sexual scandals and safe environment, social media, and a post-modern/post-Christian culture.

### *Sons and Daughters of the Light*

Though *Sons and Daughters of the Light* did not have the impact on young adult ministry as *Renewing* did for youth ministry, it was (and still is) an important document for that emerging field. *Sons and Daughters of the Light* was written 1) to make it clear that young adults must be actively invited to participate in the life of the Church, 2) to briefly describe what a “young adult” was, and 3) to develop a plan of action to minister to them.<sup>5</sup> It defined a young adult as a person “in their late teens, twenties, and thirties; single, married, divorced, or widowed; and with or without children.”<sup>6</sup>

Its style and tone is different from *Renewing*. My students read them both and are usually split down the middle at which one they prefer. *Renewing* is lauded because of its “big picture” approach while those who prefer *Sons and Daughters* appreciate its specific strategies in reaching that age group. However, that strength of *Sons and Daughters* is also its weakness. Though some strategic ideas such as, “form a Bible study” are timeless, distributing faith based CD-ROMs are not. It feels “older” than *Renewing* because of such anachronisms. And like *Renewing*, the passage of time has severely impacted its effectiveness.

Though written around the same time (published within six months of each other), the fact that neither document references the other was a missed opportunity and I feel has only contributed to (but did not cause) the “gap” that is often felt within the United States between youth ministry and young adult ministry.

### *National Directory for Catechesis*

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<sup>2</sup> I propose this for three reasons. Other than in the introduction, the word ‘evangelization’ wasn’t used until it was introduced as one of the eight components of comprehensive youth ministry. Evangelization had one of the shortest descriptions of those components, only five hundred words (in comparison, the description of the “Ministry of Catechesis” was three times as long as evangelization). It is not unreasonable to think that a reader might assume, since so little was said about it, that evangelization was of less import when compared to other components outlined in the document. Finally, by alphabetizing the components, it implied that evangelization did not have a higher priority than the others. I propose a deeper theological understanding of evangelization would have led it to not describe evangelization as a “component” but instead incorporate it as a theme woven throughout the document.

<sup>3</sup> In the introduction to the components, *Renewing* said, “First articulated in *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, these ministry components describe the ‘essence’ of ministry with adolescents and provide the Church with eight fundamental ways to minister effectively with adolescents. Today, in light of our National Strategy on Vocations, we add vocational discernment to the ‘essence’ of ministry with adolescents” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renewing the Vision*, p. 26). Was this to be a ninth component? Nothing more was said. A missed opportunity.

<sup>4</sup> “Both documents recognize the presence of different cultures in the Church and were translated into Spanish as *Renovemos la Vision* and *Hijos e Hijas de la Luz*, respectively. However, their focus continued to be on the middle class of the dominant culture, ignoring the tradition and work of *Pastoral Juvenil Hispana*, despite the efforts of the Hispanic leaders who were consulted.” National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, *Conclusions: First National Encounter for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry* (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008), 22.

<sup>5</sup> cf. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults*, (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996), §2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, §7.

Published in 2005, much of what the *National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC) said about youth and young adults was a summary of the aforementioned documents. However, the NDC addressed some things that were previously missing, especially when it came to ministry with adolescents. Vocational discernment was more strongly emphasized as was the importance of evangelization. It also proposed important qualities for “youth ministers”<sup>7</sup> such as the need for theological formation, moral behaviors, and spiritual life. “Coordinators of youth ministry should be practicing Catholics who live the Gospel in all aspects of their lives.”<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, these are “buried” within the document and is not its major focus. Many are surprised to hear it has anything new to contribute to the discussion. Should a new document be written, it offers some valuable contributions.

### *The Final Document of the Synod of Bishops and Christus Vivit*

Both the *Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment* and *Christus Vivit* emphasize a dynamic and relational approach to youth ministry, one that is focused on listening, encounter, and accompaniment. The insights are so profound and contemporary that one might be tempted to say that a new document is not needed because of these.

I propose three reasons as to why this is not the case. First, these documents are international in their scope and don't speak specifically to some of the challenges and opportunities we have in the United States. Second, the sixteen to thirty-year-old definition of youth doesn't fit into our current definition of youth (12-18) and young adult (18-thirties) ministry—it is more “young adult” than “youth”. Finally, both documents are substantial in their length. The reality is that those who work in the field are more likely to ignore a lengthy document (or documents) than read them.

### **The benefits of a new document**

Currently, one has to sift through many documents to find clarity on how to approach youth and young adult ministry in the US. It may sound ambitious to propose “one document to rule them all”, even unrealistic. However, if we are not able to simply articulate an effective vision on youth and young adult ministry in the US, then how can we expect it to be implemented by a group of men and women who are primarily volunteers?

A new document on youth and young adult ministry would show that the Church in the US acknowledges these ministries as a high priority. It could help ministries work together to help young people transition from “youth” to “young adult”. It would restructure training on the national and diocesan level. It would be taught in youth ministry courses in Catholic colleges around the nation. It would encourage dioceses and parishes to invest greater resources to serve the needs of young people. It may inspire teenagers and young adults to think about becoming involved in these ministries. It could also have an international impact.

All of this happened in the late nineties with the publications of *Sons and Daughters* and *Renewing*. The most important reason to create a new document is not because previous documents were not successful but because of how successful they were. If the bishops of the

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<sup>7</sup> cf. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *National Directory for Catechesis* (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 226. The NDC also used other titles such as “coordinators of youth ministry,” “directors of youth ministry,” and “youth ministry leaders.”

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

United States<sup>9</sup> were to publish a new document on youth and young adult ministry, pulling from past documents and adding new insights, I believe the result would not only be a *revised* vision but also a *revived* vision for ministry to, with, by, and for the young people of the United States.

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<sup>9</sup> Need it be published by the USCCB? I believe that it does. A USCCB document has far more weight than anything published by a national organization, even if it is a collaboration of numerous national organizations. I have been somewhat disappointed by the lack of response to *The Joy of Adolescent Catechesis* (of which I was one of the authors), even though it was sponsored by the major organizations within that field (NFCYM, NCCYM, NCEA).

## Looking Back in Order to Look Forward: Examining the Major Shift within Catholic Youth Evangelization, Youth Ministry, and Formation

Charlotte McCorquodale

In the 1930s when the first Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) was formed by Bishop Bernard Sheil in Chicago as an athletic organization it had a purpose to guide young Catholic boys to live a Christian life. It was developed, in response to Bishop Sheil reading the signs of the times as he wanted to offer an alternative to rising criminal activity that surrounded their neighborhood by providing an experience of community and positive activity. Fast forward ninety years, and Pope Francis is identifying the same need to respond to the signs of the time regarding the Church's pastoral ministry with youth and young adults. "...I have taken time to look at the reality of young people in today's world...I encourage communities to examine, respectfully and seriously, the situation of their young people, in order to find the most fitting ways to provide them pastoral care."<sup>1</sup>

Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit*, is calling for the Church to take a synodal approach to youth ministry, that represents a "journeying together."<sup>2</sup> He explains, "In this way, by learning from one another, we can better reflect that wonderful multi-faceted reality that Christ's Church is meant to be."<sup>3</sup> The Church in the United States has a long history of "learning together" through consulting and reflecting upon its pastoral ministry with youth and young adults with various symposiums, Encuentros, vision statements, and pastoral plans.<sup>4</sup> Each of these efforts has been focused on naming the best approaches and methods for this ministry.

Often, the discussion on the best approach has focused on how ecclesially moderate or conservative it was, instead of how effective. Pope Francis reminds us, "It does not matter where they are coming from or what label they have received, whether, 'conservative' or 'liberal' 'traditional' or progressive.' What is important is that we make use of everything that has born good fruit and effectively communicate the joy of the Gospel."<sup>5</sup>

Catholic youth and young adult ministry in the United States has evolved in various ways since the early days of CYO. This journey has been marked by "social and cultural changes"<sup>6</sup> as noted by Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit*. These changes, along with the ecclesial debates about the best pastoral approaches have pushed and pulled the Church's pastoral ministry with the young in different ways, in different directions, and with different points of emphasis. By those who have served in the field for many years, it often feels like Catholic youth and young adult ministry has been swinging back and forth on a pendulum of pastoral approaches and emphases.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, March 25, 2019), §103.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., §206

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., §207

<sup>4</sup> In 1976, after much consultation, the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) published, *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, two symposiums on Catholic youth ministry in the eighties, *Hope for a Decade* (1980) and *Faith Maturing* (1985), *Renewing the Vision* (1995), and a pastoral plan for young adult ministry, *Sons and Daughters of the Light* (1996). In addition, there have been five Nacional Encuentro for Hispanic Ministry from 1972 to 2018. (<https://www.catholicnh.org/assets/Documents/Community/Spanish/The-History-of-the-Nacional-Encuentro-for-Hispanic-Ministry.pdf>)

resulting in results that were published as a guide to the emerging ministry,

<sup>5</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §205

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., §202

Swinging or shifting from an emphasis on evangelization to catechesis, from relational to programmatic approaches, from CYO/youth groups to comprehensive youth ministry, from monocultural to multicultural, to name a few. This paper will examine these shifts or swings so that we can learn from the past as we plan the future of this important ministry within the life of the Church. Many times, our shifts in ministerial focus could be described as, throwing the baby out with the bath water, so to speak. Instead of keeping the best of what we know and adding it to it, the field has moved radically in the opposite direction causing repercussions that were not intended.

### **From CYO to Youth Ministry**

In the early days, the CYO was not focused on passing on faith but on helping young people to form community and live a Christian life, primarily through sports programs. This was effective for CYO because the society and culture was in large part Christian. As the popular culture began to change, being more open and in some ways less Christian, a gradual but distinct shift occurred. Institutions that at one time all worked together with families to form and support young people began to lose their credibility or significance because of societal changes. At some point, popular culture and youth culture became synonymous. These changes in culture began to expose the many areas lacking in young people's lives, and as such a need for a more comprehensive approach was needed in the Church's ministry efforts and this approach was articulated in the 1976, *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, from the then United States Catholic Conference (USCC.)

The shift that occurred, although not fully in all places, was a move from a singular youth group, to a variety of youth programming. While relationships are always at the center of any ministry with youth, there was a pendulum swing towards a more programmatic model versus a youth group community model.

### **From CCD to Experiential Faith Formation to a New Evangelization to Missionary Discipleship**

As society changed, the way young people were educated about the faith also changed. There was a movement from a question and answer model of the Baltimore Catechism, to a more experiential model of learning which focused more on helping young people give birth to a relationship with Jesus instead of understanding and articulating the basic tenets of the faith. This necessary swing in the 70s and 80s was a result of young people needing to make sense of their faith in a culture that could no longer be considered Christian. Unfortunately, this shift resulted in an entire generation lacking a language in faith and an understanding of the teachings of the church.

Because of the decline of Christianity and religious affiliation, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict, called for a "new evangelization" to evangelize the baptized that had fallen away from the church. The 2005 National Study of Youth and Religion young people, especially those who were Catholic lack greatly in not only their knowledge of faith but the language to articulate their beliefs. With that awareness, it was clear that in the 70s and 80s the Church threw the baby out with the bathwater, so the pendulum began to swing back in the other direction as the US Bishops developed guidelines for *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. Additionally, a

greater emphasis was placed on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and having it guide our catechetical efforts. And, now Pope Francis is inviting, not just the young church, but the whole church to a renewed commitment to missionary discipleship and the forming of missionary disciples.

### **The Future of Catholic Youth and Young Adult Ministry**

It is time for the pendulum to go away and for the Church to find balance when it comes to forming and engaging young Catholic disciples of Christ. This triangular balance is described in the three goals within *Renewing the Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry* (RTV), published in 1997 by the USCCB. While many aspects of RTV, need to be revised, the three overarching goals provide an important starting point for examining the future of the Church's pastoral ministry with youth and young adults. These goals, often summarized in the three words becoming, belonging, and believing.

- Goal 1: To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today. (Believing)
- Goal 2: To draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community. (Belonging)
- Goal 3: To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person. (Becoming)<sup>7</sup>

Similar goals for young adult ministry were articulated in the 1996 pastoral plan, *Sons and Daughters of Light*. Additionally, the Church's pastoral outreach to Hispanic young people, as well as those from other cultures is an important shift that is occurring that requires more reflection and must be included in the conversation about the future of the Church's pastoral ministry with youth and young adults.

In the past, a siloed approach has been in place, segregating young people by age or culture. It is clear that this is not working and that the Church in the US must identify a common vision and plan for all young people regardless of age or culture so that she can help them move seamlessly to faith as an adult.

Maybe the future is as simple as what Pope Francis shares in *Christus Vivit*, "that youth ministry involves two main courses of action. One is outreach, the way we attract new young people to an experience of the Lord. The other is growth, the way we help those who have already had that experience to mature in it."<sup>8</sup> As the leaders of youth and young adult ministry help to chart the future of this ministry and try to turn the tide of disaffiliation among the young, it is important that the Church builds on the past as it plans for its future.

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<sup>7</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (Washington DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §209.



## **Tener Sed con los Jóvenes** **Acompañar a Jóvenes Adultos y Adolescentes Hispanos en USA a la Luz de *Christus vivit***

**Rev. Alejandro López-Cardinale<sup>1</sup>**

### **Preámbulo.**

Uno de los requerimientos principales -y al mismo tiempo una imperiosa necesidad- de toda pastoral, más aún de la pastoral juvenil -sea hispana, sea de cualquier cultura-, es el acompañamiento pastoral que se da en una doble dimensión, tanto para el que es acompañado como para el acompañante. Es precisamente en esta acción, la de acompañar a la persona, que se hace viable el proceso de maduración personal, se profundiza la vinculación e inserción con la comunidad eclesial a través de una presencia activa para así proyectarse hacia el objetivo que toda pastoral conlleva: que toda persona -acompañado y acompañante-, de la edad que fuesen, lleguen a la madurez de la vida cristiana, lleguen a ser adultos en la fe y en la vida.

Quiero hacer énfasis desde el principio de este artículo como algo muy propio de la pastoral juvenil desde la realidad hispana, que el acompañamiento pastoral se da siempre en dos niveles: acompañamiento para el acompañado y acompañamiento para el acompañante. Este énfasis da y otorga al acompañamiento pastoral un carácter único y, al mismo tiempo, dinámico.

Al dedicar estos pensamientos y reflexiones en torno a la acción de acompañar a los jóvenes, acción que le da su objeto teológico y su nota distintiva a la pastoral juvenil, a la vida del acompañado y la vida del acompañante, y por la brevedad de este escrito, no quisiera dejar pasar de lado el marco eclesiológico en el que dichos pensamientos y reflexiones descansan: en una eclesiología de comunión y participación<sup>2</sup>, tal como lo señala el documento de Aparecida, n. 368.

El Papa Francisco, en la Exhortación Apostólica *Christus vivit*, menciona el tema del acompañamiento siete veces entre los nn. 242-247, cuando se refiere al papel de los adultos en el acompañamiento hacia y con los jóvenes.

Desde la perspectiva de la teología práctica, este ensayo se construye a partir de la experiencia de lo que he vivido como acompañante en medio de los jóvenes adultos y jóvenes adolescentes hispanos-latinos, sujetos activos de la pastoral juvenil. Esta experiencia viene

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<sup>1</sup> Este artículo ha sido pensado como material de apoyo a [Voice and Vision: The National Summit for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults](#), a celebrarse en Franciscan University of Steubenville, julio 31-agosto 2, 2019. Como una visión general al tema, recomiendo la lectura de los siguientes artículos: Hosffman Ospino, *Hispanic Ministry, Evangelization, and Faith Formation* (pp. 55-80); Ken Johnson-Mondragón, *Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry* (pp. 99-128), ambos en: *Hispanic Ministry in the 21st Century: Present and Future*. Hosffman Ospino (ed.), Convivium Press. Serie Hispania, Miami, 2010; Lynette De Jesús-Sáenz and Ken Johnson-Mondragón, *Hispanic Youth and the Pastoral Care of the New Generation of Latino Youth*, en: *Hispanic Ministry in the 21st Century: Urgent Matters*. Hosffman Ospino, Elsie Miranda, Brett Hoover, editores. Convivium Press. Serie Hispania, Miami, 2016, pp. 67-82.

<sup>2</sup> Esta eclesiología de comunión y participación la encontramos en el corazón de la *Lumen Gentium*, Constitución dogmática sobre la Iglesia, del Concilio Vaticano II. Para profundizar más en este tema, recomiendo la lectura de la Conferencia del, para ese entonces, Cardenal Joseph Ratzinger sobre la Eclesiología de la "*Lumen gentium*" pronunciada en el Congreso Internacional sobre la aplicación del Concilio Vaticano II, organizado por el comité para el Gran Jubileo del año 2000.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000227\\_ratzinger-lumen-gentium\\_sp.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000227_ratzinger-lumen-gentium_sp.html)

iluminada por la lectura de la Exhortación Apostólica *Christus vivit*, del Papa Francisco. Recoge, por tanto y particularmente, algunas de mis experiencias vividas a lo largo de los últimos 17 años del ministerio sacerdotal que he ejercido en Estados Unidos en medio de ellos. La narrativa que utilizaré es a partir de cómo ellos han impactado en mí -no hablaré de ellos en tercera persona o ubicándolos como destinatarios o inclusive como interlocutores. Antes bien, como compañeros de camino-, y cómo el acompañarlos me ha regalado una *mística* y, al mismo tiempo, me ha generado una sed de Dios, sed que es saciada en la medida que los acompaño y que me dejo acompañar por ellos.

Que este ensayo pueda servir para examinar las cualidades como acompañantes entre ellos, para ser prudentes en no hablar de ellos sino con ellos, en el diálogo que se establece y que genera las conversiones pastorales y personales que todos, sin excepción, tenemos o deberíamos tener en la medida que acompañamos y nos dejamos acompañar, conversión pastoral y personal que todos, sin excepción, necesitamos y a la que nos urge el Papa Francisco.<sup>3</sup>

### **1. Desde la experiencia de acompañar, del acompañante y de ser acompañado.**

Conocí a Dania Sánchez hacia el 2010, en uno de los cursos bíblicos que dicté apoyando la labor del [Instituto Fe y Vida](#), en la diócesis de Dallas. En aquel momento, Dania pertenecía al equipo coordinador y estaba iniciándose en sus labores de animación diocesana. Dania es latina, nacida en Texas. Al mismo tiempo que se vinculaba a la vida diocesana, proseguía sus estudios en el área de educación, en los que se desempeña actualmente. En medio de todas sus actividades, Dania asume su vida de esposa y ejerce la presidencia de la Pastoral Juvenil Hispana Región X (diócesis de Texas, Arkansas y Oklahoma). Por su paulatino trabajo en la pastoral juvenil y su presencia diocesana y regional, es invitada a formar parte del *National Colloquium on Ministry with Hispanic Youth and Young Adults*, convocado por [La RED, National Catholic Network de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana](#) y [Boston College](#), celebrado en Boston en el 2016, formando parte del grupo *U.S. Born Latino Youth*. Recientemente acabo de compartir con ella unos días en el [Programa Nacional de Liderazgo 2019](#), organizado por el Instituto Fe y Vida, en Lewis University, IL., donde ejercía su animación pastoral acompañando a adolescentes y jóvenes que por primera vez asistían a procesos de formación en la pastoral juvenil y cursan el Simposio en pastoral juvenil.

Como vemos, puedo decir con una inmensa alegría, que de acompañada, ella ahora es acompañante. ¿Cuál es la dinámica que he visto presente en el proceso que hemos llevado a lo largo de estos nueve años?

Utilizando las propias palabras de Dania, cito:

“El arte de acompañar y ser acompañado [...] requiere de dos cosas: el deseo y la confianza. El deseo de la persona que va acompañar. Este deseo viene de lo que él o ella ve en el que va a ser acompañado. El deseo de ser parte de su caminar, no por sus méritos sino porque siente en sí el llamado de Dios para acompañar a esta persona. La confianza viene de las dos personas. El acompañante y el que recibe el acompañamiento. La confianza de saber que se cuenta el uno con el otro. La confianza de entender que puede ser un acompañamiento cercano o distante, flexible

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<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Papa Francisco, *Evangelii Gaudium. La alegría del evangelio*, nn. 25, 27, 32. Un excelente artículo sobre este particular lo encontramos en <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/es/news/presupuestos-de-la-propuesta-de-conversion-pastora>

ante todo. La confianza de saber que Dios es quien camina al lado de cada uno y de una manera especial empieza a caminar más cercanamente a través de la presencia del acompañante como en el camino a Emaús.”<sup>4</sup> Partiendo de estas palabras, quisiera profundizar en lo que Dania llama “el arte de acompañar y ser acompañado”.

El arte de acompañar, desde esta experiencia, descansa en contemplar la vida, vida que tiene que nutrir el diálogo que se desarrolla entre ambas partes, del acompañante y del acompañado, es hablar sobre lo que se siente, lo que se vive, lo que conmueve,<sup>5</sup> los sentimientos y las mociones que se encuentran detrás de ellos, y que son absolutamente necesarias para iniciar el camino hacia un discernimiento espiritual,<sup>6</sup> las alegrías y esperanzas, las tristezas y angustias, tal como lo señala la Constitución pastoral *Gaudium et spes* sobre la Iglesia en el mundo actual, 1:

“Los gozos y las esperanzas, las tristezas y las angustias de los hombres de nuestro tiempo, sobre todo de los pobres y de cuantos sufren, son a la vez gozos y esperanzas, tristezas y angustias de los discípulos de Cristo. Nada hay verdaderamente humano que no encuentre eco en su corazón. La comunidad cristiana está integrada por hombres que, reunidos en Cristo, son guiados por el Espíritu Santo en su peregrinar hacia el reino del Padre y han recibido la buena nueva de la salvación para comunicarla a todos. La Iglesia por ello se siente íntima y realmente solidaria del género humano y de su historia.”

El arte de acompañar, y éste específico entre Dania y yo, se da y se dio en un espacio, cultura, realidad y tiempo concreto, en medio de las y nuestras historias personales, de las y nuestras historias de salvación que se entrecruzaron, que se reescribieron, al igual que la historia de los discípulos de Emaús se entrecruzó y se reescribió entre ellos mismos y Jesús. Volveremos más tarde a estos puntos, pero no quiero dejar de mencionarlos, pues el hilo conductor de este arte no es otro que el misterio de la Encarnación. Acompañar y ser acompañado impone la dinámica que ya en el año 150 San Ireneo de Lyon sabiamente comentaba: “lo que no es asumido, no es redimido”.<sup>7</sup>

## **2. Definiendo los elementos esenciales que el acompañamiento espiritual requiere.**

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<sup>4</sup> Apuntes de una entrevista informal entre Dania Sánchez y quien escribe este ensayo. Junio 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Carmen Esthela Simbra Herrera. Propuesta de acompañamiento espiritual para los jóvenes de 12 a 16 años del Colegio Técnico Don Bosco. Tesis para optar a la maestría en Pastoral Juvenil. Universidad Politécnica Salesiana, Quito, 2011, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> San Ignacio de Loyola nos presenta reglas de discernimiento, aclarándonos que son para, en alguna manera, sentir y conocer las varias mociones que en *la anima* [el alma] se hacen presente, conviven y se entrecruzan. La razón de esto es para no solamente reconocerlas, para profundizar en las buenas y rechazar las malas. En el proceso de acompañamiento, en el camino que se establece, las mociones son, en última instancia, lo que nos moviliza. En general las identificamos con esos sentimientos espirituales de “consolación y desolación” pero las mociones no son sólo los sentimientos, también lo son los pensamientos, los recuerdos, y hasta las imágenes que nos movilizan interiormente. Es aquí, en la medida que vamos descubriendo las mociones detrás de los sentimientos cuando hacemos evidente la presencia del Espíritu de Dios. Es aquí, indiscutiblemente, donde comienza la tarea del proceso del discernimiento espiritual. *Cfr.* Raúl González, sj. Las mociones espirituales. <https://raulgonzalezsj.wordpress.com/>

<sup>7</sup> *Cfr.* San Ireneo de Lyon. *Adversus haereses*, 3, 19, 1; 3, 23. *Cfr.* Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica, 456-483.

Los jóvenes reunidos en el Pre-Sínodo del 2018 definen en sus propios términos lo que ellos no solamente entienden pero también esperan de un acompañamiento espiritual:

“Los jóvenes están buscando a hombres y mujeres fieles que les guíen en su caminar y que expresen la verdad, dejando al joven la capacidad de articular la comprensión de su fe y de su vocación. Dichas personas no tienen que ser ejemplos a imitar, sino testimonios vivos, que evangelicen con su propia vida. Son muchos los que pueden cumplir estas expectativas; rostros familiares que están en sus hogares, colegas en la comunidad local, o mártires que dan testimonio de su fe a través de la entrega de su vida. Las cualidades de dicho mentor incluyen: que sea un auténtico cristiano comprometido con la Iglesia y con el mundo; que busque constantemente la santidad; que comprenda sin juzgar; que sepa escuchar activamente las necesidades de los jóvenes y pueda responderles con gentileza; que sea muy bondadoso, y consciente de sí mismo; que reconozca sus límites y que conozca la alegría y el sufrimiento que todo camino espiritual conlleva. Una característica especialmente importante en un mentor, es el reconocimiento de su propia humanidad. Que son seres humanos que cometen errores: personas imperfectas, que se reconocen pecadores perdonados. Algunas veces, los mentores son puestos sobre un pedestal, y por ello cuando caen provocan un impacto devastador en la capacidad de los jóvenes para involucrarse en la Iglesia. Los mentores no deberían llevar a los jóvenes a ser seguidores pasivos, sino más bien a caminar a su lado, dejándoles ser los protagonistas de su propio camino. Deben de respetar la libertad que el joven tiene en su proceso de discernimiento y ofrecerles herramientas para que lo hagan bien. Un mentor debe confiar sinceramente en la capacidad que tiene cada joven de poder participar en la vida de la Iglesia. Por ello, un mentor debe simplemente plantar la semilla de la fe en los jóvenes, sin querer ver inmediatamente los frutos del trabajo del Espíritu Santo. Este papel no debería de ser exclusivo de los sacerdotes y de la vida consagrada, sino que los laicos deberían poder igualmente ejercerlo. Por último, todos estos mentores deberían beneficiarse de una buena formación permanente.”<sup>8</sup>

Son varios los elementos esenciales que podemos comentar a partir del aporte de los jóvenes desde nuestra perspectiva hispana:

- a. El acompañamiento espiritual que piden, con el que se sienten cómodos, no es una experiencia puntual. Es más bien un largo proceso, una experiencia continua, la misma experiencia de camino presente en los discípulos de Emaús (Lucas 24,13-35), en el relato de Felipe y el eunuco (Hechos 8,26-40). Este proceso continuo, prolongado, implica no solamente las sesiones de escucha propiamente dichas. Implica hacerse familia para poder comprender las realidades personales tanto del acompañado (de ahora en adelante lo denominaremos *joven*), como del acompañante, llegar a reconocer tanto los

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<sup>8</sup> Documento de la Reunión pre-sinodal de los jóvenes para la preparación de la XV Asamblea General Ordinaria del Sínodo de los Obispos, n. 10. Roma, 2018.

sentimientos como las mociones que, en última instancia, llevan a reconocer la presencia del Espíritu de Dios.

- b. Por lo que este acompañamiento espiritual es lento y progresivo, pues no se puede obtener todo inmediatamente. Para el hispano, la efectividad del acompañamiento se da no por llegar a la meta pre-establecida. Antes bien, el acompañamiento se realiza en la medida que se da el proceso de crecimiento personal de ambos -joven y acompañante-, por los lazos de “familia espiritual” que se crean durante esta jornada de fe.
- c. Por lo lento y progresivo, este acompañamiento no solamente se realiza en el tiempo, también en un espacio, en una realidad y en una cultura precisa. El espacio es la vida misma, tal como se presenta, no la que se quiere alcanzar, pues no se puede construir un acompañamiento en los resultados pero sí a partir de los hechos concretos de la vida, siguiendo la dinámica de la Encarnación. Esa misma dinámica impone tomar en serio la realidad donde el joven vive y la cultura donde él/ella están inmersos y en donde ese acompañamiento se desarrolla, máxime en la realidad de una cultura “híbrida” o nueva cultura que el encuentro de la hispanidad/latinidad con la cultura anglosajona origina. Acá hablamos de un acompañamiento que tome en serio los datos de la interculturalidad y todo lo que ella implica.<sup>9</sup>
- d. Es, pues, desde este tiempo, desde esa realidad concreta y desde esta cultura, donde tiene su punto de partida el acompañamiento, el lugar o espacio vital de donde comienza todo. Es importante recalcar esto dentro del contexto hispano. El espacio del encuentro entre el joven y el acompañante es, ante todo, un espacio vital, donde cada uno aporta y donde se encuentran dos historias, desde diferentes ángulos y perspectivas, llamadas a ser compartidas, teniendo presente que son dos historias diversas enmarcadas en un espacio, tiempo, realidad y cultura definidos.
- e. En ese espacio, tiempo, realidad y cultura, empieza la relación de “amistad”, la relación fraterna y, al mismo tiempo, la relación filial, es decir, la relación de “familia”, la

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<sup>9</sup> Propongo la lectura del excelente artículo de José Mario Méndez. Teología e interculturalidad: más allá de la inculturación. Costa Rica, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/48861630.pdf>. Méndez, en el artículo citando a Fornet-Betancourt, señala la interculturalidad como fruto de una postura o disposición del ser humano por la que “se capacita para... y se habitúa a vivir sus referencias identitarias en relación con los llamados ‘otros’, es decir, compartiéndolas en convivencia con ellos. De ahí que se trate de una actitud que abre al ser humano y lo impulsa a un proceso de reaprendizaje y de reubicación cultural y contextual. Es una actitud que, por sacarnos de nuestras seguridades teóricas y prácticas, nos permite percibir el analfabetismo cultural del que nos hacemos culpables cuando creemos que basta una cultura, la propia, para leer e interpretar el mundo”. Con palabras seculares, Fornet-Betancourt está describiendo exactamente el mismo proceso descrito por Lucas en el encuentro del diácono Felipe con el eunuco, Hechos 8.26-40. Por supuesto, la interculturalidad en el proceso de acompañamiento implica también una reconsideración de la teología narrativa, tal como lo expresa con sabiduría Paul Ricoeur. Para Ricoeur, el “ser-existir” del ser humano se expresa en el lenguaje-tiempo. La única manera de acceder al tiempo es a través del lenguaje y, a la vez, el lenguaje guarda el tiempo. Sin embargo ese ser no es que esté dado, se interprete y se asuma. No se trata de una información que alguien codifica y anexa en formato de aplicación a su vida, logrando ya ser lo que debe ser. El ser tiene múltiples posibilidades. La condición humana es un enigma susceptible de interpretación que se nos ofrece para que en libertad absoluta configuremos nuestra existencia. De tal manera, el “ser-existir” se ofrece a todos por medio del lenguaje-tiempo. Para una lectura más pausada al respecto y como la teología narrativa juega un papel importante en el acompañamiento pastoral-espiritual, recomiendo vivamente el artículo de Eduar Reyes Garzón. Hermenéutica y narrativa en Paul Ricoeur. Bogotá,

<http://repository.lasalle.edu.co/bitstream/handle/10185/13466/T30.09%20R33h.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>

Recomiendo también la lectura del artículo de Edgar E. Velázquez Camelo, *Hacia una teología narrativa encarnada. Aproximación desde la teología de la acción*, en: Reflexiones Teológicas, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, enero-junio 2019, n. 15.

relación comunitaria. En el contexto hispano esta manera de hacer el acompañamiento es esencial. De hecho, sin esa relación, no existe acompañamiento. La relación de familia, el sentirse “uno-en-dos”, hermanados, hace posible un acompañamiento más en sintonía con lo que somos y creemos, con los valores profundos que sostienen la idiosincrasia hispano-latina.

- f. Esta relación de familia se da en dos sentidos: entre el joven y el acompañante y, además, con la familia del joven. Una de las características que define a la pastoral hispana en general, y más a la pastoral juvenil hispana, es que al caminar con los jóvenes, caminamos con las familias de cada uno de ellos. Es imposible e impensable, y esto es una realidad vivida todos los días con y desde la realidad de los jóvenes: no hay acompañamiento posible si no se asume el acompañamiento al entorno familiar del joven.
- g. En esta doble dinámica familiar, el proceso de acompañamiento toma un cáliz definido: el joven es el que formalmente toma la iniciativa, el que expresa el deseo de ser acompañado, el que invita al acompañante a entrar en su vida y en la vida de su familia. Esto garantiza que el proceso esté fundado en la apertura de abrirse al otro y en el deseo y la necesidad de crecimiento -llámese humano, llámese espiritual-.
- h. De esta doble dinámica familiar depende el nexo espiritual que se desarrolla entre el joven y el acompañante. Este nexo fluye en ambas direcciones. El joven está buscando consejo, sabiduría, cariño, fraternidad, filiación. El acompañante redimensiona la paternidad/maternidad, ayuda en el proceso de discernimiento.<sup>10</sup> Entre ambos intentan responder a la pregunta esencial: “¿dónde está Dios en todo esto?”.
- i. En el contexto de la pastoral juvenil hispana, responder a la última pregunta implica adentrarnos en los objetivos concretos del acompañamiento espiritual:<sup>11</sup> acogiendo al joven, se establece un espacio de escucha e iluminación, de orientación y facilitación, para que dentro de las circunstancias particulares del espacio, tiempo y cultura donde se

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<sup>10</sup> Es oportuno destacar acá algunas de las funciones del acompañante miradas desde la perspectiva de la pastoral juvenil:

- a. El acompañante debe ayudar para que el acompañado ponga atención a todo lo que pasa en la vida ordinaria, cotidiana. El primer nivel de lectura se realiza en la vida diaria del acompañado.
- b. El acompañante, una vez que ayuda a enfocar la atención en este primer nivel de lectura, la lectura desde la vida (método antropológico), intenta seguir acompañando en un nivel más profundo, el nivel de los “lugares teológicos” que, para nosotros los católicos, los constituyen la Palabra de Dios, el encuentro con Jesús y con la Iglesia-comunidad, iniciando una relectura de la vida desde la mirada de Jesús y la comunidad de fe. Esta relectura establece una hermenéutica que redirige la vida de ambos, acompañado y acompañante, en el proceso de liberación y crecimiento.
- c. El acompañante en ambos niveles, acompaña afectivamente al acompañado, haciendo de sus problemas, crisis y dificultades, ocasión de oportunidades y desafíos.
- d. El acompañante va adquiriendo, poco a poco, el sentido y la certeza de hasta dónde acompaña y desde dónde el acompañado requiere otro acompañante u otro proceso de acompañamiento. Es quizá esta parte la más compleja y difícil de aceptar: todo acompañamiento tiene un término, máxime cuando hablamos de procesos en la pastoral juvenil.

<sup>11</sup> Uniéndonos al criterio de Eugenio Albuquerque Frutos, “[si] preferimos hablar de acompañamiento espiritual es no sólo por esta razón concreta de ser el término que prevalece especialmente en el ministerio pastoral entre los jóvenes, sino, sobre todo, porque pensamos que expresa mejor la realidad cuyo sentido y naturaleza [se presenta en este ensayo], -editado por el autor del mismo-. Se trata de guiar y orientar en el camino que cada uno personalmente emprende para ir a Dios, caminando junto a él. Comporta una nueva mentalidad y un nuevo planteamiento en relación a la concepción y praxis tradicional de la *dirección espiritual*. Acompañar supone aceptar al joven como agente y protagonista de la propia vida, caminar con él hacia el descubrimiento de la propia identidad humana y cristiana, iluminar el camino y ayudarlo a crecer en la fe y en la adhesión a Jesús.” Eugenio Albuquerque Frutos. *El acompañamiento espiritual en la pastoral juvenil*. CCS, Madrid, 2009.

da el acompañamiento, se produzca el encuentro personal con Jesús y con la comunidad de fe.

- j. En este particular, el encuentro con Jesús y con la comunidad de fe, son encuentros que se dan por una iniciativa que viene del mismo Jesús que sale al encuentro de todos y, de manera especial, de los jóvenes. Es tarea propia del acompañante caminar con el joven para que este encuentro con Jesús y la Iglesia puedan darse, no desde el marco de la invención del acompañante pero desde el marco de la gratuidad con el que Jesús sale al encuentro del joven en su vida y en su momento histórico. Es importante señalar esto, una y otra vez. El Papa Francisco se hace eco de esta misma idea en todo el capítulo 4 de *Christus vivit*, 111-133. El Papa señala tres grandes verdades que todo acompañante debe procurar que el joven descubra: que Dios es un Dios de amor, que Cristo salva, que Él vive. Todas estas verdades se dan dentro del marco de la gratuidad, no son inducidas. En el contexto hispano/latino -y se aplica a todas las culturas y etnias-, estas tres verdades son supremamente importante para redimensionar y ayudar a una relectura de la vida desde esta óptica.

### **3. Hablemos de los tipos de acompañamiento.**

Como bien comenta García Domínguez: “podemos pensar en dos modelos de dirección o acompañamiento espiritual: la figura del «padre», director sabio y carismático; o la figura del que pone el acento en el «método» de la conversación, en el procedimiento. El primero es una figura clásica [...] el segundo modelo, [...] recoge de la enseñanza de la tradición el método para acompañar, el modo mejor de proceder en el acompañamiento.”<sup>12</sup>

Con estos dos modelos en mente, dando preferencia al modelo de la conversación, distinguimos además diversas modalidades de acompañamiento: el diálogo pastoral puntual, para afrontar algún problema específico, centrándose en la persona del joven, prever un proceso de acompañamiento a largo plazo. Estas modalidades descansan más en las habilidades propias del acompañante y en las que éste debe ser claro al momento de iniciar el acompañamiento con el/la joven.<sup>13</sup>

La claridad en cuanto a cuál tipo de acompañamiento es esencial desde el inicio. Esto es de absoluta necesidad y, dentro del contexto hispano-latino, es vital colocar las pautas claras desde el inicio.

A partir del modelo de la conversación, el acompañamiento espiritual con el joven se centra en una serie de conversaciones para que éste, con los elementos que de esas conversaciones se desprenden, pueda él mismo descubrir, encontrar, asumir, integrar, la voluntad de Dios en medio de los acontecimientos de su vida y, por consiguiente, tomar las decisiones necesarias para que su vida se conforme de acuerdo a esta voluntad divina en su historia concreta de salvación.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Luis María García Domínguez, sj. Acompañar para discernir: Claves para un acompañamiento espiritual sencillo y serio, en: La Revista Católica, Julio-Septiembre, 2018, p. 300-309. Por otra parte, no olvidemos los clásicos tipos de acompañamiento que han prevalecido en la pastoral juvenil por muchísimos años: el acompañamiento grupal-comunitario, el acompañamiento ordinario (usualmente a nivel de la catequesis y/o formación), el acompañamiento sistemático, el que se establece entre dos personas haciendo un camino y proceso espiritual juntos: el joven y el acompañante o asesor, el acompañamiento extraordinario, cuando intervienen diversos campos disciplinares en el proceso, sea bien con un joven o cuando se realiza el acompañamiento grupal-comunitario.

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. Idem., p. 301.

<sup>14</sup> “Este acompañamiento supone la capacidad de provocar al sujeto para ir (a “lo profundo”), a las aguas más profundas, asumiendo el compromiso por la causa de la vida personal, comunitaria y social. El acompañamiento, en

Los dos últimos Papas han dedicado tiempo para delinear este modelo de acompañamiento juvenil. El Papa Emérito Benedicto XVI invitaba a llegar a lo íntimo de la persona, al “verdadero encuentro de dos libertades.”<sup>15</sup>

El Papa Francisco ha destacado insistentemente que toda la pastoral debe ser de un acompañamiento misericordioso. Esto aplica aún más al acompañamiento espiritual entre y con los jóvenes. En la Exhortación Apostólica *Evangelii Gaudium*, La alegría del evangelio, el Papa utiliza dos criterios de acompañamiento. Por una parte, un criterio amplio, lo utiliza cuando afirma que acompañar es una de las acciones que forman parte de una “Iglesia en salida”: primerear, involucrarse, acompañar, fructificar y festejar (EG, 24).

Por la otra, en un criterio más restringido, señala diversas situaciones de acompañamiento:

- a. Iniciar en el arte del acompañamiento a los sacerdotes, religiosos y laicos (EG, 169).
- b. Todo acompañamiento debe llevar a un proceso de liberación integral, donde la auténtica libertad es llevar que la persona se encuentre con el Padre por medio de su Hijo (EG, 170).
- c. La necesidad que los acompañantes conozcan los procesos, que sean prudentes, comprensivos, sepan esperar, dóciles al Espíritu, cuiden a la comunidad. Para ello, ejercitarnos en el arte de escuchar, en el arte de cultivar una pedagogía que lleve al joven a la plena asimilación del misterio, en discernir las decisiones verdaderamente libres y responsables (EG, 171).
- d. El acompañamiento está ligado a la construcción y proclamación del Reino. Como éste es un trabajo arduo y prolongado, y desde la propia experiencia de ser acompañados, implica que este acompañamiento es compasivo, despierta confianza (EG, 172).
- e. El acompañamiento espiritual más auténtico se inicia y dirige siempre hacia la misión evangelizadora. De ahí el concepto de ser discípulo misionero. Por esto, lo de discípulo misionero no es una idea sino la concreción de un acompañamiento donde los discípulos misioneros acompañan a los discípulos misioneros (EG, 173).

En *Christus vivit*, el Papa Francisco vuelve a retomar el tema e insiste en específicas situaciones de acompañamiento cuando se trata de los jóvenes:

- a. “La familia debe ser el primer espacio de acompañamiento.” (CV, 242). Parte de la idea que la pastoral juvenil está encargada de construir una casa, un hogar. Ese proyecto se materializa, en la mayoría de los casos, en el matrimonio y en la caridad conyugal.

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la pastoral juvenil, requiere confianza, conocimiento de los procesos presentados por la pastoral juvenil, una relación con el Dios de Jesús, para que sus palabras tengan la fuerza del testimonio de personas de fe, y madurez para estar atentos a la otra persona en su proceso. Con esto, ella tiene autoridad para hacer que la formación integral se dé en el proceso de la educación de la fe.” CELAM, Civilización del amor. Proyecto y Misión, CAPYM, Bogotá, 2013, n. 525.

<sup>15</sup> “El acto de fe es un acto eminentemente personal, que tiene lugar en lo más profundo y que marca un cambio de dirección, una conversión personal: es mi vida que da un giro, una nueva orientación. Pero este creer no es el resultado de mi reflexión solitaria, no es el producto de mi pensamiento, sino que es el resultado de una relación, de un diálogo en el que hay un escuchar, un recibir, y un responder; es el comunicarse con Jesús, el que me hace salir de mi “yo”, encerrado en mí mismo, para abrirme al amor de Dios Padre. Es como un renacimiento en el que me descubro unido no solo a Jesús, sino también a todos aquellos que han caminado y caminan por el mismo camino; y este nuevo nacimiento, que comienza con el Bautismo, continúa a lo largo del curso de la vida.” (Catequesis de Benedicto XVI, 31 de octubre 2012).



- b. La comunidad cristiana juega un rol importantísimo en el acompañamiento espiritual a los jóvenes (CV, 243). Este énfasis del Papa Francisco tiene grandes implicaciones en el carácter iniciático en la catequesis y de las propuestas de formación en la pastoral juvenil.
- c. La calidad en la preparación y en la dedicación del acompañante, colocando la escucha como parte esencial de su ministerio. De hecho, el Papa hace eco de la sugerencia del Sínodo de Obispos sobre: “el carisma de la escucha que el Espíritu Santo suscita en las comunidades también podría recibir una forma de reconocimiento institucional para el servicio eclesial.” (CV, 244).
- d. Un tipo especial de acompañamiento para aquellos jóvenes que serán líderes entre ellos (CV, 245).
- e. El acompañamiento específico desde las escuelas y universidades, desarrollando una pastoral juvenil-universitaria capaz de escuchar y acompañar a los jóvenes en estas áreas edades específicas (CV, 247).

#### **4. Hablemos del acompañante, lo que los jóvenes como Dania esperan encontrar.**

El Papa Francisco hace eco de las peticiones de los mismos jóvenes sobre cuáles deben ser las características de los acompañantes que ellos esperan encontrar (CV, 246):

- a. Que sean auténticos cristianos, comprometidos con la Iglesia y el mundo;
- b. Tengan como objetivo buscar la santidad;
- c. Acompañen comprendiendo, no juzgando;
- d. Escuchen activamente y respondan con gentileza a las necesidades de los jóvenes;
- e. Bondadosos y conscientes de sus propias limitaciones y su propia humanidad;
- f. Que se reconozcan pecadores perdonados;
- g. Conozcan las alegrías y sufrimientos que la vida cotidiana y el camino espiritual conlleva;
- h. Despierten en los jóvenes el deseo de ser protagonistas de su propio camino y destino;
- i. Respeten la libertad de los jóvenes en los procesos de discernimiento;
- j. Ofrezcan herramientas para que los jóvenes puedan discernir correctamente;
- k. Que confíen en la capacidad del joven de poder participar en la vida de la Iglesia;
- l. Que no se sienta que es un trabajo exclusivo de los sacerdotes. Quieren también a laicos como acompañantes;
- m. Dispuestos a tener una formación permanente.

Con similares palabras, los jóvenes hispanos-latinos expresaron cuáles deben ser las características de los acompañantes que ellos necesitan en el Primer Encuentro Nacional de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana celebrado en Notre Dame, Indiana, en el 2006.<sup>16</sup>

Ahora, a la luz de *Christus vivit*, ¿qué novedad ofrece ésta?

El Papa Francisco une el arte de acompañar al arte de la escucha, algo que los jóvenes insisten todo el tiempo. Escuchar para acompañar. Esta escucha supone, según el Papa, “tres sensibilidades o atenciones distintas y complementarias” (CV, 291). La primera sensibilidad, es atender a la persona, al joven concreto. Para que esta escucha se dé, hay que dedicarle tiempo,

<sup>16</sup> Primer Encuentro Nacional de Pastoral Juvenil Hispana, PENPJH, Conclusiones. USCCB, Publicación C2983, 2008. Edición bilingüe. Leer especialmente la sección Segunda Parte. Conclusiones. Conclusiones sobre las mejores prácticas y modelos pastorales, pp. 62-77.

que el joven sienta que “el tiempo del acompañante” es también suyo, para poder expresarse. Esta misma actitud la encontramos repetidas veces en la pedagogía ministerial de Jesús a lo largo de los evangelios. El tener la sensibilidad de escuchar a la persona concreta, al joven, dándole tiempo, logrará que el mismo joven se detenga para ofrecerle al acompañante la oportunidad que “se monte en el tren de su vida”, para hacer historia juntos.

Una segunda sensibilidad es la atención al proceso de discernimiento. No solamente se trata de ayudar en el discernimiento moral, entre el bien y el mal, sino en el espiritual: entre dos bienes, cuál de ellos expresa mejor el camino para hacer la voluntad de Dios en la vida (Cfr. CV, 293).

La tercera sensibilidad es “escuchar los impulsos que el otro experimenta “hacia delante”. Es la escucha profunda de “hacia dónde quiere ir verdaderamente el otro”. (CV, 294) Esta sensibilidad se construye en base a la anterior y ayuda para que las decisiones que se tomen no miren tanto a los gustos o deseos, sino más bien, lo que más agrada a Dios y al proyecto de vida gestado. Este “Impulso” se expresa en una inclinación del corazón, una intencionalidad que decide la vida y el curso de ella.

Es por ello que el Papa insiste que el acompañante, el que el joven está necesitando, acompaña “procesos”, no impone “trayectos”, procesos que hacen al joven único y libre (Cfr. CV, 297).

### **Consideraciones Finales.**

Desde mi experiencia con Dania aún resuena en mi corazón lo que su mirada expresaba en uno de los encuentros en la diócesis de Dallas: quiero, no sé si deba y no sé si pueda. Como esa mirada, he encontrado cientos de miradas en los jóvenes a los cuales Dios me ha dado la gracia de acompañarlos en este país. Ese querer, deber y poder creo en mí una sed, una sed de Dios. Hace poco llegó a mis manos el estupendo libro de José Tolentino Mendonça, *Elogio de la sed*. Para aquel que está acompañando a un joven, recomiendo ampliamente su lectura. En él, el Arzobispo Mendonça comenta que el primordial deber del acompañante es desarrollar una espiritualidad de la sed en el proceso en el que él y en el acompañado, en nuestro caso, el joven, inician. Esta espiritualidad ayudará para que el joven, así como lo hizo Dania, pueda querer, deber y poder.

Acompañar a nuestros jóvenes hispanos-latinos hoy supone recrearnos en esta espiritualidad de la sed, en aquella que se sacia solamente sentándonos en el pozo del Sicar de nuestras vidas (Cfr. Juan 4), que construye desde esta sed una espiritualidad encarnada y encarnatoria, que sigue las prioridades y opciones fundamentales de Jesús. A este respecto, el Cardenal Martini, nos recuerda que esas mismas actitudes de Jesús deben ser las mismas que desarrollemos en el acompañamiento espiritual con los jóvenes.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Cfr. Carlo María Martini. *El ejercicio del ministerio, fuente de espiritualidad sacerdotal*, en: Comisión Episcopal del Clero, Congreso, *Espiritualidad sacerdotal*, EDICE, Madrid 1989, pp- 175-191.

## Running the Race: A Look at Parish Young Adult Ministry

Diana Hancharenko

*Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running, “attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us. – Christus Vivit §299.*

It can be easy in ministry to expect success to look like a destination or feel like an arrival. We can miss out on so much when we are looking for specific markers while overlooking less obvious moments of grace. Four years into investing in ministry with young adults at St. Angela Merici Parish in Youngstown, Ohio, the parish is continually learning, evolving, and growing. Truth be told, we will never really ever figure this out perfectly or find an easy stride, and this isn't even what we are called to do. Knowing that there is no silver-bullet or set formula for young adult ministry, how do we find ways of moving forward when situations get tough or when we find ourselves in uncharted territory? What does patience really look like when we arrive where others have not yet reached? How do we continually dialogue as Church to move forward?

The Synod process, the *National Dialogue*, and *V Encuentro* have invited us into intentional exchange with young people, but it is also a call to enter into larger conversations as Church, or all who make up the people of God. These efforts are not designed for just data collection or one-time efforts but reveal to us the way to move forward. Ongoing conversation and dialogue are taking us into further relationship and understanding of young people and will be what moves the Church ahead. In addition to these larger efforts, back in 2016, I shared our parish model of engaging young adults of all faith stages in backgrounds, with an emphasis on simple questions to begin the conversation on faith and the Church, at the National Leadership Forum on Ministry with Young Adults in San Jose, CA. This was based on Pope Francis' call for one on one transmission of the Gospel in *Evangelii Gaudium*.<sup>1</sup> This concept is still in practice, but many of these relationships have evolved into deeper, ongoing conversations. Dialogue has become a parish practice, and it is a practice that is sacred. We are about relationships, and we will be patient and walk with each other as long as it takes.

Building relationships requires ongoing effort and a sense of mutual respect. Patience can only happen if we can bear where another person is in their journey, young or old, with love and gentleness. Pope Francis emphasizes, “Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things and turn it into an attractive means of

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* November 24, 2013 §127-129, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

evangelization.”<sup>2</sup> We must never confuse urgency for sharing the Gospel message with impatience. “Love is patient” (1 Cor 13:4), after all, though it is never easy.

There is nothing glamorous or comfortable about this patience Pope Francis calls for as we engage young people and as we engage each other as Church. It is not the toe-tapping, checking a wristwatch sort of waiting. It is a persistent and active perseverance which calls for trying new things and staying the course amongst resistance and misunderstanding. Patience is keeping at it when ideas turn into action and threaten long-standing ways of doing things. It is moving from a sense of mere recruitment into all of the uncertainty openness and authentic relationships can bring. It is feeling the fear and persisting anyway because we know this is what the Holy Spirit is calling us to do and how Christ is calling us to love.

It is difficult to run the race ahead of others and provide helpful encouragement to those we hope would catch up. It’s challenging to see others run off in a different direction or stop completely because it is too scary, too hard, or different than they were expecting. Not unlike the “young man,” as Pope Francis recounts from Mark’s Gospel, “who wanted to follow Jesus, but in fear ran away naked.”<sup>3</sup> Our intentional efforts to further engage young adults at the parish have not been without struggle or hiccup. We wrestle constantly with what makes us comfortable. Involving young people is a great idea if they stay in their lane and at their events. Making room for young adults in other parish ministries is fine if they can parrot back the usual answers and keep up the way things have always been done. It is easy to continue to overlook the young people who are already present because they challenge the narrative that young people are not around and don’t care about their faith lives. We have been comfortable with this narrative, and it is easy to fall into the trap that we can be let off the hook in what has become a blame game for both young people and the larger Church.

Dialogue and patience are in practice here at the parish in one on one relationships, in ministries, amongst our pastoral council and finance council, and our staff. It is about clarifying common and repeated questions and debunking myths, most especially about young people. As Pope Francis states in *Evangelii Gaudium*, “A preacher has to contemplate his word, but he also has to contemplate his people.”<sup>4</sup> Patience is enduring the questions of the value of investing in relationships and conversations. It is walking a slow pace with a young person who has been hurt by the Church or isn’t sure they belong or know what they believe, even as others may not understand why it is taking so long. It is walking with young people through social events and service projects and connecting them to experiencing God’s love in their unique way, knowing that eventually this will lead them to or back to the Eucharistic table.

Patience is trying new efforts and experiencing low attendance at events. Relationships lead us into honest conversations about what may not have worked this time. It is adjustment and recalibration, but also the knowledge that some old ways will die hard. There will be trial and error for each community to find its unique approach.

Many parishes and groups wonder how they can afford or justify this avenue in ministry in the spirit of good stewardship, but really the question should be can we afford not to? We cannot just continue to raise the question about where the young people are going and not be willing to work to be part of the answer. Dialogue and communicating in these relationships is

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., §131.

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, March 25, 2019 §32, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html)

<sup>4</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium* §154.

not always easy, but it is necessary and will need to be ongoing. We talk about what matters. We listen to who we value. We are there for as long as it takes.

Although there is a great deal of vulnerability and uncertainty in ministry with young adults, so much is possible if we stay the course and remain persistent and patient with our relationships with each other. As Pope Francis reminds us, the Holy Spirit will guide us through the unknowns of the race. We will better learn to love and live out our faith to walk with young people and each other, despite uncertainties and challenges in the Church. We will keep running this race.

## **Motherless Children: The African American Youth & Young Adult Ministry Struggle** **Ansel Augustine, D.Min**

In 1989, Sr. Thea Bowman, F.S.P.A., addressed the USSCB at their annual June meeting. Here she explained what it meant to be Black (specifically African American) and Catholic. She said, “That means I come to my church fully functioning. That doesn’t frighten you, does it? I bring myself, my black self. All that I am. All that I have. All that I hope to become. I bring my whole experience, my history, my culture. I bring my African American song and dance, gesture and movement, teaching and preaching and healing and responsibility, **AS A GIFT** to the church.” She ended her moving presentation with the bishops standing hand in hand singing the Negro Spiritual, “We Shall Overcome.”

Here we are, almost 30 years later, and we, as African American Catholics, a distinct group from our African, Caribbean, or Hispanics that identify as Black (many times all lumped together as Black), are still asking for the Church to see us as a “gift” and not a burden. Looking at our history as African American Catholics, we have always had to fend for ourselves in various ways. Our history, that is as old as the church itself, especially with the founding of the church here in America, is constantly overlooked and not shared. Our ministries are constantly under resourced or ignored. Our spirituality is constantly having to be defended as being “authentically Catholic” by those who administer the litmus test. We are a people of great faith and achievements but being a youth or young adult (including campus ministers) in the African American Catholic community is difficult. We constantly have to fight to fit in, in a church that sometimes treats us like we do not belong. There are two factors that I would like to focus on that create this dynamic of marginalization: Racism and Proximity.

### *Racism*

Racism is commonly referred to as America’s original sin. Out of that came the dynamic of slavery, whose affects are still felt today. It is this sin that makes it difficult to do youth ministry within the African American community. The USSCB just released a Pastoral Letter entitled, *Open Wide Our Hearts* to address this sin and what the church should do about it as a follow up to the other racism Pastorals that they have written in the past. Fr. Bryan Massingale’s book, *Racial Justice & The Catholic Church*, powerfully illustrates the issues that divide us as a church today.<sup>1</sup> Bishop Edward Braxton from the Diocese of Bellville wrote two strong Pastoral Letters about racism that many of his brother Bishops have shared widely as well.

It is through these documents that we are reminded, for those of us that do not have to deal with this issue on a regular basis, that racism does not only occur outside of the church, but it is a sin within the church itself that we must address. When we look at the history of our church in the United States, a Eurocentric model (worship styles, images that are used, languages that are spoken) is upheld as what should be the norm, but in an ever “browning,” whether through immigration or births, there seems to be a backlash to anything that is not part of this norm. Look at the leadership of our chanceries around the country. Are the decision-makers representative of the people they are called to serve? When people are called to the table to address racist actions, are all called, or does leadership only “welcome” those folks of color that go with the status quo and are seen as safe? Does our Church “blackball” those that challenge these norms and label them as “troublemakers?” When we have large diocesan, or national,

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<sup>1</sup>Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*, (New York: Orbis, 2010).

gatherings of youth and young adults, is the music that is played, the sacred images that are shown, or the speakers that are invited representative of the diversity of the Church? Most of the times the answer is no. And, to add insult to injury, many times faces of color are used as tokens to show diversity on brochures or marketing and not in the actual programming or decision-making process. It is through these, many times institutionalized, racist occurrences that the African American youth and young adult community does not feel included, and we are called to do our own thing with little to no support from the wider Church.

### *Proximity*

On April 2018, at their Spring meeting, the USCCB invited Bryan Stevenson, a famous criminal justice lawyer that gained recognition for leading the creating of The National Memorial for Peace and Justice – more commonly referred to as the Lynching Memorial – in Montgomery, Alabama, to address the body about racism as they were writing their Pastoral Letter. During his address, Mr. Stevenson talked about several factors that cause racism to exist. One factor was proximity. Proximity refers to how close things are to each other. Mr. Stevenson said the issues of racism persist in this country because people are not within proximity of each other. We still live in a segregated society. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said it best when he said the most segregated time in America is Sunday morning. This is very true of our Catholic parishes around the country. Despite the rise of many “multicultural” parishes around the country, and despite the existence of many distinct cultural parishes, we are still divided as a church when it comes to realizing no one expression of our faith is “more Catholic” than another

Bryan Stevenson said one way to combat racism is for those in leadership (Bishops, diocesan leaders, Catholic event organizers, liturgists, etc.) to be in the authentic presence of others. I remember when we were trying to rebuild our Archdiocese following Hurricane Katrina, we had many Catholic groups visit my home parish, St. Peter Claver. These groups, most of whom were white and made up various age groups, were in awe at our gospel choir and the sacred art that reflected the people in the pews. They were struck with preaching that touched on the social justice issues that our communities face. Many were very appreciative of being able to sit with and interact with youth from the African American Catholic experience. When they learned about our specific “right to life” issues that affect our communities like mass incarceration, poverty, racism, poor education, and a lack of other resources; they understood that basic survival was something that many of our families struggle with.

Just as Bryan Stevenson suggested to the USCCB, it is when we are in proximity with one another we can truly see the dignity of another human despite our differences. It is in this “sharing of space” that we share our souls and live as one Body of Christ.

When Sr. Thea began her talk with the U.S. Bishops in 1989, she sang the Negro Spiritual, “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.” In her presentation she continued to share the gifts we, as African American Catholics, bring to the Church, but how the Church sometimes treats us as second-class Catholics because we tend to express our Catholicism differently. As stated earlier, here we are 30 years later and we, as African American Catholics are asking the Church that we love to show us that it loves us back. Not only when it is comfortable and affirms Eurocentric norms, but when the Church is challenged to truly be a welcoming church for all. Those of us that have worked in youth and young adult ministry within the African American Catholic community know all too well how we must tweak certain resources to be relevant to our youth and young adult’s experiences. We know how sometimes we have to “fight” certain diocesan officials to help them understand we are just as Catholic as

other parishes. We also have the challenge of helping our non-Catholic brothers and sisters understand why we remain Catholic. In 2019, we are seeing various African American Catholic schools, parishes, and institutions closing. We are seeing our youth ministries dwindling. In conversations that are presently taking place between the USCCB and various HBCU's (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) Catholic campus ministers, we are seeing the disconnect with many of our young adults and the Catholic faith. It was during a conversation with one of these campus ministers where the following questions were brought up:

- What would it look like for National Catholic leaders and conference coordinators to attend our conferences (Archbishop Lyke Conference, The Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, The National Black Catholic Congress) so they can meet those speakers, and learn about those topics, that are important to our communities?
- Why can't these leaders attend a Black Catholic Gospel Mass near them to see how to better integrate our worship styles and environment into their diocesan and national events and not just use black people as "tokens"?
- How can these leaders better connect with the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus, the Black Catholic Sisters Conference, the Black Catholic Seminarians Association, the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver, Inc., and the Black Catholic Theological Symposium; and learn about the histories of these organizations?
- How can we create more opportunities for diocesan and national leaders to come into "our" spaces so that they can understand our realities and needs?

These issues, and the pain caused by having these constant discussions, cause many of those doing this work to burn out or give up, but the hope is in the fact that our ancestors sacrificed much more so that we could be. We have historical records, as well as stories passed down via word of mouth, detailing the disrespect they endured by the Church to keep the faith. So, who are we not to do the same? Yes, it is a challenge to lift up the next generation of African American Catholic youth and young adult leadership, but it is a must. Our Church has, and continues to benefit from our gifts, but more work needs to be done so that our realities, needs, and worship experiences are seen as just as valid, and Catholic, as anyone else's. To truly be ONE, means to not be the same, but to be welcoming of all experiences and expressions of our Catholic faith.



## The Art of Personal Accompaniment: The Foundation for Flexibility in Youth Ministry

Nathan Stanley

One of the challenges Pope Francis identifies in his recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, is the need for youth ministry to “become more flexible.”<sup>1</sup> There is a growing need to reach the next generation through accompaniment, walking alongside them while they ask pivotal questions during a critical time in their lives. This flexibility can best be addressed by the renewal of the art of personal accompaniment. It is through personal accompaniment that the Church can follow through with the two main courses of action that Pope Francis recommends for youth ministry: outreach and growth.<sup>2</sup>

This flexibility that Pope Francis recommends encapsulates Jesus, whom we meet in the Gospels while He is accompanying the twelve men He calls His disciples. These men follow Jesus closely, as any disciple of that time would follow a rabbi. The conversations and encounters they have together and the missions they go on together over these three years are filled with examples which reveal the art of teaching faith. The scenes vary in form: Jesus feeding the five thousand; Peter fishing for the coins to pay the Temple tax; Peter receiving the keys to the kingdom; Jesus teaching on marriage; Jesus encountering the adulterous women; Jesus healing the multitudes; and so much more. All these scenes are moments of formation and teaching for the disciples. Many times the disciples return to Jesus in private to ask questions, and He then explains the mysteries of the kingdom to them. What amazing conversations those must have been. This flexibility in ministry not only imitates Jesus’ way of accompaniment and formation, but it also allows for what Pope St. John Paul II called for with catechesis — that it should be “organic and systematic.”<sup>3</sup>

Personal accompaniment or discipleship can foster a flexibility to meet the needs of the one being accompanied, and therefore it has a greater ability to facilitate a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. In 2013, during a speech which Pope Francis made to the bishops of Brazil during World Youth Day, he said, “We need a Church capable of walking at people’s side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey; a Church able to make sense of the ‘night’ contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters ... [a] Church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return.”<sup>4</sup> This Church is a Church made up of those who can personally accompany and disciple others. This is a Church full of members who aren’t afraid to go against the current of society and travel that current with great affection and empathy for those who have strayed. They don’t see those outside of the Church as enemies, but rather as the great treasure. This is a Church who is willing to “smell like the sheep”<sup>5</sup> and go out to “the fringes of society.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, March 25, 2019, §204, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, §209.

<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II, *On Catechesis in Our Time (Catechesi Tradendae)* §18, October 16, 1979, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_16101979\\_catechesi-tradendae.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html)

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, “Meetings with the Bishops of Brazil,” (Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130727\\_gmg-episcopato-brasile.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130727_gmg-episcopato-brasile.html)

<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis, “Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday,” (Rome, 28 March 2013), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130328\\_messa-crismale.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html)

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, “Holy Mass at the 28th World Youth Day,” (Rio de Janeiro, 28 July 2013), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130728\\_celebrazione-xxviii-gmg.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130728_celebrazione-xxviii-gmg.html)

This is a Church full of those who see evangelization as an art form with the intention of bringing people back to the loving embrace of their Father who loves them.

St. Paul recommended this approach to the early Church: “So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8, RSVCE). The early Church lived this radical availability so that they could be a gift for others and lay down their lives for those in the early Church community. Their personal accompaniment led to a revolution of underground conversion that increased through each generation. Their approach was flexible to the needs of each person and grounded in the teachings of the Apostles. It is in this same spirit that we must rededicate our missionary efforts and live the art of accompaniment.

This history of the art of accompaniment leads to us exploring a unique formation that must be offered to the Church today. As Pope Francis continued in his 2013 speech:

Unless we train ministers capable of warming people’s hearts, of walking with them in the night, of dialoguing with their hopes and disappointments, of mending their brokenness, what hope can we have for our present and future journey . . . That is why it is important to devise and ensure a suitable formation, one which will provide persons able to step into the night without being overcome by the darkness and losing their bearings; able to listen to people’s dreams without being seduced and to share their disappointments without losing hope and becoming bitter; able to sympathize with the brokenness of others without losing their own strength and identity. What is needed is a solid human, cultural, effective, spiritual and doctrinal formation.<sup>7</sup>

This formation can also be answered by a flexible approach that helps to support those who are engaging in the work of evangelizing and discipling others. While this formation can be found in further studies in theology and ministry, it should not be limited to this means. The beauty of personal accompaniment is that one can be evangelized through the personal witness of another — and then, through that same person, one can be catechized. It is in this relationship that one can help form another in the faith, especially in the two main goals that Pope Francis gives in *Christus Vivit*: “the development of the *kerygma*” and “growth in fraternal love, community life, and service.”<sup>8</sup> These two main goals are truly the personal growth of the disciple in the first two commandments (Mt. 22: 36–40).

The Holy Father knows that, if a disciple follows these two commandments closely, there will be a greater encounter with the Church and an understanding of doctrine. As Pope Francis said in a 2013 interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro S.J., “The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant. It is from this proposition that the moral consequences then flow.”<sup>9</sup> This is what the flexibility of personal accompaniment can bring about in another. Through the personal friendship and witness of the other, the disciple desires to know Jesus more and to know Jesus’ teachings more. This catechesis then does not need to always be given in classrooms but can be given over a cup of coffee, an evening drink, meals with the family or during a walk with friends.

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<sup>7</sup> “Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil.”

<sup>8</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §213.

<sup>9</sup> Antonio Spadaro, S.J., “A Big Heart Open to God: An interview with Pope Francis,” *America* September 30, 2013, date accessed May 29, 2019, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>.

Also, this flexible approach can foster friendship that grows in Christ and helps our light shine brighter. As one article says, “Think about starting a charcoal fire: The best way is to gather all of the coals and place them together in a pile. As the coals begin to burn, they feed off one another, and the ones that aren’t lit yet catch fire from the heat of the others.”<sup>10</sup> The fires of our personal accompaniment will help us to be authentic witnesses in the midst of a world that has forgotten about the joy of knowing God.

Our personal accompaniment will help us to light many fires and to reach more people in the midst of their personal nights. Our personal accompaniment will give us the ability to be more flexible to listen and more flexible to guide a person in the midst of their own struggles and worries and introduce them to the person of Jesus Christ who has come to save them.

Too often we are looking for a perfect plan instead of an encounter to guide us in our missionary calling. Let these words of Pope Francis inspire us: “The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus and many Samaritans come to believe in him ‘because of the woman’s testimony’ (Jn 4:39). So too, Saint Paul, after his encounter with Jesus Christ, ‘immediately proclaimed Jesus’ (Acts 9:20; cf. 22:6 – 21). So what are we waiting for?”<sup>11</sup> We must go out and encounter those who don’t know the joy of the knowing Jesus Christ, to be lights in the midst of their darkness and guide them back to beauty of living for Jesus Christ.

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<sup>10</sup> Fellowship of Catholic University Students, “Fellowship,” [focusoncampus.org](https://focusoncampus.org/content/fellowship-7e7bf0cf-fb5c-4b54-9d68-1c42bc202d82), date accessed May 29, 2019, <https://focusoncampus.org/content/fellowship-7e7bf0cf-fb5c-4b54-9d68-1c42bc202d82>

<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* November 24, 2013 §120, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

## Youth Ministry & the Watering Down of Theology: Thoughts from a Practical Theologian

Jodi G. Hunt, PhD

*We urgently need a profound rethinking of the way catechesis is presented and of the connection between passing on the faith in families and in the community, with greater emphasis on processes of personal accompaniment.*

*—Final Document of the Synod of the Bishops on Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment, §19*

One of the greatest surprises that I had this year was handed to me through a conversation I had with a small group of undergraduates I taught in a youth ministry course. As part of the course, students read the youth synod proceedings and then comment on them in a series of group discussions. Prior to the start of these conversations, I thought I knew exactly what my students would say as I expected many of them to embrace the broader conversation of the need for “accompaniment” in the process of youth ministry with great excitement. My presumptions could not have been more wrong. To say my students were displeased with the synod’s final document and Pope Francis’s *Christus Vivit* would be an understatement. They were not only displeased, but gravely disappointed. The synod and Pope Francis, in their opinion, “missed the mark;” or as one student said, “all these writings show is that the watering down of theology continues.” It disappointed my students that the documents did not, in their opinion, explore how to best teach youth and young adults the rich theological traditions of our faith.

Our conversations concluded that although accompaniment is essential to the spiritual development of youth and young adults, what it ignites will not continue to burn without the sharing of a rich theological teachings. Youth and young adults yearn to know Truth and if youth ministry bypasses of presenting Truth as it is, it will fail in its pursuit of drawing in adolescents towards God. After some contemplation, I think my students are “spot-on” in their observation. If youth ministers are to be successful in drawing in the next generation into full and active participation in the life of the Church, they must find better ways to integrate theological reflection within already adapted ministerial processes used for youth evangelization.

In full disclosure, the students who took part in my youth ministry course were theology or pastoral ministry majors. That is, this group of students are not like most young Catholics today in as far as they were very much “in tune” with ancient and modern theological discourse. Thus, much of what they shared considering their reading of the synod documents came through their own experience of working in Catholic youth programs across various socio-economic settings. It is from these experiences that my students first observed what they termed a “theological watering” of Church teachings. One student shared that he was especially upset after attending a meeting with youth ministers who openly pondered how to water down Church teaching. “Youth today,” in the words of one youth minister at the meeting, “cannot understand theology, so we have to simplify it or discuss other things.” As an additional disclosure, this paper is not suggesting that youth ministry needs to abandoned simplifying Church teaching as a method of assisting the “un-churched” with grasping theological understandings. There is a great value in using simplified theological language in explaining doctrines, teachings, and beliefs to youth who have yet to grasp the basic tenets of Catholicism. Even so, meeting today’s youth where

they are does not mean we teach them about the Faith in only in “simplified or feel good terms” because we fear that if we teach them the Truth it will hurt their feelings and we will lose them.

In rendering processes of teaching youth theology, youth ministry needs to keep in mind that youth today, largely as a result of the “Google it” culture, will find what Catholicism holds to be True through their own searches for it. Consequently, youth who have no other means in uncovering what the Church really teaches are more likely to be misguided or confused by what they find. Instead, our deep love for the youth we minister to, like that of the love of a Father for his child, should direct us to teach the theological teachings and traditions of our faith as they are and not in a manner like that of watering them down so that they are always easily digested. Tension between youth’s lived experience and the Truth offer good opportunities for theological reflection centered upon the laws and teachings of God. Offering points for theological reflection as youth ministers accompany youth on their journeys is one of the greatest acts of love that youth ministers can show them as this is how God also has shown his love to his people over the centuries.

In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis reminds us that youth ministry’s outreach also needs to use a “language of closeness, the language of generous, relational and existential love that touches the heart, impacts life, and awakens hope and desires.” In the words of Pope Francis, “young people need to be approached with the grammar of love, not by being preached at.” Youth ministers should “radiate life” and serve as people “for [the youth] and with [the youth].”<sup>1</sup> Coupled with the observations shared by my own students, I have concluded that for youth ministry to be successful today must refocus itself on exploring the Truth of our faith through a language of love and here are the steps I believe will help ministers avoid the mistakes of “theological watering:”

1. Study theology and the process of theological reflection
2. Create youth ministry programs that include opportunities for strong theological discourse
3. Practice theology in community

First, for any strong theological discourse to occur within a youth ministry program, the youth ministers and volunteers need strong theological formation. The stronger the youth minister’s theological foundation is, the better equipped they are to engage in rich and challenging theological discernment with those whom they are ministering to. The most successful youth ministry programs in the United States are led by those with strong theological formation.

Second, all youth ministry programs must include theological rich conversations. Instead of talks and speeches, they should instead include guided readings and an exploration of questions drawn from the rich theological traditions of our faith. Many would disagree with me that all youth are educationally prepared to jump into reading Augustine or Aquinas. I counter this argument, however, with the simple reminder that most theological works have been translated and reformatted for even the most amateur of theologians. A good theologically trained youth minister would not only have a keen eye on where to find these texts, but they would also know how to integrate them into their youth ministry program. Reading works like

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, March 25, 2019, §211, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html)

Augustine's *Confessions* is a powerful way to prompt youth in exploring Truth and the merciful love of God.

Last, if theological discourse is to have any meaningful impact it must be lived and experienced. Youth ministry must place life experiences into conversation with theological discourse. For example, in addition to showing youth how to live a life of service they also should be offered opportunities for theological reflection in relation to human dignity. Bringing the lived experience into conversation with theological teaching will better assist youth ministry in fostering connections between what the Church teaches and how we live.

The above ideas and discourse are only the beginning of an exploration of how youth ministry and theology can work together in drawing young people back to Christ. Although there is much more to be explored, one thing is already clear: if youth ministry is to be successful in guiding Generation Z towards Christ, it must avoid watering down theology. In the age of fake news and doctored social media posts, today's youth possess a deep, unwavering desire to know what is true, re-imagining theological discourse in youth ministry, as my students taught me, is an essential step in doing so. Let our conversations begin.

## A New Pentecost Today: Engaging Hispanic young Catholics in Higher Education

José J. Matos Auffant

A new Pentecost<sup>1</sup> is aflame today: Hispanics younger than 35, with all their gifts and talents, constitute more than half of Catholics in the USA.<sup>2</sup> Through the *V Encuentro* process<sup>3</sup> we learn that nearly a third of these young Catholic Hispanics are 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation born in the USA, while a third directly arrived from another country, and all can trace their backgrounds from Central America, South America, the Caribbean or Mexico. Their identities are shaped by their upbringing as well as by traditions practiced by their families. And while Hispanics are encouraged by parents to attain higher education degrees to lead a more comfortable life in the future, the reality is that a majority of Hispanics are engaged in professional endeavors like education, healthcare, mental health and other occupations that allow them to “give back to the community.”<sup>4</sup> Most are not looking to get rich fast but to make sure the least are taken care of and everyone has an opportunity for a wholesome life, two important markers of a Christian life.

At the *V Encuentro* 2018 meeting, delegates at the Higher Education and Campus Ministry discussion groups called for a more comprehensive approach to engage Hispanic students at colleges and universities.<sup>5</sup> In particular, to develop specific initiatives for outreach and support of young Hispanics shaping their identity: to reinforce the sense of belonging to a universal Catholic community that embraces all. It is not a dynamic of ministering ‘to’ but rather ministering ‘with’ young Hispanic Catholics attending higher education. At those institutions where Catholic campus ministers are active, inviting bilingual Hispanic students to assist with outreach, evangelization, educating for justice, music, liturgy and religious practices is in line with the invitation in *Christus Vivit* that “young people are able to guide other young people and to exercise a genuine apostolate among their friends.”<sup>6</sup>

In the *V Encuentro* surveys done at over 2,145 parishes, nearly 40% of young Hispanics reported Spanish as their main language, 8% reported English as their main language, and over 50% expressed preference for using both languages in their daily life. While Spanish liturgies and programming are very helpful, language barriers between campus ministers and students should not hinder intentional outreach efforts: bilingual Hispanic students, faculty and staff can assist campus ministry as “bridge people”, following the call of *V Encuentro*, to enrich the relationships between the Church personnel who are not fluid in Spanish with those young Hispanics who only speak English as well as those whose first prayer language is Spanish.

Two simultaneous movements in faith formation help our young Hispanic Catholics to develop a healthy identity and enrich their spiritual life throughout college: to embrace being

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2, 1-11 (New American Bible, Revised Edition), <http://www.usccb.org/bible/acts/2>

<sup>2</sup> Hosffman Ospino, “In Focus: Hispanic Ministry ‘The Church’s changing face,’” *Our Sunday Visitor*, May 18, 2014. [https://www.osv.com/Portals/4/PDF/OnlineInFocus\\_140518\\_HispanicMinistry\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.osv.com/Portals/4/PDF/OnlineInFocus_140518_HispanicMinistry_WEB.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> *V Encuentro of Hispanic / Latino Ministry* “Youth and Young Adults Consultation – Early Results,” 2018, <https://vencuentro.org/results/>

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Arredondo, Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, Edward Delgado Romero, Angela L. Zapata, *Culturally Responsive Counseling with Latinas/os*, (Virginia: American Counseling Association, 2014), 79-85.

<sup>5</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *V Encuentro of Hispanic / Latino Ministry, Working Document*, 2018, [https://vencuentro.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Working-Document-EN-8\\_30\\_18.pdf](https://vencuentro.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Working-Document-EN-8_30_18.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, March 25, 2019 §219, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html)



Hispanic and to embrace being Catholic with a rich heritage. This way we heed Pope Francis' warning and advice:

Today, in fact, we see a tendency to “homogenize” young people, blurring what is distinctive about their origins and backgrounds, and turning them into a new line of malleable goods... Helping the young to discover the living richness of the past, to treasure its memory and to make use of it for their choices and opportunities, is a genuine act of love towards them, for the sake of their growth and the decisions they are called to make.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Pew Research Institute, nearly 15% of Hispanics have completed a bachelors' degree, compared to the 41% national average.<sup>8</sup> As of 2018, nearly 3.2 million Hispanics in the USA were enrolled in higher education, with over 110,000 Hispanics studying in Catholic universities.<sup>9</sup> The total number of Hispanics in contact with campus ministers at public institutions is not certain, yet the 2017 survey on campus ministry sponsored by the USCCB shows that nearly one million Hispanic students in higher education are not in contact with Catholic campus ministers at all.<sup>10</sup> A closer look reveals that while all Catholic universities have a campus ministry department with professional staff, only one-in-four non-Catholic 4 year universities can claim at least one campus minister or post-graduate volunteer in ministry, whether that person carries certification by the Catholic Campus Ministry Association or not. The tragedy for the Church is that there is only 1 campus minister available for every 60 community colleges, the very institutions where over 50% of Hispanics attend higher education.

It is not clear yet if dioceses, parishes, movements or Catholic organizations are able to fund the amount of new positions urgently needed to engage the group of people that constitute the fastest growing segment of Catholics in the USA. But we can do a lot, starting today, to engage Hispanic students already in our midst, starting with our Catholic colleges and universities.<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis, in *Christus Vivit*, remind us that

the Church's educational institutions are undoubtedly a communal setting for accompaniment; they can offer guidance to many young people, especially when they “seek to welcome all young people, regardless of their religious choices, cultural origins and personal, family or social situations. In this way, the Church makes a fundamental contribution to the integral education of the young in various parts of the world.”<sup>12</sup>

As a case in point, each one of the three Catholic universities in San Antonio, TX have close to 70% of Hispanic undergraduate enrollment and 30% Hispanic graduate enrollment: both facts place them among the top 10 Catholic universities with the highest Hispanic enrollment.

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<sup>7</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §186-187.

<sup>8</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad, “5 facts about Latinos and education,” *Pew Research Center*, July 28, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/28/5-facts-about-latinos-and-education/>

<sup>9</sup> “5 Facts about Hispanics and Latinos at Catholic Colleges and Universities,” Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, 2018, <https://www.accunet.org/Portals/70/Images/Publications-Graphics-Other/Images/FiveFactsAboutHispanicsinCatholicHigherEducation.jpg>

<sup>10</sup> Starks, Brian and Maureen Day, *A National Study on Catholic Campus Ministry*, A Report Prepared for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Catholic Education, 2017, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/campus-ministry/index.cfm>

<sup>11</sup> Hosffman Ospino, “Ten reality checks about young Hispanics in Catholic Schools and Colleges” in *Our Catholic Children: Ministry with Hispanic Youth and Young Adults*, (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2018), 33.

<sup>12</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §247.



More than half of our students at St. Mary's University state that their first 'prayer language' is Spanish, and they show great appreciation when religious services are offered in the language of their very first prayers. Hispanic students whose first prayer language is English also express appreciation for the religious services offered in their main language. The insights gained in dialogue with our students, faculty and staff have guided a number of efforts made by University Ministry to re-design faith-based programs leading to meaningful conversations, impactful student-led retreat experiences and beautiful bilingual religious celebrations that inspire our students to keep growing in their faith while in college: their voices led to a new vision! In line with the 2017 survey on campus ministry, community service events and solidarity initiatives attract a majority of Hispanic students, creating fertile opportunities to connect and follow up with their spiritual development.

St. Mary's University also hosts an annual summer four-day residential program designed and implemented as a collaboration of campus ministers and theologians in San Antonio area, for leadership development and formation of young adults together with their campus ministers.<sup>13</sup> Our main goal is to build that "Culture of Encounter" preached by Pope Francis through prayer, reflection, dialogue and celebrations in light of the USCCB document on Hispanic Ministry titled "*Encuentro and Mission*."<sup>14</sup> Each topic of the document is used as the framework for the different sessions and activities each day, building up from a common Catholic identity all the way to best practices and new horizons in ministry. An important outcome is that students involved in campus ministry connect with local parishes to continue building lives of service to God and others long after graduation. As campus ministers we are continually learning new ways to promote an integral holistic formation for our Hispanic young adults to keep growing in faith, expressing individual religiousness, discussing the distinctive traits of our cultures, cooperating with community services, joining social action organizations, and promoting a high level of academic excellence along with constant reflection on individual vocational callings, with the opportunity for personalized spiritual accompaniment.

More important is the realization that all we do in campus ministry impacts retention and graduation rates among Hispanic students. The same strategies of mentorship and peer to peer support recommended by retention staff are operational in campus ministry through retreats, socio-cultural activities, small communities, and spiritual friendships that develop through the evangelization process. Inviting, engaging and accompanying our Catholic Hispanics in higher education will yield new and varied workers for the vineyard: "As a university, as educational institutions, as teachers and students, life itself challenges us to answer these two questions: What does this world need us for? Where is your brother?"<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Messengers of Faith and Hope*, St. Mary's University Ministry, San Antonio TX, 2013, <https://www.stmarytx.edu/campuslife/spiritual/>

<sup>14</sup> *Encuentro & Mission: A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry = Encuentro y Misión : Un Marco Pastoral Renovado Para El Ministerio Hispano*. Publication / USCCB Publishing: No. 5-496, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Address of the Holy Father to Educators and Students in Ecuador, July 7, 2015, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150707\\_ecuador-scuola-universita.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150707_ecuador-scuola-universita.html)

## **The National Dialogue: Making Room for Popular Young Adult Ministries**

**Tracey Lamont, Ph.D.**

### *Introduction*

I often hear parish ministers and religious educators lament how hard it is to grow a ministry program for young adults; that they host bible studies or plan large events or small gatherings and very few young adults attend. This leads some people to think that young adult ministry is too difficult, takes too much time, utilizes already scarce parish resources, or that young adults are not interested in or committed to growing in their faith. This narrative, however, only tells one side of the story, the story of parish and diocesan programming efforts at building community for young adults.

Young adults, however, are forming community outside parish and diocesan sponsored gatherings and events and Pope Francis is asking ministry leaders and religious educators to nurture and support these ways of gathering and leading as community. Angie Thurston and Casper ter Kuile, in their research on how Millennials create and join community, state “religion-like communities are bursting forth in unlikely places...in fact, many unaffiliated participants in these communities have not left religion behind; rather, they are finding religious life wholly outside of its institutions.”<sup>1</sup>

There are organizations outside planned parish and diocesan events and programs that attract young adults. Young adults gather for yoga, SoulCycle, or CrossFit classes, join organizations that offer innovation and entrepreneurial opportunities, empower them through civic engagement by attending protests and rallies<sup>2</sup>. Some might be explicitly faith-based, but all are share in a commitment to provide a welcoming atmosphere where young adults feel a sense of belonging, a community that peeks the interests of contemporary young adults, offers them a platform to be heard, to form meaningful relationships, and recognizes their leadership potential and ability to become agents of change –in short, they found meaningful communities in what were historically found in religious institutions. These trends reveal that the human longing for meaning, identity, and belonging, and the search for answers to who they are –and for some, whose they are– transcends cultural differences and generational divides.

Pope Francis, in his post-synodal exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, encourages faith communities to acknowledge and support what he calls “popular” ministries with young people, or ministries of and by the people. He states:

In addition to the ordinary, well-planned pastoral ministry that parishes and movements carry out, it is also important to allow room for a “popular” youth [and young adult] ministry, with a different style, schedule, pace and method. Broader and more flexible, it goes out to those places where real young people are active, and fosters the natural leadership qualities and the charisms sown by the Holy Spirit... who are natural leaders in their neighborhoods and in other settings. We need only to accompany and encourage them, trusting a little more in the genius of the Holy Spirit, who acts as he wills.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Angie Thurston and Casper ter Kuile. *Something More* (Cambridge, 2017), 6, [www.howwegather.org](http://www.howwegather.org)

<sup>2</sup> For more on these and other young adult lead communities, see the report [How We Gather](#) by Angie Thurston, Casper ter Kuile, and Sue Phillips.

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, March 25, 2019, §230, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html)

The questions remain: what does it mean to “make room” as Pope Francis suggests? Who are these popular young adult leaders and communities in our geographic area? What does this mean for those parishes and schools looking to engage young adults, to know that young people do gather together in small groups outside or apart from parish or diocesan programs or events? What is more, how do ministers make room for leaders and communities they may not know exist? This essay proposes that the *National Dialogue on Catholic Pastoral Ministry with Youth and Young Adults* can be a method for ministry leaders to “make room for,” accompany, and support “popular” young adult initiatives in their communities.

### Overview

Nicholas Stein, member of the USCCB National Advisory Team for Young Adult Ministry, in his presentation for the Saint Meinrad Young Adult Initiative Gathering, asks “what makes a parish?”<sup>4</sup> Is the faith community defined by its membership, or does the parish serve the larger community, those young adults who are affiliated and former/disaffiliated; baptized and unbaptized?<sup>5</sup> The documents from the Second Vatican Council encourage ministers and religious educators to acknowledge and support the work of the people in society. *Lumen Gentium* describes how the laity, by virtue of their baptismal vocation, “are called by God...[to] work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way, they may make Christ known to others...”<sup>6</sup> The Vatican II fathers went on to state it is precisely because the laity live and work in non-ecclesial settings that they have a special calling to bring the light of Christ into the world.

Thurston and ter Kulie noted that although such communities and “organizations count themselves secular, they demonstrate elements of religious polity, liturgy, and even spirituality.”<sup>7</sup> Given these new ways of forming community with young adults, does the traditional model of ministry and parish life serve, or “make room for,” both church and non-church sponsored events and communities with young adults in the surrounding geographic area and how can our faith communities head the call to “make room for... accompany and encourage.”<sup>8</sup> these popular young adult ministries, groups organized by and for the local community in society, not just in the parish or with members of the parish? This essay presents a conceptual analysis on the research and experience of forming meaningful communities with young adults by exploring how the process of facilitated dialogue, such as the method developed by the National Leadership Network (NLN) of the National Dialogue, provides a way for ministry leaders to identify and support “popular” young adult gatherings, or ministries by and for the people, in their communities.

The *National Dialogue* (ND) is an initiative designed by a broad range of leaders in the field of youth and young adult ministry, in collaboration with the USCCB, in preparation for the 2018 Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment. The ND created a method for ministry leaders and religious educators to listen more deeply to the experiences of youth and young adults to better accompany religiously affiliated and non-affiliated or former

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<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Stein, “Innovation and Ministry with Young Adults,” *Saint Meinrad Young Adult Initiative Gathering*, March 8, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Dogmatic Constitution on The Church (Lumen Gentium)*, November 21, 1964, §31, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vatii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)

<sup>7</sup> *Something More*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §230.

youth and young adults in our communities. This paper argues that this method of dialogue can be used to create a space for “popular” young adult ministries as a way of “becom[ing] their spokespersons and to work for their promotion” for “all those persons who journey, not as individuals, but as a closely-bound community of all and for all.”<sup>9</sup>

In the Archdiocese of New Orleans, one faith community is committed to doing the *National Dialogue* as an effort to reengage the young adult alumni in the larger community. At Pope John Paul II High school in Slidell, Louisiana, ministry leaders and religious educators came together with the primary goal of reigniting the young adults in the community. The principal and leadership team, upon hearing the statistics from Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) and Saint Mary’s Press, that the median age when a young person stops identifying as Catholic is 13 years old, realized those youth in their classrooms and young adult graduates likely represent a portion of these statistics.<sup>10</sup> This caused them to wonder what they could do in the high school and with their alumni who are affiliated and disaffiliated, those struggling to make sense of their faith, in need of mentors, and looking for meaningful communities in their young adult years. In talking with the principal, a graduate from the Loyola Institute for Ministry, regarding their concerns I suggested we try the method from the ND.

This process of dialogue creates a welcoming, “radically hospitable” space for young people to reflect on their experiences of church. The NLN created a set of [questions](#) to help facilitate these reflections with young people, parents/families, and ministry leaders. This facilitated listening session asks members to just listen to one another, to maintain a spirit of radical hospitality. We encourage everyone to follow the ND Way of Proceeding for Facilitators and Participants, that there be “no fixing, saving, advising, or correcting each other.”<sup>11</sup> After engaging the religious educators, ministry leaders and stakeholders in this facilitated dialogue, we met again to discuss the main themes that emerged from our listening session.

Through this process, the group decided to replicate this listening session with the young adults in the community by first reaching out to the five surrounding parishes asking the ministry leaders and pastors they have relationship with to identify a small group of affiliated young adult PJPII alumni in their communities. After engaging and accompanying these young adults in dialogue, we envision this group as reaching out to the young adults they know who identify as former or marginalized or disaffiliated Catholics, to host listening sessions with them. Through each dialogue, ministry leaders and young adults open themselves up to vulnerability, share meaningful stories about their lives, and as such, begin to form deep, meaningful relationships with one another and, from there, can begin to work together to create or support communities for and by the young people in the surrounding neighborhoods. This, in turn, creates a network of meaningful relationships, and identifies, mentors, and supports young adults as protagonists and leaders who want to accompany their peers as they search for and struggle to find meaningful communities. In these networks, these webs of relationships, and through deep listening, we will begin to uncover how young adults are making meaning and to accompany them as they discern God’s call in their lives.

The dialogue, or facilitated listening sessions, in my experience, should begin with the parish or school staff members. This process allows ministry leaders to come together, listen to one another’s experiences of church and their faith, to help them learn from one another and

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<sup>9</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §231.

<sup>10</sup> Robert J. McCarty and John M. Vitek, *Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics*, (Winona, Minnesota: Saint Mary's Press, 2017), 42.

<sup>11</sup> National Dialogue, [Way of Proceeding](#).

journey together as a small faith community. Then the staff can move out to engage ministry leaders and stakeholders in the parish, ask them to identify people they know who have established communities or groups with young adults, and host listening sessions with them with the overall goal of finding ways to support those communities in which young adults are thriving in. Faith communities, by enacting the work of the *National Dialogue*, can begin to find those young adult leaders or partners in ministry in their neighborhoods, to work with them to explore how best to support, mentor, and collaborate with one another, practice co-responsibility, and embrace Pope Francis' exhortation to "allow room for a 'popular' youth ministry, with a different style, schedule, pace and method [and]... accompany and encourage" those "natural leaders in their neighborhoods and in other settings."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §230.

## **Radiate Christ – Become a Parish Who Accompanies Young People**

**Tom East**

*Christus Vivit* provides vision and guidance for youth and young adults for their lives as missionary disciples. This article will explore the direction provided by this important document for parishes to transform ministries with youth and their families. Parishes are not directed to implement a particular strategy or to change the approach to a specific youth initiative. Instead, we are guided to change our relationship with the young people in our communities. Rather than seeing them as objects of ministry and participants in programs of formation, parishes are guided to see young people as God’s beloved who are seeking truth and life.

Each young person’s heart should thus be considered “holy ground”, a bearer of seeds of divine life, before which we must “take off our shoes” in order to draw near and enter more deeply into the Mystery.<sup>1</sup>

Seeing the holiness of young people is recognizing that the task of evangelizing youth and forming them as young disciples is God’s initiative. God has been completely in love with the young people in our communities from the moment of their conception. God began a conversation with these young people; our job is to pay attention to what God is doing, align ourselves with the Spirit, and walk with youth as they grow in discipleship. We are called to accompany them as they discern their response to God’s plan for their life.

How is this different? It’s all about stance. A typical story of youth ministry goes something like this: a youth minister has an experience of faith which leads to hearing a call and becoming a youth minister. She or he works to create programs where young people can experience faith and then tries to get youth to join in those programs. The parish community checks youth ministry off their list because they hired a youth minister. This process relies upon the personality of the ministry leader and the convergence between young people’s interests and the programs that are created. In this model, ministry leaders have to initiate a relationship with a young person, help them trust, and sell them on joining a program that has a particular focus, personality and set of interests. We lose a lot of youth in the process, not necessarily because youth aren’t interested in faith or God, but because they don’t relate to the leader’s faith journey and the programs being offered.

The process suggested in the synod document is different. It all starts with listening. We are urged to listen to young people, to know them, and to respond in human, personal ways:

All too often, there is a tendency to provide pre-packaged answers and ready-made solutions, without allowing young people’s real questions to emerge and to face the challenges they pose. Listening makes possible an exchange of gifts in a context of empathy.<sup>2</sup>

### **Becoming a Parish Who Accompanies Young People**

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, March 25, 2019 §67, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html)

<sup>2</sup> *Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, (Rome, October 27, 2018), §8, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20181027\\_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20181027_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html)

We are also reminded that the whole community has a role in sharing faith with young disciples:  
...community has an important role in the accompaniment of young people; it should feel collectively responsible for accepting, motivating, encouraging and challenging them.<sup>3</sup>

To live into this role, parishes re-examine the way we minister with young people by recognizing that accompanying youth in faith is the primary way that youth grow in discipleship.

In such places...the person-to-person contact indispensable for passing on the message can happen, something whose place cannot be taken by any pastoral resource or strategy.<sup>4</sup>

### **Empowering Faith Companions**

This direction has important implications for parish communities. First, we need to be intentional in the ways that we support and empower all of those who walk with youth in faith. This begins with families.

The Synod insisted that “the family continues to be the principal point of reference for young people. Children appreciate the love and care of their parents, they give importance to family bonds, and they hope to succeed in forming a family when it is their time.”<sup>5</sup>

Ministry with youth has been aware of the need to include parents and families more intentionally for the last thirty years. Unfortunately, much of the attention has been focused on trying to get parents and families to come to things at the parish and do things at home and most importantly get their family to mass. This approach begins with an assumption that families are evangelized and that parents know their job but just need to be encouraged or in the case of sacramental preparation, required to help them to do the tasks of parenting for faith. The work of the New Evangelization reminds us that the challenge in our United States context is not bringing the message of Christ to people who have never heard it, the challenge is helping people who have heard the message to know that it matters; the message is about them, it is a love story about a personal God who wants to be in their lives and with them in their everyday challenges. Youth ministry’s connection to families is not about getting their support for the ministry and about getting them to do their job at home; it is about inspiring, evangelizing and ministering to the families of youth.

In addition to parents, there are many other family connections for people who could be faith companions for youth including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. There are also people who have a sacramental relationship with young people such as Godparents and Confirmation Sponsors. In many cases, these potential faith companions are just waiting for the permission and the starting point to enter into the conversation of faith with the youth to whom they are related.

We should also consider all the other relationships in the parish where youth can experience faith companionship. These would include ministerial roles such as the pastor, and parish pastoral leaders, leaders in ministry with youth and young adults, catechists, teachers, and parish ministry leaders whose role touches young people. It could also include members of the

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<sup>3</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §243

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, §218.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, §262.



parish community whose work and vocation puts them in contact with young people such as teachers, counselors, employers, health care workers, and others in the community. Peers also play an essential role in accompaniment. Their common base of experience lays a foundation for faith witness and companionship.

We can take a significant step in becoming a parish who accompanies youth by identifying and empowering all of the faith companions in our community. What would it be like if everyone in the parish who has a connection to young people understood their role and felt equipped to pray for, provide care for, and witness faith to youth?

### **Transforming Ministries**

To implement this direction, we begin by looking at all of the strategies, communities and initiatives with youth in our community through the eyes of accompaniment. For many parishes, ministry with youth has been reduced to an emphasis on classroom based sacramental preparation or faith formation, and event-based youth ministry. With so much focus on programs and events, relationships become incidental and ministry retreats behind a podium. These efforts provide formation about the faith in the style of a broadcast, but they often miss the one-to-one witness and accompaniment described in *Christus Vivit*.

Looking at youth communities and programs in new ways means transforming them to promote accompaniment relationships. For example, one parish is implementing the directive of accompaniment by transforming the process for preparation for Confirmation so that all youth are divided into groups of five to seven members with two faith mentors who accompany youth through the process of preparing to receive the grace of the sacrament.

Transforming our ministries also means focusing on helping youth grow in faith and discipleship. Because we love young people and we long for them to experience the embrace of Christ as disciples, we help them notice what God is doing and notice their choices to see the possibilities for their life and for their life in Christ. To keep the flame of faith alive, we need to minister in a way that is aligned with God's timing and purpose in growing in relationship with young people. Our generous God is always sending opportunities for encounter to young people. We are told to awaken youth to these encounters and consolidate these experiences to sustain discipleship. We are also warned – don't bore young people. Sometimes, we allow our fears about how much youth know to dominate what we share and how we spend our time with young people.

...it happens that young people are helped to have a powerful experience of God, an encounter with Jesus that touched their hearts. But the only follow-up to this is a series of "formation" meetings featuring talks about doctrinal and moral issues, the evils of today's world, the Church, her social doctrine, chastity, marriage, birth control and so on. As a result, many young people get bored, they lose the fire of their encounter with Christ and the joy of following him; many give up and others become downcast or negative. Rather than being too concerned with communicating a great deal of doctrine, let us first try to awaken and consolidate the great experiences that sustain the Christian life.<sup>6</sup>

A second quality of our ministries is flexibility. Ministries transformed by accompaniment place the emphasis on the relationships, the encounters, and the witness of

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<sup>6</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §212.



community. Structure is provided to the extent that it facilitates the dynamics of growing in faith together.

The young make us see the need for new styles and new strategies. For example, while adults often worry about having everything properly planned, with regular meetings and fixed times, most young people today have little interest in this kind of pastoral approach. Youth ministry needs to become more flexible: inviting young people to events or occasions that provide an opportunity not only for learning, but also for conversing, celebrating, singing...<sup>7</sup>

Transformation is all about building mutual relationships in the parish. Relationships with peers, family, faith companions and the whole faith community. These relationships are described in the Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment:

Young Catholics are not merely on the receiving end of pastoral activity: they are living members of the one ecclesial body, baptized persons in whom the Spirit of the Lord is alive and active. They help to enrich what the Church is and not only what she does. They are her present and not only her future.<sup>8</sup>

Taking young people seriously now, means integrating them fully within parish life. We include them in ministries, in leadership, in service, in catechesis, and in our community life. We engage the young in our community and we strive to become communities who witness Christ's presence.

### **Conclusion: Radiate Christ**

Applying the direction of *Christus Vivit* to parishes begins with examining our relationship with the young people in our community. There are three movements for transformation and growth. Firstly, we look carefully at parish life as a whole to see how we are welcoming, including, and integrating youth throughout parish life. Secondly, we empower and equip all those who could accompany youth in faith. Thirdly, we transform all of our ministry efforts with youth to promote relationships of accompaniment. These movements make us ready as a community to witness a living faith to the young in new and energized ways.

... (Young people) will be better integrated into communities that are open, living their faith, eager to radiate Christ, joyful, free, fraternal and committed. These communities can be settings where they feel that it is possible to cultivate precious relationships.<sup>9</sup>

What does it mean to be a parish that is “eager to radiate Christ”? This describes a community that has a fervency of faith to share. The community is eager to share the treasure of faith, which includes being intentional in sharing that faith with young people in our midst. These communities recognize that young people are making a choice with their lives about who to be with, how to spend their time, what to give their lives to. These communities long to be with young people in these choices and encourage the radical option of becoming missionary disciples of Jesus Christ. Standing with youth in this life choice takes more than having them

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., §204.

<sup>8</sup> *Final Document*, §54.

<sup>9</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §220.

participate in a particular program or community. It's all about the relationship. Young people will see Christ radiated from communities who intentionally welcome youth, listen to them, include them, walk with them, and invite them to the adventure of discipleship.

### **Appendix: Step by Step to Growing as a Parish Who Accompanies Youth**

1. Begin with the parish relationship with youth
  - a. Look at the engagement of youth in liturgy, community life, service
  - b. Look for involvement of youth in ministries, leadership and decision making
  - c. Look for the engagement of members of the parish community with young people
2. Assess territory for making connections
  - a. Consider all of the potential faith companions for young people
    - i. Family connections: Parents / Aunts / Uncles / Grandparents /siblings
    - ii. Sacramental connections: Godparents / Sponsors
    - iii. Ministry connections: pastor, pastoral leaders, ministry leaders, catechists
    - iv. Community connections: teachers, counselors, community workers, employers
  - b. Work to provide formation, resources and coaching for faith companions to equip them to care for and witness faith with young people
3. Transform ministry efforts to support accompaniment
  - a. Strengthen current ministry efforts by creating space and building accompanying relationships
  - b. Eliminate some programs and strategies
  - c. Create new efforts paying particular attention to outreach

## How the Connection Between Liturgy and the Mundane Street can Transform Your Student's Spirituality

Cari White

In *Christus Vivit*, we hear Pope Francis call for new styles and strategies in providing youth with pastoral care.<sup>1</sup> In Catholic Education, especially in high schools where there is a high concentration of Catholic youth, this call from Pope Francis could not be more timely. I propose that one of the new styles should be a new way of helping youth to understand and appreciate the celebration of the Mass.

As a Campus Minister in a Catholic High School, one of my primary responsibilities is planning and executing all liturgical celebrations for our community. This includes smaller group liturgies with our various sports teams, liturgies that are part of various events such as reunion weekend or a parent club, and our monthly all school liturgies. Simply put- I should devote a large part of my time to thinking about how liturgies can inspire our students. As the liturgy is the source and summit of the Christian life, one could (and should) make the argument that a school's liturgical celebrations are the most important things the community can do.

David Fagerberg writes in his book *Consecrating the World- on Mundane Liturgical Theology* that "the true subject matter of liturgical theology is not simply what happens in the sanctuary but its encounter with the mundane street"<sup>2</sup>. The Liturgy should inspire those in attendance to leave the church inspired and ready to change the world. "The Liturgy is the perichoresis of the Trinity kenotically extended to invite our synergistic ascent into deification"<sup>3</sup>. More simply put, liturgy is the Divine dance pouring out in invitation- for a synergistic relationship where the divine energy moves in us and we respond by allowing God to move us. This divine dance results in our becoming partakers of the divine nature. This is further evidenced in the Second Letter of Peter, when we read "Through these, he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire" (2 Peter 1:4 (NABRE)). We are adopted as God's own children, which results in our reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a particular way; ultimately, we become deified when we are sanctified and are infused with God's grace.

This is of particular importance for me, as I am becoming more and more aware of how our students and faculty members are missing the point on just how significant their time at mass is. A few weeks ago, we had a significant prayer service for a long-time teacher who was recently diagnosed with very aggressive and advanced cancer. The students created and led this prayer service (with some guidance from some adults) and after this prayer service a theology teacher (and graduate) remarked that the prayer service was the most moving prayer experience he's ever had here at St. Edward. This struck me that he would say this, when as a theology teacher I would hope he would think that about our all school liturgies. If this teacher fails to recognize the importance of the liturgy, it's no wonder the students struggle with this even more. I often see students (and faculty members) sleeping through mass or actively not participating.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, March 25, 2019 §204, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html)

<sup>2</sup> David Fagerberg, *Consecrating the Word-on Mundane Liturgical Theology* (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2016), 76.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6

Even though the theology teachers try to instill the importance of mass to our students and they work with them in a variety of ways to prepare for our liturgies (such as lectio divina with the readings, practicing the music ahead of time, etc.) our students still feel active participation is largely unnecessary. I keep thinking to myself, if I could just help these students to understand and embrace what Fagerberg is talking about when he talks about the liturgy, it could have a transformational effect on not only our students and faculty, but on the culture of our entire community.

The most important question then becomes- how will I take these ideas of liturgical mysticism and translate them into a lesson plan experience that will help all of our students understand the importance and significance of the actions, prayers and events of the liturgy? This will take the form of the most effective way to help students get excited about and remember what they are learning- in a gamified contest experience.

Modeled on the popular break out game model, I will set up a series of activities that students have to complete. Our students love competition, and this competitive element will help to keep students focused and motivated. First, one must have a theme for the game/lesson. What point are you trying to get across? How will this be accomplished through the various activities? For my lesson, the goal is that students will recognize the importance and significance of liturgy. Arguably, there are many ways this could be done, and I admit I've tried many of them. What I haven't tried yet, is this new approach- of using the spirituality and wisdom of the mystics combined with the newest innovative teaching techniques.

My lesson will use the approach of a QRbreakin, as described by John Meehan, an English teacher and instructional coach at Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington, VA.<sup>4</sup> Using a Harry Potter theme as a focuser for the various games, students will have an opportunity to complete up to six different learning stations. These learning stations will consist of a google form<sup>5</sup>, a review on quizizz.com<sup>6</sup>, (which uses fun memes after each question), a video on the significance of the liturgy by Fr. Mike Schmitz, a mirco-lab discussion based on excerpts of David Fagerberg's *Consecrating the World- On Mundane Liturgical Theology* chapter 4- The Eye of the Dove,<sup>7</sup> a flip grid video<sup>8</sup> creation that teaches their classmates about prayer; an edpuzzle<sup>9</sup> video featuring Bishop Barron on prayer; (edpuzzle allows you to create pauses and other breaks in the video for students to complete various questions or tasks), and a sketchnote<sup>10</sup> to depict what engagement will look like at mass and at prayer.

These various activities will allow for the students to engage important theological questions from many different sources and points of view. Having a timed discussion around the question of "how do you see the connection between the work of the liturgy and the mundane street?" ties Fagerberg's idea of liturgy which inspires us to go out into the world, and this process allows students to demonstrate their understanding of this important theological idea.

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<sup>4</sup> John Meehan, Blog post, date accessed March 24, 2019, <https://edrenalinerush.com/resources/qrbreakin/>

<sup>5</sup> Cari White, Google form, created 3/25/19, [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdyJA4pLvL0WGIQdCVzxyoCHaTmD1zTnwG\\_EW0kqKR2lsEFrw/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdyJA4pLvL0WGIQdCVzxyoCHaTmD1zTnwG_EW0kqKR2lsEFrw/viewform?usp=sf_link)

<sup>6</sup> Cari White, quizizz.com, date accessed March 25, 2019 <https://quizizz.com/quiz/5c995b5fd5d230001c5831cf/edit?source=admin&trigger=navigation>

<sup>7</sup> Fagerberg, *Consecrating the Word*, 73-79; 90-91.

<sup>8</sup> FLipGrid webpage, date accessed March 25, 2019, <https://admin.flipgrid.com/manage/grids/1275419>

<sup>9</sup> [www.edpuzzle.com](http://www.edpuzzle.com), date accessed March 25, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Craighton Berman, *Sketchnotes 101: Visual Thinking*, June 6, 2011, <https://www.core77.com/posts/19518/sketchnotes-101-visual-thinking-19518>

The google form offers for a quick way to get a gauge of the students' current experience of liturgy, their impressions on why going to mass is or isn't important, and if they have any suggestions for things that could potentially be improved.

The quizzizz allows for a fun way to review particulars regarding the liturgy and prayer in general, including some basic facts about mystical spirituality and prayer, which will help students connect to the understanding of the significance of the liturgy. Making a list of five things that stood out to the group from the Fr. Mike Schmitz video provides another perspective for students to encounter and forces students to listen for key ideas that matter to them.

The flip-grid video gives students an opportunity to be creative and synthesize what they have learned and discussed. They then create something new for their classmates to see, as flip-grid has a peer viewing component which allows a class to see each other's videos. The edpuzzle allows for the video content to be paused and questions or even quizzes to be inserted. This encourages students to engage in the content instead of just letting it play in the background to get it done.

The sketch note gives students the opportunity to creatively map out visually what they think engagement looks like, and to take that step further and visually represent what liturgical engagement might look like when someone has successfully crossed from the world into the nave of the Church in order to absorb the energy of the altar in the sanctuary, but then also crossing the narthex from the nave back to the world, to release the light into the world.<sup>11</sup>

Providing these various activities in a format that allows for students to engage in the content in new ways, hopefully inspiring new ways of thinking and experiencing the liturgy. This approach to teaching the liturgy will help to provide an effective way to evangelize the students at Catholic Schools with a fresh experience of the kerygma, wide-ranging dialogue, interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary approaches, and a culture of encounter<sup>12</sup>. When students have navigated all of these learning centers, they will feel empowered and able to take the energy of the altar and go and encounter the mundane street.

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<sup>11</sup> Fagerberg, *Consecrating the Word*, 91.

<sup>12</sup> *Christus Vivit*, §222.