

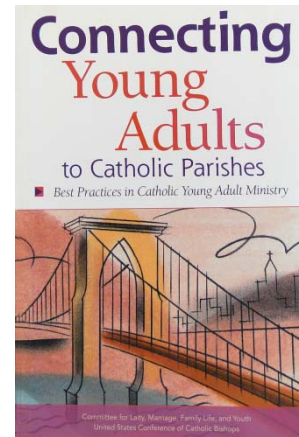
A Guide to Apply
***Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes:
Best Practices in Catholic Young Adult Ministry***
to a Military Setting



Reflections for Catholic Faith Communities
in the U.S. Military provided by the
Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA,
Office of Evangelization

How to Use This Guide:

[Connecting Young Adults to Catholic Parishes: Best Practices in Catholic Young Adult Ministry](#) is a resource developed by the Committee for Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This guide has been created by the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA Office of Evangelization to help those ministering to young adults apply ideas from the USCCB resource to a military setting. Ideas from the USCCB resource are highlighted with corresponding page citations. Contact information for additional resources may be found at the end of this resource.



Creating a Young Adult Responsive Church

- Young adult outreach should be dynamic, taking the Church into the community where young adults gather rather than waiting for them. (p. 5-6)



What could our Catholic faith community do beyond the walls of the chapel to reach out to young adults? (i.e., the Air Force has been known to have a cookie wagon that greets airmen working the night shift on the flightline during the holidays. In this way they have gone to where the young adults are rather than merely advertise a program on a bulletin board.)

- Using technology is an especially effective way to reach out to young adults. (p.10)



Being sure to keep any requirements or regulations of the installation in mind, think about what ways our Catholic faith community could utilize media. Is it feasible to establish a web site or Facebook page? Could we encourage young adults to connect to the AMS via their web site (www.milarch.org) and social media? (www.facebook.com/milarchusa, www.twitter.com/milarchusa)



The USCCB has established a resource detailing guidelines for using social media that contains many best practices. The resource can be found on the USCCB web site: <http://www.usccb.org/comm/social-media-guidelines.shtml>

- When asked, “What are you looking for in the Church today?”, young adults named the following ten elements (p.13):
 - A sense of community and belonging
 - Dynamic liturgies
 - Spiritual growth and enrichment
 - Religious education and Catholic identity
 - Guidance and direction in life
 - Acceptance and support
 - Opportunities for service and leadership
 - Social activities
 - A community that shares common values
 - Inspiration and rejuvenation

Prayer and Spirituality

- Many young adults feel a disconnect between a Catholic identity that is based on spirituality and a Catholic identity that is based on involvement with the structures of the institutional Church. For this reason, some look for God in places outside the Church. (p.17)
- The Bishops' document *Sons and Daughters of the Light* (which can be found online at <http://www.nccbuscc.org/laity/ygadult/toc.shtml>) recommends that faith communities provide opportunities for young adults to learn and experience different forms of personal and group prayer. One parish held a four-week evening series on various forms of prayer, each session beginning with a brief talk on a specific type of prayer and leading into an experience of it. (p.19-20)



Are there resources in the local area that our Catholic faith community could connect with? (For example, activities sponsored by the local diocese, a retreat center, a speaker series or workshop that could help expand upon prayer experiences.)

- Because today's young adults have grown up with more diversity than any previous generation, they respond well to and are enriched by prayers from different cultural traditions. (p.23)



In what ways does our Catholic faith community engage in different cultural traditions? If none, where could we start? What are some specific cultural traditions that apply to the area where our military installation is located?



Catechesis and Young Adult Ministry

- The aim of Catechesis is to put people in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ. Young Adult Catechesis has to do with falling in love; if they are captured by the love of Jesus, they will want to know more and grow in the Christian way. (p.37-9)
- One of the most effective strategies for catechesis with young adults involves bringing them together to reflect on, discuss, and learn the Church's teachings on issues they are encountering now in their own lives. Example topics: vocational discernment, Christian involvement in society, the relationship between faith and reason, the problem of evil. (p.40)



Catholics Seeking Christ, a resource designed by AMS for use by young adults, develops small groups of peers to discuss spiritual questions, discover their Catholic identity, and connect with a Catholic faith community. (CSC resources can be found online, <https://milarch.org/index/catholics-seeking-christ>) Is there a way that this and other similar resources can be used to help bring young adults in our Catholic faith community together for catechesis?

- Young adults do not grow in faith primarily by learning concepts, but by sharing the life of the Christian community. For this reason, intergenerational catechesis is particularly effective. Engage young adults with older adults to enable them to better understand Catholic teaching by providing them with opportunities for dialogue about living the faith over the course of a lifetime. Additionally, having young adults serve as catechists can draw younger learners into a deeper relationship with Christ while at the same time enlivening young adults in their faith. (p.46-47)



This presents an opportunity for young adults to both give and receive. When invited to share their gifts young adults engage in the catechetical process encouraging younger Catholics at the same time they are encouraged to grow in faith by mentors providing unique opportunities for intergenerational experience and interaction. To help a young adult become a certified AMS catechist, visit the AMS web site for details on the process: <https://milarch.org/index/catechist-certification>

Discernment and Vocation

- Parishes should help young adults be aware of the difference between discernment and decision making. (p.62-64) Parishes should highlight the fact that vocation is a universal call to holiness and that it can be lived out in many different ways: single life, marriage, religious life, diaconate, or priesthood. (p.67-68)



- Young adulthood is the time when one searches for, works to discern, and responds to one's vocation. Inviting young adults into positions of leadership in the parish community and supporting and mentoring them in these positions can help them in their discernment process. (p.70)



What possibilities are there to foster mentor relationships within our Catholic faith community to help support young adult members through their discernment?

- Because reaching out to young adults in the context of their lives is critical to the effectiveness of any ministry with them, young adult-responsive parishes might explore and share with young adults the numerous Internet resources available (p. 74-75). Examples:
 - National Religious Vocation Conference: www.nrv.net/
 - USCCB's web site "For Your Vocation": www.foryourvocation.org/
 - Busted Halo: www.bustedhalo.com/



What are some practical ways that the Catholic faith community could draw attention to online vocation and young adult resources?

Community Life and Pastoral Care

- In today's hectic world, young adults can feel pulled in many directions. The Church community can provide a spiritual home for them: a place where they are appreciated, supported, and invited to contribute, -- and most of all, a place where they belong. (p.85-86)



How can young adults belong here at this particular Catholic faith community? Consider bringing a pilot group of young adults together and ask them what are some specific ways that the Chapel could appreciate, support, and invite young adults to contribute.

- Welcome and get acquainted with young adults. Personally greet them before or after Mass. Make contact with young adults when they move into the area. (p.88-89)

Evangelization and Young Adults

- When young adults feel enthusiastic about their faith, they hunger to share that faith with others. Parishes have largely untapped wealth of evangelists in young adults, but the Church needs to support them as they learn how to evangelize their peers. (p.105-108)
- Help foster enthusiasm for being Catholic. Young adults may have picked up some of the things the Church is *against*. Evangelization means helping them see what the Church is *for*. (p.105)



How can our Catholic faith community help young adults see the church as a place of "yes"?

- One of the key places to encounter young adults is online. Employ technology to reach out to young adults. (p.111)



Many military faith communities (such as the chapels at Fort Belvoir and Hill AFB, which both have Facebook pages) use social media to make events known. Would it be feasible for our Catholic faith community to connect to its members in this way? Consider asking the help of a young adult.

Young Adults and Liturgy

- Young adults seek significant roles in church life, and they have much to contribute to liturgical celebration. Consider personally inviting young adults to help decorate the church for Lent/Easter or Advent/Christmas, select music for liturgies, give the homilist input, or serve as liturgical ministers. (p124-126)



Many university ministries form a liturgy team of young adults. Would it be possible for our Catholic faith community to engage young adults in this manner?



- Young adults want a homily that is rooted in the Scripture readings of the day and enlightened by the Tradition of the Church. They also want a homily that outlines some practical application of the Scriptures to their everyday lives. (p131-132)



A liturgy team (mentioned above) of young adults could even help provide the Catholic chaplain with examples of how the Gospel is speaking to young adults in our particular Catholic faith community.

- Liturgical catechesis helps young adults fully appreciate the meaning of the gestures, symbols, and texts used in Sunday worship, thus engaging them in their faith and encouraging them to participate more actively. (p134-135)

Justice and Service with Young Adults

- Parishes that want to connect young adults with justice can begin with two great resources on parish and social ministry issued by the Catholic bishops of the United States: *Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish* and its accompanying *Parish Resource Manual*. (p.161-162) (<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/saltandlight.shtml>)



A Catholics Seeking Christ group at MCAS Yuma, AZ, moved by the discussions they held in their small group sessions, reached out beyond themselves and encountered Christ by serving at an orphanage in Mexico. They went to play, eat, and spend time together while also delivering items needed by the orphanage (i.e., clothing, school supplies, etc.)

- One way parishes can increase young adults' awareness of the relationship between the Church's social mission and the Church's teachings is to offer resources that young adult small faith-sharing groups can use in order to focus on the social teachings of the Church. (p.126-164)



Justice Walking, a seven week "Discipleship Journey" developed by Just Faith Ministries, is one such faith-sharing group that can easily be adapted for use at a military installation. (<http://www.justfaith.org/programs/collegejusticewalking.html>) Justice Walking combines community service and Gospel reflection to help participants grow in understanding of the Church's social mission.

Leadership Development

- Jesus went out and called the apostles by name. He knew that the way to involve people in his mission was to ask them to participate. Personal invitation is integral to getting young adults involved in parish life and leadership and within ministry to their peers. (p. 148-149)
- Train young adult leaders in the context of leadership retreats, providing them with a mix of spiritual formation and practical leadership skills. (p. 151-152)



One possible way to go about leadership training for young adults at military Catholic faith communities is to look to the local diocese for support. Could young adults at our Catholic faith community benefit from programs run by the local diocese? The National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association is also available to help provide training.

<http://www.ncyama.org/services/index.htm>

Forming Faith Communities of Young Adults



- Small faith-sharing groups and small church communities, in which young adults walk the spiritual journey together, have proven to be an effective way to form young adults in the Catholic faith. Small faith-sharing communities provide support for questioning, while they ground faith in the context of members' experiences. (p. 185-187) The Catholic Church is blessed to include many organizations that provide great resources for forming small church and faith-sharing communities.



- Catholics Seeking Christ, <https://milarch.org/index/catholics-seeking-christ>
- RENEW International, www.renewintl.org
- Quest, www.sccquest.org
- Sunday by Sunday, http://www.goodgroundpress.com/sunday_by_sunday.aspx
- Just Faith Ministries, <http://www.justfaith.org/>

- Small faith-sharing communities can also be connected online. Email, blogs, social networking sites, and other forums for online outreach are great ways to connect parishioners. (p.192)

Moving Forward

What are three goals that our Catholic faith community could start with? Realize that the most important goal is personally inviting young adults to find a spiritual home in the Catholic faith community. Without the personal invitation everything else becomes just a task to be accomplished. Focusing on the invitation to belong will help create a better understanding of the local pastoral needs of the young adults in your community.

1.) _____

2.) _____

3.) _____

After these goals have been met, a small planning committee could gather again to consider another three goals and so on.

For additional information and resources, contact:

Mark Moitoza
mmoitoza@milarch.org
202-719-3648

Margaret Bétit
mbetit@milarch.org
202-719-3649

AMS Office of Evangelization
www.milarch.org

