

Texting, Email, Facebook, face-to-face and more.....Keeping Connected

It's all about connection. Ministry to, with and for 20 and 30 somethings is about connecting in effective ways with the great diversity of the population. People in their young adult years are single, married; single again and everywhere in between. The Bishops of the United States authored a document entitled, *Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults*, in 1996. Their guidance continues to be relevant fourteen years later. The relationship parishes play between the church and 20 and 30 somethings is crucial. The former Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Tip O'Neil, sums it up well: "All politics is local." So too is ministry with 20 and 30 somethings.

Often the first community that Catholics connect with is the parish. This may be where they were baptized, where they stop by when they are in town, or where they hope to marry. Pastoral care for young adults requires that parishes be a home for young adults where they are personally touched in their faith journey. Here is where most young adults experience life cycle events – birth, marriage, and death- and struggle with the challenges of their lives-leaving home and coming back. (USCCB, *Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults* (Washington, DC, USCCB, 1996), 27.

Parishes have many areas of connection with young adults. Four key areas include:

Liturgy

Music, preaching and a sense of welcome are what speak to the young adult population. Sunday Mass is where we encounter 20 and 30 somethings. Time and again they are reflecting that they seek singable music, engaging homilies that speak to lived experience and a place where they are welcomed no matter if they come by themselves or with a crying baby. Other key liturgies where young adults encounter our parishes are at weddings and funerals. What is their experience like?

Milestones

The diocese has recently inaugurated the Millennial Milestones Project. What are the milestones that 20 and 30 somethings look to the parish to celebrate and prepare them for? Post Confirmation, the college experience, Marriage, Infant Baptism and Adult Confirmation are only some of the key times parishes walk with 20 and 30 somethings on their faith journey. Resources and continuing education are available to help parishes maximize the experience of young adults. Visit the Millennial Milestones section of the Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministry's website at www.dobyouth.org for more information. Diocesan staff in the Departments of Lifelong Faith Formation & Youth and Young Adult Ministry is also here to help.

Technology

Don't forget about being connected on the web. Back in December 2009, the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership's weekly newsletter shared the following statistics:

- Twitter has one million new subscribers each month
- Facebook features 500+ Catholic identified groups
- YouTube boats 150 million visits every day.

How is our parish connecting to those who do a Google search about us? Are we connecting with young adults on social networking sites? Mass times, sacramental policies, contact information and directions are all information that many are looking to access via the internet. The Pope on World Communications Day encouraged clergy and the church to faithfully engage the *rich menu of technological options*. He challenged all to proclaim the Gospel using images, videos, blogs and websites alongside traditional approaches. How can technology add to the spiritual growth of your parish?

Service Opportunities

Generosity of time is a key virtue that is lived among young adults. Service opportunities that help the poor and disenfranchised or the parish community are key. It is amazing what a hammer and nail can do to break down barriers and build up community with projects like Habitat for Humanity. Are service opportunities within the parish set up at convenient times in the evening and on weekends? Do catechetical, liturgical and service ministries have an opportunity for new people? Wouldn't it be amazing if the all parish ministries strived for 5% involvement of 20 and 30 year old parishioners?

The ways to connect with young adults abounds. Evaluate how your parish connection can continue to support and challenge young adults in their connection with Jesus, the Church, the Church's service with the poor and other 20 and 30 somethings.

The department can provide resources, consultations, and helpful advice. Please contact Greg Coogan (gcoogan@buffalodiocese.org) or 716-847-8793 for more details.