

Implementation Guidebook

for

*Listen, Teach, Send: A National Pastoral Framework
for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults*

Resource Guide of Practical Applications and Local Considerations
for Catholic Parishes, Schools, Campuses, Dioceses, and Eparchies



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth

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The suggestions contained within are not prescriptive, nor should they be interpreted as the exclusive means of understanding the particular dimensions of *Listen, Teach, Send*. Rather, the insights herein are meant to encourage and inspire pastoral leaders and families to consider various ways that they can put the lessons of the national framework into local practice for the benefit of youth and/or young adults.

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Table of Contents

Introduction and Foundations	4
<i>Organizational Flow</i>	<i>6</i>
Part 1: Strategies for Listening	7
1.1 <i>Encountering Young People</i>	<i>8</i>
1.2 <i>Being Fully Present</i>	<i>12</i>
1.3 <i>Understanding Across Generations</i>	<i>16</i>
1.4 <i>Healing Brokenness</i>	<i>19</i>
Part 2: Strategies for Teaching	23
2.1 <i>Proclaiming Jesus Christ</i>	<i>26</i>
2.2 <i>An Evangelizing Catechesis</i>	<i>31</i>
2.3 <i>Sharing the Truth in Love</i>	<i>35</i>
2.4 <i>Renewing Sacramental Life</i>	<i>39</i>
Part 3: Strategies for Sending	45
3.1 <i>Bold, Evangelizing Witnesses</i>	<i>45</i>
3.2 <i>With Charity and Justice</i>	<i>48</i>
3.3 <i>Vocational Discernment</i>	<i>52</i>
3.4 <i>Faithful Protagonists Today</i>	<i>53</i>
Conclusion	60



Introduction and Foundations

*We offer this national pastoral framework as a summons to local faith communities across the country to renew their efforts*¹

In general, pastoral plans and frameworks from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) are often written from a national viewpoint. As such, these documents may not be as specific on the actual implementation strategies for local Catholic faith communities.

Therefore, this *Implementation Guidebook* is offered to provide concrete responses and strategies to the question “How?” that readers of *Listen, Teach, Send* (LTS, 2024) might have while reading it.

As a national pastoral framework for ministries with youth and young adults, there are many wonderful and broad insights given by the Catholic bishops of the United States about accompanying young people within family, church, and other settings; however, the local level is where the document truly comes alive. While this *Implementation Guidebook* offers strategies, it has also been developed at a nationwide level, so the application of its content is incomplete until those in the local church and among families and social networks, as well as unique circumstances inclusive of universities, hospitals, prisons, and military service, add their specific situations to the ideas offered. Some caveats, however:

- The *Guidebook* does not attempt to exhaust every possible scenario when it comes to youth and young adults. To do so would be impossible and potentially endless.
- The *Guidebook* does not offer commentary and strategies for every sentence or phrase within *Listen, Teach, Send*. It provides a few key passages from the pastoral framework that cover multiple areas of concern as much as possible, but there is still yet to be explored.
- The *Guidebook* primarily offers principles of implementation, though suggests some specifics in a few instances. However, since it is written at the national level, most specifics will depend on the local circumstances of the person using this tool.
- The *Guidebook* is offered as an impetus for local creativity in implementation. Rather than looking at the text herein as prescriptive, it is best to view these ideas as catalysts for further reflection and springboards for pastoral action.

*...with youth and young adults...*²

Before proceeding, it is also important to note that LTS was written to both those who accompany *youth* and those who accompany *young adults*. This was done since Pope Francis addressed both age groups in his 2019 apostolic exhortation on young people, *Christus Vivit* (as the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and

¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Listen, Teach, Send* (LTS): A National Pastoral Framework for Ministries with Youth and Young Adults (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2024), p. 14.

² LTS, p. 14.

Vocational Discernment that preceded the exhortation outlined their understanding of “young people” as age 16 to 29³). The LTS framework was developed as a national response to that Synod and papal document.

On an international level, the idea of “young people” (*giovani* in Italian and *jóvenes* in Spanish) can often be defined as a person between the ages of 16 and 30 (or 35). In the United States, that age range includes individuals whom we call “youth,” “teenagers,” or “adolescents” (up to age 18) as well as women and men who could be considered “young adults” (those in their late teens, twenties, and thirties). Even within certain U.S. states, there are varying definitions of being a “minor” (under a certain age or still in high school, etc.). Because of the great diversity of young people addressed in *Christus Vivit*, the bishops of the United States opted to make their own pastoral framework as expansive and inclusive as possible. As such, *Listen, Teach, Send* is applicable to the Church’s ministries with youth and with young adults and to families of adolescents and to families of those in their twenties and thirties. Therefore, when applying the principles laid out in the national framework, it is essential that this nuance be considered in the application process.

Furthermore, due to developmental and legal issues and always seeking to maintain safe environments, the USCCB advises great caution in potentially merging or combining pastoral efforts for both youth and young adults. Rather, the bishops recommend clear and distinct efforts be carried out for the various age groups, demographics, and populations considered within *Listen, Teach, Send*, with particular attention to maintaining homogenous age groups for minors.

Grounded in the journey of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus...⁴

The model of ministries proposed within *Listen, Teach, Send* is firmly rooted in the Emmaus Story: Luke 24:13-35. This New Testament moment with the Risen Lord and two disciples is a paradigmatic approach to the pastoral disposition of the Church in journeying with youth and young adults. Such a critical task, then, can only be accomplished through grace and reliance on the Holy Spirit. Prayer can focus our pastoral engagement with young people, placing this work in God’s hands.

Liturgy and prayer suggestions for individuals and communities might include:

- Engaging a leadership team in a *lectio divina* (divine reading) with the Emmaus Story. Go online [here](#) for some *lectio divina* resources from the USCCB. Or take a walk with a young person or fellow leaders from a spiritual and prayerful perspective while discussing the reading.
- Attending Mass together as a ministry team or family.
- Spending time praying before the Blessed Sacrament in Eucharistic Adoration, in particular alongside fellow colleagues in ministry or family members.
- Praying the Rosary or Divine Mercy Chaplet and naming specific young people in your intentions.
- Asking for the intercession of the Blessed Mother and other holy men and women in history (see LTS, pp. 9, 24, 30, 35, 38, 45, 46-47, and 51, and *Christus Vivit*, nos. 49-62, for suggested saints, blessed, venerables, and servants of God).

³ XV Ordinary General Assembly, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Preparatory Document* (Vatican City State: Libreria Editrice Vaticana [LEV], 2017), Part I: “Young People in Today’s World,” ¶ 3.

⁴ LTS, p. 14.

We begin this summons in the home and with our loved ones... starting with a simple encounter with one or a few youth or young adults within our families...⁵

As *Listen, Teach, Send* notes, families are critical to the fruitful accompaniment of young people. This connection cannot be overstated. Because of this, LTS is directed not just to pastors and professional ministers, but also to parents and families. From childhood, through adolescence, and into young adulthood, the family is key to the love, care, and religious development of the individual.

This inclusion of both families and pastoral leaders all throughout the framework is one area that distinguishes LTS from other documents on youth and young adults. Because of this, it is strongly recommended that the framework and this guidebook be available to both audiences.

Organizational Flow

The *Guidebook* is organized as *Listen, Teach, Send* is organized, roughly following the text as it flows from its introduction to the sections on listening, teaching, and sending, to its conclusion.

Each sub-section of the LTS framework is given a **sub-section** in this *Guidebook* as well (**in large red font**), with a short introduction that gives some additional insights beyond what is included in LTS.

Key **quotes** (in a **blue font**) from LTS are the primary means of addressing particular areas for further reflection. Underneath each quote, practical strategies are offered for various populations, inclusive of youth and young adults, or settings, such as the parish, school, campus, diocese, or home.

Each of these is color coded to provide clarity in each element:

The population or setting of the ministry, in green:

The suggested strategy, in purple

Here's how, in black:

- With step-by-step bullet points for implementing the strategy

The *Guidebook* is a first step at recommending pathways forward and will likely be updated in future years with additional ideas and best practices gleaned from the field. The organizational flow may also be adapted as the implementation of *Listen, Teach, Send* is actualized on the local level and new insights are received that might cause future realignment.

⁵ LTS, p. 16.

Part 1: Strategies for Listening

The place to begin engaging with any youth or young adult is through intentional and patient listening and dialogue...⁶

As the pastoral framework states, listening is the first step in ministry (see LTS, p. 17ff). Yet listening takes practice and intentionality on the part of everyone (young people and older generations). Adopting a truly *synodal* approach (see <https://www.synod.va/en/the-synod-on-synodality/what-is-the-synod-about.html>) can provide a structure for authentic listening. This does not mean only one side of dialogue speaks and one side listens. Rather, we must help to cultivate listening by all. This atmosphere of mutual respect can allow for the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of all those present and for trust and dialogue to develop naturally.

Engagement through listening and dialogue can happen in a variety of ways; two in particular include:

- natural conversations with one or two young people, or
- organized listening sessions with small groups of youth and/or young adults.

Natural and individual engagement can happen in the moment. Yet it is important for people to be trained in the art of listening and attentiveness. One methodology that the Catholic Church universal has recently promoted is the concept of “*Conversations in the Spirit*,” employed at the Synod on Synodality.

A Vatican guide for training oneself or others in the art of spiritual conversation can be found online at https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/phases/en/EN_Step_6_Spiritual-Conversation.pdf.

NOTE: For one-on-one discussion and spiritual conversations with minors under age 18, please follow diocesan requirements for child and youth protection.

In organizing listening sessions with young people, here are some strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Evaluate how youth can share insights with leaders and incorporate new platforms for engagement.

Here’s how:

- Spend time as a diocesan, school, or parish ministry leadership team assessing your current structures of engagement with youth and the systems in place for these young people to provide feedback to church leadership teams.
- Bring teens together in your particular community and provide them with an opportunity to share their experiences, desires, and hopes for engagement in their parish, school, or diocese.
- As a result of this assessment, feedback, and engagement with one another, incorporate new structures for listening to take place at all levels of the community.

⁶ LTS, p. 17.

In ministries with young adults:

Host a series of listening sessions to increase young adult engagement.

Here's how:

- Partner with active Catholic young adults in the parish or campus to plan a series of listening sessions at young-adult-friendly and non-ecclesial/church locations such as coffee shops, restaurants, pubs, city parks, or secular locations around college campuses, all of which provide unique opportunities to engage a wide variety of people. Young adults can help recruit and invite their peers to participate in these experiences. Use the *Conversations in the Spirit* [methodology](#) to conduct listening sessions.
- Plan a follow-up conversation with individuals or small groups of those who connected through the listening sessions, going deeper with the particular issue(s) raised in the conversation.

1.1 Encountering Young People

*We go out of our own comfort zone to encounter those of another generation: meeting youth and young adults on their paths—especially outside church walls.*⁷

The encounter moment is best when pastoral leaders and families can enter into places where young people gather in their local community and everyday lives which are outside the church building. In these settings, we can better engage in authentic conversations and meaningful dialogue with one another. Although within the walls of a parish church or diocesan chancery good conversation can be fostered, it is important to meet young people in their everyday settings.

In going beyond ecclesial settings, here are some strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Encounter young people in safe and familiar spaces in the community (for both adults and youth).

Here's how:

- Collaborate with parents and families to host a series of social nights in their homes where members of the ministry team and young people who are already involved in the life of the Church can facilitate opportunities for listening to the young people in the broader community.
- Work on forming relationships with families and discern how to embark on this in the local community. Form a team of committed missionary disciples to accompany you.
- Ask young people you meet to share their stories of who they are, their joys, and their struggles.
- Listen to these young people, build relationships and trust with them, and then invite these young people to engage in a program at the diocese, parish, or school.

⁷ LTS, p. 19.

In ministries with young adults:

Cultivate a young adult evangelization team who can encounter their peers in casual settings.

Here's how:

- Build up an evangelization team of young adults active in your diocese, parish, or campus.
- Get to know the realities of each young adult on the team, recognizing that each has a variety of interests and stories, as well as a particular way they desire to encounter others.
- Equip the team with the skills of authentic listening and engaging in conversation with peers, but most importantly with a heart for the Lord and a love of neighbor (Mt 22:37-40).
- Encourage the team to have conversations with other young adults in everyday settings, while also being cognizant that approaching strangers should be discerned carefully. Should the occasion be fitting, this can happen in settings such as restaurants, workplaces, places of service, sports, among other secular environments. Ask the team to truly listen and invite their peers into authentic friendships, opening the door to faith.

*...encounter young people, especially those in marginalized communities that seek to heal wounds and renew youth or young adults in the faith.*⁸

By reflecting on *marginalization* in our own communities and seeking to understand the lived experiences of those who are in marginalized communities in our midst, we can encounter those young people in need of healing and renewal. Who are young men and women who are “missing from the table” in your church, ministry, campus, or Catholic setting? Consider the financial, economic, geographic, cultural, racial, gender, physical ability, and the other distinct aspects that may have pushed them to the margins. Ask your team how you can do better to serve and invite them to engage more fully with the Catholic community.

NOTE: Existing woundedness among some youth and young adults on the margins may make any invitation difficult; with that in mind, build relationships slowly and seek to establish trust over time.

In connecting with marginalized young people, consider these strategies:

In ministries with youth:

Host an intergenerational gathering and listening session for the larger faith community.

Here's how:

- Invite a variety of members from your Catholic community who are from different generations, backgrounds, and experiences for an intergenerational night of sharing stories and listening to one another without judgement, blaming, or fixing.

⁸ LTS, p. 21.

- Be intentional about inviting those in your community who may feel marginalized and give them a role in helping to plan the gathering.
- Create a space of belonging for all invitees, especially being mindful that awareness of the vulnerable is key in a new and sometimes volatile environment. The beginning stages of listening and trust building can take place among all members of the community.
- Use the *Conversations in the Spirit* [methodology](#) to conduct these dialogue sessions.

In ministries with young adults:

Evaluate what *ministries with young adults* look like when all people are included.

Here's how:

- Invite active Catholic young adults to plan a series of conversations that they lead with their peers in order to learn from one another about their lived experiences.
- In planning this time together, intentionally seek to include young adults who may feel marginalized in the community and involve them in the process and the programming. For those in or near collegiate environments, keep in mind that a college or university campus can be a great place to engage a diversity of young adults, many who may feel excluded from religious activities.
- Consider where to have these conversations: either in ecclesial or non-ecclesial settings so as to involve as many young people as possible.
- Use the *Conversations in the Spirit* [methodology](#) to conduct these dialogue sessions.
- Evaluate regularly who engaged in these dialogue sessions and explore ways to connect to those who did not accept the invitation or who were missed in the invitational process.
- Seek to find ways to include those on the margins in future attempts at this sort of dialogue experience. Also be mindful that not everyone is an extrovert, so consider written forms of participation for them.

We have met many of you...at various moments of return throughout the liturgical year. We pray that the graces you received from the Lord during these sacramental experiences have taken root in your lives...⁹

In past generations, young people who were less active in their youth or early young adulthood might return to the active practice of the Catholic faith through Marriage or the Baptism of their children. However, in recent years, this trend has decreased significantly. Instead, many youth and young adults may make *moments of return* for holidays like Ash Wednesday, Easter, and Christmas, at sacramental occasions like Confirmation or cultural celebrations like Simbang Gabi or Quinceañeras, or in coming to a church to support their family or friends for a wedding, Baptism, or funeral.

⁹ LTS, p. 8.

In connecting young people at key moments of return, consider the following strategies:

Within the home and family:

Use the holidays to engage young people in conversations of faith.

Here's how:

- Look ahead at the next Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas seasons, as well as the national and cultural customs common around this time of year, as a moment to open up an intergenerational family dialogue about tradition, charity, memories, and faith.
- Plan to engage in a conversation at one of the holiday dinner tables.
 - Begin the dinner with the saying of grace. Consider inviting a young person at the table to offer a prayer from their heart to begin the meal.
 - This can also take place after attending Thanksgiving, Advent, or Christmas liturgy together, especially ones that may feature transcendent or memorable moments that speak to the heart of the young people in your family, in particular those who are less religious.
 - With the Christian witness of charity so prominent around these holidays, the family may wish to engage in something together such as distributing holiday meals, purchasing gifts for low-income families, working at a shelter or soup kitchen, or visiting nursing homes.
- Conversation starters might include:
 - What was your favorite part of the holiday from your childhood?
 - Why do you think this tradition was important to our family (or grandparents, etc.)?
 - What made that memory or experience special (or sacred or memorable) for you?
 - How do you continue to make this holiday special in the midst of your busyness?
 - (after a liturgy) What moment in the liturgy was especially poignant for you today?
 - (after a service activity) What particularly moved you when we were helping out?
- Do not attempt to move immediately from this reflection to pushing more active engagement in the practice of faith but allow the fruits of the dialogue to sit with the young people in the family.
- You can revisit the conversation gently in follow-up moments. Over time, this could lead some youth or young adults to a longing for the sacredness elicited by holiday moments.

In ministry with young adults in church settings:

Welcome the guests of the bride and groom at weddings in the parish.

Here's how:

- Since guests of the bride and groom may include young adult peers who are not regular churchgoers, consider coordinating a hospitality team for weddings at your parish.
- Greet all guests at the door or in the parking lot, accompanying them to the pews. Make visitors feel comfortable and that they know the church is a welcoming place.
- Consider having a physical welcome pamphlet in the pews that lets them know the hospitality team and/or the parish leadership is available for any questions they may have about faith, life, or relationships.
- The presider may wish to invite all guests to help build up the faith community around the bride and groom, and that they can continue this marriage celebration by engaging with them in prayer, loving support, and spiritual companionship. This invitation may encourage the guests to consider their own faith lives. Again, make mention that the guests are always welcome in this place, should they want to explore that path.

1.2 Being Fully Present

...providing empathetic presence and accompaniment in helping youth and young adults navigate numerous life transitions and developmental moments.¹⁰

Provide practical training in life skills for navigating transitions and difficulties while also presenting young people with support and examples for how to navigate such transitions.

In helping young people navigate life transitions, consider these strategies:

In ministries with youth:

Collaborate with Catholic Scouting leaders to host a series of life skills sessions.

Here's how:

- Partner with local Catholic Scouting leaders to prepare a three-part series in teaching life and relationship skills to teenagers.
- Brainstorm with young people in the scouting unit on things about which they would like to learn that could be helpful in navigating high school and their growing transitions in their young lives.

¹⁰ LTS, p. 21.

- Work with scouting leaders and parents to prepare the series of interactive evenings designed to teach and equip the youth on those topics, along with relationship-building and life skills.
- Taking it a step further: encourage the high school youth to collaborate with their scouting leaders to prepare similar interactive sessions for middle school and younger children on their own life transition experiences. Having teens teach others can help them grow their leadership skills.
- **NOTE:** This activity of teaching life and relationship skills can also work in the area of chastity education (partnering with marriage, family, pro-life, and school leaders in the process). Using resources from groups like [Teen STAR](#) could be invaluable in helping youth to develop healthy skills in building relationships during their transition-heavy adolescent years.

In ministries with young adults:

Host a series of evening programs to equip and pray with young adults facing life transitions.

Here's how:

- First, prepare a casual and interactive program with young adults to explore the lives of young adult saints who faced incredible transition experiences, such as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. John Paul II, or Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati (among others). Examine how their navigation through their transitions left a legacy for others to follow.
- Prepare ahead of time by listening and learning from young adults what their interests and struggles are, and then pick two or three saints to highlight which can speak to their experiences (for example, if losing family members is raised as an issue, consider St. Kateri's story).
- Work with a presenter or presentation team to make the program interactive and dynamic, allowing for a healthy give-and-take. The program should not only feature an explanation of the saints' lives, but also how it can apply to the young adults' lives today. If there are lay persons who are third-order or lay associates of religious congregations in the parish, this may be a way to involve them.
- Should the need arise, seek out a mental health professional who can come and offer a hands-on program (or individualized session) with young adults to address any stresses they voiced at the presentation and how to navigate those difficulties from a Catholic perspective.
- As a follow-up, host a candlelight evening of prayer (which might include Eucharistic adoration, Taizé prayer services, Rosary, the Examen, *Lectio Divina*, or another devotional experience) to allow the young adults to pray together, offering up their tumultuous transition experiences to the Lord and seeking God's grace and guidance as they navigate them.
- In all this, keep in mind that transitions can range in the amount of trauma or disruption they have over a young person's life. In addition to mental health transitions, consider moments such as going to college, pursuing a career, moving from one city to another, and so forth.
- **NOTE:** This can be adapted for other types of young adult transitions. For example, work with marriage, family, or pro-life ministries around programs like the above activities that touch on various relationship transition issues such as the single life, friendships, dating, engagement, newly married life, or pregnancy.

Faith communities have embraced new technologies and invited young people to assist them in understanding and making use of the digital landscape...¹¹

One of the areas of “presence” for many youth and young adults is their online or digital presence, through social media, blogs, videos, texting, and so forth. Many of them thrive in these spaces. It is recommended that pastoral leaders and families enter into that digital landscape where young people are and, in those spaces, accompany them toward fruitful and meaningful online engagement.

In accompanying young people in the digital landscape, here are some strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Plan youth nights that walk through the digital world, in the company of Carlo Acutis.

Here’s how:

- Share Carlo Acutis’ YouTube videos on Eucharistic miracles from around the world with youth.
- Plan, with a ministry team, a series of live youth nights to walk through several of the Eucharistic miracles and task teens with creating digital content for each of those miracles that brings Christ to their peers in a creative way just like Bl. Carlo Acutis once did. Another option is to do group research online about the young saints noted in the preface letter of LTS or in Pope Francis’ *Christus Vivit*, showing how all young people are called to holiness. Yet another option is to do group research on finding reputable and solid Catholic content online. While the focus of any of these programs is digital, it is important to do the youth nights in-person so that the journey through a digital environment can be done in a live community with trusted mentors.
- During these evenings, it is essential to teach teens how to protect themselves in unhealthy digital environments, including those that young people might see as otherwise harmless. Pastoral leaders can share with youth what is good (holy) and what is not (evil). Focus on cyber-bullying, phishing scams, misinformation, grooming, and other cautionary topics. Consult with your arch/diocese’s digital policies and online safety guidelines for recommendations in this area.
- Conclude each youth night with a prayer through Bl. Carlo Acutis, offering up to God the various questions and concerns of young people around the digital landscape to his intercession.

In ministries with young adults:

Create digital media content for young adults who have become disaffiliated from the faith.

Here’s how:

- Identify active Catholic young adults who are skilled in creating digital media content and invite them to be part of a team to help the parish, campus, or ministry’s social media platforms reach out to peers who are disconnected from the practice of the Catholic faith.

¹¹ LTS, p. 23.

- Encourage the young adults to share their stories through those platforms, but also to listen to the stories of their peers who are less engaged. In particular, encourage the young adults to hear about the pressing challenges of their peers, especially in communities that experience poverty or marginalization due to race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, ability, or other reasons.
- Maintain a regular schedule of content production, but most of all, keep in mind the interactivity of synodal listening-and-sharing that good Catholic social media can offer for a local community.

Within the home and family:

Establish boundaries for technology as a family.

Here's how:

- Discern, as a family, how to engage in spending quality time with one another and being more fully present to one another by setting boundaries on or fasting from technology use in the home.
- This can be a beautiful opportunity for the whole family, working together across generations, to decide what boundaries will be fruitful for each person involved. In so doing, every member of the family can hold each other accountable to the discerned and established boundaries.
- So that this can be a positive rather than just a negative experience, it will be helpful to discern what fun, creative, and special things the family can do together during those added quality moments so that each person in the familial community will feel loved and supported by others through increased presence.
- If it is helpful, parents or older family members may wish to invest in a course on the importance of and how to offer screen supervision.

Within Catholic school settings:

Have regular digital-free prayer moments in Catholic high schools.

Here's how:

- Work with a leadership team of adults and students to discern an evening or special program with mindfulness and centered prayer, so that youth who have the world “at their fingertips” with social media day and night can enter a digital-free zone.
- Host the special program for any teens who wish to enter the present moment so they can better listen to the voice of God in their lived experiences. Consider collecting all mobile devices and other technology to allow students to feel liberated from technological distractions.
- Begin the program with a guided meditation, which can serve as an engaging way to walk with youth through a process and get them in the habit of setting aside quiet time for prayer and disconnecting from the noise of the digital landscape during their daily routines.
 - Introduce a quiet Catholic devotional prayer into each gathering (including Eucharistic adoration, Taizé, Rosary, Lectio Divina, the Examen, Stations of the Cross, etc.), to show the rich prayer traditions the Church has gathered to be more present to the divine.

- Depending on weather, this program can also take place outdoors, integrating a reflection on God's creation experienced in the natural world (see Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'*) as well as the health benefits of physical activity that can be stunted by technology overuse.
- Conclude the program with discussion, as the young people share their own ideas for disconnecting from the digital world and entering more fully into sacred space, and other ways they can find consolation in the midst of desolation brought about by everyday noise. Other topics for discussion can include the impact of cyber-bullying, online humiliation, digital safe spaces, and harmful internet communities that prey upon unsuspecting young people.

1.3 Understanding Across Generations

To truly understand and appreciate each unique story, we must recognize the distinct cultural and generational expressions present in their lives...¹²

Each young person has a unique story. It can be tempting to rely only on nationwide data sets and trends about youth or young adults collected by researchers and analysts, or to glean information about young people from what someone else shared on social media, a YouTube video, blog, or website. Receiving this input is relatively easy, as most of it can be done online. Yet the wide trends only tell a relatively small part of the story of the youth and young adults within one's local community.

Instead, it is critical to learn about the realities impacting young people and their engagement with faith by investing in local immersion experiences and talking directly to individual young persons – in our families, in our workplaces, in our schools, in our communities, and in our churches.

Additionally, it is helpful for the multitude of generations to come to know each other better. Those of the Gen Z or Generation Alpha¹³ cohorts may have opinions about Baby Boomers or Gen Xers that may be incorrect; and those of the older generations may have opinions about Millennials, Gen Z, or Generation Alpha which are misinformed. To counter this, establishing greater connections across generations can go a long way towards better appreciating one another and truly understanding what real data and trends mean for the local experiences of life.

To better understand cultures and generations, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Invite youth to visit a nursing home facility monthly or quarterly.

Here's how:

- Plan ministry opportunities for teens in the parish community to visit with their elders who live in nursing homes or senior care facilities in the area. These visits will allow for opportunities for storytelling, holiday celebrations, religious traditions, or special events.

¹² LTS, p. 23.

¹³ See Springtide Research Institute on data about Generation Alpha (born 2010 or after): <https://springtideresearch.org/thirteen-a-first-look-at-gen-alpha>.

- This will allow young people to better understand their elders and it can allow the seniors to better understand what is happening in the lives of youth. In so doing, all generations will be able to learn from each other and cultivate an appreciation beyond stereotypes or assumptions.
- Note that this can also take place within the parish community itself: the seniors and youth ministries can come together for social, service, or spiritual activities (such as praying together) at the church accomplishing the same goals.

In ministries with young adults:

Attend and celebrate different cultural activities together with young adults.

Here's how:

- Take stock of the cultural diversity in the geographic area around the faith community. Be mindful to include not just those who are active in the church or campus, but those who live nearby even if they do not regularly engage or attend religious activities.
- Depending on those local realities of young adults in the area or college campus, schedule and (with the young adults) plan opportunities throughout the year to host or attend cultural celebrations that are particular to them or to communities in the local area.
- Encourage young adults who have lost their cultural heritage to reclaim their traditions and invite older generations to take part, so that storytelling and cultural sharing can take place.
- It can also be a way for a young adult whose heritage is somewhat lost to reclaim that tradition. Consider also inviting older generations to take part, so that storytelling and sharing can take place. Be mindful of the diversity of cultures that comprise the young adult landscape in the local area and host these programs throughout the year.

In church and school settings:

Guide young people on listening to their elders through the lens of *Christus Vivit*.

Here's how:

- Gather youth or young adults together for a shared reading of the sixth chapter of Pope Francis's exhortation, *Christus Vivit* ("Young People with Roots," CV, nos. 179-201). You may also wish to invite young people to reflect on Pope Francis's catechesis on the wisdom of age ([see here](#)¹⁴).
- Then ask questions such as:
 - Do you feel disconnected from your family or cultural roots?
 - Do you feel these words apply to you: "Today, in fact, there is a tendency to 'homogenize' young people, blurring what is distinctive about their origins and backgrounds, and turning them into a line of malleable goods" (CV, no. 186)?

¹⁴ Francis, "General Audience: Catechesis on Old Age - 17. The 'Ancient of days.' Old age is a reassurance regarding the destination to a life that never dies again" (Paul VI Audience Hall, August 17, 2022).

- Pope Francis encourages the Church to help “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” (CV, no. 187). What do you treasure most about the memory of your elders and families?
 - How can you listen patiently to older adults, “being open to receiving a wisdom passed down from generation to generation” (CV, no. 190)?
 - How can you “let older people tell their long stories, which sometimes seem legendary or fanciful—they are the dreams of old people—yet are often full of rich experiences, of eloquent symbols, of hidden messages” (CV, no. 195)?
 - What does it mean to you to “journey together, young and old” (CV, no. 199) in your family and in your encounters with older adults or elders? How can you practically live out the call to “be firmly rooted in the present, and from there, revisit the past and look to the future” (CV, no. 199) together with your parents, grandparents, family, teachers, mentors, or others?
- Give the young people suggestions for better listening to their elders and older women and men, including practicing patience, silence, and humility. Share dialogue tools¹⁵ for engaging in intergenerational conversations, wherein both young and old take turns listening and receiving.
 - Make a plan with the young people to engage in these conversations in their home, parish, or school. You may wish to assist them in setting up the time and place for these intergenerational dialogues. Follow up with them to check in and see where further assistance may be needed.

The best way to get to know the young is through individual accompaniment...¹⁶

A “group mentality” can creep into ministry activities, as there is a perception that holding one event for many people at the same time is a more efficient, and therefore effective, model of ministry.

However, such group activities can ignore many participants at the expense of those who are most engaged, leading to potential disaffiliation. Instead, the call is to equip all people in the parish, school, family, or other faith-based setting to better accompany young people one individual at a time.

While being mindful of all safe environment protocols, especially with minors under 18, there are ways to engage in effective individualized accompaniment, to journey with a young person in pastoral care, faith formation, and vocational growth. When using the concept of “accompaniment,” be careful that it does not become a form of therapy or “moral therapeutic deism.” This is a term popularized by Dr. Christian Smith in his 2005 book *Soul Searching* to describe the search for happiness, fairness, and feeling good about oneself without the need for a religious community like Catholicism.

¹⁵ Tools can include “The Way of Proceeding” from the *National Dialogue on Catholic Pastoral Ministries with Youth and Young Adults* ([linked here](#), p. 40) or “The Spiritual Conversation” from the Vatican Synod on Synodality ([see here](#)).

¹⁶ LTS, p. 23.

For one-on-one, individualized accompaniment, here are some strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Develop small groups, mindful of youth-to-adult ratios.

Here's how:

- Recruit a team of adults who are relatable, have had solid faith formation, are positive witnesses of God's love, and have met and adhere to all the safe environment criteria.
- Develop small groups of six young people per one adult (or eight young people with two adults), so that there is a healthy ratio that allows for building community and healthy accompaniment.
- Diocesan, parish, or ministry leaders can provide formation resources for the adults and help them secure meeting spaces and access to food/drink so that the faith-based conversations can take place in comfortable settings, always mindful of safe environment protocols.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of young people in these intentionally ratioed small groups as they receive more personalized engagement with the Catholic faith.

In ministries with young adults:

Foster two-by-two accountability partners.

Here's how:

- Identify young adults to partner one-on-one with others with whom they have similar interests and qualities that are complementary to one another. This can serve to equip young adults with more personalized support networks as they live out their faith in the world.
- Work with these teams to hold each other accountable throughout their respective faith journeys: in prayer, in sacramental life, in service and justice work, in catechesis and formation, and in engagement with the larger Catholic community.
- At various points throughout the year, provide opportunities for these two-person teams to come together in-person and online (i.e., group chats) for prayer, liturgy, service opportunities, and sharing the joys and struggles they have experienced in life with small or large groups of peers.

1.4 Healing Brokenness

We can be a 'field hospital after battle' to 'heal the wounds' of the many young people who struggle, in great and in small ways...¹⁷

The idea of pastoral care is critical to the work of ministries with youth and young adults. Tending the wounds that young people have is often an invaluable first step to building trust, so that formation,

¹⁷ LTS, p. 24.

vocational growth, and mission can take root. Many youth and young adults are struggling in one way or another, even if it is not visible to us. This is especially true with mental health challenges that often take place below the surface or can be suppressed for survival, appearance, stigma, or other reasons.

Recognizing that we each carry a certain sense of woundedness can open us up to providing ministries and interacting with young people in compassionate and patient ways. This pastoral awareness by families and ministry leaders is important to foster within Catholic homes, parishes, schools, and other settings.

In healing the wounds of young people, here are some strategies to consider

In ministries with youth:

Host a healing service to explore brokenness with youth.

Here's how:

- Take time to train an adult leadership team on intentional conversations around pain and brokenness with middle or high school youth. This may involve additional formation around youth developmental issues and pastoral care responsiveness, in addition to safe environment training.
- Work with a pastor or school chaplain to host a liturgical healing service with young people (and their families) at the parish or high school campus, connecting their struggles with the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Because of this, the Lenten season may be an appropriate time to host this.
- The healing service can also be an opportunity for families to experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation together, which may have a powerful effect on internal healing as family units.
- The trained leadership team should also be available for spiritual guidance, presence, and support, with an eye towards referrals to professional counselors or spiritual directors for those who need or may benefit from it.

In ministries with young adults:

Host an intergenerational Lenten Night of Reflection and Reconciliation

Here's how:

- Work with an intergenerational team of young adults and older adults to prepare and facilitate an intergenerational reflection/reconciliation gathering during the season of Lent that could be focused on spiritual healing and forgiveness. While such an event can be done at other times of year (i.e., Advent), the Lenten season is very powerful and fitting for such an occasion.
 - In the college or university campus setting, faculty and students can dialogue and/or develop potential mentorship engagement. Campuses can also offer retreats that provide spiritual direction and prayers for healing people, nations, and creation.
- Depending on the style and interests of the young adults in the community, the team could work together to potentially identify a speaker to address the entire group and then have the attendees work in small groups at tables to share with one another in a synodal style. This presentation and

interaction should be assessed carefully to ensure it does not feel like a motivational talk or workshop, but a truly prayerful gathering focused on healing woundedness.

- Invite priests to be available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and conclude the program with a prayer service with candlelight and sacramentals. Encourage participants to take the lessons of the evening into the remainder of Lent, as they journey through the healing process with families, friends, co-workers, colleagues, and fellow parishioners, including their peers.

Trust must be curated in order for deeper formation or the pursuit of a vocational pathway to take root in a young person's life—and that can take time...¹⁸

Being *trustworthy* is a trait that many youth and young adults hold up as a significant element of their faith journey. It is a trait to be made visible through living an authentic life, which opens others to the act of trusting the person. To consider where God is leading, a young person must have confidence and belief that the individuals accompanying him or her are doing so without ulterior motives or hidden agendas. To that end, it is important to invite adults, filled with vocational joy, to be able to share their story and witness to Christ's presence in their lives without rushing or guiltting the young person in their journey.

It should also be acknowledged that any distrust a young person has in the Church may be warranted and grounded in some past hurt or negative experience. As much as possible, it is helpful that pastoral leaders and families be sensitive to the fact that the Catholic institution or individual Catholics present (ranging from pastors to ministry leaders and family members) may have cultivated distrust among the young.

To patiently restore trust with young people, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Invite Catholic adults in the community to visit with youth and share their stories.

Here's how:

- Introduce young people to faithful, joyful, and honest Catholic adults who are living out their respective vocations in the life of the Church.
- Encourage older adults to be present and actively participate in programs designed for teens.
- Invite single and married people, priests, deacons, and religious sisters and brothers to be present, and when the time is right, to share their vocation stories and processes of discernment openly and honestly with the young people. Consider also collaborating with other offices, pastoral leaders, and communities in the invitation to trustworthy adults.
- It is important to not gloss over or justify any stumbles in the storytelling, but to be honest with the youth; this can build up credibility. Then, invite young people to ask real, hard-hitting questions in this discernment process.

¹⁸ LTS, p. 25.

- Consider ways to foster that trust beyond events, inviting both young people and adults to share in devotions such as Eucharistic adoration and engage in dialogue beyond the ministry setting. Another route is inviting youth to work with a spiritual director, a long-term relationship with a trained spiritual professional, with whom the young person can establish trust and consider the next steps in their vocational pathway. Visiting the religious community can also help build trust.

In ministries with young adults:

Host an open forum with Catholic leaders in the community.

Here's how:

- Invite a carefully discerned team of Catholic leaders, including lay persons (either/both single and married), priests, deacons, and/or religious sisters and brothers, to engage in an open-forum-style dialogue with young adults, especially those who may be skeptical of Church leadership.
 - Keep in mind that, in some communities (such as college campuses and other institutions with strong young adult presence), young adults are also among the Catholic leaders and decision makers. It is important to invite them to dialogue with their peers, as there may need to be a restoration of trust between active and less-active Catholic young adults.
- Advertise this program as a true open forum and make particular inroads to young adults who may show reluctance to trust Catholics or Christians.
- Allow for any question, any topic, and any issue to come forth in the program; this openness can break down walls of distrust if handled well. Engage in dialogue, pointing out that each person on the team of respondents had to establish trust in order to engage in their own vocational journey.
- Conclude by offering up any frustrations, concerns, or moments of anger and distrust in a closing prayer experience and challenging all participants to seek ways to rebuild trust with one another through prayer for each other's intentions and work.

Part 2: Strategies for Teaching

Pastoral leaders, families, and young people share the light of Christ and bring about a conversion of heart. This begins by responding to their realities...¹⁹

True Christian formation is most fruitful when it is a dynamic response to the story of the disciple, and in so doing, brings about a conversion of heart of all involved. The heart of the one being accompanied and the heart of the one doing the accompanying are both transformed by Christ's light.

When we engage in authentic listening with young people (as noted in the previous section), we can respond with a certain specificity, since we now know the road through which the other person has traveled. Our response should always be directed at their needs and concerns. Any teaching is a response to the needs of the one being taught. However, as Catholic leaders, we can sometimes miss this when we are excited to share our story or experiences or knowledge. The Church empowers ministry leaders with rights and obligations they have as a baptized person (see Canons 208 and 225, and from Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 33, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, nos. 2, 3, and 17, and *Ad Gentes*, nos. 21 and 36).

Therefore, it is important to train ourselves in the art of responsivity, which is rooted in situational and interpersonal awareness. Being always mindful of others allows for a dynamic accompaniment project, yielding a fruitfulness of formation that finds a home in our transformed hearts.

In becoming aware of others to allow for dynamic formation, here are strategies to consider:

Within the home and family:

Be patiently responsive to nonverbal communications.

Here's how:

- When a youth or young adult in the home exhibits behavior that elicits frustration, anger, or indifference, pay closer attention. Give the young person the space they may require, but be aware that something deeper may be going on in their life.
- Respond to that young person with grace, being patient with him or her. Avoid phrases like "what's wrong?" or "why are you acting like this?" Use phrases like "I recognize something may be happening in your life. I am available whenever you are ready to share."
- When the young person wishes to share, be ready to respond first with compassion and love, regardless of what is being shared. Offer constructive insight only when trust has been established and the individual seems open to your perspective or opinion.

Within the church or school:

Develop programs in response to young people's needs.

¹⁹ LTS, p. 30.

Here's how:

- Before planning programming for youth or young adults, take what was heard in listening (i.e., the ideas from the previous section) and engage in a discernment process with church leadership over what was heard and where the actual needs of the young people lie.
- Develop ministry initiatives rooted in that listening/discernment process, as opposed to developing programming around the interests or passions of the ministry leadership.
- Share with young people and the community at large that the ministry efforts have been discerned through the listening and responsiveness of the Church to the needs of the youth or young adults.

Many youth and young adults today lack mentors in their lives, and yet these wisdom figures can do so much to guide a young person along the right path...²⁰

The lack of mentoring relationships is a critical issue for today's youth and young adults. Consequently, one of the most necessary concrete actions a family or faith community can do for a young person is establish a mentorship network. This not only allows for more opportunities for "listening," but also can help provide solid "teaching" and "sending" experiences for a young person along their journey.

Thus, identifying, equipping, and encouraging mentors in a community is key to the accompaniment of youth and young adults. Providing mentors with the formation they need to be intentional missionary disciples they need can lead to these men and women discipling young people more intentionally and fruitfully. By taking the time to invest in those individuals in the community who can be more present in the lives of young people, we can help youth and young adults grow in faith and engage in the world.

In developing mentorship experiences for young people, here are strategies to consider:

**In ministries with youth and within the home and family:
Train parents and family members for mentorship.**

Here's how:

- Begin by meeting with parents and/or family members of youth on a regular basis to share mentorship skills and intentional catechesis, giving them more confidence to accompany them and share with them the Catholic faith.
- On a weekly basis, share with these older adults catechetical resources, mentorship tools, teachings from the pastor or other Catholic leaders, and/or suggested books or podcasts to amplify their capacities as mentors and teachers of the faith.
- For support, offer the mentors the experience of community in small groups to be able to dialogue with other parents and families who are also learning the art of Catholic mentorship.

²⁰ LTS, p. 30.

In ministries with young adults:

Develop a mentorship program with young adult married couples.

Here's how:

- Recruit a network of couples who have been married 10+ years from the community, inviting them to be part of a mentorship initiative for young couples. If there are not enough couples in the parish, consider working with the diocese to create a network of married couples in a region or cluster.
- Engage the older married couples in formation around mentorship and around a better understanding of the Catholic approach to family life (including doing a group study of Pope Francis' *Amoris Laetitia* and/or the USCCB framework, *Called to the Joy of Love*).
- Promote and make available this mentorship network to young adult couples following their wedding as well as those couples in the community in the first ten or so years of marriage.
- Similar to sponsor-couple marriage preparation, the older and younger couples would meet together regularly (weekly, monthly, or at whatever pace is comfortable for all involved). These meet-up could include socializing, faith sharing, Bible study, service projects, or getting together before or after Mass or other activities at the parish for community-building and mentorship.
- In the parish or across the diocese, there could also be quarterly events for all married couples, to which the mentorship teams could attend together.

Within church or college campus settings:

Develop a mentorship program based around career and work.

Here's how:

- Invite active adult members of the parish or college campus, who are seasoned in their career, specialization/study, trade, or workplace, to be part of a mentorship initiative for young adults.
- Gather the seasoned adults together for mentorship training and faith formation, introducing them to the Catholic understanding of vocation and infusing a sense of spirituality and holiness to one's career, specialization/study, trade, or workplace. If there are any priests or religious men or women in or near the campus, consider inviting them as well to be part of this mentorship program.
- Promote this mentorship program with young adults and collegians as an opportunity for personal, professional, and spiritual accompaniment. This may be especially appealing on college campuses as students discern their future paths – personally, professionally, and spiritually.
- As best as possible, match up young adults in a particular field of work or study with a seasoned adult in the community or faculty member (in university settings) in a field similar to the young person or who share similar interests, experiences, or goals.
- Encourage mentorship pairs to meet regularly, pray together, and share stories and ideas for integrating Catholic values and vocation into one's work or study. This relationship can also yield an intergenerational bond that goes beyond the particular line of work/study and extends to the faith and family lives of all involved.

2.1 Proclaiming Jesus Christ

*A bold invitation of faith can help dispel darkness
and amplify the joys in a young person's life...²¹*

Within the context of relationships and relational ministry, extending an intentional and specific invitation to a young person, whether it be from a peer or from a trusted older adult, can have a great impact on the engagement of youth and young adults in the practice of the Catholic faith. When a young person sees themselves as an active and contributing member in service to and within the Church, they can find renewed joy in giving themselves to others and to Christ. *The Code of Canon Law* reminds everyone, including young people, that “(b)y virtue of baptism and confirmation, lay members of the Christian faithful are witnesses of the gospel message by word and the example of a Christian life; they can also be called upon to cooperate with the bishop and presbyters in the exercise of the ministry of the word.”²²

By presenting Christ to them in a similar manner as he presented himself to the first disciples, as the experience of “Good News” to those who are downtrodden or overwhelmed by life, we can help make Jesus become real and relevant to a young person. This is the core of sharing the *kerygma* with the young. In this, the Lord goes from being a historical figure to a real-life companion of youth and young adults. This all begins with a gentle yet bold invitation from a missionary disciple in relationship with the invitee.

In making invitations of faith to young people, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Invite teens to use their gifts for the Catholic community.

Here's how:

- Tapping into the desire of youth to make a difference through their acts of service, invite young people in the community to recognize their unique gifts and talents they can share.
- Engage in dialogue with the teens about their gifts and talents, and point them toward using them in service to Christ and the Church.
- Develop a plan for incorporating the invitees into various roles at the parish, school, diocese, or other setting. This can include service at liturgies, in social justice projects, as educators of children or retreat leaders, or on the councils, committees, and advisory boards that orchestrate activities for a faith community.
- Be sure to accompany them to see their service as a response to Jesus' invitation to his disciples, not just as a task or service opportunity. As youth become comfortable in these roles, they can also guide their peers to discern how they, too, can respond to Christ's invitation to serve others.

²¹ LTS, p. 31.

²² *The Code of Canon Law*, c. 759.

In ministries with young adults:

Invite young adults to small groups for discipleship and community.

Here's how:

- For young adults who may be new to an area and in search of new friends and social networks, the invitation to connect with their young adult peers can be a great entryway to invite them deeper into Christ and the Church.
- Establish small groups in whatever way works best for the local situation: by men and women, by interest, by geography, or by preferred meeting times.
- Ensure that each group has a trained leader—someone who understands and accepts the Catholic faith and can connect to other experts and resources in the diocese.
- All groups can meet weekly or every other week for sharing stories, unpacking the Gospels, going through Catholic teaching, holding each other accountable, and socializing around the local area (perfect for new arrivals to the region).
- In addition, priests, deacons, and/or consecrated religious can visit each group. In this way, the members can build a connection to the clergy and religious in their area.
- By providing intentional small group communities, young adults can have a shared space to feel Christ's love and have difficult conversations, while also growing boldly in their faith together as companions on the journey of life.

Young people should be given loving environments where they can ask questions without judgment and wrestle with difficult issues...²³

Youth and young adulthood are times when individuals are confronted with difficult issues, sometimes for the first time apart from their families. There can be many places a young person might turn in those challenging times: peers, workplaces, schools, and online, as well as addiction, substance abuse, isolation, and unhealthy social networks.

Catholic environments like the home, parish, or campus community can be in the mix when we establish places where authentic listening, openness to discussion, and divine truth is shared as the norm. These conditions allow for difficult conversations to take place with love and charity, so that Christ, the one to whom the woman caught in adultery sought refuge (Jn 7:53-8:11), can also be there for the young people.

In creating environments for questions and reflection, here are strategies to consider:

Within the home and family:

Cultivate daily space for conversations with the family.

²³ LTS, p. 31.

Here's how:

- Since family life is busy, complicated, and beautiful, the home can offer natural moments and opportunities for cultivating community and intentional conversations.
- Starting with young children and adapting as they get older, make time throughout the daily routine at meals or when traveling to school and work to have honest discussions on what is going on with one another.
- Establish a culture of trust and honesty by doing daily check-ins and affirmations. As children grow into adolescence and then young adulthood, the conversations will change and the young people in the home will be grateful for a space to be authentically themselves and share what is on their hearts and minds with loving family members who have been well formed in the faith and prepared to have conversations with them.

Within church and school settings:**Equip adults to have difficult conversations with young people.****Here's how:**

- Recruit youth or young adults in the community to assist older adults in the community to strengthen their skills at having difficult conversations in the home, parish, campus, or school.
- Invite older adults in the local community to be part of this “difficult conversation” initiative. This would not be for all adults, but those willing to strengthen their dialogue skills. In effect, this is a bit of a reverse of the traditional mentorship model, where young people can assist older adults.
- Once invited, develop the professional development initiative, sharing best practices in having difficult conversations, especially for those who are uncomfortable with confrontation, new people, or engaging in unfamiliar or challenging issues. The sessions should also include foundational catechesis in topics of church teaching that are commonly misunderstood.
- Ask young people to witness to their elders and provide “role playing” scenarios where the older adults test their skills engaging youth or young adults in those difficult conversations. Practice the conversations in small groups, talking through any obstacles that presently exist, either in the home or within the parish, school, or campus setting.

Effective teachers should be familiar with the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, and the Church's teaching concerning the Word of God which includes both Scripture and Tradition...²⁴

To proclaim Jesus Christ effectively, it is important to prayerfully study the Bible in light of the Catholic faith (Tradition). In Sacred Scripture, we can learn that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's covenant with the Jews and that salvation came by way of the Jewish People. The faith that God gifted to the Church through the guidance of the Holy Spirit was affirmed by the Apostles and their successors--the bishops in union

²⁴ LTS, p. 32.

with the pope (the Magisterium). This understanding is possible not only by study, but also by integrating Scripture and the study of doctrine (as articulated in the Tradition of the Church) into the daily prayer of the family, pastoral leaders (individually and as a team), and the life of the local Catholic community (inclusive of parishes, movements, apostolates, and other ministries of the Church).

In learning and sharing Scripture and Tradition, here are strategies to consider:

NOTE: It should not be implied that Scripture only applies to home or family settings, just as it should not be implied that Tradition is only engaged in church or school settings, etc. Scripture and Tradition can both be engaged together as well. What follows are simply illustrative examples of ideas for consideration.

Within the home and family:

Develop a plan for reading Scripture throughout the year.

Here's how:

- First, determine the particular way to read Sacred Scripture with your family. Some options include proceeding through the Catholic liturgical calendar (Advent through Ordinary Time), connecting with the daily and weekly Mass readings; journeying through a particular Gospel or book of the Bible over a multi-week period (e.g., Lent); going through a *lectio divina* prayer experience; or doing an organized, pre-set Bible study from a Catholic publisher or organization.
 - For those who choose the first option listed above, keep in mind the USCCB posts the daily Mass readings on their website at <https://bible.usccb.org/readings/calendar>.
- Place a family Bible in a prominent place in the home, so that all members of the family can see it in their daily routines. You may also consider decorating around it for each liturgical season.
- Find a time when the family can gather to discuss Scripture. You may wish to inquire with the youth or young adults in the home what is most convenient or engaging for them.
- Seek out Catholic resources to help the family learn about the context of the biblical stories for deeper discussion (the New American Bible Revised Edition, among some other translations, has introductory remarks and footnotes that can also guide the family regarding that context). Consider getting a biblical commentary and placing it near the Bible in the home.
- Invite the youth or young adults present to read the passage each time the family gathers, giving them a chance to speak aloud the words of Sacred Scripture.
- Family gatherings can last anywhere from 10 to 60 minutes, depending on how much time has been pre-allotted for reading and discussion. Always close in prayer, led by a young person.
- On other occasions, beyond this formal gathering time, make reference to the biblical stories or passages in everyday conversation. This can show young people that the Scriptures are not just reserved for explicitly religious activities but have applications for daily life.

Within church and school settings:

Incorporate Catholic Tradition into programs and events for young people in the community.

Here's how:

- Consider the various aspects of Catholic Tradition that have special meaning for you, as a pastoral leader, or for the parish/campus community with its charisms, values, or mission statement. These can include writings from or biographies of the saints, papal or magisterial texts (including Vatican II documents), elements of Catholic social teaching, prayer and devotional practices, or excerpts from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), among other sources (see www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/catechism-of-the-catholic-church).
- Topics that encourage an appreciation for Catholic Tradition can include:
 - God first made a covenant with a small group of nomads—the ancient Israelites (see CCC, nos. 54-64). What does it mean to have a covenant relationship with God?
 - God created a perfect world with people made in his image (see CCC, nos. 356-361 and 1700-1709). What does it mean to be made in God's divine image?
 - Sin entered the world, but God would not leave his children orphans. God designed a plan of salvation (see CCC nos. 599-605). What does it mean to be saved by God?
 - The Church encourages Catholics to work for the dignity of all persons and the common good of society (see CCC, nos. 1913-1917 and 1928-1942). What does this mean for how people of faith should engage within their social and political systems?
- Take one of those and, similar to a regular scripture study, parcel out aspects of that document, writing, witness, prayer, or teaching across the length of time of the program or event. Realize that the entirety of the Tradition cannot be shared in one sitting and incorporate it slowly.
- You may also find elements of Catholic Tradition that may challenge the presumptions of youth and young adults (examples of this might include living the virtue of chastity, the nature of man and woman as male and female, the problem of contraception and reproductive technologies, teaching against the death penalty, the great importance of care of creation, the question of war, among other issues). Take time to respond to young people with love and grace. You may find it necessary to engage with young people on an individual basis for a more personalized approach.
- Before, during, or after a program or event*, take time (again, similar to a Bible study) to read, listen, watch, or experience that aspect of the Tradition. Invite a youth or young adult to take the lead at reading or sharing that element with the others. Then allow time for personal reflection and discussion on whatever element of Tradition was introduced or covered.

(* this can be done at the beginning or ending of a gathering, class, meeting, program, or event; it can also be done as a post-event theological reflection, depending on the particular activity.
- The time dedicated to focusing on an element of Catholic Tradition can last from 10 to 60 minutes, depending on how much time has been pre-allotted for reading and discussion. Always close in prayer, led by a young person.

In ministries with youth:

Regularly pray *lectio divina* for the Sunday Gospel with teens.

Here's how:

- Share with the teens that *lectio divina* is a Catholic tradition where people meditate on the Word of God in a patient process of listening and discerning. Explain how it can also help them slow down from their already-busy adolescent lives.
- Additionally, share with them that this prayer style can help them better appreciate the Sunday Gospels and weekend liturgies – and better hear God speaking through Sacred Scripture.
- Form the young people in the basic steps and background of *lectio divina*. The USCCB has several resources here: www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/meditations.
- Gather young people in small groups prior to each Sunday. Allot enough time for the experience, as it will take some time to go through the basic steps and then reflect on what was received.

In ministries with young adults:

Establish a Bible study curriculum for young adults.

Here's how:

- Work with already-actively-practicing young adults in the faith community to develop a Bible study curriculum that meets their needs and interests for the liturgical year and with reference to the specific liturgical seasons.
- Choose whether this Bible study will be lectionary-based; a deep-dive into a particular book of the Bible, or by connecting Scripture to key issues or interest areas important to the young adults (e.g., mental health, transitions, workplace ethics, relationships, or analysis of certain biblical accounts).
- Provide a comfortable venue for small groups to gather with the Scriptures, meeting on a weekly basis if possible. Incorporate some opportunities for fellowship and community-building as well.

2.2 An Evangelizing Catechesis

The ministry of formation flows from the kerygma and is an essential part of ministries with youth, collegians, and young adults...²⁵

Catechesis, which fosters a deeper understanding of the faith, should never lose contact with the *kerygma*, the first proclamation of the faith, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

²⁵ LTS, p. 33.

St. John Paul II offered us this wonderful and succinct definition of *kerygma*:

The initial ardent proclamation by which a person is one day overwhelmed and brought to the decision to entrust himself (or herself) to Jesus Christ by faith.²⁶

Catechesis does not simply pick up from where the *kerygma* leaves off. Rather, it must always lead one to enter more deeply into the *kerygma*. Catechesis should always be evangelizing. As Pope Francis explains:

On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.” This first proclamation is called “first” not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things.

It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment.²⁷

It is key for effective ministries with youth and young adults to provide opportunities to remind young people of the *kerygma* that inspired their faith. It can truly take root when we also equip youth and young adults with the tools to share the *kerygma* with their peers, witnessing to the work of Jesus in their lives and sharing opportunities to encounter the Lord.

In rooting formation in the *kerygma*, here are strategies to consider:

In the home and family and in church or school settings:

Read together Pope Francis’ unpacking of the *kerygma* in *Christus Vivit*.

Here’s how:

- Gather youth and/or young adults together for a group reading of the fourth chapter of Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, entitled, “A Great Message for All Young People” (found in CV, nos. 111-133). Slowly and carefully read through the chapter together.
- Pause after each of the sections (“A God Who Is Love,” “Christ Saves You,” etc.), noting that each section presents a key element of the *kerygma*: that God loves us; that Christ saves us; that Christ is alive and always remains with us; that the Holy Spirit remains with us. Ask participants how they see this element of the *kerygma* at work in their lives.
- At the conclusion of the group reading, ask participants to take the ideas and concepts that Pope Francis explains in their own words.
- You may wish to have spiritual mentors and guides on hand to answer questions about the *kerygma* as they arise in conversation. On college campuses, consider tapping into the wisdom of faculty and campus ministers with experience sharing the *kerygma* through Scripture and Tradition.

²⁶ St. John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae* (Vatican City State, LEV, 1979), no. 25.

²⁷ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) (Vatican City State, LEV, 2013), no. 164.

In ministries with youth:

Invite teens to plan and lead a summer program on the kerygma for younger children.

Here's how:

- Invite youth to plan and lead a summer program with children themed around the *kerygma*.
- Collaborate with a religious education or family catechesis program at a parish, school, or diocese, which may welcome the assistance of the teens in this way.
- Discern what the needs of the local community might be to develop a summer program that responds to the realities experienced by the children of a given area.
- Invite the youth to do most of the program planning and, most of all, the teaching of the *kerygma* to the younger kids, while working with adult mentors and teachers who can help guide the teens as well through the messaging.

In ministries with young adults:

Encourage young adults to create a video series on the kerygma.

Here's how:

- Empower young adults who have been formed in the faith and have a grounded understanding of the *kerygma* to develop and communicate a series of videos for other young adults (or for children and teens, or for the faith community at large).
- Ask young adults to create and edit videos that are brief, yet engaging and instructive, on the fundamentals of the *kerygma*. Encourage them to use their technical, presentation, or theatrical skills to complement this experience of faith formation.
- Use the finalized videos within the parish, campus, or diocese to share the Catholic faith with others, especially other young people, who live in a digitally-focused world. This sharing can be done through the institution's web presence, social media, or other means of sharing.

*Evangelizing catechesis has many expressions...
Comprehensive faith formation should also involve a variety
of people as a young person matures into adulthood...²⁸*

The USCCB's Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis has defined "evangelizing catechesis"²⁹ as a means to deepen a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is done through proclaiming the core message of the Gospel and accompanying people to a response of faith and conversion to Christ. Evangelizing catechesis provides a systematic exposition of God's revelation within the communion of the Catholic Church and is directed toward the sending out of missionary disciples as

²⁸ LTS, p. 34.

²⁹ "What is Evangelizing Catechesis?," Institute on the Catechism, <https://evangelizingcatechesis.com/site/>.

witnesses to the Good News of salvation: a new vision of life, humanity, justice, and human fraternity (The Institute on the Catechism can help give a vision and formation for this; [see here for more](#)).

Such a comprehensive task can seem overwhelming at first glance, but *Listen, Teach, Send* reminds us that there are many expressions to the formation of a young person. It is best to incorporate a variety of pastoral methods, including different people and materials, to reach as many youth and young adults as possible, while also being rooted in the Scripture and Tradition of the Church.

In providing interdisciplinary formation, here are strategies to consider (through the arts, culture, music, sports, scouting, science and the natural world, work, service, and the family):

In ministries with youth:

Offer interactive service learning with youth in middle and high school settings.

Here's how:

- Share a lesson about a particular social justice teaching which can lay a good foundation for young people exploring how Catholic social teaching impacts their lives. Integrate Sacred Scripture, Catholic Tradition, and prayer into this formational experience. Use the [Act-Reflect-Transform methodology](#) to help ensure that service activities are truly transformational.
- Schedule the youth to serve a particular community or population whose suffering shows them the connection of Church teaching to the lived realities experienced by marginalized individuals.
- Additional projects might include bringing blankets for homeless shelters, assembling sandwiches for a food kitchen, organizing or shopping for groceries for a food pantry, serving hot meals to those who are hungry, or making friendship bracelets for children and youth in need. NOTE that it is important to check the local policies regarding minor assisting in these ways/places.
- Partner with a local service organization which can host the young people at their site or where youth would be welcome to provide a program.
- Adapt this idea to the needs within your local community, and always have adult mentors on hand to chaperone and accompany youth as they process their experience from a faith perspective.
- Consider a retreat experience that incorporates the Eucharistic component of the Catholic faith with service learning. The resource for that experience can be found on the USCCB website at https://www.usccb.org/resources/Service_Retreat_Experience_Manual.pdf.

In ministries with young adults:

Provide opportunities for young adults in the arts or sciences to catechize children.

Here's how:

- Invite Catholic young adults who work in (or are studying) scientific or artistic fields to serve as catechists and ministers of children (or other groups) within a parish, school, or diocese.

- Encourage young adults to integrate their skills and knowledge of the arts or the sciences with concepts of faith. In so doing, young adults can be positive role models for younger people (and others) and share how the natural world and artistic expressions can be means of glorifying God.
- Schedule this as part of a lesson plan during the school year or at a Vacation Bible School during the summer, or in whatever way fits their schedule and the needs of the faith community. For collegiate young adults, consider the timing of academic breaks as opportunities to serve.
- After the experience, gather with the young adults who took part in this engagement (individually or collectively) to explore how God is present in their skills and professional experiences. Provoke a discussion and reflection on ways to encounter God through their work or to help others better understand God's creation through their vocation of service to the world. For example, help the scientist discover God at work through their daily scientific efforts, or help the musician see how certain pieces of music can draw their own soul (and the souls of those who listen to it) toward thoughts around the meaning of life and God himself.

2.3 Sharing the Truth in Love

It is essential that young people be given a clear proclamation of the Church's teaching on human sexuality to help them navigate significant life transitions...³⁰

During the tumultuous life transitions of a youth or young adult, issues of morality and sexuality will be one of the more challenging issues which a young person will face. The Church can aid in this fragile time by equipping young people with positive experiences of formation and by assisting families, teachers, and pastoral ministers with education, formation, and resources to have life-affirming conversations on human sexuality and moral and ethical issues related to the body and chaste living.

ALERT: Families, teachers, and pastoral ministers who do not feel fully equipped to explain Church teaching on human sexuality will need education, formation, and training in this area, along with trustworthy resources. Such individuals should be vetted well. Please consult with the USCCB Marriage and Family Life [web pages](#) for support in this regard.

In giving a clear proclamation of Church teachings on human sexuality here are strategies to consider (inclusive of *apologetics*, *dispelling myths*, and *conscience formation*):

In ministries with youth:

Equip teens with St. John Paul II's teachings in the *Theology of the Body*.

Here's how:

- Become familiar with faithful Catholic resources that leaders in the Church have developed around the *Theology of the Body* (TOB), a collection of teachings from St. John Paul II which integrate

³⁰ LTS, p. 35.

Scripture, Tradition, Church teaching, and morality on Christian anthropology, human sexuality, marriage, and the family.

- Choose the resources that are age-appropriate for teenagers and respect the realities being faced by young people in your local community. Note that some TOB resources are designed for parents to use with children (and some which have a mother/daughter or father/son formats effecting in fostering parental-child communications on delicate subjects), while other resources have been developed for classroom, campus, diocesan, and/or ministerial settings.
- Invite and train youth leaders to accompany their peers in the community in learning the principles of TOB. Guide these peer leaders so that they can better understand, appreciate, and reflect on their own human sexuality as designed by God.
- Equip a formation team of parents and adults who can serve as mentors to the youth leaders and teenage participants in the parish, school, or diocese as they journey through formation around TOB. Discern how best to include the pastor/bishop or other pastoral leaders in the team.
- Schedule programs or formation series around TOB for youth in the community, allowing the youth leaders and adult/parent mentors to take a leadership role in passing on these teachings. You may also wish to provide fertility appreciation and chastity programs to complement these efforts.
- Be sure to follow your diocese's policies on child and youth protection when designing programs at which TOB is to be shared. Ensure that all mentor programs have a parental component so that the rights of the parents can be respected and integrated into the activities. In addition, be sure to check with your diocesan marriage, family life, and/or Natural Family Planning leadership to explore programs that may already be provided in the area.

In ministries with young adults:

Host a young adult series on common misunderstandings of Church teaching.

Here's how:

- Engage in a listening process to learn young adults' understanding of Church teaching on sex, marriage, and having healthy Catholic relationships. You may wish to enlist active Catholic young adults who can assist in coordinating listening sessions with their peers. Keep an ear out for and take note of any misconceptions or misunderstandings that may arise about these topics.
- Develop a diocesan, parish, and/or campus ministry team to craft a discussion series that responds to the misconceptions/misunderstandings heard in the listening component. This team should include active Catholic young adults from the community.
- Connect with diocesan leadership that connects to young adults, marriage and family life, Natural Family Planning, to consult on how best to respond to the misconceptions/misunderstandings. Those offices may have additional resources or advice on developing the series.
- During the planning process, organize the series to follow a simple format like this: prayer and introductions; a brief presentation about a particular area of misunderstanding, followed by a well-facilitated discussion with participants; closing with sharing resources (online or hard copy) and prayer; and appropriate follow-up with each participant.

- Identify relevant speakers to address the topic. You may wish to consult with the diocesan offices for ideas and advice on speaker selection that would be appropriate for the topic and audience. Consider also some young adult witnesses so that participants can hear from their peers.
- Host the discussion series around one topic; host secondary and further series around other topics. Do not try to cover all topics in one series/program.
- Engage in follow-up with resources that would dovetail with the issues raised in the discussion, and in one-on-one mentorship/guidance as needed.

...look to the young, especially faithful young disciples who have personally experienced various struggles related to these moral, social, and ethical issues, to help Catholic communities...³¹

Some of the best people to share the Church's teachings on moral, social, and political issues with youth and young adults are other young people who have journeyed through certain challenges and come to a deeper understanding of Catholic faith through that journey.

Whether the issues revolve around moral issues like human sexuality, chastity, or conscious formation or social issues such as climate change, immigration, racism, (gun) violence, or economics, a young person who has personally experienced (and wrestled with) these matters and found God's truth through them can be a powerful witness for his or her peers and for the community at large.

In raising up young witnesses to the faith, here are strategies to consider:

Within the home and family—for youth and young adults:
Encourage a young person to share their stories in and beyond the home.

Here's how:

- Families must first recognize and affirm the struggles being faced by the youth and young adults within their family dynamic. Upon this recognition, it is also critical for parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and others to let those young people know that they are supported and loved.
- Help the young people in the family see the need to relate to others. One way to do this is to connect his or her struggles (and strengths, journey, and healing process) with that of another family member, a beloved friend, or a saint or holy person in history who faced similar issues.
 - Holy women and men such as St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, St. John of the Cross, St. Martin de Porres, Ven. Augustus Tolton, Bl. Chiaro Badano, Bl. Carlo Acutis, and St. Teresa of Calcutta are excellent examples of individuals whose story of struggle may be helpful.

³¹ LTS, p. 36.

- Tell your own story. Be vulnerable and open to sharing with the young people in your family your own stories of struggle, pain, and hurt, as well as your journey through healing and prayer.
- Ask the young person in the family to reflect on their story and how God may have been present along their journey. Invite him or her to consider how sharing this story and the continued reliance on the Lord can help their peers who may be going through similar situations.
- Invite the young person in the family to share this story beyond the family setting: through writing, digitally (video, podcast, social media, etc.), in-person at a retreat or church event, or by one-on-one engagement with his or her peers.
 - Help the young person with this project. For example, if the story is written, offer to review and edit the writing; or if being done by video, volunteer to set up the camera and help them record or post the story to the intended platform. Ask his or her permission to talk with your pastor or other parish, campus, or diocesan leader to see what future opportunities there may be for sharing this story in more public/church settings.
- Follow up with the young person at family functions, encouraging them to keep going along their path, always seeking the Lord's graces during times when struggles reemerge or are particularly difficult to navigate. Be sure to keep this young person in your own prayers.

Within church and school settings:

Highlight young leaders on the church website, newsletter, or bulletin updates.

Here's how:

- Work with the parish leadership to post profiles of faith: inspiring stories of youth and/or young adults who overcame great obstacles and found hope in Christ and the Church.
- Invite young people whose stories have been shared with you to write out or make a video of those stories, if they are willing to share those with the broader community.
- Receive, review, and edit the stories (with the permission of the young person), and consider providing context by including teachings of the Church or inspiring quotes from the saints to complement and provide context and a faith-filled foundation to the story.
- Post these stories on the parish, campus, school, or diocesan website (or bulletin, newsletter, etc.). Promote the post through social media and other avenues of communication.
- Accompany this communication strategy with something akin to: "If you are facing similar issues and need pastoral help (or if you know someone in your life who is struggling in these ways), please reach out to us. We are here to support and love all young people, including those who may be in the midst of crisis, anxiety, depression, or darkness." Include your contact information.

2.4 Renewing Sacramental Life

...invite young people into liturgical and sacramental celebrations which help them understand and receive the true presence of Christ in their lives...³²

The sacraments of the Church are integral to the life of all Catholics. Confirmation, Marriage, or Holy Orders may be milestones during youth and young adulthood. Reception of the Holy Eucharist and participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation happen regularly in the life of many church-going young people. For a number of youth or young adults, the need for healing in the Anointing of the Sick can be part of the journey. And for those who come into the Church through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) process, Baptism, and other sacraments of initiation are experienced. For some, though, the regular experience of liturgical and sacramental life can feel routine. This can lead to slow disaffiliation.

In *Listen, Teach, Send*, the bishops of the United States use the moment when Jesus breaks bread with the disciples going to Emmaus (Lk 24:29-32) as a summons to revitalize the faith journey with youth and young adults through sacramental life. This serves as the pinnacle of the narrative. In much the same way, connecting young people to prayers and sacramental life³³ can be a key moment during their formative years, gracing a young person with the strength for the journey yet to come.

In renewing liturgical and sacramental practice, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Incorporate prayers and liturgical invitations into youth gatherings.

Here's how:

- Examine existing activities and events with youth in your community to see if intentional prayerfulness is missing. Reflect on the young people who would benefit from the addition of explicit prayer moments in their faith lives, especially ones that may address their specific needs or culture.
- With that recognition in mind, consider creative ways to integrate prayer components into the youth gatherings, activities, events, or processes. You may wish to consider pausing half-way through a program for a moment of prayer (rather than only at the beginning or end of an event) or establishing prayer partners when appropriate.
- Invite teens to help plan, prepare, and lead those prayer moments. Allow their creative energy to fulfill the areas of need that you have already identified.
- In every youth gathering, always invite young people, their families, and peers to the upcoming weekend liturgies and other sacramental moments that may be taking place that month.

³² LTS, p. 38.

³³ A tool to assist in these areas is the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (Vatican City State: LEV, 2001); see here: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html.

In ministries with young adults:

Invite young adults to engage with the OCIA community.

Here's how:

- Since many OCIA (previously known as RCIA) communities include young adults seeking to draw closer to the Church, invite already active and confirmed Catholic young adults to engage more regularly with the yearlong OCIA process.
- At the beginning of an OCIA process, encourage young adults to be sponsors for candidates.
- Coordinate with the OCIA team/leadership to set up some regular social gatherings between active Catholic young adults and the OCIA participants. In addition, spiritual and service/charity programs can also be established between the two populations throughout the formation year.
- Ask young adults to attend and be actively involved in the Easter Vigil rites (coordinating again with the OCIA team/leadership on this), so that the newly initiated can feel the presence of the young adult community at this special and sacred moment in their faith lives.
- Offer to support the OCIA team/leadership by coordinating the *mystagogy*³⁴ components following the neophytes' reception into the Church. The social-spiritual-service elements of programming can also take place in the weeks and months following Easter Vigil to continue the relationship building and growth of the Christian community.

In church and school settings:

Create a special prayer book for youth and/or young adults.

Here's how:

- Make plans to create a prayer resource for the young people in your community.
- For those on high school or college campuses, this can be tied to significant moments throughout the academic year such as beginning the semester, breaks, or finals. For those in parish or diocesan life, this can be tied to liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time, etc.).
- Work with your parish/campus/diocesan leadership with ideas on what prayers to include, as well as what resources are already available in this regard.
- Consider the diversity of the young people in the community when discerning the different types, origins, and styles of prayer to include in the book. Consider also prayers connected to various saints who may appeal to youth and/or young adults (e.g., Carlo Acutis, Pier Giorgio Frassati, etc.) or to certain moments in the liturgical cycle.
- Invite young people to submit ideas for prayers, as well as relevant talents/skills related to the design and production of the book (e.g., artists who can provide artwork; writers on providing copy and

³⁴ *Mystagogy* is the fourth and final stage of Christian initiation for new Catholics, following the reception of sacraments at the Easter Vigil. During this time the newly initiated are led to “an ever deeper experience of the mysteries of the faith” and “incorporation into the life of the community” (*Directory on Catechesis*, no. 63).

editing work; designers who can put the guidebook together; those in the printing industry to make copies, those with a Ignatian charism to share favorite Jesuit prayers, etc.).

- Distribute the book in a cost-effective manner that can reach the most young people. This can include physical printing, creating a digital e-book, converting the copy into a new or existing mobile app, posting it on a website or via social media posts, or distributed in smaller sections throughout the year). If printed, be sure to have copies available at local churches for visitors.

...pointing young people toward the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and inviting them to active participation in a Eucharistic community...³⁵

Jesus Christ came to bring human beings into communion with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and also into communion with one another. As Pope John Paul II explained, the Church in her pilgrimage on earth is called to maintain and promote this communion:

For this purpose, she possesses the word and the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, by which she “constantly lives and grows” and in which she expresses her very nature... The Eucharist thus appears as the culmination of all the sacraments in perfecting our communion with God the Father by identification with his only begotten Son through the working of the Holy Spirit.³⁶

The Eucharist, being the source and summit of the Catholic faith and the life of a Eucharistic community, is a foundational element of the “teaching” work of the Church with youth and young adults. This element should not be missed. In a tangible way, the Eucharist gives young people a chance to meet the Lord in Word, Sacrament, and community, and for the Lord to meet them in a sacred setting within the Church. There is a diversity of ways in which young people encounter Christ in the Eucharist, so it is important to be mindful of the many paths towards the Lord.

With this in mind, take the opportunity to bring the youth and young adults to Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Enter into the stories from Sacred Scripture through imagination and wonder, as together you can explore the foundations of the Sacrament and its impact on the world through the centuries.

To better engage young people through the Eucharist, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Facilitate a Eucharistic retreat for young people.

Here’s how:

- Recruit a student and adult leadership team to work together to pray, plan, and facilitate a Eucharistic retreat at the parish or school for young people in middle school or high school.
- Prayerfully discern whom to invite to the team, pulling in individuals with a range of personalities and gifts to collaborate on a retreat that can meet the needs of the local population of youth.

³⁵ LTS, p. 27.

³⁶ *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 34. See also USCCB, *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*, nos. 24-28.

- Spend time with the Eucharist in adoration and celebrate Mass as a team preparing for the retreat.
- Design a one-day or weekend-long retreat, centered on the Eucharist, exploring how teens can bring Christ into the world today. Discern other retreat leaders (priests, religious, lay ministers) who can witness to the impact of the Eucharist on their lives in a relatable way. Make ample time on the retreat schedule for Mass, adoration, and Reconciliation.
- Promote and execute the retreat in a prayerful way, with an eye toward making this a regular occurrence for young people in the community. Cultivate youth leaders who can serve on the leadership team in future years to pass on what they have received.
- Provide ongoing leadership and faith formation for the organizing team, as well as for the retreat participants, in the months following the retreat experience.

**In ministries with young adults:
Host Eucharistic adoration and social nights.**

Here's how:

- Invite young adult leaders who have a special love for the Eucharist to serve on a team that can plan monthly Eucharistic adoration nights for other young adults.
- Design the adoration nights to include prayer, silence, worship music, sacred art, chant, and Scripture, followed by community-building and social time. The design and planning process itself should include spending time in prayer, with Eucharistic adoration and meditation on Sacred Scripture, as well as coming together for liturgies, so that the young adult leaders can prayerfully discern, as a team, how to best facilitate, organize, and accompany their peers through this effort.
- Schedule the adoration nights based on the needs, realities, and availabilities of the young adult leadership team, as well as the priest(s) or deacon(s) who would lead the adoration experience. Consider also how these evenings can be opportunities for young adults to rediscover and reclaim the central importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Extend invitations to the wider young adult community in the area, promoting the evenings as opportunities to engage in active prayer with one another, to rest in the presence of the Lord, and to discern where the Holy Spirit may be leading them.

...Rosary offers yet another opportunity to personally accompany a young person.³⁷

The Catholic bishops of the United States asked for the intercession of Mary in the development and promotion of *Listen, Teach, Send* (see the [document's](#) final paragraph) and recommended devotion through the Blessed Mother as a means of moving from “teaching” to “sending” as Mary herself is a model of movement towards mission.

³⁷ LTS, p. 40.

Praying the Rosary is an excellent means to encourage this connection. It also ties into the Scriptures that underpin the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries, which can offer an experience with the life-giving Good News reflected in the life of Christ. By praying to God through the intercession of Mary, the Church can teach youth and young adults about the Blessed Mother's role in the life of Christ as his first disciple, as companion to the Apostles, and her impact on our lives today. This makes Marian devotion a helpful aspect of strong ministries with youth and young adults.

In engaging young people in Marian devotion, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Participate in a Marian consecration with teens.

Here's how:

- Research what it means to engage in Marian consecration. There are reputable Catholic resources on this devotional practice.
- Schedule the consecration on one of the Marian feast days (e.g., Immaculate Conception, Annunciation, Assumption, etc.), to highlight the importance of this moment in the year.
- On or before the consecration, share with youth the work, *True Devotion to Mary*, by St. Louis de Montfort, who wrote it as a preparation for consecration. Consider sharing this in a group setting, where there can be dynamic conversation around the points raised in the book.
- Find ongoing ways to integrate Marian devotion into your ministry with youth, helping them to learn about and draw closer to Mary (especially as the young woman of Nazareth, who was close to their age when she carried the child Jesus). In this devotion, teens can continue to be guided by Mary throughout their lives as they mature into adulthood.

In ministries with young adults:

Invite young adults to design relevant reflections on the Mysteries of the Rosary.

Here's how:

- Invite a group of active Catholic young adults to prayerfully discern and develop modern, relevant reflections (in writing, in art, etc.) for each of the twenty Mysteries of the Rosary, or the World Mission Rosary, created by Ven. Fulton Sheen to encourage people to pray for those around the world, using each rosary decade to reflect on one of the five continents.³⁸
- In preparing for this task, young adults should be given opportunities to pray together with their peers, use their unique interests and talents at the service of the Church, and work as a team on a creative project.
- Be aware of the cultural dimensions and roots of the young adults, which can lead to a great opportunity for this and other Marian celebrations. The Roman Missal allows for

³⁸ See explanation of the *World Mission Rosary* via the Archdiocese for the Military Services USA at <https://www.archmil.org/ArchMil/Resources/WMM/MissionRosaries/WM-Rosary-Booklet-.pdf>.

celebrations from various countries or devotions. If this is applicable to young adults on the leadership team of this project, encourage them to integrate this into their reflection.

- See also the ways that praying the rosary can help young adults better connect with the Church's work in advancing human life, dignity, justice, and peace through resources such as the *Pro-Life Rosary Intentions* (<https://www.usccb.org/prayers/pro-life-rosary-prayer-intentions>) and the *Scriptural Rosary for Justice and Peace* (<https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/rosaries/scriptural-rosary-for-justice-and-peace>).
- Have the young adults present their reflections to younger and older generations in the faith community at a date and time coordinated by the liturgy or worship leadership within a parish, campus, or diocese.

In the passing on of faith to the young through the accompaniment of their families, friends, and pastoral leaders, we move with young people towards the mission...³⁹

Knowing the youth and young adults who have been entrusted to your pastoral care you can adapt the strategies here and engage in teaching and forming young people as disciples of Christ in unique and beautiful ways. There is no limit to what the Holy Spirit can do if we entrust our young people to the Lord and allow him to work through us.

Accompaniment involves lovingly and humbly walking with one another towards Jesus and bearing one another's burdens together or guiding another closer to Christ if a person's lifestyle leads them in the opposite direction. Teaching, when done through this approach, becomes a dynamic relationship where young people and those accompanying them encounter Christ learn about the faith and share the teachings of the Church with one another through the following: study and reflection on moral teachings and doctrine; reception of the Sacraments; praying with Scriptures; engaging in service work; and being active in the local Catholic parish. By forming young people in the Catholic faith and equipping them to lead others in the faith, we are accompanying them to develop a deeper relationship with Christ and encouraging them in the day-to-day work of becoming missionary disciples.⁴⁰

³⁹ LTS, p. 41.

⁴⁰ Pope Francis defined *missionary disciples* in the following way: "A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 266)

Part 3: Strategies for Sending

...the result of our ministries should point young people toward their mission, motivating them to go where Christ is calling them.⁴¹

Just as in the story of the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35), when people are listened to with concern, taught with love, and given an opportunity to encounter Christ in us and in the sacraments, their hearts burn with joy. This is the *kerygma*. Like those disciples with Jesus on the road, they may be ready to go forth. It is our work as Catholics, in our homes and in our faith communities, to send them out for the work of evangelization, justice and peace, vocation, and leadership in the Church and in the world.

The sending forth of youth and young adults is the fruit of the faithful mission to which each of us has been called, as pastoral leaders and families. Christ calls us, but he also calls the young people whom we have accompanied. The Lord desires youth and young adults on fire with the Gospel and motivated by the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) to go forth into the world and proclaim the Kingdom of God.

3.1 Bold, Evangelizing Witnesses

...equip youth and young adults to proclaim Christ to the world...⁴²

The work of evangelization is ideally done in natural, everyday conversations, which often happens in peer networks. Whether from youth to youth, young adult to young adult, or adult to adult, we often find ourselves in relationships with people who share our interests, ages, or life experiences. As such, the work of witnessing our faith may regularly take place in peer networks.

For young people on fire with their faith, it is important to provide them with the formation and resources to have Gospel-oriented conversations with their peers. Be present and available for ongoing formation and mentorship with young people to accompany them on their journey of proclaiming Christ to others.

In equipping young people to evangelize, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Create a web page, mobile app or pocket-size evangelization guide for youth.

Here's how:

- Brainstorm what direction may be most fitting, practical, and attainable. Possible guide options might include a web page (either independent or as part of a parish, diocesan, or school website), a new or existing mobile application, or a hard-copy or electronic version of a guidebook. The goal is to create an easy-to-use reference guide for peer evangelization among teens.

⁴¹ LTS, p. 44.

⁴² LTS, p. 44.

- Find existing resources that might fit this goal or create one of your own, using the insights and intergenerational wisdom of leaders from within your local Catholic community.
- Once developed, accompany youth on how to respond when they are confronted with questions or objections about their religious engagement or important life and justice issues. Encourage them to have the web page, mobile app, and/or hard-copy guidebook at hand to offer them a handy tool for offering a response in the moment of peer engagement. The guide can also be helpful for teens who want to share their faith with other youth who may be curious or questioning faith concerns.
- Work with youth to navigate the guide and practice how to have natural conversations of faith with their peers. Teach them to be observant of bullying, hurtful actions, and situations of moral or ethical concern, so that they can respond as an authentic witness to Christ.
- Help teens understand the guidebook is meant as a preparation and support resource. True evangelization does not come about by a recitation of Christian facts; rather, it happens when young people can communicate the beauty, truth, and goodness of their beliefs. Encourage teens to not only *know* the guidebook, but to *live* it out through the fire they have for Jesus Christ.

In ministries with young adults:

Prepare young adults to share their testimonies with others.

Here's how:

- Prepare a series of gatherings for young adults to reflect on how they can live differently from others in society because of their Catholic faith.
- At each gathering, spend time in large and small groups helping young adults reflect on their story, honing what it is about their experiences that can be a sign of hope for their peers.
- Have young adults share their testimonies/stories in small groups, allowing for peer feedback and encouragement. Boost confidence in the young adults' ability to share this faith with others.
- Take time for prayer to remind young adults that the sharing experience is always rooted in the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Mt 28:18-20). Consider closing each session with a blessing.
- Consider the timing of this series: for example, on college campuses, consider holding these sessions for graduating seniors, to prepare them to share their story in the next chapter of their lives beyond graduation (i.e., the workforce, the home, the community, the military, etc.).

Families and ministries with young people today must encourage each youth and young adult to take on this enthusiastic spirit...⁴³

Sharing faith needs to be done with a joyful spirit. Pope Francis regularly reminds Catholics that the joy of the Gospel should be manifested in the attitude and expressions of those who share the Good News. If

⁴³ LTS, p. 45.

someone is on fire with an evangelical fervor, his or her faith is, to put it simply, “contagious.” Others who hear the message of faith from a passionate individual may draw closer to Christ because of that enthusiasm.

While such passion and joy cannot be taught to young people per se, it can be modeled, fostered, unlocked, and given places to flourish and mature. It is important that families and pastoral leaders model authentic joyfulness with youth and young adults in their care and invite them to do the same for others.

In fostering enthusiasm for evangelization, here are strategies to consider:

Within the home and family:

Joyfully celebrate saint days for each member of the household.

Here’s how:

- As a family, create a plan to celebrate saint days associated with the names, interests, work/school, or dreams of each family member.
- To prepare for this, encourage people in the family to pick one saint for themselves based on their names, interests, work/school, or dreams (and in so doing, discover how that saint modeled radical joy in their lives and attracted others to the joy that they embodied).
- Once chosen, calendar this out throughout the year and, on each person’s saint day, celebrate the occasion like a birthday or anniversary, with a special meal, family party, and even gifts.
- Another option is to mark it with an act of service in line with that saint, whether it be a small act of kindness or serving a meal at a soup kitchen.
- Invite friends and extended family over to celebrate and pray together. For young adults who move away from home, encourage this activity within their new home with roommates, friends, co-workers, or significant others, spreading this fun tradition beyond one’s own family unit.

Within church and school settings:

Cultivate leadership programs for young people rooted in the joy of the Gospel.

Here’s how:

- Develop or utilize already existing leadership programs for youth and/or young adults that model virtue and the joy of the Gospel.
- Challenge young people to understand authentic Christian leadership as a call to live out the “joy of the Gospel” in a radical way to attract others to Christ.
- In the leadership program, pass on the message that virtuous and joyful living is a key to being authentic Christians and, together with those who minister alongside young people in the community, identify key virtues for youth and/or young adults to strive to live out.

- Then, work with those same young people to develop practical ways to foster these virtues and hold each other accountable in joyfully living out those virtues in their daily lives. Consider using the resources from the [Walk with One](#) call-to-action initiative of the National Eucharistic Revival.

3.2 With Charity and Justice

Encourage youth and young adults whose hearts are on fire for Christ to draw near to those on the margins of society... We cannot foster fear or indifference to the tragedies felt by so many people, but rather encourage joy and active involvement...⁴⁴

Leadership in the areas of charity and justice are excellent ways to put the moral teachings of Christ into practice. Assisting youth and young adults to see the intrinsic dignity and value of each human being and ensuring that society provides for this dignity and value, not only helps those on the margins but it can also raise up missionary witnesses of the Gospel in the world today.

To step into this work, it is important for youth and young adults to draw close to those who are most affected by injustice, even if such proximity may initially be intimidating, overwhelming, or uncertain. Many young people live and work within their “comfort zones,” where they may not be regularly exposed to the poor, marginalized, or sick. Yet this closeness can foster familiarity and passion, as we see with our own eyes who among us is in need of charity and justice.

In overcoming fear or indifference and engaging the margins, here are strategies to consider:

Within the home and family:

Engage in family conversations about empathy and visit places of poverty.

Here’s how:

- Reflect on your family dynamics and what will work most naturally in the home regarding having conversations with young people within the family about injustice in society.
 - Consider discussions around the dinner table as one option, or at any other occasion when the youth or young adult members of the family may be open to such dialogue.
 - Consider whether to have these conversations individually (one-on-one) or together with siblings, parents, or other family members present.
 - Check with your local parish or diocese, in particular the peace, justice, or service offices (as well as Catholic Charities USA or Catholic Relief Services), to inquire about resources that might aid in having intergenerational conversations about poverty and marginalization. One important topic to discuss: What do the “margins” look like in our local community?

⁴⁴ LTS, p. 46.

- One natural opportunity may be having a discussion after seeing someone living on the margins in the family's local community (for example, an unhoused individual on a nearby street corner or someone using food stamps in the neighborhood grocery store aisle).
- You may also consider intentionally visiting areas in the community where people living or working in impoverished conditions may be present. So that the witness of another individual's poverty or suffering is not just observational (thereby disrespecting the dignity of that person), be ready to provide water, food, money, or interpersonal engagement. Assess how the family can be of service to those who are unhoused, unemployed, or unsafe.
- Make time to allow young people to encounter and listen to the stories of the person(s) living in marginalized communities and situations.
- As a family, follow-up these encounters by regularly volunteering or getting involved in soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters, Catholic Charities, diocesan social justice ministries, or organizations supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) in order to participate in activities that affect the lives, families, education, and communities that suffer most. Find ways to regularly nurture solidarity between the family and people living in poverty and in other marginalized situations in the local communities.

Within church and school settings:

Walk through and try out the "See-Judge-Act" pastoral circle with young people.

Here's how:

- Listen for times when youth or young adults in the community identify (including complaining about or offering opinions about) societal challenges or injustices that they are regularly dealing with or observing online or in their school, workplace, or community.
- When appropriate, take time to share with them the best way that Catholics can respond to social and justice issues: the pastoral circle/process of "[See-Judge-Act](#)" (or "See-Discern-Act").
- Patiently collaborate with the young people as they work to (a) name the issue from multiple perspectives, (b) illuminate it through the light of the Gospel and the Catholic faith, and (c) collectively discern a proactive path forward. Walk with them through this process and find opportunities to practice it through exposure to those most impacted by injustices.
- Guide youth and young adults in the community toward relationships with people living on the margins in their schools, workplaces, communities, and online. Encourage the young people to get to know impoverished persons more closely so that they can naturally respond through the pastoral process of seeing, judging/discerning, and acting in imitation of Jesus Christ.

...give young people the tools they will need to respond to this radical invitation from the Lord through works of charity and social justice...⁴⁵

It should be noted from the outset that charity and justice are not the same thing. Works of charity are about tending the wounds of those negatively impacted by society, while works of social justice are about trying to ensure that those wounds are never experienced again by addressing the root causes and systemic factors that harm humanity in a variety of ways. We can limit ourselves by providing charitable assistance alone, yet the problems persist. With sound prudence, young people can put their passion, energy, and voice to Gospel use in addressing the bigger picture. As such, it is the responsibility of families and pastoral ministers to give them tools for both charity and justice.

The variety of issues is vast, and young people will likely gravitate to one or several of these areas of concern: poverty, economic disparity, and homelessness; ecological and environmental concerns; lack of access to education and educational inequity; abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and other issues impacting human life and dignity; racism and prejudice; immigration and migration issues; the breakdown of marriage and family in society; health care, in particular mental health and wellness; domestic and civil violence, inclusive of gun control issues; international war and peacemaking concerns; and so much more.

In reflecting on the engagement of youth and young adults with charity and justice, be mindful of the many different aspects of this work, and find ways to connect young people both to areas that they are already passionate or concerned about, but also new ways to introduce them to the margins of society.

The Gospels have so much to say about this work, so lifting up Jesus's witness of charity and justice proves essential for long-term engagement with the faith.

Our work of social justice and charity (or charity and justice) is rooted in God's tender love for those who are poor or vulnerable. Help young people experience God's compassion--embrace it as their own--through powerful experiences of prayer for those in need: <https://www.usccb.org/prayers/praying-faithful-citizen>.

In engaging young people in charity and justice, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Invite youth to lead appropriate parish charitable efforts.

Here's how:

- Assess what the parish already does for charity work, such as food pantry distribution, holiday outreach efforts, or engagement with shelters and/or soup kitchens.
- Invite the youth of the community to serve as the lead agents for these efforts on a quarterly basis (or at a regularity that works best for the local parish).

⁴⁵ LTS, p. 47.

- Ensure that teens are not just the workers, but also actively involved in advance planning, collection efforts, and follow-up tasks.
- Ministry leaders can accompany the youth through this process through spiritual and formational activities, such as the important work of building relationships with those most impacted, leading them deeper into the Catholic social teaching that provides the roots for these charitable programs.
- NOTE: Be sure to ensure child and youth safety, as well as consult with insurance policies that each parish, school, or diocese has that guides all pastoral activities with minors. This is especially important when interacting with people on the margins of society.

In ministries with young adults:

Empower young adults to advocate for justice with their elected representatives.

Here's how:

- Learn about the local bishop's policy regarding diocesan pastoral leaders and activities that interface with politics and public life (N.B., in some states, the bishops will have joined to agree on certain policy directions. Your state Catholic conference director will have this information).
- Hold educational seminars with invited speakers to help young adults understand Catholic policies on each issue. Because of the seriousness of the issues of life, justice, and human dignity, invite your state's Catholic conference staff or diocesan policy director to meet with the young adults.
- Have the invited guest(s) cover the basic points of advocacy for specific Catholic justice issues. This can include an explanation of the bishop's or state Catholic conference's direction. Remember, Catholic pastoral leaders should advocate with one voice in harmony with the bishops.
- Plan to involve the young adults in the diocese or state Catholic Conference's "advocacy days." For example, every state Catholic Conference gathers for a Respect Life advocacy day (or other occasions around immigration, care for creation, capital punishment, etc.).
- Consider ways to get involved at the national level.

For example, the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering ([CSMG](#)), sponsored by the USCCB Justice and Peace Secretariat, is an excellent way for young adults to participate and advocate on the federal level. Other national events include the [Annual Vigil for Life](#) and the [March for Life](#) and getting involved with organizations such as the [Catholic Mobilizing Network](#) (around the death penalty), [Catholic Climate Covenant](#) or the [Laudato Si' Movement](#) (around care for creation), or [Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.](#) (CLINIC, around immigration and migration issues), among others.

- Those working with young adults can visit the [USCCB Action Center](#) to learn about federal legislation on which young adult advocacy is always needed.

3.3 Vocational Discernment

...help young people hear the voice of God, to discern their vocation...⁴⁶

Adolescence and young adulthood are critical times when young people should be trying to discover where God is calling them to serve and love their neighbors. Such discovery, from a Catholic faith perspective, is best done through the experience of prayerful discernment. Families and those who minister with youth and young adults can aid in this process by introducing young people to the art of discernment and to accompany them through that journey. It is essential to create opportunities for young people to engage in personal and communal prayer, to understand the many vocational opportunities before them, and to take active steps towards whatever prayerful decision is made for their lives.

In accompanying young people as they discern their vocations, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Bring in spiritual leaders to teach youth about discernment.

Here's how:

- Meet with your youth ministry team to plan the following strategy. Review the steps below and discuss how this strategy may have to be changed to meet the needs of the teens under your care.
- Ensure that your plan is in conformity with diocesan guidelines for child and youth protection.
- Send the parents of the adolescents a letter of information (and permission forms, if needed). Parents will need to be aware that you will provide education on vocational discernment.
- Plan a foundational educational event. Schedule the diocesan director of vocations or a local certified spiritual director or professor of spiritual direction to speak with the teens. Also consider asking if the bishop can meet with the teens. Have the person cover the basics of individual vocations and spiritual discernment.
 - This may be a leader within or the vocational director for a diocese or a consecrated religious community, a spiritual director from a nearby college or university, a young adult who is trained and formed in spirituality, a pastor or bishop, or an expert trusted by the Church's leadership, to lead such efforts. Work with the ministry team serving youth to explore ways to best address discernment with youth and develop a plan to introduce this with the aid of the spiritual leader identified.
- Plan discernment prayer events. Teach the teens how to do quiet prayer, either before the Blessed Sacrament, in the silence of a chapel or religious space, or within God's creation, where young people can hear the Lord's voice beyond the noise of everyday life.

⁴⁶ LTS, p. 48.

- Moving forward, invite guests (e.g., priests, married men and women, doctors, teachers, etc.) to share their vocational stories—how they arrived at their understanding about what God wanted from them and also how they pray. Alternatively, youth leaders can accompany young people to visit the houses of married couples or the houses of religious men and women (such as a monastery or convent) where these stories can be shared in their home spaces.

In ministries with young adults:

Host vocational discernment roundtables for young adults.

Here's how:

- Look for natural opportunities throughout the calendar year for young adults within the parish or college campus to gather monthly for vocational discernment roundtables.
- Invite people in a variety of vocational paths: engaged and married couples, diocesan and religious order priests, consecrated religious women and men, deacons (and their wives), lay ecclesial ministers, and those who are currently in formation for lay, ordained, or religious life.
- Look to hold these roundtable gatherings in comfortable/casual, yet safe, settings that can allow for deep discussions on personal topics.
- Develop a series of initial discussion questions for conversations. These questions might include: What first inspired you to consider this vocational journey? Who has been the most influential to your vocational journey thus far? What doubts did you (or do you) have regarding this path?
- Even if you have leading questions, let the young adults engage authentically with each other and the guests (the couples, priests, deacons, consecrated religious, or lay ministers) so that all feel like be an active part of the dialogue. Be sure to include food, drink, and fellowship as part of this activity to allow for a more relaxed environment and natural conversations.

3.4 Faithful Protagonists Today

...encourage youth and young adults to be a 'living part of the Church, protagonists of her mission' and co-responsible leaders active in their faith at this very moment.⁴⁷

Youth and young adults are not just the “Church of tomorrow” but are truly the “now of God” (CV, no. 178), a phrase Pope Francis uses frequently with younger audiences. With proper education, discernment, and formation, young people can step into specific leadership roles in the faith community and in society. Families and pastoral ministers can enact creative ways to invite, support, form, and engage the young people they know to actively step into leadership roles. Keep an eye out to identify young persons who exhibit leadership qualities as well as those who need additional support to discover their potential.

⁴⁷ LTS, p. 50.

Equip youth and young adults with examples of good Catholic leaders (the saints and the holy women and men of the Catholic Church are excellent role models), as well as access to the Sacraments (offering young people with the grace they need to be effective leaders).

Help them hone their leadership skills. Introduce and guide them toward opportunities where their skills can be used for others, whether in the parish, school, campus, diocese, or as an active member of society.

In identifying and preparing young leaders, here are strategies to consider:

Within the home and family:

Ask young people to lead prayers and collaborate on faith decisions for the family.

Here's how:

- Before meals, and especially at special dinner moments on birthdays and holidays, invite the youth and/or young adults within your family to lead the family in grace/prayer.
 - You may wish to share this invitation prior to the meal, so that the young person has time to prepare himself or herself accordingly.
 - To encourage collaboration, you may wish to invite siblings or cousins in their youth and/or young adult years to offer the meal prayer together; again, you may wish to share this invitation with them prior to the meal or occasion.
- Invite the young people in the family to work alongside you in making decisions regarding faith activities such as: which Mass you attend together; how and where to participate in charity and justice work in the community; which Scripture story to read together; when to light the family Advent wreath or place figures in the family creche/manger; among other similar activities.
- By involving the youth and young adults in key faith-related decisions, they can begin to recognize their role as a faith leader beyond the family home. Once a young person feels comfortable taking this protagonist role in familiar environment, encourage him or her to engage faith proactively at church, in school or at work, among his or her peers, when making important decisions, and as an active Catholic in society.
 - In some cases, the youth or young adult members of the family may eventually be the ones motivating the rest of the family to go to Mass, participate in Catholic activities, learn about the faith, or getting involved in the social mission of the Church.

Within school settings:

Develop a leadership peer formation program in high school.

Here's how:

- Invite Catholic high school students, in particular those who exhibit leadership abilities, to be part of a small-group peer leadership team at the high school.

- Depending on your situation and size capacity, consider creating three or more small-group teams (of about four to seven students, max), each focused on different components of a Catholic campus ministry program.
- When gathering each small group team, encourage them to spend time to pray together and share their faith with one another, and then teach or share basic leadership skills – and how these can be used to guide and engage their peers to draw closer to Christ and the Catholic faith.
- Use a retreat, liturgy, spiritual event, or service activity through the high school as a focus for building up each peer leadership team, so that they can hone their skills and prepare to lead in these settings. The preparatory process before their event could take a semester or longer, with weekly (or more frequent) meetings that involve faith formation and skills development.
- The lead pastoral ministers in the high school can meet periodically with all teams for ongoing spiritual and leadership formation, beyond the particular skills taught within each small group. Time can be set aside for sharing ideas, learnings, and experiences to help each team grow.

Within parish or diocesan settings:

Invite young adults to be key members of the pastoral and finance councils.

Here's how:

- Review the requirements for membership in parish and/or diocesan pastoral and finance councils. Among the young adults who are active or already engaged in pastoral ministries (within the parish or diocese), identify who may meet those requirements.
 - If some young adults fall short of the necessary requirements, devise a plan to prepare them to meet the requirements for future involvement.
- Assess the needs of the existing parish or diocesan leadership councils (pastoral, finance, building, etc.; NB: some campus ministry programs may have such councils). Notice who is missing at the table and what skills, talents, and gifts are needed for effective ministry.
- Recruit and invite Catholic young adults to the corresponding parish or diocesan councils that may be missing their specific skills and talents.
 - The invitation should NOT be extended to one young adult alone; rather, it is strongly recommended that at least two young adults be invited to participate so that the individuals do not feel boxed in or tokenized, and so that they have peer support on the council.
- When a young adult steps onto a pastoral or finance council, encourage him or her to first learn about the various tasks and, if appropriate, how to volunteer to take on a leadership role as a committee chairperson or project manager. Should a young adult be given a role of responsibility, allow him or her the creative license to try new things, especially ideas that may connect to the evangelization and accompaniment of the younger generations, as appropriate.

...global gatherings have inspired successive generations of pilgrims to discern their vocations... and bring the Gospel home with them...⁴⁸

One of the most fruitful ways that the Church has produced young leaders over the past half-century has been through the work of nationwide and global ecclesial gatherings such as World Youth Day or country-specific events like national youth or collegiate conferences, teach-ins, Eucharistic congresses, or large-scale Catholic events involving bishops and internationally known presenters.

Introducing youth and young adults to the universal Church can have incredible consequences, as it often fuels a sense of purpose and a recognition of the rich catholicity and diversity that exists in the wider faith community. To foster faithful protagonists, consider ways to engage in these key moments, while also being mindful that the post-event “*mystagogy*” and follow-up are equally as important in the formation of missionary disciples, lest these events become limited to happy memories.

In fostering missionary discipleship through key events, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with both youth and young adults:
Host local celebrations around Christ the King Sunday.

Here’s how:

- With the annual *Global Celebration of Young People* (inclusive of both youth and young adults) taking place on the Solemnity of Christ the King each year, the Church has a built-in opportunity to celebrate and motivate youth and young adults in a local community.
- In the local celebration of the weekend liturgies for Christ the King Sunday, invite young people to serve in key roles such as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, greeters, musicians, or gift bearers.
- Identify ways to connect the young people in the parish level with youth and young adults across the diocese/eparchy, across the country, or around the world (including at the Vatican) who are also engaged in the *Global Celebration of Young People* that same day.
 - Work with your diocesan or national leaders to find ways to make these connections and consider ways to connect via video, live-streaming, or social media.
- Discern, in collaboration with the ministry teams and already-active youth and young adult churchgoers, how to develop a celebration beyond the Christ the King weekend liturgies that can foster fellowship, evangelization, and encouragement of the Christian mission in society. See the USCCB *Global Celebration* [web page](#) for ideas and guides for this occasion.
- In future years, consider how young people can be involved in World Day of the Sick, World Day of the Poor, World Communications Day, World Mental Health Day, among other opportunities to draw on the global nature of the Catholic community.

⁴⁸ LTS, p. 51.

In church and school settings:

Pilgrimage with young people to and from World Youth Day (WYD).

Here's how:

- Recognizing that, every few years, the Catholic Church hosts an international World Youth Day celebration for youth and young adults (generally age 16 to 35), prayerfully discern if you want to coordinate a pilgrimage of young people from your community to the next worldwide moment.
- Research what options are available in your local area: what your arch/diocese/eparchy or nearby parishes or dioceses are doing; what may be happening through particular Catholic apostolates, organizations, or religious communities; or what travel agencies are coordinating trips.
- Consider collaborating with nearby parishes, campuses, schools, or arch/diocese/eparchies, as well as Catholic apostolates, organizations, religious communities, or other groups who may want to go to the next World Youth Day.
- Prepare pilgrims with intentional catechesis, service and justice work, and fellowship prior to the trip. Take time for retreats, liturgies, and moments of prayer during the months before WYD. Be mindful of opportunities to encourage leadership growth among the pilgrims.
- Before going to WYD, start planning the return experience by encouraging the young people on pilgrimage to think about how they can use their experiences at WYD to step into the role of missionary discipleship, especially among their peers and local communities.
- Hold several follow-up meetings after returning from WYD, to hold the pilgrims accountable as inspired pilgrim leaders, witnessing to Jesus Christ to all they encounter. During these meetings, consider using the "[Conversations in the Spirit](#)" method as a guide for listening to and discerning what was experienced and what can fuel further engagement beyond those big events.

All young people of faith are called to step forward, for the Holy Spirit has graced each of them with gifts "to promote the building of the kingdom of God in the world today, thereby bringing about the transformation of society..."⁴⁹

The call to faithful protagonism does not end at the church walls, nor does it only involve leadership in Catholic or Christian contexts. Rather, it extends forth from the Church and into society at large. In the same way, equipping youth and young adults in this manner should help them transform the world to make it closer to the kingdom of God shared by Christ in the Gospels.

Families and pastoral ministers can foster this direction, so that a young person looks beyond the church settings and discerns how they can use their gifts in their schooling, their careers, their families, and in the betterment of society. The Catholic Church, in the Second Vatican Council, called for a revival of the apostolate of the laity, to be "leaven" for the world, infusing it with the love of Christ for all humankind. We can help in that mission by pointing youth and young adults to be dynamic lay Catholic men and women that share the Gospel through their lives.

⁴⁹ LTS, p. 52.

In helping young people transform society, here are strategies to consider:

In ministries with youth:

Encourage teens to discern their future paths beyond high school.

Here's how:

- Take a quiet moment with teenagers and ask them to look ahead at their life beyond high school, inviting them to wonder what lies ahead of them.
- Begin with reading the Emmaus story (Lk 24:13-35), pointing out that Jesus joins the disciples on their intended journey toward Emmaus – just as he now joins them in their intended journey toward their future destination. Also keep in mind, the two travelers were moving away from the other disciples and from the holy city of Jerusalem. As such, it is also a story about returning to the roots.
- Ask the young people to write out, draw, map, or create a visual image of their path to Emmaus.
 - Some may reflect on going off to college or university to study in preparation for a professional career of some kind, while others may recognize their engagement in a trade or workplace immediately after high school. Still others will move towards military service in the armed forces. A few young people may consider their specific vocational calling as a married person or in church service as a priest, consecrated religious, or lay minister. Encourage the young people to consider all that could lie ahead of them.
- Engage in discussion around all the potential destinations or roads they could travel upon and how they can choose the path(s) that God seems to be calling them to follow. Discuss how Jesus might appear along their paths and how they can recognize him journeying alongside them on the way.
- Share with the young people that the path(s) they should follow are the ones that allow them to transform the world to help build up the Kingdom of God through their skills, talents, and spiritual gifts. Offer them insights and examples of various options (and saints who also walked that path).
- Close the session by encouraging them to work in partnership with their parents and families, as well as mentors, spiritual directors, pastoral leaders, and older Catholics who have walked their own collegiate, career, vocational, or service paths.

In ministries with young adults:

Motivate young adults to engage their careers and workplaces with a missionary spirit.

Here's how:

- Gather young adults together in similarly focused workplace or career groups, depending on the realities within the local region (i.e., those in accounting or finance, those in customer service, those in military service, etc.).
- Take time for prayer and study together, as well as time for fellowship and community-building.

- Either an older adult mentor or a young adult peer leader can help others within those groups to reflect on how they can use their gifts and talents to make their careers and workplaces into places of love, service, and mission, responding to the needs of the world.
- Being mindful of the call to bear witness to the Good News (Canon 225) while also being careful about overt religiosity in places of work (where such activities may have both legal or moral implications), these teams can consider ways to infuse their daily activities with a sense of vocational mission as well as a communal spirit of compassion, justice, and belonging within the workplace, such as holding a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable in decision-making.
- Each person will need to wrestle with where the boundaries are based on their situation, awareness, or conscience among other considerations.

We are called... to send (young people) forth as they move further along the path God has laid out for them in their lives...⁵⁰

The work of the “listening” and “teaching” work that was cultivated in the home and in Catholic communities yields an intentional “sending” that moves youth and young adults into the mission God has in store for each and every one of them. We cannot sit back on this task. We are called to inspire, motivate, and equip young people so that they can take up the mantle of this holy mission.

If we get overwhelmed by the tasks presented in this guidebook, always remember to allow the Holy Spirit to take the ultimate lead in guiding your family or the ministry of the community towards its goal. Our work of accompaniment is done with a firm reliance on the Lord while also using our own gifts and talents as missionary disciples to journey with youth and young adults towards the kingdom of God.

⁵⁰ LTS, p. 52.

Conclusion

The *Listen, Teach, Send* document concludes with a few pages to help those reading the framework to examine their own realities as a missionary disciple. While there are many great ideas to consider in ministering with, for, and to youth and/or young adults (in the home, school, or faith community), any plan or program is only as fruitful as the people who put it into motion. So, before proceeding in your own ministerial zeal, pay attention to the document's *Conclusion* and make sure to attend to your own self-care and mental health. Consider the recommended strategies listed in this final section to endure and sustain yourself in healthy ways for the mission of the Church on behalf of youth and/or young adults.

Many of us were also accompanied by our parents, families, teachers, mentors, and friends in youth and young adulthood...⁵¹

On a personal level, each family member or pastoral minister reading this guidebook has his or her own story to tell. Each of us can share how God moved in our lives, transforming our hearts to make them more receptive of Christ and the Gospel. Much of that was likely due to our parents, families, teachers, mentors, and the friends and colleagues we journeyed with along the way: those who listened to us, those who responded to us with passionate teaching, and those who inspired us to step into the Christian mission.

If we are to accompany youth and young adults, we must also remember to thank God for those who accompanied us and allow God, through our current community of family, friends, colleagues, and mentors, to continue forming and shaping us—for we are far from complete. If we are humble enough to let the Lord open our hearts every day to his love, then we can share that same humility with the young.

In reflecting on your own past to cultivate gratitude, here are some strategies to consider:

As a missionary disciple:

Make a gratitude list of the people who listened, taught, and sent you.

Here's how:

- Slow down and take a quiet moment and prayerfully reflect on your past: where you have been, what has led you to this point in your life, and who you have grown into over the years. Think especially about God, who guided you to this point in your life.
- Write out the names of the teachers, mentors, family members, and ministers who led you toward faith and inspired you in your current faith efforts.
 - It may be helpful to look at photos, mementos, or other tangible items that might conjure up the names and faces of the people in your past who journeyed with you.
- Take your list and keep it close to you, especially in moments of prayer and during your regular liturgical practice.

⁵¹ LTS, p. 53.

As a missionary disciple:

Engage in an “examen” of conscience on discovering God at work in your daily routine.

Here’s how:

- Using the [Ignatian Examen](#) as a guide, reflect on a regular basis on your daily routine, especially related to the ministry of accompanying youth and/or young adults.
- Slow down to take time and recount the moments in a spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving and reflect on the places where you felt God’s presence or heard his voice most clearly. Step back from technology in this moment.
- In silence and stillness, resolve to seek the Lord in the experiences of ministry and in the hearts and souls of the young people in your care.

As a missionary disciple:

Pray before the Blessed Sacrament for the graces to continue in this work.

Here’s how:

- Resolve and set aside time in your calendar to pause your routine to pray with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Take at least five minutes or a whole hour to regularly spend time with the Lord.
- Pray in stillness before the Blessed Sacrament and allow God to speak to your heart. You will be grateful for the moment of calm in your otherwise busy life.
- Reflect in deep prayer on your own faith journey, asking how and where Jesus is calling you now and what he may be inviting you to do next.
- Surrender your anxieties, worries, and concerns to God, and be at peace in his Real Presence. Receive the Lord’s love for your life.
- Express gratitude to God for this special moment. Resolve to keep coming back to him.

*Those who accompany youth and young adults are most effective
when they work in collaboration with the entire community...⁵²*

We do not do this work alone. We are joined by countless witnesses in the accompaniment of youth and young adults. While the specific ministries may look different from church to church, school to school, family to family, and culture to culture, the uniting factor is a love for Jesus Christ and the young. It is helpful to recognize that collaborative tapestry in which we play a part, and to find others with whom we can work together for the sake of meeting, forming, and inspiring young missionary disciples.

⁵² LTS, p. 55.

In widening our ministerial collaboration, here are strategies to consider:

As a missionary disciple:

Identify co-workers in this ministry within and beyond your local faith community.

Here's how:

- Intentionally seek out other people in your parish, school, campus, or arch/diocese/eparchy who not only share your passion for ministry and/or young people but also could collaborate with you on specific projects.
- Consider reaching out beyond your comfort zone: to leaders of other ministries that might connect to the lives of young people; to leaders in other Catholic and Christian communities in the area; to those with whom you may have previously dismissed or avoided, among others.
- Cultivate a strong ecclesial network by getting to know the stories of the people you encounter, spending time with them, and fostering a genuine friendship.
- Due to your shared love of Christ and your concern for young people, brainstorm with them on what might be possible in working together on behalf of youth and/or young adults.

As a missionary disciple:

Work with other leaders to have regular listening sessions.

Here's how:

- With collaborators (including the network cultivated, as noted in the previous entry), make a plan to keep listening together to the voices of young people.
- Even though “listening” is a first step in the *Listen, Teach, Send* methodology, families and pastoral leaders are called to keep hearing what is new and to pay attention to who may have been missed. Times and people change, and so much our listening.
- Work with your extended and growing networks to consider the others’ engagement of young people, which can widen the number of youth and/or young adults to whom you can listen anew.
- Carry out listening sessions on a regular basis, working collaboratively with other missionary disciples and with the same concern you had in any initial listening experiences.

As a missionary disciple:

Host intergenerational gatherings focused on young people in your faith community.

Here's how:

- Assess the engagement of older adults and grandparents in the family, school, or faith community, looking for areas to grow the connection between generations.
- Seek ways to connect the elders with youth and/or young adults through intentional programming, one-on-one mentorship, or shared faith experiences (i.e., liturgies, parish events, etc.), based on what seems most natural and symbiotic.

- Foster these connections by planning intergenerational gatherings on a regular basis, so that your work with young people is supported by those of other generations than your own.

As a missionary disciple:

Bring together families and ministries that accompany youth and young adults.

Here's how:

- First, recognize that you do not do this accompaniment alone. Families, schools, and ministries are all interconnected in so many ways.
 - Throughout *Listen, Teach, Send* and this guidebook, effort has been made to address the distinctiveness of each audience of missionary disciples: parents and families; school and campus leaders (in high school, college, and post-graduate education); parish and arch/diocesan/eparchial ministers; pastors, deacons, religious, and other lay leaders.
- Seek ways to collaborate with one another. The methods and styles of engagement with young people look different depending on the reality of family, educational institutions, church structures, and communities; however, the goal is the same: accompanying young people to Jesus Christ in the Church to foster their own missionary discipleship
- Take the first step and reach out beyond your situation to find others who are having an impact in one way or another on the youth and/or young adults in your care.
- Keep each other regularly informed, share your stories, and even plan ministry work with young people together. Most importantly, pray for and with each other, offering your shared service to youth and/or young adults to God, who draws all people together in his love.

*...an encouragement for all her faithful—young and old together—
to persevere and to be patient in this important work...⁵³*

Fruitful ministry with any age group, especially youth and young adults, takes time. This effort will not be accomplished overnight, or within the ministry cycle of one individual. Trust needs to be formed, mistakes need to happen (along with the lessons learned from those stumbles), and the Gospel needs to take root in people's hearts. This is why the last words of the Catholic bishops of the United States in *Listen, Teach, Send* call for prayer, patience, and perseverance.

Pray always for the young people whom you have been called to accompany, whether in your family or in the faith community (or both). Pray for those who challenge you and create difficulties in your efforts.

Pray for God to grant you confidence to continue in this work. And pray for a persevering, patient heart that the Holy Spirit may find a home in your soul and in the lives of the young people around you.

⁵³ LTS, p. 56.

