

2018 Synod Of Bishops
Young People, The Faith & Vocational Discernment



Report Submitted To Archbishop Charles Chaput, OFM
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Table of Contents

Part One – The overall analysis of the survey of our young people

Part Two – The overall analysis of the survey of adults engaged in faith formation of young people

Part Three – The overall analysis of the survey of priests from the Archdiocese

Part Four – Synod Survey: *Some Notes Before You Begin*

Part Five – Questions For Young People: *A More Detailed Analysis*

Part Six – Questions For Adults Engaged In Faith Formation Of Young People: *A More Detailed Analysis*

Part Seven – Questions For Priests: *A More Detailed Analysis*

Part One

OVERALL ANALYSIS – Young People

A total of eight questions were asked of young people. In general, those who responded to the survey have stated:

- ✓ They have a desire to gather with other young people
- ✓ Serving others is something they value
- ✓ They find their future challenging
- ✓ They are pressured by surrounding culture
- ✓ They feel judged by the Church
- ✓ They have a different ethos regarding sexual morality than the Church
- ✓ They recommend a greater presence by the Church on social media

Part Two

OVERALL ANALYSIS – Lay Adults Who Work With Young People

A total of six questions were asked of lay adults who are actively involved in the faith formation of young people (the majority of whom work in our Catholic schools). In general, those who responded to the survey have stated:

- ✓ They believe intentional gatherings are helpful in vocational discernment
- ✓ They use curriculum and retreats to help young people in vocational discernment
- ✓ They depend on the Vocations Office for vocations planning
- ✓ They believe national (like NCYC) and international (like WYD) Church events need to be more affordable and well-planned.
- ✓ They, themselves, use social media to evangelize

Part Three

OVERALL ANALYSIS – Priests

A total of six questions were asked of priests who work within the Archdiocese. In general, those who responded to the survey have stated:

- ✓ They believe that providing gathering opportunities, pilgrimages, retreats and service projects are the best opportunities for the faith formation of young people
- ✓ Unless they are in the Education Apostolate they spend minimal time with young people
- ✓ They are not aware of building a skill-set to better evangelize young people.
- ✓ They avoid the topic of forming young people as disciples *in the civics process*.
- ✓ They are willing to help victims of violence in any way necessary.

Part Four

Synod Survey – Some Notes Before You Begin

Throughout the surveys please note the following:

- 1) The respondents were given the option of providing MORE than one answer; therefore, you will notice total percentages exceeding 100%
- 2) I use the term “significant response” to represent an answer which is 65% and above. My criteria for using this term is: in any election, a significant victory (a landslide) is considered one where the winner defeats the opponent by more than 15%
- 3) Not all of the respondents to the surveys chose to answer all the questions. For example, 897 young people answered the first question on their survey while only 838 answered the second question.
- 4) You will notice a low number of respondents in the second survey. Most of these are teachers of Theology (and not other disciplines) in our Catholic schools.

Part Five

Questions For Young People: A More Detailed Analysis

1. In what manner does the Church listen to the lived situations of young people?

897 young people (16-29) responded.

1. 306 (35%) said *by gathering them and asking them about life.*
2. 287 (33%) said *by surveys, such as this.*
3. 388 (44%) said *the Church really hasn't taken the time to do so (until now)*

Throughout the survey, the comments were as varied as the people who responded. For this question, some stated that the Church does try, others stated in Confession or retreats. The most salient points were: there is a sense of being invisible in planning AND there is a sense of the Church NOT giving hope for the future but rather making them regret their past.

Thoughts:

44% is not a “significant response.” But it’s not insignificant, either. There is a sense (based on this number and the comments) that these young people are not listened to and are not involved in planning.

There is also a sensitivity about their past rather than having hope for their future.

2. What are the main challenges facing young people?

838 young people responded.

1. 411 (49%) said *dysfunctional families.*
2. 265 (32%) said *economics.*
3. 594 (71%) said *uncertainty regarding the future.*

Peer pressure (regarding sex, the existence of God, expectations and overall apathy/indifference) was a comment often made. Many respondents noted that the relationship between faith and science is confusing.

Thoughts:

71% is significant. I do not believe this is surprising. I do believe, however, that it gives the Church some insight into the fears young people have. The comments echo our conventional wisdom regarding the power of the ambient culture and the effect it has on young people.

3. What are the most significant opportunities for young people today?

871 young people responded.

1. 337 (39%) said *helping to bring about peace.*
2. 622 (71%) said *performing acts of service.*
3. 187 (21%) said *working for justice through government.*

Making good use of technology/social media and creating community were comments most often cited.

Thoughts:

71% is significant. Young people have a desire to serve. Combined with the comments I believe it provides them with a healthy way to be part of a community.

Social media begins to be mentioned in the survey.

4. What kinds and places of group gatherings of youth have a major success within the Church and why?

873 young people responded.

1. 591 (68%) said *retreats, as they refresh people and build them up*
2. 242 (28%) said *rallies, as they bring people together from different areas.*
3. 155 (18%) said *they were not aware of youth gatherings.*

There were a lot of GOOD COMMENTS here. Many respondents mentioned KAIROS retreats and Steubenville Youth Conferences (high school). Many others mentioned the need for mission trips and young adult groups. One constant theme was a need to gather.

Thoughts:

68% is significant. Sentiments are reflected in the comments of the power of retreats (and, again, gathering).

5. What kinds and places of group gatherings of youth have major success outside the Church and why?

871 young people responded.

1. 582 (67%) said *sports, as they enable us to gather and engage in recreation.*
2. 495 (57%) said *music concerts, as they allow us to gather and listen to music we all like.*
3. 134 (15%) said *religious events that are NOT Catholic, as they are uplifting.*

The comments were quite varied. The comment MOST mentioned was the need for a common cause.

Thoughts:

67% is significant. As we look outside of Church to see what gathers people it is clear people are looking to gather around a common cause (music, sports, etc.).

6. What do young people really ask of the Church in the U.S. and elsewhere today?

872 young people responded.

1. 436 (50%) said *to be there for us when we need the Church, such as in times of celebration or in times of need.*
2. 574 (66%) said *to be a sign of hope in a world that seems to be without it at times.*
3. 385 (44%) said *to stand up for the truth.*

This question created the most comments of young people. The comment most often made had to do with homosexuality and tolerance/acceptance of it. Some mentioned to stop being so judgmental.

Thoughts:

66% is significant. Young people want the Church to give them hope. The comments are predictable regarding morality. Half want the Church to be there in good times and in bad.

7. What possibilities for participation exist for young people to take part in the life of the Church?

880 young people responded.

1. 437 (50%) said *to perform corporal and spiritual works of mercy.*
2. 384 (44%) said *to attend conferences and retreats which are centered on Jesus Christ.*
3. 626 (71%) said *to attend Mass on Sundays and other liturgical celebrations.*

The need for more young adult groups was mentioned several times.

Thoughts:

71% is significant. Of those who responded, a significant number equate “life of the Church” with Sunday Mass. This highlights the need to make the Sunday Mass experience more attractive. There is, however, a desire for gathering with other young people (in the comments).

8. How are young people who are not involved in the life of the Church contacted?

881 young people responded.

1. 327 (37%) said *they are regularly invited by other young people who are involved.*
2. 401 (46%) said *through the use of social media.*
3. 326 (37%) said *I am not aware of any such outreach.*

The overwhelming comment was the need for a greater presence on social media.

Thoughts:

The comments indicated a greater need for social media presence.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

The young people who responded to this survey:

- ✓ **Want to gather with other young people**
- ✓ **Serving others is something they value**
- ✓ **Find their future challenging**
- ✓ **Are pressured by surrounding culture**
- ✓ **Feel judged by the Church**
- ✓ **Have a different ethos regarding sexual morality than the Church**
- ✓ **Recommend a greater presence by the Church on social media**

Part Six

Questions For Adults Engaged In Faith Formation Of Young People: A More Detailed Analysis

1. How are families and communities involved in the vocational discernment of young people (16-29)?

44 people responded

1. 30 (68%) *said through retreats.*
2. 32 (73%) *said through intentional gatherings to specifically help young people discern their vocation.*
4. 388 (44%) *said the Church really hasn't taken the time to do so (until now)*

The comments are varied. Two things are mentioned more than others: vocational discernment is covered in Catholic schools and intentional gatherings such as “come and see” weekends and “Quo Vadis” retreats.

Thoughts:

73% is significant. As is 68%. It seems clear that the intentional gatherings such as weekend discernment groups and retreats are most noteworthy. Also, that 44% are unaware of such programs is disappointing.

2. How do schools and universities contribute to young people's formation in vocational discernment?

50 people responded

1. 42 (84%) said *through curriculum*.
2. 40 (80%) said *through retreats*.
3. 12 (24%) said *through pilgrimages*.

Again, the comments are varied. Ideas such as small discernment groups, school culture, visibility of priest/religious were highlighted.

Thoughts:

84% and 80% are abnormally high. These are questions answered by teachers and other educators.

3. In what manner are you taking into account the cultural changes resulting from the digital world?

50 people responded

1. 33 (63%) said *they have intentional websites* (designed to assist in vocational discernment).
2. 39 (75%) said *they use Facebook/Instagram/Other Social Media*

The comments stressed the need to use social media to evangelize young people.

Thoughts:

75% is significant. These are professionals in terms of youth ministry. The 75% reveals how *they*, the professionals, reach young people.

4. How can World Youth Day or other national or international events become a part of ordinary pastoral practice?

57 people responded

1. 54 (95%) said *there needs to be early planning and affordable access to such events.*
2. 33 (58%) said *there needs to be greater intentional connection to these events.*
3. 38 (67%) said *there needs to be greater follow up events for those who have participated.*

Two comments were cited most often: cost and the need for smaller, local gatherings.

Thoughts:

95% is a veritable consensus. Early planning and affordability are vital. The comments regarding the need for local gatherings are linked to the affordability of such events.

5. In what manner is your diocese planning experiences for the pastoral vocational discernment for young people?

44 people responded

1. 14 (32%) said *there are regular planning meetings.*
2. 19 (43%) said *there are well-coordinated communications programs in place.*
3. 19 (43%) said *there are no experiences planned.*

The comments are clear that such work is predominantly done by the Vocations Office.

Thoughts:

I find the comments to be most interesting: the Vocations Office is doing all the work. Only 32% believe there are regular planning meetings.

6. How much time do you provide for the personal spiritual guidance of young people?

43 people responded

1. 13 (30%) said *2 hours per week*.
2. 14 (33%) said *5 hours per week*.
3. 16 (37%) said *8 hours per week*.

The comments make it *abundantly* clear that the adults doing the bulk of this work are employed in Catholic educational institutions.

Thoughts:

Teaching religion class is where most spiritual guidance of young people is occurring.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

Those who responded to this survey:

- ✓ **Believe intentional gatherings are helpful in vocational discernment**
- ✓ **Use curriculum and retreats to help young people in vocational discernment**
- ✓ **Depend on the Vocations Office for vocations planning**
- ✓ **Believe national (like NCYC) and international (like WYD) Church events need to be more affordable and well-planned.**
- ✓ **Use social media to evangelize**

Part Seven

Questions For Priests: *A More Detailed Analysis*

1. Outside of weekly Mass, how much time do you provide for the personal spiritual guidance of young people?

72 priests responded

1. 39 (54%) said 2 hours per week.
2. 18 (25%) said 5 hours per week.
3. 16 (22%) said 8 hours per week.

The comments are varied. Some mentioned confession. Others mentioned teaching in a school. Most mentioned less than 2 hours per week. One priest mentioned “most of us avoid it due to fear of false accusations.”

Thoughts:

I'm not sure how accurate the last comment is but it is a sentiment I've heard expressed in many forms. Priests spend less time with young people than in times past.

2. In what manner do you provide for the personal spiritual guidance of young people?

85 priests responded

1. 53 (62%) said *through spiritual direction*
2. 27 (32%) said *through retreats*
3. 58 (68%) said *through faith formation activities.*

The comments were varied. The term “conversationally” came up several times. That is, through conversations with young people some priests are providing spiritual guidance.

Thoughts:

While priests are providing spiritual direction the term “spiritual direction” was not defined. Given some of the comments it appears that things such as conversations and homilies constitute spiritual direction. Since the majority of priests are spending less than 2 hours per week with young people they are not referring to formal spiritual direction.

Conversely, a significant percentage (68%) admit to helping young people through faith formation activities. The definition and frequency of such activities, however, were not cited.

3. What initiatives and opportunities for ongoing formation are in place for you in order to provide pastoral vocational guidance for young people?

85 priests responded

1. 38 (45%) said *retreats*.
2. 26 (33%) said *workshops*.
3. 38 (45%) said *none that I am aware of*.

This question was answered in two ways. First, it seems to have been misinterpreted. The intention was to see what the PRIEST is doing to learn more about forming young people. Second, some DID respond that they have sought conferences/workshops to learn more about how to evangelize young people. One respondent mentioned he spent a summer in Nebraska learning the Spiritual Exercises which has helped him to help young people discern God’s will.

Thoughts:

In my opinion, this is the most salient question of all asked of priests. The misinterpretation is revealing. The question was asked regarding opportunities “for you.” That is, how can a priest better learn to evangelize young people. Many priests thought the intent had to do with programs that are available for the young people, themselves. I think it leads to another question: do priests think in terms of how they can build a skill set for themselves to better evangelize young people?

4. How does your community care for young people who experience extreme violence (gangs, prison, drug addiction, domestic violence, etc.)?

91 priests responded to this

1. 18 (20%) said *we provide counseling as needed.*
2. 30 (33%) said *we are available to visit with them on an as-needed basis.*
3. 45 (50%) said *we are available to refer them to facilities that provide competent care.*
4. 45 (50%) said *we do all of the above.*

There were very few comments (only 7, compared to the 91 who actually responded to the question).

Thoughts:

That only 7 of 91 priests commented is revealing. The default position here, when it comes to extreme violence, that we are here for you as needed OR we know where to refer people.

5. What information/formation do you offer to support the engagement of young people in society and civil life, for the common good?

42 priests responded to this

1. 20 (48%) said *we provide seminars/workshops on the role/obligation of young Catholics in civil life.*

2. 14 (33%) said *we have kiosk stations in the church/office that provide information on the role/obligation young Catholics have in civil life.*

3. 5 (19%) said *BOTH*

Of the 38 comments, 17 replied “none.” Most of the others responded that the school/PREP does this.

Thoughts:

Only 42 priests responded to the question (the lowest number). There seems to be an apathy when it comes to forming young people in the civics process. The political atmosphere is so combative that I would not be surprised it's why priests may desire to avoid it.

As an aside, priests have been very effective in communicating civics messages (see HB 1947)

6. In a world that is greatly secularized, what pastoral activities are most effective for continuing the journey of faith after the Sacraments?

92 priests responded to this

1. 42 (46%) said *faith formation groups for young people.*
2. 14 (15%) said *pilgrimages as a way of engaging young people.*
3. 27 (29%) said *retreats as a way of continuing the journey of faith for young people.*
4. 51 (55%) said *groups, pilgrimages and retreats are the most effective ways to help young people continue their journey of faith after the Sacraments.*

The comments are varied. A comment mentioned more than others is the need for gatherings of young people (Steubenville, retreats, service).

Thoughts:

Priests believe what young people want: gatherings, pilgrimages, retreats and service opportunities are the most effective ways to help young people in their journey of faith!

OVERALL ANALYSIS

The priests who responded to this survey:

- ✓ **Believe that providing gathering opportunities, pilgrimages, retreats and service projects are the best opportunities for faith formation of young people**
- ✓ **Spend minimal time with young people (unless in the education apostolate)**
- ✓ **Are not aware of building a skill-set to better evangelize young people.**
- ✓ **Avoid the topic of forming young people as disciples in the civics process.**
- ✓ **Are willing to help victims of violence in any way necessary.**