The numbers are bleak. Roughly half of Catholic teenagers lose their Catholic identity by their late 20’s and of those who still self-identify as “Catholic,” very few have any connection with the Church. While this is something I think most of us have realized or experienced for quite a while, it is rather stark to see the statistics in plain black and white. It is worrisome, worrisome for the Church and worrisome for them.

In my travels around Vermont over the past two and half years, when I ask people “What are some of the concerns you have?” the top two are almost always, “What is going to happen to our small parishes?” and, “What can we do to keep young people and families in the Church?” Both of these are serious topics that will obviously be discussed in the upcoming preparations for and convening of next year’s Diocesan Synod. In keeping with this, I thought over the next few months I might offer some information and statistics that will help educate us about some of the substantial issues involved around these areas of concern.

I recently received a report from Notre Dame University that summarizes an extensive survey of young people who have left the Catholic Church.* The report seeks to understand first the reasons for their leaving the Church, second who these young people are now, and finally, some implications for forming committed Catholic youth. It does so through the use of six significant findings, the first one of which I will mention today:

They are still believers. Former Catholic young adults still (mostly) believe in and interact with (some version of) God. Only 19% no longer believe in God. While the practice of prayer is less common, “57% of former Catholic emerging adults still pray at least sometimes.”

Implications and opportunity: “Leaving the Catholic Church rarely means becoming an atheist. Many former Catholics still believe in God or some other divine force…. This is not fundamentally different from emerging adults who are raised in other faiths. It demonstrates a widespread trend in this generation of moving away from organized religion but retaining a belief in and connection with the divine. These youths (and emerging adults) may be open to discussions about the nature of God that are more sophisticated and inviting than some may imagine.”

So they are “spiritual,” but not “religious.” Perhaps there is an opportunity to convince them that both are good choices: spiritual and religious.

UPCOMING EVENTS

08|25, 26, 27
St. Thomas Parish Yard Sale
St. Thomas, Underhill Center • 9 am - 5 pm
This 3-day yard sale will feature housewares, sporting goods, furniture, dishes, toys, tools and miscellaneous items. The rummage sale will feature fall and winter clothing for children and adults. There will also be a food concession stand. The event takes place rain or shine.
FOR MORE INFO: call the rectory at (802) 899-4632.

08|30
Summer Reflection Series
Saint Anne’s Shrine, Isle La Motte • 11:15 am

09|03
Healing Service
St. Joseph Co-Cathedral, Burlington • 3 pm
Hosted the first Sunday of each month, with Rev. Lance Harlow. Service includes: Divine Mercy Chaplet, Eucharistic Adoration and Charismatic laying-on of hands for physical, spiritual and psychological healing.

09|09
Chicken Pie Supper
Our Lady of the Angels, Randolph • 5 pm
Adults $10, Kids $5. Take out available.
FOR MORE INFO: Jim Kirkpatrick (802) 276-3014.

09|14
Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible
Our Lady of Seven Dolors, Fair Haven • 6:30 - 7:30 pm
“Unlocking The Mystery Of The Bible,” an eight-part study featuring Jeff Cavins, will be presented Sept. 14 to Nov. 2. Cost of $20 includes a session overview, talk notes, discussion questions and Bible timeline chart.
FOR MORE INFO: Paul Turnley, pturnley@aol.com, (802) 645-0955; Rosie Doran, Rosemarieadoran@yahoo.com, (802) 265-8635; or Father Vincent Odoemenam (802) 265-3135.

09|18, 25, 10|16, 23
Adult Enrichment: “Laudato Si’”
Sacred Heart St. Francis de Sales, Bennington

09|25
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
St. John Vianney, South Burlington • 7 pm
The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program educates and forms adults in the Catholic faith. If you or someone you know wants to become a Catholic or simply wants a better understanding of the Catholic faith, consider participating in the program. Classes will begin on Sept. 20 at 7 pm in the church hall. There is no charge.

09|26, 27, 28
Community Clergy Training to Support Rural Veterans
Davis Center at UVM, Burlington • 7:30 pm
Training topics include: Military culture and the wounds of war, Potential roles of clergy while assisting with Veteran care, VA Suicide Prevention, and Building Community Partnerships. Trainings to be held in Colchester (9/26), Randolph (9/27) and Brattleboro (9/28).
FOR MORE INFO: Ben Kaler, Veterans Experience Office, Benjamin.kaler@va.gov, (603) 722-5843.

09|28
Screening of Outcasts, a Grassroots Film
Davis Center at UVM, Burlington • 7:30 pm
Prior to the screening, there will be a Holy Hour with the Friars at The Catholic Center at UVM at 6 pm. Following the film, there will be a Q & A with one of the Executive Producers and the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. The event is free, however, tickets are required and can be picked up at The Catholic Center or Joseph’s House.

The Diocese of Burlington
CAREERS

- Administrative Assistant
- Development Donor Systems Specialist
- PT Administrative Assistant / Medical Billing Specialist
- Rice Memorial High School — Substitute Teacher Positions
- Rice Memorial High School — Assistant Coach, Boys' Prep Hockey

FOR MORE INFO:
vermontcatholic.org/careers