

**Tips from**  
**“The Basic Guide to Young Adult Ministry”**

**John C. Cusick & Katherine F. DeVries**

**Context**

- Sons and Daughters of Light has 4 goals:
    - Connecting young adults with Jesus Christ
    - Connecting young adults with the Church
    - Connecting young adults with the mission of the Church in the world
    - Connecting young adults with a peer community
  - Young adults *are* present. Marriages, Baptisms, funerals, first communion and Confirmation services. At an average Sunday, we might not realize how many young adults are around. The key to is reach out to them where they are.
  - Consider these questions:
    - Who are your young adults?
    - For what are they searching?
    - What insights did you come away with from conversations you have had with young adults?
    - What have they revealed to you about the world in which they live, their needs, their fears, and their hopes?
    - What have they said to you about the Church in general and your parish or organization in particular? What one activity or event might make a difference to them?”
  - 2001 study: “Why Catholic Young Adults Go to Church
    - I want to experience community (38%)
    - It’s a place to find meaning and strength (17.5%)
    - I want to pray/stay close to God (17%)
    - I go to receive holy communion (14%)
    - It feeds my spiritual hunger (10%)
    - It is a habit or an obligation (9%)
    - My church has good liturgy or good music (7.5%)”
- “Why Catholic Young Adults Do Not Go to Church
- I’m too busy (28%)
  - I disagree with one or several of the church’s teachings, for example, birth control, ban on women’s ordination, celibate priesthood (23%)
  - I was forced to go as a child (14.5%)
  - I’m too lazy (13.5%)
  - There’s too much ritual (13.5%)”

## Questions to Consider and Practical Insights

- There is a substantial difference between creating a young adult group and hosting young adult activities. Hosting young adult activities fits their lifestyle.
- Many young adults have had some positive experience of church, and it is easy to build on that.
- That said, other young adults think of the Church negatively because of misconceptions or stereotypes. They may not be enthused to join a church-sponsored group, etc. How can we be more inviting in a way that isn't "pushy?"
- How do you communicate with young adults? Many do not read the bulletin- personal invitation is always best, but also use social media, technology, etc.
- Adopt a preferential option in your parish for young adults. When seeking new members, volunteers, programs, etc., give young adults priority. Integrate young adults into the existing life of the parish.
- Look for presence of young adults in every part of parish life. Where are young adults not present where they can be? Keep a number of slots open in various ministry positions for young adults to fill. (One EMHC per Mass is a young adult, for example).
- Do young adults *know* they are welcomed in the parish, and welcomed into parish life? (If all of your lectors are aged 65, it may not cross their minds that this is something they could do as a young person).
- Identify a "point person" for outreach to young adults- preferably, a young adult themselves.
- Hand-pick people, like Jesus did. This not only makes your outreach more personal but helps to establish a core group of young adults as well, who can invite others and set an example.
- Can you start a similar program as one existing in the parish for younger people? Young adults may not be apt to join Knights of Columbus if every member is in their 70s. Is there similar work to be done which young men can do? How can both groups work together?
- Organizations or programs may respond to some needs, but young adults also have unpredictable, busy schedules. It may be easier for young adults to volunteer one time versus making a big commitment.
- Make a list of young adults in the parish- identify young adults from parish census forms, religious education rosters, marriages, who you see in Mass every Sunday, etc. Be creative! Talk to some of these young adults and ask them to make a list as well- they may know more people!
- Do young adults walk out of church having met people? Is an effort made to welcome them?
- Do you have many college students, young moms and dads, etc.? How can you intentionally reach out to the demographics most present in your parish, and build from there?
- Do you have young adults involved in campus ministries at college? How can they continue that at the parish?
- Reach out to college students- send care packages, have a Mass for them before they leave with a celebration to follow, have another Mass at the end of the semester with a "welcome home" dinner, sponsor activities throughout the summer.
- Identify key moments for young adults, when they may return to the parish after being away from the Church (marriages, funerals, Baptisms). Show hospitality, welcome them back. Consider developing a parish outreach team, whose only job is to stay in contact with younger singles, couples and families. Call now and then, offering support, asking how people are.
- How can you join your outreach with neighboring parishes?