

REPORT FOR THE SYNOD ON
Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment

FROM THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF KINGSTON
KINGSTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

OCTOBER 2017

His Eminence, Lorenzo Cardinal Baldisseri
Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops

Your Eminence:

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Kingston has a Youth Ministry Commission, which is comprised of the Archbishop, the Archdiocesan Coordinator of Youth Ministry, youth ministers, young adult representatives, youth representatives, Catholic educators, secondary school chaplains, and clergy. This Commission reviewed and discussed the *Preparatory Document* for the upcoming synod on *Young People, The Faith, and Vocational Discernment*. The Commission selected some key questions from the questions posed by the preparatory document and reworded them to encourage and invite responses from young people (16-29 years of age) in our Archdiocese. We also created a separate survey for adults over the age of 29 who support young adults (youth ministers, teachers, parish staff, parents, parishioners, etc.). We offered an online survey and promoted it through our schools, parish bulletins, our Archdiocesan publication, the Archdiocesan website, and social media platforms. We encouraged young people in this age bracket to respond, regardless of whether they were a practising Catholic or not. We received 78 responses from young adults and 38 responses from adults 30 years of age and up. These responses were gathered electronically by the Archdiocesan Youth Office and are summarized in the report below.

The Archdiocesan Youth Office has also included a list / brief description of initiatives that are currently offered through the Youth Office and Vocations Office. The hope is to share the results of the online survey with our Archdiocese and have further discussions about how we can expand on what we are currently doing to address the needs and concerns of young people in the Church in the Archdiocese of Kingston. We look forward to ideas and suggestions that come out of the upcoming Synod of Bishops to assist us in this effort. We are grateful that this is the focus of the upcoming Synod and will pray for all those involved and for the young people of our Church and the world.

In Christ,

Nadia Gundert
Coordinator of Youth Ministry
Archdiocese of Kingston
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

YOUTH / YOUNG ADULT SURVEY QUESTIONS

(For those 16-29 years of age)

Gathering Statistics

- **Population of Canada (2011):** 33.5 million (currently estimated 36 million; results of 2016 census not yet available).
- **Birth rate in Canada (2012):** 1.61 births per woman (up from 1.51 in 2001). The birth rate has been below replacement rate (2.1) since 1971.
- **Number and percentage of Young People (2011):** there were about 6.5 million young people aged 16-29, accounting for 19.4% of the population.
- **Number and percentage of Catholics in Canada (2011):** 12.8 million (39% of the population). Of these, 12,728 million are Roman Catholic and 81,820 are Eastern Catholic. Furthermore, 22.1 million Canadians (67% of the population) identify as Christian, while almost 24% of the population (7.85 million) do not identify with any religion.

- **What is your current employment status?**
 - Secondary School Student – 18 responses
 - Student (College / University) – 10 responses
 - Student (Graduate Studies) – 14 responses
 - Working Part Time – 20 responses
 - Working Full Time – 7 responses
 - Self-Employed – 2 responses
 - Volunteer – 1 responses
 - Homemaker – 2 responses
 - Unemployed – 4 responses

- **How often do you attend Mass?**
 - Daily – 7
 - Weekly – 21
 - Monthly – 13
 - 1-2 Times a Year – 12
 - Never - 25

- **Do you consider yourself a practicing Catholic?**
 - Yes – 45 responses
 - No – 33 responses

- **What groups /organizations do you see engaging youth/young adults the best?**
 - Many responses were: “I don’t know”, “no idea” or the question was left blank.
 - Catholic Christian Outreach on Campus / Newman House on Campus
 - Youth Ministry Groups in Parishes
 - YMCA / Boys & Girls Club
 - Sports Organizations / Clubs / Teams

- **What are two of the biggest life-challenges youth / young adults in our area are currently facing?**
 - Stress
 - Mental Health / Illness
 - Oversexualized Culture
 - Substance Abuse
 - Career Stress / Unemployment / Job Hunt
 - School stress / anxiety / work load
 - Acceptance
 - Loneliness / Rejection

- **What do you think young people want of the Church in Canada today?**
 - Acceptance. Young people want to be accepted for who they are and want acceptance of all people (i.e. LGBT community)
 - Clear moral teaching, answers to their questions, want an understanding on church teaching about modern issues (want the church to change views on many modern issues – premarital sex, homosexuality, transgender, etc.)
 - 20 responses indicated “nothing” / “not interested” in anything the Church has to offer.
 - More engaging liturgies, a relevant and relatable Church

- **Why do you think some youth/young adults drift away from the Church?**
 - Church is boring
 - They don't have time / too busy
 - Young people aren't accepted by Church
 - Outdated / oppressive / not relevant
 - Young people doubt or don't believe in God

- **What are two ways that young people can contribute to the Church or society today?**
 - Volunteering, helping others, social justice activities
 - Through social media
 - Getting involved (music was mentioned most in this sort of response)
 - Attending Mass

- **In your opinion, what opportunities or experiences for youth have success within the church? (ex. World Youth Days, Youth Ministry, etc.)**
 - Many responses indicated that there were few or no opportunities in the Church for young people
 - Youth Ministry Groups
 - Youth Events (like conferences, WYD)

- **Has there been a specific activity / experience that you have been part of that has influenced who you are today, your decision making, your faith?**
 - Many of the responses were “No”
 - Various responses indicated a specific person / family member
 - Participation in a church choir growing up was mentioned several times
 - Some responses about different types of events / retreats / youth ministry that youth participated in that were influential.

- **If you could share one thing with Pope Francis, what would it be?**
 - Young people who responded seemed to have respect for our Holy Father and thought he was doing a good job and bringing to light a lot of important conversations in the Church.
 - There were lots of comments about updating / modernizing the Church and that the Church needs to change its views (LGBT Community, Premarital Sex, Role of Women, etc)
 - That the Church needs to accept all people as they are.

ADULT SURVEY QUESTIONS

(from those who support young adults and are 30 years of age and up)

- **My relationship with youth (aged 16-30), is as a ...**
 - Parent – 12
 - Youth Minister – 3
 - School Staff – 11
 - Pastoral Staff – 2
 - Religious / Clergy – 3
 - Fellow Parishioner – 6
 - Other – 1

- **How often do you attend Mass?**
 - Daily – 4
 - Weekly – 31
 - Monthly – 3

- **Do you consider yourself a practicing Catholic?**
 - All participants answered YES

- **What do you think are two of the biggest life-challenges young adults (ages 16-29) in our area are currently facing?**
 - Peer Pressure
 - Negative Influences (Social Media, TV, Media, Music)
 - Not engaged / interested in Church / faith community
 - Lack of employment

- **In your opinion, what can young people offer the Church or society today?**
 - Energy
 - Fresh Ideas
 - New Perspectives

- **What are two of the most important things the Church can offer young people (ages 16-29) today?**
 - Acceptance & Love
 - Support / Community
 - Engaging liturgy

- **How does your church community care for young people and accompany them in various aspects of their lives?**
 - Most responded that nothing is offered for young people
 - A few mentioned Youth Ministry Programs at their parish or at the Archdiocesan level

- **In a world which is greatly secularized, what opportunities are there for young people to continue the journey of faith after completing the Sacraments of Christian Initiation?**
 - Many responded that there are few or no opportunities for young people

- Youth Groups
 - Archdiocesan Youth Events / Opportunities (Youth Conferences, Steubenville, WYD)
- **How would you like young people to become more involved in your local parish / ministry?**
- To get involved in various ministries in the Church (music was mentioned often) and to take leadership in the parish (input in decisions, on parish council)
 - Volunteering (Social Justice Activities) with parish initiatives / community works
 - Attend Mass – but have more engaging Masses that will draw young people in (focus on music, relatable homilies)
 - Intergenerational opportunities
- **What are the most effective ways that churches engage and invite young people who do not participate in the life of the Church (Masses, activities, etc.)?**
- If young people see other youth involved, they're more likely to participate.
 - Through social media
 - Have fun, social events at the parish or organized by parish
- **What challenges does the Church face in engaging and inviting young people who do not participate in the life of the Church?**
- Many young people have negative views of Church (intolerance, abuse scandals, peer pressure to not be churchy, societal views)
 - Many young people think Church is irrelevant / out of date
 - It is difficult to reach out to young people, especially because many of their families (parents / grandparents) are no longer participating in the life of the Church.
 - Church has to compete with society and so many other things capturing the attention of young people.
- **What can families do to assist young people in discerning major life decisions (moral decisions, career, vocation to marriage, religious life or priesthood, education choices, etc.)**
- Listen to them and accept them / their choices
 - Discuss options with them, have honest, open and respectful conversations together
 - Support them when they make decisions
 - Pray for young people and their discernment
 - Be good examples / role models
- **What can parishes do to assist young people in discerning major life decisions?**
- Listen to young people
 - Accept them as they are
 - Reach out and meet them where they are at (spiritually and physically – try and connect with young people at their schools, extracurriculars, in the community, and not just at the parish. Go where they are)

**Initiatives offered by the Archdiocese of Kingston Youth Office & Vocations Office
for Young People and Vocational Discernment**

Communication of Youth Opportunities / Resources / Events

- Archdiocesan Publication, *The Journey*
- Youth Ministry Page on Archdiocesan Website
- Vocations Website: www.kingstonvocations.com
- Archdiocesan Facebook Page & Youth Office Facebook Page
- Archdiocesan Youth Office Twitter Platform
- Monthly Youth Ministry Office Updates – Every month, the Youth Office sends an email to parishes, secondary school chaplains, youth ministers, and others subscribed to receive the update, to share upcoming events, resources, and youth ministry news. The update is also posted online so that anyone can access it.

Duc In Altum

- Duc In Altum is an amazing one-year journey to equip Catholic young adults to discern and live in a fuller and freer way their vocational identity as adults in faith.
- It consists of 8 sessions (2 weekend retreats and 6 Saturdays throughout the year) at which a group of young adults in their 20s and 30s come together and discuss faith and life topics as they discern what God is calling them to as adults. Topics include: identity, vocation options, universal call to holiness, scripture, Eucharist, reconciliation, theology of the body, and community.
- The experience is Christ-centered and focused on community building. It offers a rich variety of guest presenters / mentors from various paths of life teaching, witnessing, praying, serving, and sharing their faith and vocation. It exposes young people to a variety of personal and community prayer experiences and excerpts from spiritual authors.
- Each participant has a spiritual accompanier who walks the journey with him or her over the year – listening and offering guidance, spiritual support, and care.

Young Adult Ministry in the Archdiocese

- We have young adult representatives on our Youth Commission who share events and information relevant to young adults in our Archdiocese.
- The 20s and 30s group has been active for many years and the Youth Office has supported these events and promoted them throughout the Kingston area. The group offers holy hours, Theology on Tap gatherings, social events, and faith discussions.
- Participation in the annual March For Life in Ottawa
- Participation in Steubenville Toronto Youth Conference
- World Youth Day Pilgrimages
- Archdiocesan Music Concert Events / Prayer Events
- Participation at NET Retreats
- Vocation website posts. Come and See weekends, retreat experiences, etc.
- Altar Server Appreciation Days with priests / seminarians sharing their vocation story.

Youth Ministry Commission

- Youth representatives are involved in the Commission, with representation from each deanery

- Share best practices, youth ministry resources, and events, and plan youth conferences, Archdiocesan faith days, NET Ministry Visits, etc.

Totus Tuus Summer Camp

- The Archdiocesan Youth Office / Vocations Office offered a Catholic summer camp in parishes during the summer of 2017. Campers attended daily Mass, were encouraged to fully participate in the Liturgy, and were led through what was happening throughout the Mass. They learned music for Liturgies, learned about a mystery of the rosary each day, had engaging catechetical sessions, and participated in typical camp activities (sports, arts and crafts, music, etc.).
- A team of 4 young adult missionaries from our Archdiocese were hired to facilitate the camp. Their 4-week training included instruction on youth ministry, relational ministry, leadership, and catechetics.
- When they facilitated a camp week in a parish, they were billeted with families in the community, so they could continue to connect with and evangelize within the community.
- The Archdiocese collaborated with the Archdiocese of Toronto in the training of our missionaries, as that Archdiocese has several missionary teams in place each summer.

Campus Ministries Relationship

- Our Archdiocesan Youth Coordinator meets regularly with our local campus ministries, Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) and Newman House, to connect the Archdiocese with campus ministries. Information on campus events are shared with parishes through the Youth Office, and events in the Archdiocese are promoted on campus. CCO representatives attend Youth Ministry Commission meetings, as well, and look for ways to connect with schools and parishes through the Youth Office.