Young Adult Ministry Workshop

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend
Introductions

• Name
• Parish/Community and Location
• State of Young Adult Ministry at your parish or community (example: is none, exploring it, just beginning, struggling, thriving, etc)
• Your involvement in YAM
• What you hope to gain from this workshop
Engaging Young Adults in the Faith

Sean Allen, MDiv
Why does the Church have a Ministry specifically for Young Adults?

Social dynamics have changed over time

– New trends for schooling, career, and family
– Fewer in Cath. schools (youth ministry began)
– Marriage delayed, or not in Church, or not at all
– Couples having children later, not always baptized
– Gaps created between milestones, some missing
– No longer continuous life engagement by Church
Why does the Church have a Ministry specifically for Young Adults?

• To continuously engage YAs across life stages, providing a “home” for YAs in the Church

• To form young adults in the faith as adults and to help develop mature spiritual lives
  – Establish an adult relationship with the Lord

• To walk with young adults during such an important decision-making period in life

• To benefit from the rich gifts & talents of YAs
Development of YAM

1977 – Archdiocese of Chicago forms Office for YAM
1979 – Official recognition of YA stage by USCCB*
1981 – First “Theology on Tap” held in Chicago area
1986 – First World Youth Day held in Rome by JPII
1993 – World Youth Day held in Denver with JPII
1996 – USCCB completes Pastoral Plan for YAM
2010 – USCCB pastoral plan - revised edition
2010 – USCCB companion book (ed. by CMD staff)

Common Misconceptions about Young Adult Ministry

- Youth Ministry
- Singles Group
- Social Club

Confusion Over Two Items:
1) Who are “young adults”?
2) What is “ministry” with young adults?
1) Who are Young Adults?

• USCCB Definition:
  – Men and Women in their Late Teens, 20s & 30s
  – Single, Married, Divorced, or Widowed
  – With or Without Children

• “Young Adults” is ultimately an age range
  – Includes every state of life within the age range
  – Age range can vary among cultures/ethnic groups
  – Upper end is not as well defined as the lower end

USCCB, *Sons and Daughters of the Light: A Pastoral Plan for Ministry with Young Adults* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2010)
Does the Bishops’ definition of “young adult” match how you tend to think of this group? If not, what are the differences?
Developmental Stage of YAs

• USCCB Tasks of Young Adulthood
  – Developing a Personal Identity (faith ownership)
  – Developing Relationships (family, friends, spouse)
  – Developing a Meaning of Work (vocation, gifts)
  – Developing a Spiritual Life (inner life, morality)

• Sociologists use terms like “Emerging Adults” to identify the transition into adulthood
  – “Full Adulthood” = finish school, stable career job, financial independence, and new family formation
Busy Young Adults

• Life stage transitions are often primary focus
  – Completing school
  – Establishing career
  – Relationships: dating, engagement, and marriage
  – Family: pregnancy, birth, & raising young children

• Church activities must be relevant enough for young adults to make the time to participate
  – Faith activities must dialog vs. compete with life
Mobile Young Adults

• Move into and out of town regularly
  – Graduate/begin school, new/loss of job, marriage

• Often little integration into a parish community
  – Convenience mentality for Mass times & locations
  – Do not register at or commit to one parish
  – Arrive at Mass just in time or slightly late, slip into the back, and leave immediately afterward
  – Do not know many others at their parish
  – Can be an “unseen” part of the congregation
2) What is Ministry with Young Adults?

If ministries or activities are not relevant to young adults, they simply will not come.

Dual Approach for Engaging Young Adults:

1. Ensuring that existing church ministries are designed for young adult participation
2. Reaching out to and engaging more young adults through new ministry efforts

Note: Focus on parish, can adapt to other communities
Making Existing Ministry
Young Adult Friendly/Responsive

• Take into account young adult characteristics:
  – Interests and Needs at this Developmental Stage
    • Ex) relevant topics, quality events, social time
  – Diversity of Life Stages (college, working, parents)
    • Ex) event time, cost, childcare
  – Busy & Mobile can create Lack of Commitment
    • Ex) walk-up registration, self-contained, avoid homework

• Do not try to force YAs to fit another mold
  – Getting frustrated/angry at YAs is not helpful
“How can we get young adults to come to our events?”

• Reverse the Thinking:
  “How can our events attract more young adults?”

• Avoid Thinking:
  “But that’s the way we’ve always done this.”
Why do you think more young adults are not involved in ministries at parishes?
“The parish doesn’t offer anything for me.”

• What is this person really looking for?
  – Usually, a peer community
  – If no one else their age is present, it’s not for them
  – If it’s for their parents, then it’s not for them
  – From experience, assume events aren’t for them

• Only a limited number of young adults will participate in church activities without peers
Engaging More Young Adults

• Form a young adult community
  – Place to fit in & own place within the Church
  – Meet and get to know other Catholic YAs
  – Community to invite & welcome more YAs into
  – Relevant activities shaped by the YAs themselves

• Integrate with the rest of the Church
  – Balance time between only peers & with parish
  – Participate in parish events with peers/friends
  – Help parish events be responsive to young adults
Goals of Young Adult Ministry

USCCB Goals for YAM:

1. Connect young adults with Jesus Christ
2. Connect young adults with the Church
3. Connect young adults with the Mission of the Church in the World
4. Connect young adults with a Peer Community
Do the Bishops’ goals of young adult ministry surprise you in any way? What stands out to you most about the goals?
What is Young Adult Ministry?

- Welcoming community for other YAs
- Home in Church where YAs share talents
- Not meant to be merely a social club
- Walking the journey of faith together
- Can be carried out in many ways, such as socializing, learning, praying, and serving