



**DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO**  
**Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry**

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Dear Youth and Young Adult Ministry Leaders,

The US church is currently engaged in an ongoing dialogue about ministry to youth and young adults called for by Pope Francis at the Synod on Youth and Discernment, and I'd like to invite your parish to be a part of it. What we are asking is for parishes to engage in dialog with youth, parents, and ministry leaders.

This is great material that can easily be used at a regular youth group or parent meeting.

Instructions are attached for a session of listening and dialog with a:

- group of youth and/or young adults that are engaged in the parish life,
- group of youth that are not engaged in parish life,
- group of parents of youth
- group of ministry leaders.

We're asking all youth ministry, young adult ministry, and religious education programs to sponsor at least one such dialogue as part of a regularly scheduled meeting during the month of December. At the end of the session, we hope you will share your notes with the national dialog by entering them on the online form at <https://surveyMonkey.com/r/nationaldialoguebasicquestions> and emailing them into the Pastoral Center to Rochelle Gammad at [rgammad@scd.org](mailto:rgammad@scd.org).

Together we can build a church that shares God's love with the young!

Yours In Christ,

Deacon Kevin Staszko  
Director



## MINISTRY NIGHT OF ACTIVE LISTENING

The Synod recognized that the members of the Church do not always take the approach of Jesus. Rather than listening to young people attentively, “all too often, there is a tendency to provide prepackaged answers and ready-made solutions, without allowing their real questions to emerge and facing the challenges they pose”. Yet once the Church sets aside narrow preconceptions and listens carefully to the young, this empathy enriches her, for “it allows young people to make their own contribution to the community, helping it to appreciate new sensitivities and to consider new questions”.

--Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit* #65

### Purpose

The goal is to understand more deeply the experience of engagement of youth and young adults with Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church at the local and national level.

### Schedule

10 Minutes	Welcome, Introductions and Opening Prayer <b><i>Prayer for the National Dialogue</i></b> <i>Loving God, Open us to the beauty of dialogue that allows us to hear with our hearts and speak with our souls. May our conversations ignite your Spirit within us to go out into the world as missionary disciples. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.</i>
15 Minutes	Community Builder/ Icebreaker Recommendation: Select Community builder/icebreaker that focuses on the topic of listening and/or communication.
5 Minutes	“Way of Proceeding” *Resource A Feel free to read aloud, create a skit, video or activity around presenting the material.
60 Minutes	Listening Session: Pick ONE set of questions based on the group of participants
5 Minutes	Closing Prayer and Wrap Up

### Share what you’ve heard

Have each facilitator of each small group complete an online survey so that the young people’s voice can be shared with our bishops. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nationaldialoguebasicquestions>

### Continued Connection

- Follow up on any pastoral issues that may have surfaced in your conversation. Connect with ministry leaders in your setting to plan ways to follow up with participants in a way that lines up with their needs but maintains the respects the confidentiality of their sharing.
- Invite other ministry leaders to continue the dialogue with youth and young adults so that the larger local community might be able to respond to opportunities and challenges named during the session.
- Invite participants to encourage their peers and friends to engage with the National Dialogue conversations and host a National Dialogue conversation with parents and families of youth and young adults.

***“Way of Proceeding”  
for Facilitators and Participants***

**Give and receive welcome.** Go out of your way to be radically hospitable.

**Be present as fully as possible.** Keep your head in the room where your feet are. Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes. Listen with your heart, speak with your soul. Put your cell phone and computer away.

**What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.** This is not a “share or die” event! It is okay if you don’t have an answer to a question. Facilitators should help people tell their story.

**Empathy** is the ability to mutually experience the thoughts, emotions, and direct experience of others. It goes beyond **sympathy**, which is a feeling of care and understanding for the suffering of others. Both words have similar usage but differ in their emotional meaning. **We are looking for empathy.**

**Speak in ways that respect other people.** This means not interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Use “I” statements. Own what you share. Do not say “you know when you...” or “people say...” A facilitator should not “lead the witness”, show preference for answers that they agree with, judge the responses of some participants, or dominate the conversation with their own experience and opinion.

**No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting each other.** This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who make it a habit to help others. But it is vital to welcoming the soul. The goal is to let everyone be heard. The time for “teachable moments” is later, after the conversation is over. Make notes about what you need to follow-up on in your ministry, however.

**Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions** instead of counsel, corrections, etc. “Tell me more about that...”, “can you explain what you mean by...”

**When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.** If you feel judgmental, or defensive, ask yourself; “I wonder what brought her to this belief?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?” Set aside judgment to listen to others –and to yourself – more deeply.

**Trust and learn from the silence.** Silence is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words. Silence should always get its own chair in the group.

**Pay attention to your body language.** Don’t stand over and apart from your group. Demonstrate you are in this together, by sitting on the same level. Don’t force sharing through non-verbal cues. Nod along to show listening.

**Have a clear understanding and know what you want to find out.** The questions should function as more of a reference than a script.

**Observe confidentiality.**

***The goal is to understand more deeply the experience of engagement of youth and young adults with Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church at the local and national level.***

## Questions (Pick ONE question set)

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### Questions to be used with Groups of Youth and Young Adults who are **ACTIVE** or **ENGAGED Catholics**

1. **Please describe a time when your Catholic faith made a difference in your life.**
    - a. In what ways do you grow in your Catholic faith?
    - b. How would you describe your relationship with Jesus?
  2. **What three words would you use to describe your experience of the Catholic Church?**
  3. **Why do you remain Catholic or active in your Catholic faith?**
    - a. What do you enjoy about being Catholic?
    - b. What don't you like about being Catholic?
    - c. Why do you think some people decide to stop being Catholic?
  4. **What can the Church do to support you in your life and your Catholic faith?**
    - a. Are there things the Church should stop doing?
    - b. In what ways could the Church help you listen to and answer God's call for your important life choices?
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### Questions to be used with Groups of Youth and Young Adults who are **NON-, FORMER and/or MARGINAL Catholics**

1. **What brings you joy in your life right now?**
  2. **What challenges are you facing in your life right now?**
  3. **What can the Church do to support you in your life and/or your Catholic faith?**
    - a. Are there things the Church should stop doing?
    - b. In what ways could the Church support you in making your important life choices?
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### Question to be used with **MINISTRY LEADERS**

1. **Please describe a time when the Catholic faith made a difference in a young person's life.**
  - a. In what ways do you see young people grow in their Catholic faith?
  - b. How would you describe their relationship with Jesus?
2. **Why do you think some young people choose to remain Catholic and active in their faith?**
  - a. What do you do to encourage them to remain Catholic and active?
  - b. What challenges do you face in passing along the faith to them?
  - c. Why do you think some young people and adults have left the Church?
3. **What can the Church in your local setting do to support young people in their life and Catholic faith?**
  - a. Are there things the Church should stop doing?
  - b. In what ways could the Church help young people listen to and answer God's call in their important life choices?
4. **What support do you need in your ministry with youth and young adults, and their families?**
5. **What do you think most needs to be transformed in your local ministry efforts with youth and young adults?**

## Questions to be used with **PARENTS and FAMILIES** of young people

When answering these questions, call to mind your son(s) or daughter(s) who is/are between the ages of 16 and 30 (and in their youth or young adult years), or grandchildren or other family members who are currently within the youth and young adult age range.

1. **Please describe a time when your Catholic faith made a difference in the life of your son/daughter/this young person.**
  - a. In what ways does your son/daughter grow in their Catholic faith?
  - b. How would you describe their relationship with Jesus?
2. ***(For families of active or engaged Catholic youth/young adults)* Why do you think your son/daughter/this young person in your family chooses to remain Catholic and active in their faith?**
  - a. What did you do to encourage them to remain actively Catholic?
  - b. What challenges did you face in passing along the faith to them?
  - c. Why do you think some young people have left the Church?
3. ***(For families of non-, former or marginal Catholic youth/young adults)* Why do you think your son/daughter/this young person in your family is no longer active in the practice of the Catholic faith?**
  - a. What do you think may have cause this disconnection?
  - b. What challenges do you face in connecting with your son/daughter/family member about faith issues today?
  - c. Why do you think some young people remain active in the Church?
4. **What can the Church do to support you and your children and other youth and young adult family members, both in your lives and the practice of the Catholic faith? What do you need? What do they need?**
  - a. Are there things, from your perspective as a parent or family member of young people, the Church should stop doing?
  - b. In what ways could the Church help your son/daughter/this family member listen to and answer God's call regarding their important life choices?