**Session four—What is Young Adult Ministry?**

**(Slide 1) Title pg.** On our last session, we talked about youth—which are considered young people under the age of 18. We referenced the book *Renewing the Vision* and the new document, Lidten, Teach Send, as important resources.

Tonight we’ll delve into the world of young adults, and the resource we most recommend is called *Sons and Daughters of the Light*. Like *Renewing the Vision*, this book was also written by our Bishops as a guide to how we should be approaching ministry at this time to young adults. It can also be found on the USCCB website and either downloaded or ordered. Of course we’re also be sharing some concepts from the new framework, *Listen, Teach, Send*.

**(Slide 2)** **Who are our young adults?**

Before we begin, in order to put what we’ll share into perspective, we should answer the question,

1. **Who are our young adults?**
* Bishops determine YAs to be 18-39 years of age.
* Working and/or going to school.
* Single or married.
* With or without children.
* As you can see, when we refer to young adults, there are many different scenarios to consider! Of course, We also need to take into consideration the various cultural differences we experience in our country.

**(Slide 2 continued)**

1. **Let’s take a few moments to reflect. (Spend some time in quiet reflection after each age is mentioned.)**

Think back to what we were doing when we were young adults. Just pause for a minute and think about what were you doing at the age of:

**18?** Many of us had just graduated from HS and were headed off to college, trade school, or right into work. Was there an option? That’s just what we did after high school.

**25?** After we graduated from college or worked for a while, we got married, usually by the age of 25. We started having babies right away.

**30?** We had several children by now, and often had bought a “forever” home.

**39?** By the time we were 39, we were in a pretty comfortable work routine, in a stable home, and our family well established. We were surrounded by neighbors and immersed in a parish family.

**We know your answers are different, but you get the idea. When we were the age of those we hope to serve, the time-line of young adulthood was different.**

**(Slide 2 continued)**

**Young Adults today**

**18?** Often take time off between high school and college. They have so many choices!

Finances are difficult. To afford colleges, their high school years were spent working for excellent grades, notoriety in sports or other extracurricular activities(band, 4-H, FAA, Debate, etc,) volunteer or intern work and church involvement in order to get scholarships.

**25?** Choose to wait to get married. Want to establish themselves in careers and financially before they marry.

**30?** If they do marry, they may still wait until they start a family until their late 30s or even into their early 40s.

**40?** Young people often change careers or even go back to school during their 40s.

By now they have moved a lot, following their career choice. They are mobile, often single, and seeking companionship.

They often no longer have close family connections and have not connected with a church community. In fact, many churches have no programs or even gathering opportunities for this age group.

**All this is saying that the time-line into and through young adulthood is quite different than it was when most of us were young adults. We’ll talk about this some more in a few minutes.**

**(Slide 3)** **Where are our Young Adults?**

We’ve had so many people ask “Why don’t we have YouFra in the US?” We’d like to focus on this for a minutes. Hopefully you saw the article in the TAU USA in Fall of 2023 touched on that question. The article states in the final report of the *National Dialogue on Catholic Pastoral Ministry with Youth and Young Adults,*

1. U.S. has many choices in the area of spirituality. YouFra heavy countries, are comprised mostly of Catholic societies quite often accompanied by the presence of Franciscans. Young people grow up with the influence of Franciscan charism and YouFra and are deeply immersed in their Catholicism.
2. U.S. is a cosmopolitan society—quite diverse even within local communities. Other countries, usually have one cultural identity, so sense of belonging is stronger. Diversity is a gift! Each culture represented offers unique perspectives, traditions, and ways of living. Even though this gives our country a wonderful flavor, it also offers challenges.
3. U.S. is blessed with affluence, which means most young people have access to computers and internet, and freedom to obtain information. In some other countries, people are limited to the outside world, sometimes by government rules.
4. In the U.S., most young people leave home right after high school. This throws them into a culture filled with divisiveness and mixed messages. Other cultures, young people traditionally continue living at home until they are married or make a major life change which contributes to a sense of belonging, and provides a community, and support.
5. Adulting is more difficult in the U.S. in many respects.

**(Slide 4) (Part 1 of Sons and Daughters of the Light)**

There are **four key areas** that young adults are concerned about. The book refers to these as developmental “tasks” that young adults are faced with. I’m just picking out a sentence or two for each task—the book goes into great detail.

1. **Personal identity** (pg. 8—As we mentioned before, when they leave home, they find a world with so much diversity; different faiths, values, cultures, languages, and even sexual orientation. “When they meet this broader mix of people, young adults can, at times, find their values and beliefs challenged.”
2. **Relationships** (pg.9—Again, think back to when you left home. Your relationships changed…parents no longer in the picture to the same degree; lose contact with old friends; struggle to make new friends; single young adults especially end up alone. In other words, “They are reordering the relationships within their family, integrating sexuality into their lives, and choosing a permanent lifestyle such as marriage or a vocation into religious life.”
3. **Work** becomes something that dictates their use of time; challenges their values; gives them a sense of purpose. (pg. 12)—"Work defines and influences a young adult’s identity and self-concept and is a prime place where relationships develop.”

**(Slide 5)**

We’re going to spend a few extra minutes on **the fourth area of growth for young adults, which is their spiritual life.**

1. **Spiritual life**—This is an important area for many young adults in their maturing process. The book named some **important characteristics** in this process:

**One** Young people, after having just gone through the self-centered stage of high school,are grappling with questions about the purpose of life. This may be the first time they’ve considered a Christ centered life;

**Two,** Internalizing or sometimes even challenging the faith and religious tradition they grew up with. A vital step in maturing, is to own their faith; to make a conscious decision to say yes to and examine their beliefs more personally and deeply.

**Three,** Many are searching for an adult faith community. This is where YouFra and Fraternity fit in; and

**Four**, they’re trying to develop an inner life that makes sense…that corresponds to their outer life. Does that sound familiar? Gospel to life; life to Gospel!

(pg. 14)—This quote tied the tasks together:

“These **characteristics** can be expressed as a desire of young adults to root their lives in something that gives them hope and conveys meaning. Their search for a personal identity, pursued in relationships and work, partially satisfies this hunger for meaning.”

**(slide 6)**

The characteristics are not new—but as we said earlier, life today is different in many ways.

**First,** these tasks are undertaken over an extended period of time, for some into their thirties. When most of us were young, we married much younger, were quite possibly done having children by the time we were 40—whereas now, many are waiting until close to that age to even start a family. This younger generation lives longer, so the years of work are longer—many are changing careers at the age of 40-45, perhaps even going back to school.

**Second**, there is a lack of family, civic, and pastoral institutions to support them. There isn’t the “takes a village” mentality that we had as we were maneuvering through our young adulthood. Some of our earlier sessions talked about this. The disconnect makes it difficult for young people to experience a sense or understanding of belonging and identity.

**Third,** as we’ve mentioned before, the way we catechize is different. It used to be “believing leads to behaving, leads to belonging.” Now, it is “belonging, leads to believing, leads to behaving.” The Emmaus method.

**(slide 7) Our Shared Call**

Part two of the book is entitled “A Vision of Faith for Young Adults.” I feel this is the key to what we can offer to young adults as Secular Franciscans. God invites “all of us to listen to his will for us, and to say “yes” to Jesus’s invitation to “Come, follow me.” The three areas we are called to, according to the book are:

1. A call to holiness
2. A call to community
3. A call to service

How many churches are actually supporting young adults in this area? We, as Secular Franciscans say “yes” in these areas also. Obviously, we are called to holiness and a deeper relationship with God; We find support in our fraternities in this desire; and we consider servant leadership within our fraternity and service in our communities and the world, an important aspect of who we are.

The understanding that we can’t emphasize enough, is that this call and mission is **for all Baptized people**, especially Secular Franciscans. That is why we say we are “accompanying” young people. We’re walking together on this pilgrimage.

**We can invite** the young people in our midst to share in our common call…

**to holiness**, (retreats, prayer experiences, bible studies)

**to community**, (“youth friendly” fraternity, social evenings or supportive evenings for young parents, students, or singles)

**or to service**. (apostolate or service projects in and outside of Church)

**(slide 8) Goals of Young Adult Ministry**

This leads us to the third part of the book. Again, there are a lot of details and ideas that we don’t have time to discuss—but I’ll at least name the goals in ministry to young adults.

1. Connecting young adults with Jesus Christ
2. Connecting young adults with the Church
3. Connecting young adults with the mission of the Church in the World
4. Connecting young adults with a peer community

(of course, we add connecting young adults to Franciscan Spirituality)

**(slide 9) Our Mission**

Remember, our mission is to bring the gospel into the world, especially to our younger Catholics.

Our example of living the gospel life, our invitation to consider a joyful, Christ centered life-style, and the opportunities we provide in the various areas, will hopefully lead young people toward holiness and closer relationship with God…and maybe even a love for the Franciscan Order

**(slide 10)**

We’ll end with a quote from ***Christus Vivit***. It’s the last one in the Exhortation. Pope Francis says,

“Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running, ‘attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us.’”

**We’re going to read this paragraph again,** and I invite you to hear it from your perspective as an older, more seasoned Catholic. After all, when Pope Francis wrote this exhortation he specified that it was “to young people and to the entire people of God.”

**(Slide 11)**

Dear older people,

1. “My joyful hope is to keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful.”

(Don’t give up—always hope! Like we heard in our opening prayer, St. Junipero Serra said, "Always forward, never back." Don’t let those in your fraternity that don’t really get it yet, or are fearful, hold you back. Keep urging them forward, slowly and respectfully of course.)

**(Slide 12)**

1. “Keep running, ‘attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters.”

(We are attracted by the face of Christ we see in the young people, and hopefully they see Christ in us too. This sentence also offers two ways that we experience Christ—in the Eucharist, and in serving those who need us—we should participate in both often.

**(Slide 13)**

1. “May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race.”

(We can’t emphasize enough how vital it is to let the Holy Spirit guide you. Really pray as an individual and as a fraternity for direction in the task of bringing the gospel to younger Catholics.)

And finally,

**(Slide 14)**

1. “The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us.’”

(You may not have a huge amount of momentum yet, but even little steps forward help. That’s how it starts. Your intuitions may just be tiny whispers of ideas at this point…but pay attention to them, because they’re telling you something. We know all of you have strong faith. When your faith is evident authentically, joyfully, and consistently that’s one of the biggest ways to share the gospel with others.)

**(slide 15)**

Tonight concludes our Core Four series. We’ll wait a while so you have time to

**1)** Research who and where the youth and young adults are in your region

**2)** Find some young adults to listen to. Invite them for coffee or a meal. In the first section of *Listen, Teach, Send*, I found this quote meaningful. "We are called to listen with love, tenderness, and compassion…this posture, then involves meaningful encounter with, a steadfast presence among, and an authentic desire to know and understand youth and young adults in the realities of their lives. Once we have truly listened, trust can be formed and we can go even deeper.”

**3)** Delve into Renewing the Vision, Sons and Daughters of Light, and Listen, Teach, Send.

**(Slide 16)**

Hopefully these steps will be time well spent and will help you in your tasks to:

**1)** develop teams

**2)** Create plans and

**3)** Brainstorm best practices, which are all things we hope our next presentations will help you with.

**(Slide 17)**

We commission folks are here to inspire you, support you, and encourage you in this important mission.

Blessings on your work and let us know if there’s anything we can do to help you!