

young adult Bible study for Advent could help both ministries. The details on *how* the collaboration manifests is less important than that it does, in fact, happen. Ultimately, this regular parish contact in their undergraduate formation will help students to feel more belonging and familiarity in their new parish.

The final idea proposed was that recent alums, and young adults generally, may benefit from the presence of a mentor when they join a new parish. One minister who has adult children of her own highlights the necessity of this, recounting a conversation with her son:

“Have you gone to Mass this week?” “No mom.” One day he says to me, “Mom, I’m the most faithful person you’ve ever met, but I need my space.” “Okay, I’ll give you your space.” But that’s where I need the parish to pick up on that for me. Because I get that he doesn’t want to hear from me anymore, but he needs the grandma and grandpa from this church to do it. And it’s just like we don’t, we don’t help, we don’t—I say mentor, “mentor” probably’s the best word. They need mentors. They need people who want to take a vested interest in their life who aren’t their parents. And it’s not because they disrespect their parents. It’s just that they want to get away from their parents.

With families more geographically dispersed and adult children wanting a bit more freedom from their parents, parish mentors can help form young adults without seeming overbearing.

Hospitality committees may want to create a subgroup that would attend especially to integrating young adults into the wider community. Importantly, this is different from a peer mentorship, as well. The challenge of offering a similarly-aged mentor is that while it could more deeply embed the recent grad into young adult ministry, it could further isolate him or her from the rest of the parish; the siloing of young adults is exactly what the Church should try to avoid. The mentors ideally would have other things in common with their young adults. Perhaps they both play the guitar, they enjoy hiking, both love college football, or they are in a similar line of work; in the best case scenario they would have a common faith as well as “something else” that they could also enjoy together, forming the basis of a richer and more personalist friendship. Mentors would touch base with young adults to ensure that all was going well, especially that they were connecting to ministries that were helping them to grow as well as considering how they might likewise serve the parish. Note that having a specific ministry for young adults is critical for a sense of belonging *as a young adult*, but this alone can leave young adults isolated from the parish as a whole. Mentors would be an easy and available point of contact for young adults entering wider parish life.

Dioceses, priests, campus ministers and related organizations should consider the extent to which these four ideas might help them better prepare their graduates for parish life.

## **Conclusion**

There are four important findings from this report:

- 1) While the quantitative survey found differences in job satisfaction among campus ministers, it

was limited in its scope. The qualitative study was able to explore how campus ministers understand their calling or vocation, as well as where they experience both joy and challenge. In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis wrote that “vocation” can be “understood in a broad sense as a calling from God, including the call to life, the call to friendship with him, the call to holiness, and so forth.”<sup>10</sup> Variations also exist in how campus ministers understand and live out their vocational call. While some feel called to campus ministry in particular, others connect their perceived calling to lay ministry, young adult ministry, missionary discipleship, or their state as vowed religious to their work with college students in the context of campus ministry. Regardless of how their call manifests, campus ministers experience much joy in their work, such as being able to accompany students and witness their religious and spiritual transformations. Such moments confirm for them that they are doing the work God has meant them to do. However, campus ministry work is not without its challenges. Campus ministers frequently wrestle with heavy workloads, as well as long and non-traditional work hours. Increasing administrative work takes them away from time spent with students. Hurtful experiences of clericalism come from their institutional administrators and colleagues. Disagreements with colleagues and supervisors over how to best engage and minister to students takes a toll.

The interviews point to some important ways campus ministers are sustained in their vocations. Campus ministers feel at their best when they have healthy spiritual lives, practice self-care, and have positive support networks. Diocesan leaders and campus supervisors can help campus ministers feel renewed in their vocations by sponsoring opportunities for campus ministers to participate in personal spiritual direction, as well as take private retreats and sabbaticals. Diocesan leaders and campus supervisors can also help foster a healthier approach to dealing with administrative tasks and other challenges specific to campus ministry by connecting campus ministers with mentors who successfully manage such challenges. This is especially true for solo campus ministers, who may lack the supportive relationships found in a large campus ministry team.

2) The cultural differences between campuses and among campus ministers themselves are real, but they represent nuances and opportunities for learning.

- Evaluative differences between “accompaniment” and “programming”—with the former seen as positive and the latter as negative—is not wholly accurate and even does a disservice to important ways of gathering; each play a role in cultivating student growth.
- The differences found on the previous survey among attitudes on relationship with Jesus and evangelization make much more sense given these interviews. Within the quantitative survey findings, campus ministers on Catholic campuses seemed to find less interest in relationship with Jesus and evangelization. However, the ecumenical

<sup>10</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html)

ministerial responsibilities and an aversion to “evangelization” as aggressive preaching or pontificating explain those findings; this qualitative study reveals that ministers of all kinds appreciate evangelization and relationship with Jesus when they can define them on their own terms.

- Outreach seems to be shifting from service and the work we do to immersion and relationship for many (but not all) ministers. The life and ministry of Jesus included both service and encounter. Considering the ways we can authentically bring the strengths of both works and relationship together could be very fruitful.

In sum, the quantitative survey found differences in emphases and programmatic offerings among degree-trained campus ministers and missionaries. However, these interviews show that some of the disparity in attitudes is a difference in quality (e.g., different understandings of evangelization), not an outright rejection. As campus ministry teams become aware of their own theological leanings and limits of their training, they can better understand what types of students, staff and faculty they attract as well as those who could be missed. Through choices stemming from this self-awareness, campus ministries can create more inclusive ministries that will bring growth to a wide variety of campus members, rather than only those most like the ministers themselves.

3) The varying degrees of success that professional and missionary campus ministers have had in ministry settings provide important lessons for considering whether a blended model would work for a particular campus or how to better integrate a mixed model ministry. Four best practices were distilled through the interviews. First, ensure that the professional and missionary teams have a shared vision that informs their cooperation in ministry; professional/missionary hybrids should not be forced. Second, charitable communication should happen regularly; having a clear, shared authority (not a remote supervisor) who has the interest of both the professionals and missionaries in mind helps facilitate this. Third, missionaries and professionals have unique strengths; seeing how to build upon these can magnify a shared vision. Finally, professional ministers, with their formal education, longer tenure and more long-term vision for a campus, are uniquely poised to facilitate collaboration. They should be explicitly assured of their continued employment. Professional ministers are key in helping the missionaries translate their missionary training to their particular campus. More broadly, this section identified the most common pitfalls and sources of tension in integrating professional ministers and missionaries. As Bishops Cheri and Quinn state in their Pastoral Synthesis that concludes the survey report, “Catholic campus ministry needs to develop innovative pastoral and missionary methodologies sensitive to each campus’ context while rooted in the cooperation and ongoing formation of campus ministers” (17). Dioceses and their leaders are instrumental in integrating blended models. This begins at the outset, consulting the existing ministry and learning their thoughts on incorporating missionaries into the team. It continues through active conversations that ensure the particular missionaries who arrive are welcomed and understand the cultural nuances and sensitivities of the host campus. It is especially important once the missionaries arrive, with diocesan leaders

accompanying this integration by helping the team build trust, enjoy a shared spirituality, and articulate a vision that guides and inspires all involved.

4) Helping students transition from campus ministry to a parish context poses some formidable challenges. Four practices might be considered in facilitating this. First, campus ministry should take every opportunity to form the students into leaders; this pastoral responsibility will cultivate ministerial initiative within the students, ideally helping them identify the ways they can serve and be served by their parish after graduation. Second, campus ministry should be put into a larger context of faith formation; youth ministry, campus ministry and young adult ministry should work on having a “warm handoff” at these transition points. Third, campus ministry should reach out to nearby parishes and think about creative ways they can partner with one another. Lastly, parishes may wish to consider how they might mentor the newly-minted graduates in their new parish. These interviewees suggest ideas for youth, campus, and young adult ministries, but dioceses can offer critical support in these areas. Dioceses are more aware of their various institutions, be they retreat centers, community colleges, parishes and others. Knowing the gifts of the personnel can facilitate connections and collaboration across institutions, creating diocesan infrastructures and increasing ministerial efficacy. Religious communities, with their tight networks and national reach, can help relocating graduates find parish homes. Diocesan directors of young adult ministry have a clear sense of their parishes’ gifts and needs so that they might direct young adults of secular educational institutions to parishes as well as connect priests to appropriate campuses, such as a priest familiar with Black Catholic liturgy to a historically Black college for weekly Mass. Dioceses have a unique vantage point that allows them to connect gifts with needs more quickly than those working within a particular institution can. Embracing this responsibility will result in much fruit.

The preceding pages provided the readers with a brief but intimate glimpse into the lives of Catholic campus ministers today. Their ministerial lives are complicated, fruitful, busy, challenging, beautiful, frustrating, and transformative. Amid department meetings, retreat planning, liturgy coordinating and more, they tenderly accompany those to whom they minister in a spirit of faithful presence. The stories they shared are neither those of naive optimism nor of doom and gloom; they reflect genuine human experience. Contemplating these stories may remind one of the opening paragraph of *Gaudium et Spes*:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.

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These ministers support young adults at a critical moment in their lives. Every struggle or victory of these students is held or celebrated by campus ministers; they reflect deep care for their students and campus community. The campus' joys, hopes, griefs and anxieties are those of the faithful minister. It is imperative, then, that the graces and challenges of the campus minister are likewise honored by other leaders within the Church. May this report raise an echo in the hearts of our leaders to spiritually and materially support the profound work of campus ministers, mitigating their griefs and anxieties, and amplifying their joys and hopes.

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