

missionaries bring is critical. Many professionals have graduate degrees in ministry; recognizing their knowledge, their ability to pastorally apply this, and their sense of campus culture will ensure that the missionary charisms appropriately translate to the host campus. Recently-graduated missionaries easily connect to undergraduates and can bring new students to the existing campus ministry. Those who would exclude missionaries from a campus simply because they lack theological education forget that enthusiastic volunteers—including those without graduate degrees in theology—are critical to the majority of Church ministries.

Third, regular communication is key and fosters a sense of team. Even while recognizing distinct gifts is important, both professionals and missionaries want to see the campus thrive. Care should be taken to have honest conversations not only when beginning to integrate missionaries, but also as a regular practice. Similarly, do not discount socializing; having casual, yet intentional time together builds trust and charity.

Finally, a professional minister will close this section with sage advice when discerning whether or not to blend the professional ministers with missionaries, “I think there’d have to be an openness to this particular kind of ministry. Yes, I think it can [work], but if there’s resistance from the beginning, it’s not going to work. It can’t be forced.” This brings us back to the importance of shared vision; coercion can force a new ministerial model, but only with an openness to a vision shared by all involved will it succeed.

#### **Section 4. Parish Involvement Post-Graduation**

One final finding that was especially important is the transition to parish life after graduation. None of the campus ministers volunteered that they had data that tracked the extent to which students continue to practice their faith or otherwise develop spiritually after graduation. But most believed that generally students’ faith lives would decline after leaving campus ministry; only seven said that they thought that most of those who attended Mass would continue to do so upon graduating. Unlike the other sections above, in which the most common themes were the ones that shaped the analysis, this section will lift up insights that sometimes only a handful of respondents provided. Instead, the hope of this section is not to discover the broadest trends, but to raise up creative and innovative ideas that may help recent graduates to continue to grow in their faith once they no longer have the benefit of campus ministry.

Nineteen of the forty-five interviewed pointed to the parish as the problem. This was expressed either as parishes not being a very life-giving experience generally or that parishes are not good at meeting the needs of young adults in particular. Beginning with the former, a good number described parish life as an anemic experience—liturgically, communally, relevance-wise and in other ways, “They’re not welcoming. They’re not giving good homilies. They don’t have good music. They don’t have good community. We’re both on the losing end of this because, we’re missing, we’re losing a generation.” Parish life needs to be reinvigorated.

Second, some said that parishes are just not good at meeting the needs of young adults specifically. Some interviewees pointed to practical needs that drive this, “Maybe that’s not fair to the parish, because people care, but maybe the orientation is more towards families, with

children, or older adults, because that's where the power and money is. It supports the parish." Parishes might be more geared toward families because that is where most of the financial resources come from. Additionally, there may be a lack of familiarity with the world of young adults, "Instead, our students are going in and not being welcomed and hearing not such great music and homilies that really don't pertain to them as a young adult. So, they're not seeing people their age. They're not going to Mass."

As mentioned above, part of the problem that both the interviewees as well as the practitioners at the 2017 symposium at Notre Dame identified is that campus ministry is almost too good for those who participate. Students become accustomed to Catholic experiences that resonate deeply with their undergraduate and young adult experiences, "At least the students are, that I'm aware of, talk about [the campus chapel], which is so easy because they're constantly invited and their friends are going, and it's right here on campus. It's built into the rhythm of their week. Now that they're not a college student all those things are different and they're not in the habit of doing it themselves." For undergrads, Mass is both convenient and a place to socialize. Likewise, it is actually easier in many ways to minister to a more homogenous group like undergrads. When you walk into a Mass for a campus community, even if you don't see familiar faces, you see people who have some experiences in common with you. At the start of the school year, the homily discusses beginnings, reunions and anticipation. The finals' week homily is about strong finishes and the reprieve that awaits; meals, coffee and snacks might also be provided throughout this week. Academic life is appreciated. Social events are carefully planned and a fun and fulfilling time is nearly guaranteed. While this is fantastic in many ways, a downside to this "perfect fit" is that students are often unprepared to do the spiritually mature work of navigating a general parish experience. Students have the luxury to become spoonfed consumers of their faith. In contrast, when a priest or deacon must preach to children, singles, elderly, the unemployed and countless other populations, his message must necessarily be broad. Catholics in the pews need to find the nuggets of the homily—or the handful of ministries—that are relevant for them; they need to actively contemplate and discern the particular significance of a message or event for them. This takes work. Recent grads, however, are accustomed to ministries that cater to a very specialized population. Helping students learn how to do the spiritually mature work of sifting out what is relevant for them within a more generalist parish experience could be very beneficial for their post-college faith journey.

Thirteen of the interviewees said that they recognize that campus ministry life is amazing, but disconnected from parish life or diocesan activity. These interviewees admit that they do not do anything in particular to help students in this transition to parish life, as one said, "Is that a trick question, [researcher's name]? Honestly, it is the question that's been the bane of our existence in campus ministry for as long as I've been in campus ministry." Telling, none of the interviewees spontaneously mentioned regular and integrated activities, such as partnerships, that would facilitate this. They might mention, for example, having the diocesan head of young adult ministry come to do an evening talk about the area parishes that are more active in young adult ministry. But this same interviewee laughed that his alums asked him why the school never

helped connect them to young adult parishes in the diocese. When he reminded them of the speaking event, they seemed to vaguely recall it. Clearly, things need to be more ongoing and intentional to make an impact on the students.

*Ideas to Increase Parish Preparedness*

There were four important ideas that campus ministers proposed for improving students' preparedness for parish life: 1) challenge the students with greater responsibility and leadership, 2) facilitate students' transitions both into and out of campus ministry, 3) partner with nearby parishes and 4) provide mentor relationships for students and young adults. Beginning with the first idea, campus ministry would do well to ensure that leadership and responsibility are a part of the students' formation. By helping students to become leaders and co-creators of the campus ministry experience, they help them realize that Catholicism, and discipleship more broadly, is not a spectator sport. In realizing their own ministerial gifts, when it comes time to graduate, move and attend a parish where they know few, if any, parishioners, they will have the confidence and knowhow to seek out the ministries they can assist or be fed by. Additionally, if a young adult ministry does not already exist, these alums should feel comfortable approaching the lay and ordained leadership to see how they might get this off the ground.

The second idea was to consider how campus ministry might make the transition from high school youth ministry into campus ministry and then into young adult ministry and parish life more seamless. As Bishops Fernand Cheri and John M. Quinn imply in the "Pastoral Synthesis" of the survey report, we tend to treat these as three discrete ministries; it would be much better to see the ways these are interrelated. One simple way this could be done is simply through better communication with the ministers involved, as this layman at a Catholic university explains, "We've done different things in the past. We could try that parish, or that parish, but it's really a cold handoff. We could do a warm handoff. I'm getting that language from Chris Lowney's book, *Everyone Leads*. He talks about that as a Catholic Church we should work together and we don't. We have these different stages and it's like when you leave here you're on your own." What could a "warm handoff" look like?

A high school minister finds out from her graduating seniors where they will be going for college. She finds the contact information for the campus ministries of those campuses (or young adult ministers of nearby parishes when there is no campus ministry). Assuming she has the students' permission (and parents' permission if these are minors), she gives their names and contact information to the campus ministers. When they leave she reminds them to get connected with the campus ministry right away. When the students arrive and introduce themselves, the campus ministry team greets them warmly, "Yes, we've been expecting you!" The high school youth minister remains in touch with the students as well as their ministers for the first few months and has a fun Christmas break event planned for the former youth group members to reconnect and swap stories over the Christmas holiday. When the students are undergraduate seniors, the campus minister finds out where they'll be moving to. Whether it be through diocesan networks, "the Sister Network" as a woman religious called it, or alumni networks, students meet one-on-one with their minister to see which parish might best help them to

continue to grow in their new location. A process similar to the high school youth ministers is implemented, and the welcoming parish is excited to bring the alumni into their community. Would this require more time and resources? Definitely. But it is safe to say that far fewer would fall through these transitional cracks if we took the warm handoff seriously.

The third idea is that campus ministries could partner with a local parish. Campus ministries, due to the various models that exist, provide students with various degrees of “parish” as an experience. The statistics on models here come from the previous survey report. Most office-based campus ministries (31% of survey respondents came from this model) are very insular; there may be a Sunday Mass that attracts large numbers of outsiders, but the Catholic campus ministry experience is typically for the campus (students, staff and faculty). Some campus ministry centers (20%) provide a quasi-parish experience; often Newman’s centers attract a large number of worshipers who have nothing to do with the campus. However, these settings are different from true parishes because the bulk of these centers focus their ministerial efforts on the students, with other populations taking a more peripheral position within the organization. Diocesan ministries (6%) can oversee the campus ministries of multiple campuses but have little parish contact. Parish-based models (14%) are canonical parishes that have allocated parish resources to ensure that the students of a nearby campus have their pastoral needs met. Because parishes also have the pastoral responsibility for anyone in their boundaries, this model often cannot make the campus primary; campus ministry will be one ministry among many. Missionaries (24%) could be affiliated with any of the above models or could be freestanding. In sum, although these statistics illustrate the percentages of *respondents* and not the percentages of *students* served through each model, because the statistics are so low for respondents from a parish context (14%), we can imagine that contact with a typical parish is minimal for many students involved with campus ministry. This could contribute to a sense of cultural unfamiliarity when students begin attending a parish shortly after graduation.

If non-parish models cooperated with formal parishes, this would help ease the cultural transition for many students. First, it would give them a sense that parish life requires initiative and participation, “Immersion experiences, encouragement of students being able to participate in off-campus parishes as catechists, as which they are encouraged already, but I think [intentionally making] those connections. The liturgy here, the liturgy teams, the choirs, being able to have trips out to Masses out in the community and see how it’s actually really being done outside of [our university] would be great.” These trips off campus are even more meaningful when they are treated as part of a partnership, not a field trip. This collaboration does not mean that the specialized strength of the typical campus ministry should be minimized. But the student-centered and student-led arrangement of campus ministry would benefit from meeting their parish counterparts from time to time. Perhaps the students who attend weekly Adoration at the campus chapel could attend this on a monthly basis with the nearby parish. The service events of campus ministry might want to include a twice-semester project that is implemented in collaboration with a parish’s outreach group. Maybe this parish has special events (like ethnic or religious order feast days) that would warrant moving Mass to the parish that day. A shared

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