



BLACK AND **INDIAN**
MISSION OFFICE EST. 1884

Black Catholic Young Adult Gathering

(Updated 10/5/23)

In January of 2019, the Black Bishops of the USCCB convened a meeting of Black Catholic Leaders from around the country in New Orleans, LA. The purpose of this gathering was to see how various Black Catholic organizations from around the country could collaborate better to advance the needs of the Black Catholic Community. This gathering was cosponsored by the Black and Indian Mission Office as well as the National Black Catholic Congress Office.

Following this gathering, the USCCB coordinated the “Journeying Together” conference in which young adults from various cultural families gathered to share their perspectives and concerns as a way to “educate” the USCCB, and other cultural groups, of the needs of their generation from the Church.

What was very noticeable from both of these gatherings, was the lack of participation from Black (I am specifically talking about African Americans) Catholic Young Adults (ages 18-40 years old). This demographic has been in a mass exodus from the Church for many years for a variety of reasons. During the Black Catholic Leaders meeting, the struggle to keep Black youth and young adults was a topic that was brought up by the various organizations as a cautionary tale of the relevance and existence of these organizations, including Black Parishes, in the future. During the “Journeying Together” process, there was a struggle to even locate, and encourage when they were found, Black Catholic Young Adults to participate in this process.

The unfortunate reality with this issue is that the Church never really hears the “truth” about what is going on with this demographic of young adults because they have been ignored, hurt, or do not see the Church as relevant in the reality they live in as Black, specifically African American, young adults. Also, when these young adults do take the risk of becoming involved, they eventually leave again because, when they challenge the Church, they are seen as hypocritical, and thus ignored, silenced, or reprimanded by others around them. We, the Church, only tend to hear from the ones that are already committed to the faith, which does not represent the majority of this demographic, thus outcomes are skewed, inaccurate, or even irrelevant to the ministry the Church could be doing with this demographic.

Fr. Henry Sands, Director of the Black and Indian Mission Office, and I have been talking for quite some time about the possibility of gathering several of the disenfranchised Black Catholic Young Adults from around the country for an in-depth conversation and strategy session in the Fall of 2023 – following the National Black Catholic Congress XIII. This gathering would take place in New Orleans, LA. We are looking at cosponsoring with the Knights of Peter Claver, The National Catholic Shared Parish Group, and the USCCB.

Team

The Resource Team will serve two primary roles: 1) as **Facilitators** in each session guiding the work of groups and 2) as **Speakers** in selected sessions presenting insights on a focusing question.

Report

Throughout the Gathering the work product of groups will be collected. A Report will be prepared Incorporating the results from group work, and strategies and ideas for the new initiatives. The Report will be distributed to Bishops, diocesan leaders, and parish leaders, and to those who we received grant funding.

Convocation Program

10/16 Arrival at Holiday Inn Downtown – Superdome (on own) – Dinner as group around 6pm (TBD)

Day One - 10/17

7:30am	Breakfast
8:30am	Depart Holiday Inn
9am	Arrive at Xavier – Meeting Room UC 301

Opening Activity

1. Program Overview and Group Introduction (Ansel & Fr. Sands)
2. **Opening Prayer Experience** (Led by Team – organized by Christian)
3. **Group Bonding Icebreaker (Ali)**
4. **Storytelling Experience: The Calling of Faith (In Groups of 3) (Ansel) - Journals**

Reflection

- ◆ Imagine your life as a person of faith like the chapters of a book that is still being written. Use Chapter 1 to describe your call to live out your faith:
 - How do you use your gifts/talents to make the world a better place?
 - Who was involved?
 - What were the circumstances?
 - What was it like for you?
- ◆ Use the following Chapters to describe your calling over time:
 - How has the usage of your gifts evolved/changed over time?
 - What are the major chapters of your life during your faith journey?
 - Develop titles for each chapter, reflecting your faith journey.
- Describe your experiences and roles in each chapter of your life in your faith journey.
- *Small Group Storytelling*

10:30am **Session 1. Analyzing the New Context (reality in 2023) for Black Catholic Young Adults (BCYA)**
Today

Focus: Identifying features of the new context for forming all ages and generations in the Catholic faith and discipleship with a focus on the systemic issues challenging BCYAs today (e.g., one systemic issue is the breakdown in the socialization and faith transmission of the Catholic faith in the first decade of life).

Learning Process

1. Introduction to the Activity (Ansel)
2. Naming Features of the New Context
 - Participants in small groups name 5-6 significant, systemic features of the new context as it affects their Black Catholic Young Adults remaining in the Church today, and those who have left, and write them post-it note.

- Each group posts their notes and clusters similar findings so that the whole group can see the features that surfaced.
- 3. Team Panel: Shares their own/or another Young Adult's challenge of remaining in the Church**
- A facilitated panel discussion on what each person sees as one or two important, systemic features of the new context and comments on the findings Groups.
4. Facilitated group discussion on what are our realities nationwide (Open)
5. Application
- Each Small Group will analyze how the changing context is having an impact on ministry to and with BCYAs nationwide and how this reality affects the Black Catholic, and Catholic, Church as a whole.

Noon - Mass in Xavier University of Louisiana's St. Katharine Drexel Chapel

1pm - Lunch

2pm - Session 2. Exploring the Vision

Focus: What do we see as key influences, within the Catholic Church (parishes, schools, ministries, etc.) influencing the realities of BCYAs?

Learning Process

1. Essential Features of experience working in local and national orgs (Ansel)
 - **Team Panel: A panel discussion on what each person sees as one or two of the most important features of what challenges they face remaining faithful to the church – share stories**
2. Individual Reflection:
 - Individual reflection on how well the Church, from your own experience, has benefited/hurt the lives of BCYAs
3. Small Group Discussions
 - Participants share reflections
 - Participants share with the large group

4 pm Session 3. Envisioning Black Catholic Young Adult Ministry in the New Context (Part 1)

Focus: Envisioning a new paradigm for ministry with BCYAs in America.

Learning Process

1. Introduction to Adaptive Design
 - What is Adaptive Design (Ansel)
 - **Examples of Adaptive Design (Team) – new and authentic that addresses an issue**
2. Design Work in Small Groups
 - People think about Black Catholic Young Adults and ask “What would it be like if ministry was authentic, engaging, and attractive to, and with BCYAs. . . “strategies.
 - People discuss what they have learned from their thoughts and discussions and the implications for designing new initiatives with BCYAs.
 - Team works together to design new adaptive strategies and initiatives using this template:
 - Target Audience:
 - Adaptive Challenge(s) [Consult results of context analysis from Session 1.]

- Adaptive Responses:
What could it look like if we designed ministry for, and with BCYAs that addressed their lives and the new context and was guided by the vision from a Black Catholic perspective?

6pm – Depart for Dinner

Day Two – 10/18

7:30 am Breakfast

8:30 am Morning Prayer (**Christian**)

9am Icebreaker (**Ali**)

9:00 am **Session 3. Envisioning Black Catholic Young Adult Ministry in the New Context (Part 2)**

Learning Process

1. Groups continue their design.
2. Each Affinity Group presents the strategies / initiatives for their target audience.
3. After the presentations Groups discuss how the strategies and initiatives could transform BCYAs with all ages and generations, and even ministry on a national level.

Time for Individual Reflection: How to Apply What I've Learned to My ministry/life setting

12 noon Lunch

1:00 pm **Session 4. Formation of Young Adult Ministers in the New Context**

Focus: Developing new educational models and approaches for equipping and forming those that minister to/with young adults as witnesses of faith and keepers of the memory of God, as teachers and mystagogues, and as accompaniers and educators. (Priests, Catechists, Campus Ministers, etc.)

Learning Process

1. Analyze: Current Context for Formation (**Ansel**)
 - Participants in Affinity Groups discuss the question: *What's changing in the lives of those ministering with young adults that is having an impact on the ministers' formation?*
 - Each Affinity Group writes up to 5 challenge on large post-it notes and posts them in clusters of similar findings so that the whole group can see the challenges that surfaced.
 - Participants then discuss: *How well aligned are current ministers' formation efforts to the "real world" of lives of BCYAs?*
2. Envisioning new ways to conduct ministry formation (Ansel)
3. **Team Reflections on the Future of Ministry Formation – after reflection share ideas what would benefit/improve formation for those that work with BCYAs**
4. Design Work: Envisioning New Approaches to Formation of those that minister to/with BCYAs
5. Group Presentations

3pm – Wrap up – OPEN FLOOR – Anything that came up this weekend - Share

3:30pm – Go back to hotel

6pm – Depart for Dinner

Day 3 – 10/19/2023

8am – Breakfast – OPEN FLOOR CONT.

11am – Check out

Noon – Depart Hotel

12:30pm – Mass at Xavier University of Louisiana

2pm and beyond – people depart Xavier to airport (on own)

Topics from Team:

- What's affecting the Church
- Who are the Black Catholic Leaders?
- Who do Black Catholic Lay Leaders go to
- We need qualified personnel in all positions affecting Black Catholics
- We continue to have the same conversations for generations with no change
- We need to collaborate better
- Who will do the work
- We are not properly catechized
- Racism & politics from the pulpit (i.e. Obama and Trump)
- Wounds
- Issues facing Black American Catholics
- Forming Pastors and Priests serving in Black Catholic Communities
- Many Black Catholics do not attend traditional Black Catholic Parishes
- Issues between Young Adults & Previous Generations (Generation Gap)
- Experiences in the Church (negative)
- Why do we stay faithful (it is a struggle)?
- What would bring YA's back
- Lack of shepherding from the pulpit during national Black crises (i.e. murders of unarmed citizens by police)