

Executive Summary

The Next Generation of Pastoral Leaders:

Their Chips Are All In

A Closer Examination of the Current Reality

SEVEN FINDINGS

- 1:** A hindrance to better intergenerational workplace collaboration often involves the very words that generations use to describe one another.
- 2:** There are significant differences between today's young adults and those of prior generations, especially in terms of workplace styles, monetary expectations, and technology use.
- 3:** Pathways to ministry have changed, and today's young adults respond to God's call in new and different ways.
- 4:** There are two distinct generations that make up today's young adult population: "Generation Xers" and "Millennials." While each of these enjoys a rich cultural mix, this diversity is not similarly reflected in the Catholic workplace.
- 5:** Today's young adult pastoral ministers seek community both in their workplace and with young adult church workers elsewhere. They also want the Church to seriously upgrade its outreach to their young adult peers.
- 6:** Young adult pastoral ministers want to be mentored by elder church workers. But they also want a workplace where, in addition to wisdom being passed on, their ideas are welcomed.
- 7:** Young adult pastoral ministers want to be valued and appreciated for their work and for their deep commitment to the Church. As one symposium participant put it, "their chips are all in" when it comes to the ministry.

SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1:** Catholic leadership in all areas of Church life should be trained in intergenerational workplace issues and best practices.
- 2:** A nationwide *young adult church workers network* should be established which would provide peer support, practical resources, pastoral ministry, and career networking tools for Catholic lay ecclesial ministers under the age of 40 (and which may be further divided into Millennial and Generation X cohorts as needed).
- 3:** Churches should increase their investment and training in social media and technology for all staff members across generational lines.

4: An increase in young adult ministry and outreach should be a top priority for parishes, dioceses, and other Catholic organizations.

5: Local and national lay ecclesial ministry mentorship programs should be developed.

6: Bishops, pastors, and lay leaders must be open to the variety of pathways to ministry that many young adults now travel upon.

7: Catholic leadership must treat the young professional church workers in their midst with greater respect, dignity, and humility.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Various issues that have arisen since the publication of the report.

- Student loan debt is an overwhelming issue for many young adults. In 2013, 69% of college graduating seniors had some debt, with an average of \$28,400 of debt per borrower (The Institute on College Access & Success, Student Debt Project). As noted in the 2015 CARA White Paper on Lay Ecclesial Ministry, the median annual income for all LEMs in 2010 was \$27,590, not enough to match the annual college debt of any young adult, including lay leaders.
- As noted in Finding #5, young adult-age ministers often feel tension between “church culture” and the secularized culture of their peers. The increase in religiously unaffiliated adults, particularly among millennial young adults (up to 35% of this age cohort, according to the Pew Research Center, 2015), can exacerbate the tension felt in relationships that mean a great deal to these ministers. This stress is sometimes reported as feeling “overwhelmed, lonely, or burnt out,” and can be a growing concern for the health and stability of church workplaces.
- Still struggling to overcome the recession, millennials value job security more than Baby Boomers, according to *Fortune* magazine (“What Millennials Do and Don’t Want from Employers,” March 2015). They won’t, however, stay in a job they don’t enjoy. Generation X workers, who are more likely than millennials to have families and mortgages at this point, also report concerns about job security as being a major source of stress. Secure, supportive work environments are key to keeping young adult lay ecclesial ministers in the workplace.