

Challenge #8

There is a need to introduce Children into the Life of the Church as Fully and Early as Possible.

65% - Accept as is

28% - Accept with modification

8% - Do not accept

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- "It sounded like a lot of EXPERTS on this committee - where are the regular (parents) people? *I think as ""fully as possible"" should be looked at. I am a catechist since 1972 and I think the books now for CCD have too much information for kids. If we plant the seed, they will search when they are ready. *Basic information - repeated in each grade - Who is God/Jesus? What did He do for His people? Why did He come on earth? How can we serve Him and continue his message. *Perhaps we are too hard on the priests.....how about a welcoming committee to help out with the welcome. Uniform???? Is that what sets the apart and identifies their special role. Like teachers in the past - to dress for respect and distinguish between students and teachers. *We must make Church a unique, memorable experience for young children especially through their senses...Smell - incense and candles, See - Observe adults worshiping, sit up front, color and beauty of building.....windows , flowers, etc., Hear - Lots of good music, singing, instruments, Good News proclaimed in happy tone. Taste - Host & Wine, Touch - perhaps just a pat or handshake.
 - Parents of this age group are not attending even in parishes that are welcoming to children
 - The supporting info is questionable and I feel a bit off-base. Early, strong and consistent religious formation (including family formation) is the challenge. Birth to 12 includes post-Baptism; pre-school, etc. The Mass appealing to children? "Uniforms"?
 - There have been instances in the past where pastors or priests at our parish just didn't connect with children and are extremely uncomfortable with the disruptions during Mass. I would recommend a solution especially for toddlers and young children... Schedule an Open House for them to explore the church via all the senses: let them touch the statues, altar and anything they can, let them explore the choir loft and watch/listen to the organist play, let them ring the consecration bells, let them sit by the altar as the priest explains all the sounds and scents of the Mass. Let it become a place of excitement for them as they learn what everything means.
 - What a wonderful opportunity we have at this time in the life of our diocese to develop a religious education structure to educate the TOTAL FAMILY... a structure that could educate:
 - Parents-to-be on the responsibility of raising their child in the Catholic faith
 - Parents of children of all ages that they are responsible for the soul of their child, to teach them to educate their child to the beauty and richness of their faith, to lead them through birth through young adulthood

- Children (Birth -12) – We need our children to see the JOY of our faith, the beautiful symbols of our faith... we need our parents and our educators to teach with excitement and zeal.
- Children (12-18) – We need to show our teens that whatever they do should be a reflection of their faith and of their love of God. Our teens have issues regarding their faith because they don't see that faith reflected in the people around them. Parish should email teens while they're at college... encourage them to stay connected, let them know that their faith family cares.
- Adults (19-30) – OMG... where do I begin: parish website, parish should email them when they're away at college and congratulate them upon graduation. Parish should encourage young adults to email the parish ... a way to let young adults FEEL they have their faith family that loves them. Use ParishSoft as a tool to get this group together.
- Get this group involved in committees and fund-raising activities as soon as possible. Let them see the joy of giving of themselves within their church family.
- Dating and Engaged to be married Adults – ask about their plans, host an annual dinner for them to network with other young adults their age.
- Newly-married Adults – keep them involved in parish activities, host an annual dinner for newlyweds.
 - Adults (31-65) – At this age, everyone in the parish should know this group by their first name... they should feel a purpose and have a presence within their church. They should be active in all facets of parish life....
 - Adults (65 & over) – Here's how I want to be involved in my parish when I retire.... Volunteer in the community and in my parish, be more involved in committees and fund-raising, plan and attend trips, plan and attend parish parties, etc. Ask this group to share how their faith has enriched their lives to those who are younger.
- needs to be re-worded as a challenge..."there is a need to engage teens in the liturgy by helping them understand the "why" we come together to worship
- It is not all about the priests ability to relate because they are "different" -- we (including children) deal with "different" people all the time – teachers, postmen, grandparents, doctors, etc. It's about opening the dialogue with open-mindedness on both sides.
- Challenge and support points do not connect. I am unable to see how priests having one-on-one conversations connects to introducing children into the life of the church fully and early
- A welcoming gesture for young families could be something as simple as the priest who Baptizes the baby a/o the Pastor to send a card of congratulations and invite them to attend Mass with the baby. Many parishes have ""cry rooms"" which could make parents feel more comfortable sitting there. These parents, and their newest member of the parish, could also be introduced and welcomed at the end of Mass. Thus the other parishioners would recognize them and greet them.

- A special children's liturgy, even once a month encourages the younger children to participate. This has been very successful at our parish, St. Mark, Stratford. They are invited to come near the altar, and our Deacon Andy shares the Gospel story, and engages them with questions. We adults learn a lot, as well.
- Also, why not have a gathering of young parents two or three times a year to have them share their experiences in raising their children in a time when there are many challenges facing families?
- My qualifications on this are that very young children get bored quickly. My concern is that they then associate Mass with something they don't like. Praises that are truly committed to including families, offer nursery programs, and pre K/k programs during the gospel and homily. This way parents are more relaxed about bringing their children to Mass.
 - All parishes should offer a family mass where the homily is geared to children from grades 2/3 to 8 and where they can come up to the altar area at the Offertory.
 - Having said all of that, not all pastors are comfortable with children and that remains an obstacle.
- As a DRE for 14 years and a catechist for 34 years, I am very disappointed that this issue was set aside at its late date and reassigned to the Build Up Communities of Faith. Build Up Communities of Faith then did not have the ability to adequately address all the issues around this particular topic, mainly due to the sudden need to bump issues that were on the table and make space for the Catholic Schools. It felt too late in the game!
 - But, now that we are past this, what about this issue?
 - We have 38,000 (I'm sure this is bigger) children in Religious Education programs, with Parents who do not fully embrace their faith. I am not going to say that they are uncatechized since they largely attended religious ed programs as well! They call themselves Catholic, they received the sacraments, but they are as bored with the state of the Church as their children are. They know they have to deal with the many rules that come with being a part of the Church. They steal themselves to be able to get through the matrix of getting the sacraments. Many of them have issues around their choices to marry or be unmarried, or divorced. They don't see themselves as acceptable (worthy?) to the Church, but they still want their children to have a chance with God.
 - Now, let's ask them to follow the rules of going to Mass, attending classes for sacrament prep. They feel it is another hoop to jump through, no matter what you say or do to not let it be so. There is the preconceived notion that they will hate it all and we can't change their minds!
 - In 34 years of religious education, I have listened to the great struggles of these people and I have encouraged parents to go to the priest and bring their fears and needs to him. And I have been disappointed by the results.
 - Over the years, parents have asked me to get the priests into the building before their child receives the sacrament, and I knowing that will not happen, I make excuses for them and hope they will be accepted.

- Birth to 12 covers 4 sacraments with so many chances to bring these wonderful souls back to God and His Church! They need to find out that they are the missing piece in the Church which will bring so much spirit and life to the Church! We have this opportunity to love those who are right in front of us right now!
- Quite frankly, this is a large responsibility for a single person in a Religious Ed program in a Parish. So many of us work alone, ministering to so many beautiful families. It is not our design for this to be so! But we have been told that it is ""our job to keep them away from me!
- And only since the salary issue was raised first by the Catholic Schools, let's not forget just how poorly DRE's are paid and the large number of hours that they work!
- The entire Church system of education, formation and liturgy needs to work together to make all of these preconceived ideas and old ways of bringing people to the faith to change and affect a new way of engaging them and loving them!
- I suggest another study committee surrounding Parish life and Faith formation for families with children from birth to 12 years old.
- Need action steps following these observations. "How do we effect a change in willingness/availability of ...
- The introduction of children to the life of the church is the parents responsibility and directly correlates to the parents faith. As a parent I brought my children to church from the time they were infants because I wanted to share my love for Jesus and the church with my kids. It had nothing to do with how nice the priest was, or if the homily entertained my children. I think that the supporting info is off base targeting the priests as responsible. We need to work on the parents faith if we want to see the children at church.
- Not mentioned and major reason while children are not part of church is because their family/parents are not practicing and do not make it a priority
 - This overlaps the family topic but with most choose to ignore church's teaching on contraception and divorce- they are leaving themselves and their children outside the church's door
 - Also- Blaming priests is not pertinent ..(or least much more insignificant reason).
- I would have said Birth to 14 (not 12), that is High School. at 12 kids are still in middle school. I think issues change with High School
- Priests should be making home visits to parishioners who are registered in the parish but not attending Mass. This would be a very personal way to connect with them to see what is holding them back.
- "Introducing children into the life of the church as fully and early as possible is ONLY possible with educated and engaged Parents... this begins with re-evaluating the Baptismal Prep and FOLLOW UP after babies are baptized. How many babies do we baptize each year? Every single child is an opportunity to draw those parents (and in turn- that child) more deeply into the life of the Church and into relationship with Christ.
- We have them for at least an hour of baptismal prep... and unfortunately I think we're not taking advantage of that captive audience.

- I voted to accept this Challenge with modification. I disagree with the support statement that priests " don 't live in the community so they are different." How is the church/rectory considered not part of the community? If the church is excluded from the community, then we have a problem...especially if that is the perspective of Catholics.
- Let's mention catechesis/education here. Even from a young age, kids respond and can love Jesus freely. This is a critical time to lay a foundation.
- I think this needs to be written more as a challenge and less as a statement. Also, I think we need to keep children in this committee as well as in the ""building up"" committee.
- The supporting information for this Challenge seems to be more critical of priests or the parents but it seems that there are deeper challenges. Children at this age love ritual. Perhaps the challenge may be how to involve the children in understanding and participating the rich rituals of our Church.
- This challenge has much more to do with parents than with kids. Young kids are not coming to Mass on their own, they come with parents. Why isn't that addressed specifically in this challenge?
- Also, we should not significantly modify the Mass to attract kids. That is making the Mass an advertisement. Christ does not conform to us; we conform to Him.
- Yes, we must introduce children into the life of the Church and to a lived relationship with Jesus. That said, let's keep in mind that it is not only priests who need to do this, nor are priests the only ones who are sometimes not welcoming or able to have one-on-one conversations about the faith - every single person who is on a parish staff must be welcoming and able to witness to the beauty of a relationship with Jesus.
- Switch order of early and fully. It is not just life of church we need to introduce them to but more importantly the knowledge of a loving God. Supporting info about priests does not make sense to me.
- Children's liturgy of the Word (where children are led out for an age-appropriate reading and discussion of God's word in an environment where they can move around is critically important. This is as important for adults as it is for the children - most children's liturgy I've seen has youngsters performing in some way, and adults impressed by how ""cute"" they are. This does little to invite anyone deeper into the great mystery of God's love and forgiveness. Primarily children eventually participate in a faith that they see impacts their parents and other adults in powerful ways - a faith beyond simple pat answers that doesn't address the complexity of the world we live in. There needs to always be a focus on offering adult Catholics more challenging opportunities to move their faith beyond the grade-school faith many were left with. In doing so, children will be naturally drawn to it, not solely because of their Sunday experience as much as because of what they observe in adults and the world. To bring in the next generation of Catholics - focus on inviting the adults to a much deeper level of study, pray, contemplation, and service - and the children will follow. So, I'd add: How can we empower adults in their faith in ways that will influence their children through the ways they live the Christian life. Perhaps the question should include: the institutional and home church?

- These are the categories I found effective for my own children:
 - Formative years:
 - 0 – Pre-School
 - Pre-School to First Holy Communion
 - Pre-School held on Sunday during Children’s 9:00 a.m. Mass
 - At the end of pre-School era they have a special Mass held during the Children’s 9:00 a.m. Mass. Possibly A moving up ceremony.
 - First Holy Communicants to Confirmation
 - At the next Sunday’s Mass acknowledge those First Holy Communicants and the significance of the Sacrament.
 - If there is a Youth Mass acknowledge those newly Confirmed and the significance at a Youth Mass."
 - I really think it is mistake to remove age birth through 12... I believe the reason for the issues in the future groups is the failure of birth through 12.
- "As fully and early as possible"- The only way to do this effectively for the pre-school Youngsters is by way of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. I have direct contact with someone with expertise regarding this outstanding program which is both National and international. She was trained in Rome by Sophia Cavaletti (a proponent of Maria Montessori). She trains Catholic school teachers, Catechists, principals, DREs, etc.
- Based on the above supporting information, the challenge should be portrayed as - "There is a need for parish communities to be more welcoming to young families so that they are drawn to participate regularly in the life of the church.

Challenge #9

Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?

No Voting on this challenge

- Clearly this issue is somewhere under “family”
- Catechesis! Uniform good information for children so that they can know the truths of their faith
 - Can't love what you don't know
 - We have seen our little ones age 3 - 10 respond with joy to the Catechesis of the good shepherd (Montessori style method) where they learn in the classes about the altar, the rituals, liturgical season, the parables etc). The faith becomes Relevant! And they love it.
 - We also live faith and life - treats children and subjects with seriousness, grace and beauty
 - Dumbing down the faith is a disservice - serving little bits a time makes it more available to the little ones (like good ccd, the Catechesis of good shepherd etc)
- There really are formation issues that are the responsibility of parish and diocese. This committee needs to reflect the younger children as well.
- Education of parents needs to be done at various stages in order to foster a collaborative manner. The church cannot nor should it expect to take it all on alone. But many parents lack the true background and therefore need assistance so as to be a “part” of introducing Children into the Life of the Church. We can't assume that because they are Catholic that they are fully informed in both content and manners for delivering.
- This area was not discussed. Children in grades 4 through 6 need opportunities to have youth groups. Once a child hits the teen years if they have not firmly developed a strong youth group or peer connection at church, it probably won't happen. If presented with the right opportunities filled with engaging experiences they may be more likely to continue practicing their faith as teens. Yes, they are not as able to make the decision on when to go, but imagine a parent being nagged to go to church because their child is having a great time while learning about their faith
- Sunday conflict of sports... An approach by clergy of all denominations to Rec Depts to modify Sports schedules to begin on Sundays after 1:00 pm... Unapologetic advocacy of Sunday Mass/family time...
- I am very disappointed that children's religious education programs are not a challenge. I firmly believe that many of the teen challenges are a result of a 'broken' religious education system.
 - Each year we offer the same programs at the same time, with the same textbooks, etc and we assess our success on our numbers. If the majority of teens do not come back after Confirmation, doesn't this say something about their faith formation?

- Peer pressure - perhaps they are not equipped with the faith knowledge to defend their faith
- Mass attendance - perhaps Mass should be incorporated into their formation - instead of teaching about it, let them experience it, and then the Church won't be so foreign to them.
- I would like to know which committee will address this. Our study group was told that the Building Communities of Faith will have this discussion, but I do not see it reflected in their challenges.
- Religious Education programs need to be relevant to the students of today. How are we meeting the needs of "today's" kids in our Rel. Ed. programs? How well are we providing faith formation to special needs children?
- "Both challenges seem to omit or overlook the sacramental aspect for the "children" and "youth" age groups. Perhaps it is addressed elsewhere? Additionally there is no reference to children and youth developing a personal relationship w Christ.
- Religious Ed consistency and participation in parishes seem to a major issue.
- I voted no because there is no Challenge to address parishes giving mixed signals to parent, youth and children when they schedule a family or teen mass once a month. Does that mean that families with children or teens only have to come to those masses and it is all right to miss other masses. We need to encourage families to practice their faith together. The family that prays together stays together.
- Parents are un-catechized- there is no reference to them as an issue.

Challenge #10

There is a need to closely examine the issue of Peer Pressure for Teens.

56% - Accept as is

25% - Accept with modification

20% - Do not accept

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- I suspect a lot of research in this field is available. As we shape Youth Ministries for the future, seeking out expert help from sociologists and psychologists and teachers should play an important role, but I'm not sure that counts as a "challenge."
 - Make the statement more of an action statement , e.g. Examine the affect peer pressure has on teens and their relationship to their Catholicism.
 - All these challenges (#10-15) are best met by basic family involvement & the family involvement in basic faith formation and education.
 - "I think some teens may feel ""peer pressure"" but many teens may also be encourage by their friends.....by the time they are teens they should have gotten the message....what & why. It's tough being a practicing Catholic but it is also tough to go to school each day, practice for a sport, practice music, get dressed and visit grandma, etc. Lets let them rise to the occasion. It can't all be the same - to their comfort....that's how we learn and grow!! Many adults don't know about ""Church decisions"" - lets all hear about them together at Mass!!!!
 - The young speakers are right on target! Are they on the study groups?
 - It is all about the personal relationship...at some point all of us made that connection and it's what kept us here!
 - This set of comments and questions cuts across all the challenges in this section. Being Catholic involves developing and cultivating a sacramental imagination - that all of their reality and experience may speak of God.
 - How do they "see" God in their everyday life, not just in formal Church sessions? How can their Church or youth group time enable them to see and live God's love in all their experiences?
 - Most people, esp. Youth, live their lives outside formal religious settings. Therefore, how can those few times each month that young people with or apart their families gather in Church settings (Mass, youth groups, etc.) be leveraged such that youth can more consciously live their everyday lives as a sacramental presence of Jesus Christ and recognize God in any of their experiences?
 - Action activities that help people live the Gospel is key, e.g. Service opportunities. So is addressing the challenge of peer pressure or peer influence. Yes, how do we invite them into a relationship with Jesus and through him to all others? That's the essence of sacramentality.

- And their acceptance by Christ and His church.
- I feel that that issue here is not so much about peer pressure as it is about the teens feeling comfortable about themselves. If the teen has a good relationship with God he/she is not going to worry about what their friends think. Our teens learn by experience and in today's society most teens are leaders and not followers. Again I think that teens are falling away from church due to time commitments, school, sports and jobs and not so much by peer pressure.
- Peer pressure - "it's tough to be a practicing Catholic when my friends are making choices that the church does not accept." I understand that teens are vulnerable to peer pressure. But what really underlies this statement is that it's hard to act in any moral way when those around you are making different, perhaps less moral choices – that is not unique to the practice of Catholicism. I would like to see us convey the message of our Catholic faith as a source of the strength that teens can feel in not succumbing to peer pressure and in making moral choices, instead of flipping it on its head and having peer pressure be the reason not to be faithful and moral.
- Again, the support points issue. We need to choose how to use limited resources of focus and energy and I don't believe this should be a focus
- Invite our young priests, seminarians or Catholic Christian speakers to a discussion with our young people. My home parish in New Jersey has asked Father Benedict Groeschel's young men to visit and talk with the teens of the parish. My cousin, who engaged them, said it was a big success. This type of program could extend invitations to other parishes in the area to join in. Once again, make it an evening of food and fun as they learn about their faith. A Teen Mass could be incorporated as part of this evening. These gatherings could be tailored to meet needs of the younger age group 12-14 and perhaps 15-18. In our parish there are two youth groups-- one for junior high and one for senior high. They are involved in doing the corporal works of mercy, as well as learning their faith via our Religious Ed. program.
- Raising children means setting guidelines in everything. Why would 12-18 year olds be given a choice on attendance at Mass. The discussion can occur after, with parents, explaining it is time spent with Christ. "Being cool" is something that children realize as they mature may not be in their best interest. Parents have to be committed themselves or it won't happen
- Lack of incorporation of Jesus Christ in observations and action steps.
- Becomes irrelevant with other issues resolved
- Challenge 11 is the answer to challenge 10 and 12
- I feel that that issue here is not so much about peer pressure as it is about the teens feeling comfortable about themselves. If the teen has a good relationship with God he/she is not going to worry about what their friends think. Our teens learn by experience and in today's society most teens are leaders and not followers. Again I think that teens are falling away from church due to time commitments, school, sports and jobs and not so much by peer pressure.
- I do not accept. I do not see the issue as merely peer pressure. Society and media are the pressures influencing teens and the choices they make.

- Peer pressure has always existed, what we need to do is arm our young adults with the ability to explain what we believe to an unbelieving and indifferent world. Why being Catholic is special. A sort of apologetics for young adults.
- I was upset to see that THIS is the first challenge that was presented for this age group. We do not need to closely examine the issue of peer pressure, we know it's there. We know it's an issue. Teenagers will be pressured by their peers. What is of MUCH more importance is closely examining the ALTERNATIVE that we have to offer to this peer pressure, their relationship with Christ and participating in the life of the Church. Acknowledging that they deal with peer pressure is important, but for the sake of the Synod, it is not necessary to spend time examining the issue of peer pressure. How about to begin with... ""There is a need to closely examine and discern the best way to invite teens into a relationship with Jesus."
 - In the Supporting info it says: ""They have a need to know more about Church decisions and how they relate to them in their everyday lives." Using the expression ""Church Decisions"" makes it sound like the Church is deciding things on a regular basis, which is not the case. Could we change that to... ""We need to reveal to teens the beautiful Traditions of the Church"" or... ""The Churches wisdom"" or ""Her teachings.."" The church is full of TRUTH and Beauty and Goodness. She is full of Wisdom to help us and guide us towards communion and intimacy with Christ.. which is what we're created for, and is our ultimate joy and happiness. Peer pressure is a non issue when inviting our teens to follow Jesus, who is the Way the Truth and the Life, is first and foremost our priority.
- Isn't it Cool to be radical, counter-cultural and totally free? That is what it means to be Catholic! The better an understanding the youth (and all Catholics) have of the Gospel message, of what Jesus is asking (i.e., sacrifice) as an expression of love, the better they will be able to live this counter-cultural message, and withstand "peer pressure", and be shining examples to other youth who are searching for Truth. (maybe even exerting some "peer pressure" of their own!)
- It can never be cool to be Catholic
- Challenge should be more specific to read: there is a need to closely examine the issue of peer pressure against Christianity, the person of Christ, and the Catholic faith,
- Homilies should interpret the scripture readings and relate them to today's life and culture, explains what Jesus means by these words. Parents need to understand that not only are they the first teachers, but they are also the primary examples. If parents don't value their faith, then their children won't either. This is especially true in the preparation for the receipt of the sacraments.
- A person with a relationship with Christ can withstand peer pressure. I suggest we focus on building these relationships, as well as vibrant culture/opportunities for community (youth ministries, etc). Focusing on the root cause, rather than this secondary effect, will lead to better insight here.
- The issue of peer pressure, again, is only on the surface. The deeper challenge is to look at why teens are not coming to Church. Again, what is the relationship with Christ? Sacraments? Service?

- In general the statements are not challenges they are observations and need to reflect all of the comments listed below
- I think the community has a very good understanding of peer pressure and its influence on teens already. This doesn't seem to be a challenge this body needs to address.
- If teens have authentically catholic peers--they will grow in their faith. Many young adults see the Church as a place of rules which binds usually with a "no" to what the world finds liberating. We as the Church must show the freedom of Christ which is a big "Yes".
 - I found myself not understanding the faith and therefore not practicing fully these years, except as a family we "had" to go to Mass. But why do we do things like genuflect--not knowing that the true presence of Jesus in the Eucharist--this knowledge which was presented to me later on in life--changed my whole life.
- ...peer pressure for teens....add " as it relates to our Catholic faith.
- Do not accept because it's not really peer pressure; it's a lack of family commitment. If families were living out their mission, peer pressure would not have the influence it has.
- Not just peer pressure, but the social influences that prevail on our young people and form their mindset. Peer pressure is one of the things that forms our young people. But there are many influences that do not come from their peers.
- Do not accept the not cool premise. The challenge is the invitation to share the why in an open environment. Need to find way to incorporate "mainstream" teens in youth programs and not just the ones that "don't fit in".
- What we need to do is create a church that draws teens into us. They need to feel that they are part of a community. We can influence Peer pressure of our own
- We don't identify with the phrase "it's not cool to be catholic," and peer pressure may not be the best "cause" of declining youth attendance to church- at this stage in our lives, our social lives are very important to us- nobody is "pressuring" us to be social- it's important to us.
- There is a need to closely examine the issue of Peer Pressure for Teens I would like to suggest a modification of the wording "peer pressure." I don't believe the term is relevant for today's teens. Teenagers today are influenced by their friends and family, as well as the media, society, and culture, maybe even more than others explicitly pressuring them to do or not do something. The supporting info for this challenge states that teens need to be taught why the Church teaches what it does, absolutely. I think the real issue here is relevance- how can teens today be taught that the Church is for them, who they are, where they are, right now. The Church is timeless, it does not change with the times
- This is stated too broadly - "There is a need to identify the major forces and factors that reduce, impede, or destroy the attractiveness and relevance of Catholicism to teens."

Challenge #11

There is a need to share the Gospel Message in a manner that resonates with Teens.

56% - Accept as is

34% - Accept with modification

11% - Do not accept

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- All cultures deserve to hear the Gospel proclaimed in their own key, as it were. Youth culture is no different. Having said that, teenagers are capable of great sacrificial love and will rise to the occasion when challenged.
 - Make the statement more of an action statement, e.g. Develop ways to share the Gospel Message in ways that resonate with Teens.
 - WHY DOES IT ALL HAVE TO BE THE SAME???? .ELECTRONIC DEVICES...How about a Youth Mass that rotates each week from parish to parish.....even at the universities!!! Benefits: different priests, different approaches, larger gathering.....invite (require)the confirmation students to attend. Also require the Confirmation students to attend the ""living stations of the cross""go as a class - many parishes offer them during Lent!!! LETS GIVE THEM A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE!!!!
 - Diocese should establish a way to coach priests to deliver better homilies. Priests should learn to speak from their heart more than read from a pre-written text. The Diocese should create a 'bank' of information to use for homilies where priests can get ideas from in order to better connect with life issues/youth.
 - Homilists cannot possibly speak to every person in the church. Teens are not alone in feeling unaddressed. On any given Sunday a middle aged father struggling to find a job, an elderly person hating their coming frailty, a new mother sick and tired of sleepless nights, or a 30 year old struggling with hiding his addiction may be in the pews listening but not being "spoken to." As teens you may see it as only specific to you, but please understand – the homilist cannot speak in tongues so each person hears the language or message they need to hear at that moment. Be patient with your church. If you come regularly to mass you will hear many different types of homilies, some which will resonate. And by all means, talk to your pastors about teen masses and teen participation to help you derive meaning from the mass you attend. But also understand that the homily is never going to be perfect for all - even a teen mass homily because your needs will be different than the teen next to you. BUT - the celebration of the Eucharist is perfect every time, so take strength in that every time you come to mass. Whether or not you like the homily you are receiving God's most precious gift and YES this will strengthen you for life even if we do not fully realize it. Please try to understand that in life every message is not exactly what you may need to hear, but be patient with your church and with yourselves and it will come together over time if you allow it to.

- This challenge raises numerous questions because of the supporting info. How do adults (parents and catechists) give their personal witness to “kids?” Have they been trained to give it or just trained to teach out of a book? If Jesus isn't relevant to adults, both catechists and parents, He won't be relevant to the teenagers. This forces adults to be confessional with their teenaged audience, and that is HARD! Who can/will witness to teens if parents and catechists don't/won't? Should catechists be allowed to continue teaching if they can't/don't/won't share their “testimony?”
- Might we be implying that all teens come to be entertained; that they are spectators and not participants. This is not true of all in my experience
- Spending time with Christ - the rest matters, but is not important. Parents have to have a strong faith formation to get through to their children in this area
- Challenge 11 is the answer to challenge 10 and 12
- Again no action steps following observations and with a strong emphasis on relationship with Jesus.
- This is a similar comment to t4 c1 in that we need homilists to relate the gospel teachings to today and the social justice issues that are prevalent in our society that require our action. If homilists are uncomfortable with talking about the issues then they should utilize technology to provide approved speakers who are subject matter experts.
- I understand the comments that Mass isn't primarily about "what I get from it" but that is a part of it. We are there to thank God and praise him but we are also there to learn how we can serve Him and do his work here on earth."
- Gospel becomes relevant to teens when they understand it with good Catechesis
- How do we bring the Church's Social Teaching a present day example of living the Gospel so that it resonates with our young people?
- How do we keep teens engaged in the Church after Confirmation?
- Nothing resonates like the Truth! That is what Teens are yearning for.
- I don't see education/catechesis mentioned much in any of the Topic 1 buckets. I'd add it here. Unapologetic, bold, charitable teaching of the truth will attract folks of any age. The teenage mind is especially hungry - let's give them the tools for a love of Christ, including His Truth.
- Express the gospel that communicates that Our connection to Jesus allows us to encounter God. Convey to youth having an intimate relationship with God is what allows us to endure and overcome the challenges that arise. And that relationship gets us to heaven.
- Promote a personal relationship with Jesus. The how's and the why's.
- Need to be careful of language. No such thing as teen mass or middle school mass
- The beauty of the liturgy is universal. Ok some parishes are stuck in flashback zone 1975 with music. Worship of God is the primary focus of the Mass--really showing that all are participating in this worship and preparing the heart to be an altar--a place of worship within the Mass.
- Parishes must address the seasonal lives of teens so that their faith is integrated into their lives. For example, a "convocation" Mass should be held at the start of the school year for all students to pray for personal growth through studies, a graduation Mass and speaker, a Christmas celebration for high school students, and a homily weekend that is specifically designed to

address moral and theological issues relevant to high school students, delivered perhaps by a person particularly familiar with those issues.

- We do need to recognize our young people but not as a group separated from the greater community or the future of the Church but as the young Church NOW.
- We always run the risk of presuming that we know what resonates w/youth. We need to make sure that we ask the youth about what resonates with them.
- I received this from a youth delegate. "Many people would say the lives of the youth are revolved around technology. Yes, technology has changed the world and has had a huge impact on the lives of the young people today. However, it isn't the center of their every day lives. Coming from the youths' perspective, speaking and personal communication is what is going to grasp the attention of the young Church. Lectures are not what the youth need in order to interest them in the Church. What they do need is entertaining, motivational/inspirational speakers that come to their Catholic schools or youth groups and can relate to their lives so that an impact can be made. Also, posting things on twitter and facebook is fine, but having the Church revolved around that isn't going to entice the youth. The Church has to appeal to the youths' emotion. As a teenager I know that having an impact on the youth emotionally is the way to draw them closer to the Church."
- With regards to these two challenges, I agree that the Church needs to be dynamic in its approach to young people. The Gospel message must be made applicable to the lives of young people, the homilies must speak for, through, and with them. Providing opportunities to worship/adore our Risen Lord outside of the traditional Mass setting is truly effective (i.e. Youth Masses, Adoration, Rallies, etc).
- Social Media does play a large role in the lives of young people and must be approached systematically - i.e. we must utilize the means of communication that young people use to educate and catechize effectively.
- This one is very challenging, it might take more years, growth, maturity?
- 12-18 is too broad. Middle school is a very important age- perhaps focus there. Diocese app is a good thing- teens compartmentalize their religion, and if we want to reach teens via technology, there should be one place to go for that
- We need to utilize technology as a tool and social media for the church to give kids the opportunity to meet Jesus. They will not meet Jesus online. They need a personal experience with him that can only be found in the real world. Social media etc. should be used to get them to that real experience not a replacement. Kids want to participate in these things, there is just little to no opportunity. They need service, they need to see Jesus in the poor, and through that get into their face and become educated
- We can't water down the faith, or create special teen masses that regularly separate the parish family. (Once in a while- fine). It could be insulting to them to not expect them to learn about their faith in the mass that has worked for centuries. We all (Adults included) need to assume a counter-cultural mentality at mass- to leave the distractions of the world outside. We cannot gain understanding of our faith if we are continuously reminded of the present world and all of its distractions. The mass MUST remain reverent and sacred. There is truth in that!

- There is a need to share the Gospel Message in a manner that resonates with teens. Again, I suggest a re-wording and a re-focus on this issue. What is the core of the Gospel Message? Teens know that they are supposed to give to charity, help others, be "good people" but why? Teens need to have an authentic encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. Our challenge is to evangelize them. Many of them have been catechized in parish religious education programs or Catholic schools. How can we help teens to become intentional disciples of Jesus Christ if they don't know who He is? In this challenge, some of the teens who spoke at the microphone during the Synod brought up "Teen Masses" and more contemporary music. I think that they are expressing a real need to feel welcomed by the Church and engaged. However, is the best way to do this to separate them from the parish and their families? I think there is a real danger for teens to enjoy youth ministries and teen Masses, and then once they go to college or enter the workforce and those ministries are not there anymore, they don't feel like they belong. Teenagers belong in the Catholic Church, not at a teen Mass or in a youth ministry, but in the universal Catholic Church. I believe that teens today are capable of receiving the fullness of the Truth found in the Church. In words and language they can understand, certainly, but not a watered-down version of the faith, not purely emotional or feelings-based. Masses should be centered on the Sacrament of the Eucharist, be supported by quality music (regardless of the genre- it should be good music!), and homilies that speak to current issues, and are delivered in an engaging manner.

Challenge #12

I Would Go to Church More Freely, but...

44% - Accept as is

36% - Accept with modification

21% - Do not accept

-
- This struck me as testimony well worth listening to, but not a "challenge" per se.
 - Make the statement more of an action statement, e.g. Make the Church/Mass an inviting place/event for Teens.
 - I would go to Church.....* let us, in each of our churches, explain.....what the mass is all about.... and that it is our obligation to support the community.* I think the parishes MUST do a better job in making ALL people feel welcomed!!!!* We tend to feel comfort with those we know or we are on a committee with but how about a big welcome for EVERY person who walks through those doors!!!! Especially welcome the parent who went through great efforts to get to church with their family - Perhaps print out little activity books & pictures of Jesus to color.....no, it is not disrespectful it is LEARNING....God bless them and who are we to frown at the ""noise'.....
 - The modification should be to find a way of working with this age group, as well as younger groups, to include them in a special ""teaching mass"". That would open to them the meaning and the beauty of the mass. For example, see Fr. Baron's explanation of the mass in the Catholicism series. His explanation is an exciting and clear description of each part of the mass. This suggestion would require working out the logistics for the presentation of the mass (i.e. time, place (such as the Hall vs. the Church), parents attendance or children only, age groups (i.e. 3 to 7 - 8 to 12 - 13 to 18). The analogy used by Fr. Baron of the mass being a ""Gathering"" as in a family gathering together, can be very powerful to the young.
 - I accept with modification because the attitudes of young people depicted here can best be addressed and changed through the young people's parents. I believe a major part of the solution to the problem addressed in this Challenge will be to provide education and other support for Catholic parents in answer to the attitudes and questions cited by this Challenge. The parents are our first line of defense. We need to provide them with all the resources we can to enable them to do their job as Catholic parents.
 - We need to do a better job at marketing our 'brand'.... Let's publish a simple guide to the Catholic Mass.... Explain everything in living color: Explain the NEED to attend weekly Mass and re-create excitement about going to Mass. Do you know that there are many people who enter a church and do not bless themselves? Do not genuflect before entering a pew? Do not know to kneel on both knees when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed? We need an "Everything you need to know about your faith" guide.

- This is all about faith formation. These are basic questions that need to be reinforced from childhood throughout life. I know that you may not like quiet and no-talking places, but you study in quiet, you understand that libraries and certain area of school are quiet. It is indeed terrible if you find that churches do not welcome you – that is an attitude which must be fixed. But, essentially I think we must do a better job from the beginning of reinforcing the answers to these questions so that it is more embedded in our psyches and the welcome our youth feel and respond to is first from God and secondarily from their church home.
- I don't believe this is a separate challenge but ought to be incorporated with others in the T3 section
- Many teens are choosing to go; I would be interested in how the young people in this age group would respond to this Challenge
- A rambling statement rather than a challenge or a proposition. I don't know what to do with it.
- Education of parents needs to be done at various stages in order to foster a collaborative manner. The church cannot nor should it expect to take it all on alone. But many parents lack the true background and therefore need assistance so as to be a "part" of introducing Children into the Life of the Church. We can't assume that because they are Catholic that they are fully informed in both content and manners for delivering.
- The "challenge" needs to articulated more clearly as a declarative sentence... not as a "complete the sentence" or a question... Where is the "verb"?
- Challenge 11 is the answer to challenge 10 and 12
- Do not accept premise and supporting information. Factors in home and parenting far more influential
- The age group in question starts at 12 years-old. I see the matter more of a parental issue rather than drafting a list of reasons why teens do not attend. Care must be taken to compare the teen wanting to attend versus the adult not getting them there.
- How can we make a Youth Mass more engaging for the Youth? Music, involvement, being Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, gift bearers, ushers, etc. Priests should make the Youth feel welcome and direct their homilies to them.
- Just to add to the supporting info
 - I would go to Church more freely, but..."I want to be there, but my parents don't go and I don't have a ride." Problem: Poorly Catechized/ non-practicing parents
 - "I don't understand why I am supposed to go because I don't know that I am called into relationship with God."
 - Point being:
 - If they KNEW what took place in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, they would be there. "
 - The supporting info should have language that speaks to the need for better catechesis for parents and children
- Unfortunately too many Catholics don't understand the mass, especially children. Dr. Scott Hahn has a wonderful book called the Lambs Supper which explains that mass is heaven on earth and also how revelation is about the mass.

- I'd break open this topic to include all Sacraments, especially Penance. I think it is possible to get this age group "addicted" to the Sacraments and they are the gems we have to offer
- MISSING ELEMENT: my parents don't go. Why should I?
- The challenge seems to be more about inviting and involving all people in the Mass, especially the young.
- This challenge is not adequately formulated or expressed.
- I think that teens have to appreciate the tradition of mass. Yes have mass that are especially for teens but also have a tradition aspect of it. I have brought up before Religious Education for high school students that are not a catholic school. I go to public school and do not get to experience religion class anymore. Having a high school religion class will help teens understand the mass. And therefore we can keep the tradition of mass.
- These questions (regarding no interaction, not a welcoming environment) apply to EVERYONE, not just youth. The issue here is how we define the Eucharist and Liturgy. Too many churches view Eucharist as a collection of mass-goers each involved in private devotion, rather than a collective, communal activity. Why can't people greet one another as they gather? At St. James in Stratford, we have worked for years to build an engaged, participatory community - everyone takes a name tag when we come through the door. We greet one another by name. Talking before mass isn't frowned upon - it's encouraged. People who come for private prayer - private devotional prayer can take place anywhere - but coming together for the Eucharist is communal, warm, engaging. Before mass our pastor, deacons, and staff walk around, welcoming and getting to know the community, networking, connecting people to one another. Our lector begins with an introduction inviting people to turn to their neighbor and introduce one another by name. The pastor continually calls for full, active, and conscious participation. The cantor leads the singing in keys that people can actually sing in. Without getting to know one another we have no skin in the game. When we don't participate fully we sit back and get lost in our own thoughts. We also don't do a good job of teaching people to recognize the symbolic richness in the liturgy. In many places people can't even receive from the cup! If we're not taught about the movement and symbolic significance of the liturgy the trade-off is disengagement. For people of all ages. I'd respectfully suggest that priests (and even our Bishop) attend mass here and there, incognito, to experience what it can be like to be a congregant.
- There is such a language of kids "going" to be a part of the church. Instead of focusing on making kids "go," could there be a shift to focus on bringing the church to kids? If kids are expected to step out of their comfort zone to come to things at church, why are we not expected to step out of our comfort zone to go where kids are? Current restraints on anyone over 18 being with kids makes this difficult
- I absolutely agree with the young woman who addressed the need for a teen mass and also with the young man who said that the parts of said mass should relate directly to teens.
- This comment applies to this whole age group.

- Need to single out best practices in parishes, such in St. Als in New Canaan and in key Catholic HSs --- both Diocesan and private Catholic Schools --- Fairfield Prep, St. Joe's, Convent SH. Modify and adopt practices
- Investing in dynamic, good Youth Ministers --- clergy and lay --- is effort and monies well spent. Consolidate and coordinate youth programs across parishes in towns ---- need to be broader --- town youth go the schools together yet may go to different churches/parishes.
- Youth Ministries and PARENTS need to help educate youth on the joy of developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Individual and personal --- what and why are the sacraments important to them.
- Importance of prayer and worship.
- PARENTS need to be the FIRST example ---- and help available to single parents to educate their children and families.
- The statements presented indicate that the teen with those reasons did not perceive that they received a benefit but rather saw it as a drain on time. If the teen feels at home, this will not be a drain.
- Baby steps, first re-connect with the youth with the ultimate goal of drawing them back to church
- I don't believe this is a separate challenge but ought to be incorporated with others in the T3 section.
- I really believe that this challenge needs to be modified. The primary reason why teens today don't go to Mass is because their parents/families do not take them to Mass and because they have never been taught the importance of weekly mass attendance. This is a bigger issue, beyond the empower the young church committee, because it reaches into building communities of faith committee too. The Church needs to communicate strongly to Catholics that it is essential that they go to Sunday Mass. This is an issue I have discussed many times with my students at St. Joe's and with my youth group at St. Thomas. Many teens have never been taught that missing Sunday Mass for a reason other than an emergency is a grave sin. We need to tell this to them, even if it is unpopular. We need to challenge them. Improving the liturgy, making parishes more welcoming etc. can help but that is not the solution to the problem. Even if Churches have fabulous, entertaining (they shouldn't be looking to the Church for entertainment...), they won't go without the support of their families. As I shared at the Synod, I met a girl who was a junior in high school who loved the Convivio youth conference and youth group and Bible study but didn't go to Sunday Mass. I had to tell her, even though it was a little awkward, that going to Mass on Sunday is a non-negotiable issue. We need to be teaching this to couples who come to the Church to be married, to parents when they are in Baptismal prep, to parents during Sacramental preparation. We as a Church are challenged to convey the teaching that Sunday Mass is mandatory in a way that explains it well, but unapologetically.
- Rephrase for better focus - "There is a need to determine how to motivate teens to integrate the practice of their catholic faith into their daily lives."

Challenge #13

Good Youth Ministries are Tough to Find.

61% - Accept as is

29% - Accept with modification

10% - Do not accept

-
- Again, valuable testimony, but what exactly is the challenge? Clearly, projects like Theology on Tap and Mass Mobs illustrate that younger Catholics can find community outside parish boundaries. As for Youth Ministers, economic justice and living wages start at home. I'd love to see Bishop Frank spearhead a really creative solution to this problem, along the lines of providing scholarships to Fairfield County (lay) students to pursue Pastoral degrees (Masters-level) in exchange for promised work in a local parish for 3 or 4 years. Just one idea.
 - Make the statement more of an action statement, e.g. Develop attractive youth Ministries across the Diocese. Consider holding Religious Education classes/events periodically (quarterly/semi annually) in common locations such as a larger Parish Halls or Catholic HS so that the youth develop a broader sense of a larger catholic community and maybe hear and see what others are doing or wanting to know about.
 - The only leader of a youth ministry should not just be a priest... lay people should also co-lead. At the present time, you only know what happens in your own parish. There is a need to communicate & coordinate parish ministries in our diocese through diocese website... and now the App!
 - Catholic Youth Groups fail by reducing themselves to another fun social activity for teenagers to chose from; need to emphasize the CATHOLIC experience which is unique in offering the only way to truly unite yourself with God. The youth themselves are asking for more Formation within the Youth Group. They also want to enlarge their world and go beyond themselves by sacrificial experiences, such as the March for Life, where they can be sleep-deprived, starving, and freezing cold for Jesus and sanctity of life—young people I have heard from who have participated in this have universally declared it Awesome!
 - I have heard of several instances where new pastors dismantled active youth programs in their parishes. This isn't mentioned in any of the bullet points. What must be done to ensure that a newly arrived pastor in a parish doesn't disrupt, curtail or shut down active ministries?
 - Even really devout Catholics are sending their children to Protestant retreats and Summer camps. There is a lack of strong youth ministry. I have heard of some, they need to become centralized, as in any other "best practices". When my children were growing up, it was "cool" to go on a Search or Antioch weekend. You had to be asked, and then became a leader. Adults shouldn't put their own restrictions on programs like Emmaus - they should be facilitating and making certain it is safe, but youth should be running it.

- We have to remember that youth group is one facet of youth ministry
- Catholic Youth Groups fail by reducing themselves to another fun social activity for teenagers to chose from; need to emphasize the CATHOLIC experience which is unique in offering the only way to truly unite yourself with God. The youth themselves are asking for more Formation within the Youth Group. They also want to enlarge their world and go beyond themselves by sacrificial experiences, such as the March for Life, where they can be sleep-deprived, starving, and freezing cold for Jesus and sanctity of life—young people I have heard from who have participated in this have universally declared it Awesome!
- The challenge itself should read Good youth ministries, including good youth ministers, are hard to find. Support info should include a need for better youth catechesis.
- Yes, youth ministries are powerful and full of potential - this emphasis is well-deserved. They are little silos, though, so I think we should also consider how to make youth feel a part of the wider parish/diocesan communities. This encourages everyone - not just youth ministers - to feel a responsibility towards our youth
- MISSING ELEMENT: Priests need to encourage and support youth ministry by their presence and by inviting youth to be actively involved in Mass and all parish activities.
- Because of the disparity on economics in this diocese perhaps each parish on a sliding scale contributes to a diocesan fund out of which salaries for youth ministers/catechetical leaders and school principals are paid.
- Is ""fun"" the goal? Or is it Peace? There are many many opportunities for fun. However fun does not often result in peace. In His will is your Peace. Life is more struggle than fun. But you can have peace in the midst of our struggles through Jesus and his Church.
- Amend to include search for youth ministers. Perhaps have a formal model for youth ministries or a list of best practices from the more successful programs.
- Good Youth Ministries are not tough to find - existing structures need to be strengthened as outlined in the comments provided. How do we get parishes to greater emphasize and support youth ministry efforts? How do we get parishes to realize that youth ministry extends beyond the role of the Youth Minister but is a parish wide effort. How do we mobilize adults to participate and contribute to building up the youth of a parish in conjunction with the pastor? A priest should be active in the life of every parish youth group. Availability and accessibility to the sacraments must be made the top priority for only through Christ, in Christ and with Christ will young hearts be opened to understanding the reality and truth of living the Catholic faith fully and wholeheartedly.
- Amen! There are a lot of great places to get trained Youth Ministers--Augustian Institute has a program. A friend once said: ""Before Catholics can really believe, they have to belong."" Along with this you cannot lose the baby for the bath water. The beautiful hymns of the Church with profound words should be brought forward from the treasury of our faith: ""Let all mortal flesh keep silence and with fear and trembling stand. Ponder nothing earthly minded, Ponder nothing earthly minded, For with blessing in His hand, Christ our God to earth descendeth. Our full homage to demand." If we believe this our lives will change.

- It's not that we can't find good youth ministers, as noted, it's because we do not value them. We have the money to pay them decently, but we are unwilling/afraid to spend it. You get out what you put in. For example, if we get a professional accountant to be the business managers for our parish, we should have someone who is qualified AND gifted as our youth ministers/faith formation leaders. It may be a risk monetarily but we won't grow unless we take that risk. It's not a lack of money/resources, it's an unwillingness to apply them to this mission because we unfairly rely on volunteers.
- Emphasize youth ministers as professionals and worthy of being paid a salary that allows them to live in Fairfield County
- Needs to be parish focused. Challenge listed as if youth are shopping around. Issue is personality of youth minister and importance of ministry to pastor to foster environment that drives youth to program. It leads to an empowerment of full membership that elevates relationship with church as whole.
- Qualified youth group ministers are available. The Diocese signifies the importance of this ministry through monetary means as well as other supports and parishes will flourish.
- Can't we collaborate w stronger youth groups, catholic or not, that already exist?
- Good Youth Ministries are Tough to Find Youth ministry is certainly a challenge of the Synod. I think we could modify the wording and change the mind-set. The idea of this challenge seems to be that we are trying to attract youth to participate in youth groups by making them better or marketing them more effectively. We seem to be very caught up in offering youth with fun activities, retreats, mission trips, a slew of activities, when we've also discussed how overwhelmed and busy they are. I think that one way to approach this could be to help parishes involve youth in a variety of outreaches, opportunities, and different events. Instead of improving youth groups as a part of the parish, we need to find ways to help parishes welcome youth more into their lives. I agree that directors of youth ministry should be well-trained and paid a fair wage, as well as supported by the Director of Youth Ministry for the Diocese with Diocesan events and formation opportunities.
- Rephrase for better focus - "What can the Diocese do to create, shape, and support a model of an effective youth group and promote the establishment and operation of this model across the Diocese?"

Challenge #14

Let's be realistic, am I expected to practice my faith every day?

50% - Accept as is

27% - Accept with modification

23% - Do not accept

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- This Challenge is a repeat of Challenge 12. The points listed are very good in that they relate to today's family's morals and values. We are teaching our kids to excel in every aspect of their lives except for the most important part, their spiritual life. As families and teachers we need to focus them on the importance of their relationship with God and the Church. We should educate the parents and let them know that they are the first teachers so they must be good examples to their kids.
 - Make the statement more of an action statement, e.g. Provide our youth with the tools to practice their faith every day. Help them understand what is in it for me
 - Practice my faith every day: Once it is a stronger part of you it takes no "extra time" – it is part of what you do and who you are. Like the exercise with the jar where you put in all the sand first and then can't fit in the ping pong balls – if you put in the ping pong balls first the sand will all fit around it and between it and as part of it. Parents not being role models is such a tough question. It's so hard for teens to ask their parents to be for them what they need in this area, but hopefully, the young can lead the old where necessary.
 - This Challenge places Catholicism in a secular model, as an activity separate from and competing with other demands in life. We are doing Youth a disservice by acceding to this model, instead need to stress the radical, transforming message of the Gospel, and the relationship with God which gives meaning to everything else in life. The Catholic Faith, and only the Catholic Faith, offers the Truth that so many Youth are seeking, AND show that we believe it ourselves; too many of these Synod Challenges sound tentative on that matter!
 - This challenge relates to Bldg. Communities of Faith/Family.
 - A rambling statement rather than a challenge or a proposition. I don't know what to do with it.
 - The "challenge" needs to be articulated more clearly as a declarative sentence... not as a "complete the sentence" or a question... Where is the "verb"?
 - Support info needs statement about better catechesis for parents and children
 - The challenge is a question..doesn't make sense
 - This Challenge is a repeat of Challenge 12. The points listed are very good in that they relate to today's family's morals and values. We are teaching our kids to excel in every aspect of their lives except for the most important part, their spiritual life. As families and teachers we need to focus them on the importance of their relationship with God and the Church. We should

educate the parents and let them know that they are the first teachers so they must be good examples to their kids.

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- Many non-practicing Catholics still believe enough to want their children to receive the sacraments. This could be an opportunity to address parents together with their children perhaps once a month or once every other month, so they can hear again about the meaning of the sacraments and the need to receive them regularly especially in today's culture.
- Family authority and culture is key here. Perhaps this topic belongs more in the families section? I don't know how to get youth to practice the faith daily without a vibrant family culture.
- The challenge is looking at how faith relates to everyday decisions. There is a lot of depth to this challenge.
- What does "practice my faith everyday" mean? Go to church every day or to act as disciples of Christ and love one another and be the hands and face of Christ.
- These issues are included within c-13: youth ministries would address how to live out the faith in daily life.
- Faith isn't just a part of my life--it is the part of my life that fills, impregnates everything we do and are. Jesus isn't just a historical figure, but alive and my God who loves me into being. He wants me to receive Him "Amen, amen I say to you if you do not eat my flesh and eat my blood you have no life within you." Hello, this is what God wants, to give us life. We are called into worship, and are fed with God Himself, so that we will have the strength to live the life of faith.
- Within this challenge there is a need to introduce teens to the opportunities to practice their faith and grow in their faith when they go to college. Introduce them to Catholic Colleges and catholic groups on secular campuses as they begin to apply to college.
- Teens tend to live in an "immediate" world and it seems, perhaps that they think they have to be "there" now. Perhaps we need to address some of the issues as ongoing, developmental. I.e. Do they have to live their religion every day? perhaps they would feel less pressured if they saw this as a process of growth - there is no expectation to do that perfectly every day right now. That way it isn't all or nothing, success or failure, it is about growing in faith.
- This isn't an issue specific to teens. Again, our adults/parents/etc are not modeling this for our youth. We need to give them examples – if they don't have them in their immediate families, the parish family needs to step up providing spiritual motherhood/fatherhood/guidance/leadership for our youth to encourage, affirm and practically assist them in living their faith.
- As an assistant in an 8th grade Confirmation class, I try to utilize the activities they are involved in to explain some of the tenets of our Faith. Such as in sports: "What do you think of your

coach? Do you have to follow rules? Dancing, playing a musical instrument, etc. Can you see Jesus as your spiritual coach? I don't believe they have to make a choice of sports or church.

- The topic of "practice my faith" is very broad. We need to understand and to teach is that there are many ways to practice your faith, not one single, specified way.
- This is a tough one even for adults, and we work on it every day...our prayer can actually save us timers rather than over burden us to help us discern and identify priorities
- I do not like the wording of this challenge at all. I believe the essence of what the study committee is trying to say is that we realize most teens aren't actively living their call to be disciples of Jesus Christ and that is a problem. I feel very strongly that Catholic young people are catechized but not necessarily evangelized. They have not encountered the person of Jesus Christ and fallen in love with Him. We need to create opportunities for young people to come to know the person of Jesus Christ, and in that way encourage them to practice their faith, receive the sacraments, and follow the moral teachings of the Church. We don't need to make the Church "fun" or something that feels good for it to be something important in their lives.
- How can youth groups (and church in general) address the bigger questions - where is God in our struggles? How and why do we forgive others who hurt us? How can we turn to God to heal the hurts we bear every day? How can God walk with us in loneliness, when we feel we don't fit in? How do we experience a merciful, all-forgiving God? It seems, that on another level, God can be the best soft place to fall. If religious education focused more on this, youth might feel that God is the place to turn. In addition to the Baltimore Catechism (which has been referenced quite a bit) a focus on the ways we can turn to God in our need, reflect on the ways God's Word speaks to us through the scripture. Teach lectio divina, centering prayer - traditional practices of the Mystics and many saints that can be powerful vehicles for establishing a more personal relationship with God in relation to the challenges and realities of contemporary life.
- Combine with Challenge 12

Challenge #15

Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?

62% - Need to Add

39% - List is Fine

- I wonder if we could figure out a way to help this age-group address sexuality. I'm sure the students in Catholic schools have a curriculum, but what about the students in CCD? In the old, old days, Catholic women's colleges used to offer a course on "Marriage." What about updating the concept for high-school students today? Something along the lines of "Friendship, the Single Life, & Marriage." Recruit faculty at Sacred Heart U and Fairfield U to design it. Make it serious and multi-disciplinary -- literature, sociology, psychology, and of course theology. Offer a college credit. Start a serious conversation about our beautiful lay vocations.
- Focus on teens as their own culture in transition from childhood (forced to accept faith of parent) to adulthood (owning their faith)
- I believe a major issue in this group is an absence of recognition that we need more direction and support for parents as well as teens and young adults for experiencing a love relationship with Jesus. That seems to me to be a common deficiency underlying each of the Challenges in this group. We seem to be focusing too much on fighting against secular influences, causing us to lose sight of what we can do to help our young people experience a real relationship with and love for Jesus. Further, I agree with the observation offered during the recent Delegates' Meeting that we should refrain from ""modernizing"" the Mass to such an extent that we might profane it.
- Educate parents... Parents are the first teachers of their children. Not only by words but by example.
- Summation: We are ALL growing in our faith lives. The struggle doesn't end in your youth. Be as patient with yourselves in your faith as you are training to be the best sports player or musician or student you can be. It doesn't happen all at once and it doesn't all happen because of what is coming into you from the outside – what you are bringing to the areas of your life, including faith life, is what will fulfill you. EMPOWERING means taking some of the responsibility on yourselves to have the power to live your faith and to find in it what you need. Speak to your pastors, youth group leaders etc. if you find there is nothing for you at your church. Also speak to yourself and to Jesus – use the quiet “boring” space of church to help you find the central core of the mass and understand that it is a constant growth process. We don't live your faith perfectly every day – any grown-up who says they do is fooling themselves. We are like you teens in our struggle for day to day meaning and to walk more closely with God and do the right thing. The challenges change, but the struggle remains and we are all growing. Please take the time and give your church the time to do so

- The major issue in this group is that the emphasis has been placed on “me”, when it rightfully should be placed on Jesus Christ, the importance of the encounter with Christ, and that the motivation for participating in Mass is to meet, know, and deepen our relationship with Christ.
- The problem of obligatory participation and the feeling of hypocrisy it engenders among teenagers MUST be identified as a specific challenge. In fact it may be THE challenge for teenagers who believe it is hypocritical for parents to demand that kids attend Mass and confirmation classes, and participate in social justice outreach, while refusing, at the same time, to be active in any way in the parish. And, by extension, teens consider the church to be guilty of hypocrisy and perhaps even the source of it because the church **CONDONES** this twisted parental thinking. But a second and even more fundamental challenge must be stated: The mandatory nature of confirmation as a sacrament. If a Catholic marriage can be declared invalid if one partner was forced into it, why do we continue to insist that confirmation is valid for the 95 percent of teenagers who feel they are forced to participate in it? You can't have it both ways. Why waste a sacrament on young people who don't recognize its value? Jesus addressed this in MT 7:6: “Do not give what is holy to dogs, or throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot, and turn and tear you to pieces.” The largest group of those who leave the church do so within ten years after being confirmed. They basically trample the gift underfoot and even curse the church for ramming it down their throats. You cannot force anyone to believe. Example: All three of my children have left the Catholic Church and their so-called pre-confirmation “education” is one of the roots causes for their departure. Perhaps to rephrase the question: Should the church make confirmation a purely voluntary sacrament?
- We need to better understand youth from their perspective rather than from ours
- Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Some of the issues that have been noted in the challenges are impossible to addressit comes down to proper formation and waiting for the maturation process of getting on in years to kick in.
 - One thing that does not escape me is the popularity amongst the youth of literary constructs like “Harry Potter” and “Lord of the Rings” which draw heavily from characters with ‘supernatural’ (or preternatural) powers something that fascinates the youth, thus proving that there is a yearning for emphasis on the supernatural.
 - Frankly, I think that the Church, at least in Western societies has tended to de-emphasize the supernatural which is fundamental and **CRUCIAL** to the proper formation and practice of the faith.
 - This Synod has Our Lady of Fatima as its guidehow often are kids taught about what happened at Fatima, Lourdes, and Akita??
 - How often are stories of the Saints taught in school??
 - Do kids understand that the Church, today, entertains hundreds of potential cases of demonic infestations and even possession. These are things that would make the kids better understand the things the Church offers, including the protections the sacraments give them from being ‘lead into temptation’ ...

- All these challenges are best met by basic family involvement & the family involvement in basic faith formation and education.
- Empowering" the youth requires that we assist our youth, explicitly, in understanding and experiencing that God exists and that HE (a personal God) matters in their lives. Unless our youth understand, experience, and embrace those two propositions, they will not have the "power" to withstand the secular storm that they confront in every public high school, where God does not exist or matter, and the almost inexorable gravitational pull of our contemporary society's virtually exclusive focus on the self and the material. Remember that the people in this room are the "choir." Before one can enter into a relationship with Jesus, one must accept that a God exists. Many teens may say vaguely that they "kind of" think that "maybe" a "God" exists, but the vast majority have no conviction as to the reality of God or that God does or should matter in a realistic manner in their lives. With that state of mind, how can one hope to invite them into a "relationship" with a reality that they have no conviction exist or matters?
- The voting is nonsensical. Are we supposed to agree that the statements are voiced by many youth (an empirical concern) or that we should address such a concern (a normative question). Very frustrating. The voting propositions are ambiguous and not helpful.
- I hope the purpose of the Synod is to examine and be open to change in the church in order to welcome everyone.
- Need for spiritual formation and introduction to a prayer life and one of grace with our Lord for teens. Tying good works with growth in grace.
- We need to add personal relationship with Jesus as the core of all of this!
- Focus on teens as their own culture in transition from childhood (forced to accept faith of parent) to adulthood (owning their faith)
- I believe that it is important to address the issues that impact our young teen women, especially in this formative period of faith development. Many young ladies are not welcomed to serve on the altar are disenfranchised , and then become disillusioned. How can we expect them to grow in Christ and in community if they feel unworthy. We can address teen issues if we address the whole person including male and female experiences in our communities
- The major issue in this group is that the emphasis has been placed on "me", when it rightfully should be placed on Jesus Christ, the importance of the encounter with Christ, and that the motivation for participating in Mass is to meet, know, and deepen our relationship with Christ
- When Mass starts in some churches it comes across as a guilt trip, we have to look around and notice how some other Catholic churches positively present the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
- Where is leadership from local parish clergy in the life of the youth of our parish. There is no mention of what direct role our parish priest should play in youth ministry. In my own parish it has been woefully inadequate.
- How can we catechize our unchurched parents of this age group to be model Catholics: taking the children to Mass, sending them to Youth groups, etc?
- As I mentioned at the Synod on Saturday... It needs to be our priority to invite teens into a relationship with Jesus. We want them to ENCOUNTER God through the Sacraments of the Church, and through the community of the Church. It was mentioned that they don't attend

Mass because it doesn't appeal to them. If they are invited into a relationship with Jesus, and seek Him, they'll eventually learn about His love for them because they'll realize that He fulfills all their needs. They'll come to Mass to be in true communion and intimacy with Christ. If they are pursuing Him and a relationship with Him, they'll seek Him in the Sacraments.

- I'd like to echo Jamie Keogler's concerns that there is a misdirected focus throughout this section. Let's keep the eye on the prize - bringing youth to Christ. That should be the core of the discussion, rather than these secondary effects
- Opportunities for service should be added as a challenge. Young people have already expressed that it is an important part of the expression of their faith, they are required to do community service in preparation for college, and there is a tremendous need. I'm sure I don't have to provide examples, and this is a not a novel suggestion. I was just surprised to see it absent from the list.
- It seemed to me that much of the concerns expressed are old, worn out excuses for not looking at the real problems we face with the church and our youth. I think the study group missed the basic points about the fundamental needs of our young Catholics. It is fundamentally about our inability to properly educate both children and their parents in the fundamentals of our faith and how we practice our faith.
- How do we educate our parents, CCD teachers, and youth to carry out the message of God, Jesus, so that they can have a personal encounter with God.
- Parents need to be committed and this needs to be addressed first. We must engage communities of parishes that meet the needs of parents and youth and make them the "place to be."
- There is a profound need to provide opportunities for youth to encounter Jesus Christ and enter into a living, meaningful relationship with Him.
- Add introducing youth to Jesus.
- Relationship with Christ
- I agree fervently with the speakers who urged an emphasis on a relationship with Jesus.
- What makes being Catholic special? If we're willing to meet the needs of the teens expectations should be made clear to them ... ie, offer a Teen mass, then teens should be expected to attend and bring their friends.
- The essence of success in attracting our youth to their faith is to emphasize the loving relationship that Jesus wants to have with them. If they feel that they are loved, they will want to be active in that loving relationship.
- What about the adults? Yes, the youth at mass is starting to disappear but I also notice the adults starting to disappear.
- We need to build into these challenges the role of the parent; they still have a HUGE role to play
- The majority of these kids are coming from broken homes and/or experiencing extreme brokenness in their lives. They need healing before catechesis. Healing happens through relationships not programming. Again, goes back to the family/parish living their missions as community/Church.

- Liturgical music needs to be specifically, separately addressed. Teens are hypersensitive to the messages their music conveys. Liturgical music shouldn't render the Mass to be "entertainment," but it should be used as a key to their souls - a foot in the door. There is a huge amount on modern praise and worship music by contemporary Christian music groups which would be appropriate for Mass and Adoration, etc.
- An overarching theme is that of inviting young people to be integral participants in the life of the Church.
- Where is conversation about how to help youth develop a mature and personal relationship with Christ? Whole section feels too secular and a big swing and miss.
- Each of these challenges reflect the same issue - the lack of understanding of what the Holy Mass is about, and that, seems to me is rooted in our educational practices at all levels.
- Also there is a fear of taking the ritual of the Holy Mass, not changing the meaning of the Sacrifice, but bringing the ritual into the 21st century. Hey, I read the Divine Office each day on my phone- not from a hand scripted book.
- First off, unfortunately the challenges presented in the young church study committee do not represent me and my needs well and the real issues. They are trivial and make the youth look immature and silly. Some ideas:
 - Community for catholic youth in public school. More community/ get togethers opportunities for young adults 19-30 on a regular basis. Cooperative events amongst parishes/youth groups that include service/ retreats, More than just fan the fire and convivio. We need to have a "" big brother""-esque relationship/program for the young adult church (18-30) to influence and guide the youth (0-18). Utilize the young adults (we really want to help) especially. Focus real time and means on the youth in education and participating, make them a bullet point, not an after thought. We need the kids to want to be catholic and involved in their church. I would be more than happy to brainstorm more ideas and become further involved with the forming of these things.
- We need to have liturgies which have thoughtful homilies which are NOT politicised
- It is critical in this category to stay positive, lead by example (good examples young and old) rather than focusing on obstacles...our actions will speak louder than words
- Idea: If the "home parish" of a teen doesn't have a strong (or any) youth mass/community, how can we direct them to churches that do have strong communities/masses?
- I truly believe that since the sex abuse scandal many priests are terrified of being close - emotionally or appropriately physically - to young children and teens. All children miss out on " time w father ". No more altar boy trips or times to get to know father. Need to come up w a way to reconnect w priests and for children to get to know priest if they don't attend Catholic school.
- I have worked with youth ministry for the past 4 years in Fairfield county, in particular with teens, and I found that the challenges for the 13-18 year olds did not resonate with me. I really hope that the committee spends some more time on these challenges as I believe they are crucial for our Church.

- It would be a good idea to take a separate vote of just the youth in the room on these youth challenges, to get a very good gauge on the youth opinion.
- I am really befuddled. I too am inclined to say these are very secular reasons - about "me." I think the Church really needs to reach the parents or we will never reach the youth. In my opinion the disenfranchised parents should be the focus first and then we will know how to reach our youth. We need our youth - our future. Perhaps we can share resources in communities so those parishes that excel in programs that reach out to youth can take the lead.
- Categories are still too big. Youngsters 5-10. Middle school 11-13. High school 14-18. College. 19-23. Their needs are so incredibly different and they don't belong together. I teach middle-school aged children in a pre-K through grade 8 school. They cannot be lumped into broad categories.

Challenge #16

There is a need to communicate and connect more often and effectively

73% - Accept as is

24% - Accept with modification

3% - Do not accept

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- Generally support this challenge. The Evangelicals have been ahead of the Catholics on skillful deployment of internet sites from Day One, so anything we can do to sharpen our game the better. I believe in the spoken presentation on this challenge, there might have been denigration of the internet and media coverage of the Church. (That appeared in my notes.) I would just counsel humility in addressing these issues. Denigrating the internet is like denigrating the railroad. Has it wrought some unforeseen bad consequences? Sure. Is it a fact of life and a potential source for human flourishing? Absolutely. Let's tap into the surpassing skills of the 19-30-year-olds to better serve the whole Catholic community.
 - Revise the second bullet to develop means to encourage participation after our youth have left the nest.
 - Reference to a loyalty program should be removed.
 - This challenge sounds entirely too business-like – something you'd hear at a corporate marketing session. The challenge contains an unstated implication. If I'm in that age group and read this I am inclined to think that the goal is to treat me like a project to be undertaken, and my reaction is: Stay away from me! I also dislike phrases such as “channel of communication” because they also sound corporate. This challenge must be humanized and re-envisioned as a “lived and personal experience” (to quote T4 C1) between two people (a believer and a non-believer).
 - There is a need to communicate and connect more often and effectively. I was confused by the presentation on this challenge which seemed to contradict some of its supporting info. What is the supporting info?
 - The need to communicate more often and more effectively is universal. A rambling statement rather than a challenge or a proposition. I don't know what to do with it.
 - Omit the statement regarding "loyalty program". It should simply say, how do we empower youth to practice their faith when they are out of their home environs?
 - Pertaining to the subject of connecting to young adults after they've moved away from home, I have a brother who is close to his college graduation and lives in an apartment in new York state who is having trouble finding women who practice the faith the same way he grew up. We have told him to join a parish and participate in young adult activities there, which is something that should be communicated from home parishes and families. Although being slightly autistic makes it harder for him, it is the best way to stay involved in their faith when they are away.

Therefore, it would be beneficial to have some designated person or group in the home parish to communicate with young adults who moved away and guide and encourage them to get involved wherever they are. Also, if they feel like they are the "only young one there" they should invite a friend.

- Even really devout Catholics are sending their children to Protestant retreats and Summer camps. There is a lack of strong youth ministry. I have heard of some, they need to become centralized, as in any other "best practices". When my children were growing up, it was "cool" to go on a Search or Antioch weekend. You had to be asked, and then became a leader. Adults shouldn't put their own restrictions on programs like Emmaus - they should be facilitating and making certain it is safe, but youth should be running it.
- How can we get more groups organized such as Communion and Liberation? My daughter, 26, lives in Los Angeles and is very involved with a great group of young people in Communion and Liberation. They meet regularly, share scripture and witness stories, volunteer at soup kitchens and orphanages, meet socially, share meals and enjoy sharing their life in Christ. We need to get groups like this organized here in Fairfield County. C&L is having their national meeting in New York City in mid January. It is free and the list of speakers is exceptional. This should be publicized in the Diocese as a "go see what this organization is all about".
- Bag the concept of loyalty program. Focus on incentives for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and participation in the life of the church through service.
- Combine challenge 16 with challenge 18 with a focus on #18.
- This is one of the odder expressions of a challenge. Of course there is a need to connect. Nobody disputes that. But a wide range of comments were expressed on Saturday.
 - Do we continue to focus on youth who have moved away to college and beyond? To a certain extent we do. At St. Philip, for example, college students are encouraged to come back on occasion and help to mentor the next generation of confirmandi and teens. This works well, but usually there comes a time when the ties are cut. As somebody noted, young job seekers often need to leave Fairfield County. Hope for continued engagement with parents and family, but leave the young people to find their own pastures (and pastors).
 - Then there was the extraordinary suggestion to avoid reading media stories about the Catholic Church and the user comments that are appended to online versions. I disagree in the strongest terms. Young adults should expose themselves to what is going on, should learn to distinguish true from false, and should be able to raise their own voices in public forums. If our education has not prepared them to do that, then we are doing a poor job indeed.
- It is critical that Communication and connection isn't done simply on an arbitrary/wholistic basis like from a database
- At this age many people say: ""I'll come back later, when I'm old""--like Peter Pan in Never Never Land. We have to show the faith is not for the young, old and the ignorant. Also, young people need a place to meet each other--people move so much more now than ever before. It

is a lonely age and human interaction with others ""who believe"", how wonderful to let people find communion in Christ and in one another.

- How do we communicate with our youth when they are away at college. Let them know we care and the church is there for them. How do we keep them active during visits back home? We need to let them know the church is open for them during time of trouble and pain.
- Why have a speaker that doesn't support the work of the study group? It seems that we are condoning that the work of the laity can easily be erased by a cleric.
- Need to make challenge 16 more specific.
- Implement what Father Sam SAID NOT NECESSARILY what has been written. Use social media to spread Father Sam's energy ---- email 30 sec utube video every morning to all young adults in Diocese. Develop email list. Key message every day. There are examples ---- other orders do this already!!!
- Much of what the speaker was suggesting is good. The parishes need to attend to young college students -- a welcome home Mass, a summer reading or discussion group, including on how theology of the body reacts to the hook-up culture, a convocation Mass in August before they return to college. Now, the parish staffs do not have the time, interest, or ability to engage the young adults -- certainly the college-aged members -- to make them believe that they matter and to affirmatively assist them in their journey of faith.
- C-16 and C-18 are platitudes. And how can one vote on propositions in a hand-out that are overhauled orally?
- I voted against Challenge 16 because it reaches beyond the diocese.
- When young men and women from the parish go away to college, appoint someone (Youth minister, priest, Deacon, lay volunteer) to mail a parish bulletin to the college student including a personal note OR send them the bulletin via e-mail and include a brief personal note to let him/her know that the parish cares about them.
- Rephrase the Challenge to clarify who is communicating, what needs to be communicated, and to what purpose?

Challenge #17

“We are too busy”: We Need Time for the People and Things We Love.

62% - Accept as is

19% - accept with modification

19% - Do not accept

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- We are too busy but let's include our Church Family - where ever we may be - in our weekly "things we love". make every person feel welcomed where ever/ who ever they are
 - In our often very busy lives, people are failing to put faith as a priority
 - I do not accept this Challenge. I have had extensive interaction with young people as a parent and an uncle, besides having once been a young person myself. I have not experienced anyone who truly believes that any of the comments cited here are valid reasons for not being active in the practice of one's faith -- particularly, Catholicism. My experience has been that young people drift away from the faith because they are lured away by secular society and the devil's temptations. The devil is alive and well in Western societies. I do not have a solution other than parental steadfastness in the practice of the faith and lots and lots of prayer.
 - Parish needs to do a better job of proclaiming that God is a part of everything that we do.... School, career, family, etc..... and that Mass is just another part of our lives. This is who WE are and WHAT and WHO we believe in.
 - God as part of your life does not interfere with all the busy-ness of your life, He enhances and underlies what you do, and believe it or not brings peace and with it strength to do what you need to!
 - The challenge is actually a strength. To reserve time for “the people and things we love” is something good. We need encourage that and, at some point, add that there is more to love and more to relationships than the people we know. The challenge should be: How to build upon the devotion to the people and things that are of importance to include God and broader society.
 - A rambling statement rather than a challenge or a proposition. I don't know what to do with it.
 - I really think we need to "dig deeper" with the BUSY word!! When things are truly important, time is made for it. instead, how do we communicate that God and the experience of the Church, and your faith life is really important? To love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and then, only then, to love others!!! It is then that the stress of life and "things to accomplish" will fall into place.
 - Combine Challenge 17 with 19
 - I would just add that this is a "false perception" rather than a reality. It's not that there isn't time; it's that people detect there is no reason to prioritize faith. Therefore, this makes the

answer no "people need more time." Instead, it makes the answer: "how do we inspire people to prioritize this"?

- This reminds me of the Parable of those invited to the wedding feast and those filled with many reasons why they could not come--were any of those reasons worthy of skipping the wedding feast? What did Jesus do--He sent them out to the highways to invite anyone to the feast. What am I saying--who doesn't want to go to a wedding feast if they know and love the bride and groom? To join into their celebration of love is an honor and privilege. People make time for what is important to them. One of our friends took a different approach to this. He invited people to a party for Catholics--a good, rocking party--not a lame, dull party. And from this party he invited people to church. It seemed to work.
- My two sons went on to non-Catholic colleges and universities. They participated in their campus ministry programs. One son was a Confirmation sponsor for one of his friends during his undergraduate studies. It was when they were in the business world and all the negative media on the Catholic Church abound they chose not to practice. When one married he married another non-practicing Catholic in a Christian ceremony. What went wrong? Now that I have the purpose for this Synod to pose questions, I will risk asking this question.
- Can these challenges (17 and 18) be combined?
- I voted against Challenge 17 because it is covered by Challenge 18 better.
- How does the Diocese address the challenges young adults have in making religion relevant to their busy lives in a materialistic and challenging social milieu?

Challenge #18

There is a need to help Young Adults to Fall in Love with Jesus Christ.

85% - Accept as is

11% - Accept with modification

4% - Do not accept

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- The Holy Spirit is already working in and through young adults and Jesus is already walking the road at their side. Perhaps helping them discover that truth is what is needed.
 - Make the statement more of an action statement, e.g. Develop ways to show young adults how God/Jesus fits into their lives and how they need a spiritual life to develop into a whole person. The supporting info should include issues such as: Divorce, Gay persons, Birth Control, Pre-marital Sex.
 - There should not be a need for this!!!! Again....early childhood education.....Relationship with Jesus/Church should have been established. Natural for young people to break away but a strong foundation will bring them back!!!! Why is arranging for a Catholic wedding "so complicated"????? Requirements????? Easier to buy a house, keep a job????? ALL PEOPLE MUST FEEL WELCOMED IN EVERY CHURCH/PARISH!!!!
 - Most young adults separate themselves from the formal practice of their Catholic faith; they seldom show up at Church for Mass, etc. They are more about other life issues: their further education, living on their own apart from family of origin, working a job, falling in love, etc. What opportunities can the Church, esp. local churches, offer to help keep young adults connected to one another and the community? But more important is how can the Church educate them in and help them nurture a spirituality that young adults take with them when they are apart from the formal faith community (parish, etc.)? This would happen when they are children and high school age youth.
 - This challenge should be added to Challenge 17. The items listed in this challenge are very good points and need to be addressed.
 - It would be wonderful if parishes could collaborate on reaching out to those who have left the church.
 - I see no connection between the stated challenge and the supporting bullet points. This stated challenge might better be applied to C-17. The bullet points suggest a completely different challenge: How can the church create a welcoming, love-affirming environment so that those in this age group can see the value of participating in the church's sacramental life as a means of growing in love and maturing as adults?
 - We have to INVITE them, sharing our own personal relationship with Jesus Christ
 - A rambling statement rather than a challenge or a proposition. I don't know what to do with it.

- Supporting info needs to include single people and college aged students ...not just weddings and baptisms
- Pre Cana can be a turnoff. It is a missed opportunity How do we get them involved with a group with similar interests and issues
- This is a need that needs to be addressed from day 1 in the home with the mother and father and if not there then from their first day of Religious instruction.
- I think this is the key to the whole synod--it should be for all of the sections. Maybe there could be a challenge that says: ""There is a need to help the people of the Bridgeport Diocese to fall in Love with Jesus Christ."" Really to know Christ is to love Him, and we can all come to know Christ Jesus more and let Him reveal Himself to us, and to reveal to each of us who we are.
- The supporting info doesn't seem to relate to the Challenge: There is a need to help Young Adults to fall in love with Jesus Christ. Parish registration, marriage preparation, etc. don't seem to me to be necessarily the best ways to fall in love with Jesus or to form a personal relationship with Jesus - important things, but certainly not the only ways. I think that a key point here would be to offer opportunities to study and learn some of the practices that take us deeper toward discovering the true self (where God dwells) - centering prayer and a contemplative life. They clearly need something they can pursue anywhere, anytime and these practices (lectio divina, centering prayer, the Ignatian exercises) can gently lead people toward the need to be with others on this journey into community. This should be included in some way.
- There is too much "me" ,"I" etc. Individualism is rampant. How about- "Ask not what my church can do for me, but ask what can I do for my church." There is a catharsis that accompanies helping- which in turn helps foster the sense of belonging- and then builds community!
- This the most important challenge. As a person who attended catholic grammar and high schools as well as undergraduate and graduate catholic schools and yet was never taught that I can have a unique and loving relationship with Jesus. I was taught a bunch of rules that I needed to abide by but nothing about a loving relationship with Jesus and many of these rules were in direct conflict with a loving relationship with Jesus because they were in conflict with his commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.
- I don't think the issue is lack of understanding. but the courage to change the way we reach out to families and the courage to announce the Truth/Good News
- The supporting evidence doesn't connect with this challenge as stated. There is a real disconnect.

Challenge #19

Things We Believe are Contrary to What the Church Teaches.

56% - Accept as is

25% - Accept with modification

20% - Do not accept

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- The supporting info did not seem to relate to the challenge, so hard to interpret what a "yes" vote would support.
 - Make the statement more of an action statement: e.g. Reconciling my beliefs/understandings with those of the Gospel and the Catholic Church. Supporting information should include issues such as: Divorce, Gay persons, Birth Control, Pre-marital Sex, Attendance at Church, Justice, "Me-first" environment.
 - We should be a divine community made up of BELIEVERS AND PEOPLE WHO LOVE GOD and may not be perfect and sin or make bad choices. Sorrow and forgiveness still have a place in our Church. When did failing stop being a learning experience..? Young people do not join the church because of rules & regulations. NO!!!! They love God and want to celebrate with others who believe in Him. The rules come later - just like all organizations, clubs, groups have rules. Lets not apologize for them, lets embrace them and try to support them as best we can....no one is perfect!!
 - Millennials have additional challenges due to economic concerns and an increase in dissatisfaction levels transitioning from extend adolescents
 - I do not accept this Challenge because, despite my extensive interaction with young people, I have not encountered anyone who truly believes that their beliefs are contrary to what the Church teaches or that they are not welcome back after they have drifted away from the Church. Young people may not like what the Church teaches (it argues against the temptations offered by our overly secular society), but they do not see that as a disagreement with the Church's teaching. It is more a rejection of such teaching in favor of the temporal pleasures with which our overly secular society draws them away. Our task is to show and convince them that the Church's "rules" do not restrict them, but instead form the basis or roadmap for living a truly fulfilled and happy life.
 - This is an area, where a wonderful series of lectures, or outreach through discussion should be able to help. If one does any reading at all, one can follow what our dear Pope is saying and realize things are changing. If a compassionate priest can be found, reconciliation can make all the difference in lives. The sacraments bring Jesus to us. We are Gods chosen ones and do not have to be perfect.
 - If they do believe differently, we need to open the conversation. I don't understand the supporting info statement: "Any sign of success is frowned upon."

- A rambling statement rather than a challenge or a proposition. I don't know what to do with it.
- Here we must raise the painful subject of hypocrisy. I do NOT mean to invoke the vulgar cliché that all Christians or all priests or hierarchs are hypocrites. That is an obvious lie. However . . . It is well established that priests, teachers, and church employees are obliged to profess support for teachings with which many (in some cases most) of them disagree. The danger for these individuals is destructive internal stress. For the young people they are trying to reach? Well, good students often have what Hemingway called a "built-in s--t detector." They can sense when teachings are being hedged. They invariably start to tune out. I have no easy solution to this problem. We cannot purge all questioners from our ranks. We must somehow enable them to preach and profess with absolute sincerity. The Latter-day Saints provide a current model. Just last week the leadership began to acknowledge in public what was already widely known -- that Joseph Smith himself had engaged in plural marriages, some of them highly questionable in character. There has been some positive reaction to this change of position. Our church has scandals in its past as well. There have been persecutions (of Jews, heretics, Gnostics, scientists, and others). Support for slavery. Rejection of democracy. And of course the sex abuse scandal of recent years. Openness is the only promising response if we are to convince the young. P.S. I have no idea what the last bullet point means. "Any sign of success is frowned upon?"
- Do they really know what it is that the Church teaches in order to say that it is contrary to what they believe??? there are so many misconceptions and while we don't need to debate, we certainly need to find a way to correct what these misconceptions are.
- I agree with the statement by seminarian David Romans that millennialist do not necessarily believe things contrary to what the church teaches. Language needs to be less generalized and more specific here.
- I question the statement this group believes differently than what the Church teaches. I would modify this statement to present confusion as a root cause versus a core belief system. We are referring to adults college-age through their twenties. Sad to say, institutions of higher education are proving they do not foster Catholic dogmas, so please consider these negative influences to be a cause for confused minds versus contrary beliefs.
- Society today has been clever in couching sinful behavior in terms that seem reasonable, but are in conflict with Church teaching. The Church needs to do more to explain the rationality of their positions and why what society is preaching is evil and not sensible. It is not enough to just say what society believes is wrong, but the reasons why it is wrong. We need to educate our children this way as early as possible so they are prepared to defend their beliefs.
- We should enter this challenge open to the idea that this is more of a perception than a reality. I think folks agree with the Church more than even they realize
- I have children in each age group, 10, 15 and 20. In every aspect of each of their lives the world is making connections to them in ways that our church does not. While we are making progress in media and technology the multisensory experience does not exist during liturgy. I had the opportunity to attend an evangelical service with a group of boys (mostly Catholic) and the experience was quite moving. A connection was made via music and through the preacher, who had a power point presentation displayed behind him with the salient points of his homily while

he was speaking! It certainly kept everyone focusing on the speaker instead of minds wandering. There has to be a way to employ some of these methods while not losing our fundamental faith. These things aren't 'bad'. Let's embrace all that the 21st century has to offer us.

- This observation is too generalized. I believe the real issue is that the youth are receiving so many mixed messages and are being bombarded by messages that are contrary to Church teachings.
- Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He didn't say He was found on the way, that He was part of the Truth, and that He has life. No, He is the Way, the Truth and the Life--He is Love incarnate--He is Mercy. We have to introduce people to Christ--not just to know with their minds, but also heart and soul. People often have strong opinions but when their reasoning is asked for to explain--they themselves easily see their flawed reasoning--that it is not formed by considerable pondering, research..etc.
- We are generalizing in this challenge. We need to be more sensitive to individual situations with our statements and our policies.
- It shocks me that no one has mentioned the exclusion of women from the full sacramental life of the church. While I understand that our local diocese has no ability to address this, we can't pretend that a lot of well-educated, passionately committed Catholic women (and men) will not support an institution that they see as exclusionary. The implicit message is that women are somehow unworthy to serve in the priesthood, unfit to proclaim the word. Many women get tired of ONLY hearing the male perspective from the pulpit. We're taught that men AND women were created in God's image - but somehow only men are fit to take part in the decision making process of the church
- How do I bring my faith to work. I can talk about the Sunday football game but I don't feel comfortable talking about the Sunday homily. Do I know what separation of church and state really means?
- Change "are contrary" to "seem contrary"
- I simply can't "yet" accept this one fully until I better understand the components, thanks
- Really strong sense of supporting info being spot on but don't feel the challenge reflect that. Challenge seems to be more around formation and community support, opportunities and invitations to engage service to church/others.

Challenge #20

Is there anything that rises to a major issue in this group?

32% - Need to Add

66% - List is fine

- Could we examine successful small-group communities inside and outside of parishes? Young mothers' groups, Bible Study in the financial district, Theology on Tap, Mass Mobs, (as mentioned) small-group communities (St Thomas More in New Haven excels at this). This age group thirsts for community -- how can the Church support them?
- The need for 19-30 year-olds to be treated as adults and respected and treated as such. Too often they feel judged. They are growing in faith and in maturity -- we often look to quick fixes instead of being just one step away from them and journeying in faith together.
- I can't help but feel that throughout all of these challenges is the basic need to teach -- to do a better job throughout life's changing stages -- with faith formation. We think about this for the young, throughout the sacrament years, but we also need to think about it for new parents, parents of young kids, parents of teens -- how can we help them to help bring their kids to a life of faith that they really absorb and carry with them. It was easier when families were a mother, father and children living together and going to church because it was "just what you did." Perhaps the organization has to struggle to deliver the message in a different way, but we know the message does not change -- we just need to work harder in an era of varying family styles to ensure that the message is delivered. Being welcoming to all is a huge part of that. No one wants to hear a message from a person they think is judging them implicitly or explicitly, but we need solid faith formation that grows with the growth of the person, people question the merits of their faith and drop away .
- I don't see how many of the propositions I rejected actually work to EMPOWER the Young Church
- This age group of 19 through 30 covers a 12 year span. And within there are a variety of categories or life status; i.e. married and single; college student or graduate; non college graduate; married with family and others with no children; employed and unemployed to name a few variations within. While maybe not necessarily here, but in an effort to provide this comment: With two Catholic Colleges nearby and with a diversity of geographical coverage might some students be consulted for providing some point of views and directions to these studies and efforts of the synod? We shouldn't necessarily draw conclusions by guessing and brainstorming. They could be an excellent resource.
- Challenge is to provide service opportunities for this age
- A big challenge is getting older parishioners to be more accepting of younger parishioners and making them feel welcome

- Need for more Neumann centers and support within colleges and universities. Students are at a point of definition who they are and where they are going - many universities do not support or worse attack the Faith.
- I don't see anything about helping young people find a Catholic mate. opportunities to mingle/meet with single people who care about the faith. this is critical to forming more strong Catholic couples and families.
- The major issue that was missed here is that graduates of Catholic colleges and universities come "home" after graduation to many of their parishes that are spiritually barren wastelands compared to their liturgical experiences in their college chapels. A concerted effort in the Vicariates to rectify this situation may be appropriate. And because service is such a big part of the Catholic university experience, it should be incorporated into the graduates' experience of church at the parish/vicariate level.
- Could the diocese promote Solid Catholic Colleges for teens who are looking? Perhaps provide scholarships for teens to attend Catholic Schools? How about a Diocesan guidance counselor to help guide students to find the right Catholic School for them, or get them in contact with Focus-Newman centers.. speak at Youth Groups and graduating classes? We need ways for practicing Young adults to get involved, and build them up. This age group doesn't have a place in the Church, we need to acknowledge them wherever they are and invite them by providing things that interest them: like bingo for the old folk.. theology on tap or discussion groups, hiking trips, bon fires. Date nights for young parents (with free child care)....
- I'm surprised that in all of Topic 1 there is no mention of vocations. This is a wide topic that offers solutions and insight into so many of these 60 challenges, and I think it deserves special thought here.
 - There seemed consensus that our #1 priority with youth is a relationship with Christ. So then we must ask: how? What are the means? Vocation is a primary tool/means. The concept gives youth so much of what they need: God loves them and has a unique plan for them; they are responsible for their neighbor and have gifts to serve them; they have a role in salvation history; they should pray, read Scripture, receive the Sacraments so they can better hear God's plan for them, etc.
 - The concept of vocation is also central in shifting a person's idea of faith as "what does it do for me, what do I get from it?" to "how do I serve God? Know His will for me? Love Him?"
 - So many insecurities/challenges our youth face would be banished if they had a better sense of vocation. For example, dating becomes less of a mess when young people know it is directed towards finding that father/mother of their children, that this is the person they will be sacramentally bound to, that this will be the person working hardest to get them to heaven.
 - Please include the concept of vocations in discussion of EACH age group.
- We need to acknowledge that many well-educated passionately Catholic young women feel it difficult to support a male-dominated exclusive organization that does not offer them full

sacramental opportunities to serve within the church. The implicit message in the exclusion of women to preside at the mass and proclaim and preach the word is that women are unworthy.

- A major issue that needs to be addressed: How is the church helping Catholic young adult cohabiting unmarried couples who participate in church? Some are catechists, others assist the DRE and some work with the youth. The pastor is aware of these situations. What do we do to guide them out of that lifestyle and still keep them involved in the Church?
- We are missing that this age group wants to change the world Let's incorporate a social justice/charitable/volunteer component to this. Or incorporate it into the Study Group #4.
- Hopefully we can have more welcoming outreach /opportunities with young families like our Protestant brothers and sisters
- I totally agree with the Penn State comment. The formation that he referenced is the responsibility of every parish to offer its high school students. They also have a responsibility to college students when they are home during the summer. main point is that parishes must address the needs of young adults, which are fundamentally centered upon formation and exposure to Catholic truth as applied to the worlds of their college experience.
- I like all the sections and challenges presented, but I want to stress again, as with the teen age-group, the need to stay positive and maintain an inviting, encouraging, supportive stance rather than "attacking" huge obstacles in such a way that suggests these age-groups are currently doing something wrong by not obliging to the requirements of the Catholic Church.
- I am so impressed with the young people who have spoken today. We need a vehicle for them to share the fire they clearly carry inside them with their peers and adults as well. It would certainly help to build up our church.
- Need to find a middle ground from the teaching of our church. We have gone from extreme teaching to liberal. The fear of God/hell is not teach. Teaching is like whatever you do God forgives
- The need for opportunities to form community, and within that community, encounter Christ.
- The challenges outlined assume the worst of millennials, that we don't participate in the life of the church. The questions as it were are defensive- they are not positive seeking ways to better build up the spiritual life and participation of adults in the church. We need to find ways to incorporate adults in service of the community- build community etc. How can we build up the faithful community of young adults?
- Not only an encounter with Christ but the understanding that relationship with him means becoming his body--a Church community. Recovering our ecclesiology and the gift and responsibility it is--- is critical
- Separate issues into two groups - college students 19-24 are vastly different than 24+ , they are young parents, just getting started in their career, etc.
- This whole section could be contradicted because we know places where this is not the case? why is it working in some places and not others? it feels like decisions were made and the challenges seem vague.
- Need to weave in the need to be re-formed but now as an adult member of the community independent of parents and with recognition that they are often geographically separated from

home. Don't lose sacramental connection with the age group, especially as this group has many that transitions into marriage and starting their own family.

- We need to respect the role of the laity. If we want our young adults to be active in church life, we need to respect their abilities and be open to their views
- I found these remarks to be inappropriate as they were not a summary of the group's thinking but personal opinion that could be understood as offensive to many people who have given their lives to forming faith in schools and parishes. I believe his perception is inaccurate according to current research.