



A consultation on the themes of

# ‘Faith, Vocational Discernment and Young People’

In preparation for the 2018 Synod called by Pope Francis

Brightlights Young Adults’ Festival

25 June 2017

Consultation designed and facilitated by  
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## **Faith, vocational discernment and young people**

### **Synod consultation – Brightlights, 25 June 2017**

During the annual Brightlights Festival young adults (aged 16-29), youth ministers (aged 21-29) and older adults (30+) were invited to participate in a conversation in response to Pope Francis' invitation to prepare for next year's synod. 250 young people were invited to take part through contributing to 'Graffiti boards' posing questions thorough out the three day event. Around 130 people took part in the formal consultation, facilitated by Danny Curtin on Sunday 25 June.

The conversation centered on nine themes from the synod preparation document (see appendix 2 for the themes as they were presented, page 15). The themes were selected by the facilitator: three themes from each of the three main sections of the document: Young people and the world, Choices and Discernment, Young people and the Church). The young adults (aged 16-29) were invited to choose one theme from each section and to join a 15 minute conversation on each one. The youth ministers were invited to discuss any or all of the themes in their small group. The older adults discussed the three themes about young people and the Church.

The seven page report that follows offers a detailed summary of the conversations. I have tried to include every point that was made which has relevance to the themes. The number of times that things were mentioned are not reflected. This is important, as this was not a representative group, and hence the frequency does not carry weight. However, it is of interest when there is disagreement, or broad convergence on certain issues. I have tried to highlight these.

I have tried hard to be true to people's words. There are many direct quotes, in speech marks, from what was captured by scribes or written by participants themselves. The remaining text is still largely reflective of the original words used. My task has been to try to weave this into a useful narrative. Undoubtedly there is an element of editorial addition, but I have done my best to stick to the voices of the young adults (called young people in the report), youth ministers and older adults.

(Please note, in order to preserve the proper sense of people's meaning, I have not attempted to correct all use of tense and reference to the first/third person.)

As part of the plenary session, each person was invited to share their two standout points from the conversation. These can serve as a quick overview of what the participants found the most important points. See appendix 1 (page 10).

Danny Curtin  
3 July 2017

# Young people in the world

## **1. An ever-changing world – opportunity & vulnerability**

Young people noted that society is fast paced. The fast pace creates a feeling of pressure, and stepping “too far out of your comfort zone”. There is pressure at work - to “slog” to “achieve”. There are also pressures “to be a robot” and “to conform”, which appear to young people to contradict the idea from the Church that everyone should be themselves.

One young person explained that “in a culture that shows great freedom of expression many people still don’t feel they can be who they are”. Young people asked whether the Church “as a whole” actually try to relate to people? “If a gay person walked in would they be accepted as they are?” And although the Church recognises and promotes that God made us all unique, “is there actually opportunity to express this in an everyday parish?”

Part of the fast pace is that there is always need for more. “We are always unsatisfied ... greed”. It is “difficult to root yourself” and this feeds the vulnerability of being young. “We make mistakes, and that’s what leaves us vulnerable because we don’t always know what to do”.

The youth ministers suggested a response: “Sometimes in the midst of so much input it’s really helpful to say less, keep it simple, brief, true, beautiful.” This can help youth ministers and young people experience “something intense together... time for silence and prayer”.

Young people pointed out that society is changing: “We are stepping out into the wider world. We have a desire to see the world”. This move to globalisation “is offering bigger horizons” but the “wider world feels closed to many - open only to the privileged”. As one young person explained, “this leads to feelings of anger at the injustice of the lack of opportunities”.

In a changing world, it was raised that the Church doesn’t do enough to respond to those issues which are always in the media, like LGBT issues. This “leaves [young people] feeling vulnerable about the way people perceive us as Christians based on the media’s portrayal of us.” Despite the apparent tolerance of society “everything is cool except Christianity”. From this flows an anxiety about “keeping the peace” with friends by not discussing things. For others there is a pressure from faith “to not be in this world” or “a sense of shame about our own Christian identity”.

There is also an emerging voice - which we hear throughout the conversation - of those wishing for the Church to give clarity: “The Church needs to help people understand Jesus is a constant foundation in all this movement”. This perhaps stems from the desire to ensure others share the same experience of faith which they have.

## **2. Technology and new media – connectedness & loneliness**

There are many positive aspects of new media and technology which young people praise. It “helps us to connect with each other especially globally”, to “know about important events in people’s lives” to “hear the news”. The Pope has Twitter and Instagram. You can find great inspiration/teachings that you would not otherwise have access to. Young people cited social media as a great way for the Church to be creative and relevant in the modern world. And it can transfer to real life e.g. finding out about events such as Brightlights “and then you can connect in real life”.

It can, however, “be information overload”, and it “be hard to distinguish the truth”. Youth ministers explain that social media is full of “opinions which confuses other people”, as it takes skill and time needed to inform yourself about these opinions. “So many questions are presented to the young people (eg: Gay marriage, transgenderism, IVF etc) and they might not know what to do and might not have an understanding of the Church’s teaching on it.” They also appealed for “more good Catholic voices online.”

Young people question the reality of social media. Social media shows perfect images of people and their lives - not who they really are. This can “cause you to compare your life” and lead to jealousy, in some cases fueling eating disorders and other mental health problems. It can also enable you to be another person: “You can hide behind social media - can create own perfect version of self”, so much so that in real life “people don’t recognise you or like you”. Despite it being possible to “talk” to someone each day on social media, there may still be a kind of disconnect in the relationship, and you not say hello “when you actually see them”. When people “only share the good, positive, marvelous, adventurous, where are “friends” when life is hard?”

Young people seemed to agree that social media links to loneliness. Although “social media allows for a lot of interconnectedness” there are equally “very transient relationships” that are only in the moment. Some young people cited the reduction “of closeness of friendship” due to drifting between so many social groups and identities. This adds to the vulnerability and the deep question of whether or not “anyone really knows me?”

The youth ministers suggested that loneliness is compounded “when your friends are snap chatting and Instagramming their time together and you’re not there”. One young person described how a friend gave up social media for Lent and as a result they “uncovered that it was loneliness that made him reach for it”.

Social media can be addictive. “When you are feeling something is missing the natural thing is to reach for your phone to fill the gap”. It causes disconnections in the physical world, too. In a group, whilst everyone might be physically present, they are often but mentally elsewhere. The youth ministers said that “If young people are looking down at their phones for inspiration instead of up to God - bring a little bit of God down to them.”

People can become impatient elsewhere in life, expecting the immediate response to things just like they have learnt to demand from social media. One young person explained the anxiety over the loss of wifi connection, and how this anxiety to always be connected is becoming a big deal for young children too. There is a move away from play and creativity to living in the online world.

### **3. We are agents of change ‘verses’ We can’t make a difference**

There was a feeling that young people can “make a difference outside the Church” and that their “voice is heard more outside the Church”. But, on a positive note, this linked to the hope that young people can bring their experience of making a difference to the Church itself.

Although there are some opportunities within the church for young people to make a difference, the implication is that this needs to improve. Social action within the Church (CAFOD/SVP etc) is one area where young people can make a difference, but it led to the question as to why young people’s experiences aren’t used more in ministry? For example: “As a female I studied theology. Some sermons I often feel, wow, I could do better, or I have something more to offer to lay preaching. Perhaps lay people could really enrich it.”

Another area discussed was pilgrimage. Both WYD and Lourdes were highlighted as examples of where young people are seen to be making a difference, but it was questioned as to why young people have to go abroad to make a difference in the Church. The youth ministers suggested offering clear opportunities to sign up to at “a parish level e.g. helping with bringing meals to struggling families”.

At least one young person had a positive experience of a priest being open to change, saying: “if you talk to your priest about doing it differently this can often help”. However, the youth ministers explained that “when a parish priest doesn’t like change it can dishearten you”. It can be the simplest things that disempower, like being “told I couldn’t speak about opportunities after Mass.”

There was also encouragement for Birmingham Diocese: “Kenelm Youth Trust helps you to be involved in Church and you can make a difference”.

It was also acknowledged that participation is a two way process. Young people often get invited but do nothing. There was admission that young people must choose to take up invitations when they are extended. Young people “need to be visible, brave and strong”. However, the lack of engagement even when invited, is perhaps due to being “disillusioned” because “you don’t believe things will change”. The experience of ‘tokenism’ was tangible: “It makes you feel worse if you’ve spoken up but nothing is happening”... the “Church is open to hearing, but not acting”. And the youth ministers explained that ideas are sometimes praised, but then not enacted.

There was clearly a sense of disempowerment in society and the Church. Firstly, young people said that they “don’t have the authority or the power or the means to make a difference.” They are limited by age, viewed as not having enough experience, and felt that their voice would not matter, expecting to be met by condescending authority figures who will not listen. In the Church it was felt by some that the power is with the older generation and that older lay people don’t want young people involved. This can “put you off”. Some young people did not want “to upset the balance”, and it would not be fair to take roles away from older generations. Additionally there was some that thought that “the parish looks down on you, stereotype you, older people are not welcoming.”

These factors can be a “heavy weight to push against”, coming up against the way things have always been done and being “afraid to be a little radical, afraid of people’s reactions and being judged for having opinions that are different”. It was suggested that “priests need to make effort to involve the young” as some young people will “respect them and follow their example”. Youth ministers speak of the importance of creating distinctive roles based on peoples charisms, not just leadership roles within the Church.

Gender had an important place in the conversation: “As a young female in the Church I don’t get chance to speak due to hierarchy and the structure that the Church works on.” It was discussed that “women have no chance to have their voice heard”. Their perspective are never utilised, and it is “hard to engage on any level”.

And in the area of sexuality, there were conversations about the opportunity to be open and have dialogue: “LGBT has been called by the Church so many things. Language always “sinful”. This is a community! Church scared to even say “Gay”. Older Church doesn’t even recognise LGBT”.

## **Choices and Discernment**

### ***4. So much choice – so little freedom***

Whilst there was a sense that “faith should influence our choices”, it was felt that “society presents choices which are different from the faith we practice”. Young people said society “makes it hard to follow what we are meant to do”. They face choices in “smaller daily things”, in “careers” and in “relationships”. The choices appear to be “unlimited”. However, in reality, family and friends, and the pressures and expectations of work, exams, money and training limit their choices.

Some young people feel a lack of guidance and said that “it will feel good if the Church would comfort the youth and engage with youth to help youth make decisions” and “teach us to pray”. There was a plea for the Church to reassure young people that as different individuals “we aren’t all going to make the same choices but it doesn’t mean we are bad people”. The Church should give people wisdom to make decisions, but shouldn’t impose decisions themselves. “Sometimes people need to take a risk to gain wisdom”.

Others seem to have been searching for more clarity from the Church. One young person referring to the “CatBook” as “rules” described it as not very clear or accessible. They simply asked the question: “What can I do?” But there is no clear answer: “What are the Church’s main teaching?”

Different priests tell us different things about life choice, leaving us very confused!" Furthermore, a distinction was raised between what our *faith* says about choices, and what the *Church* says: "What do we do if our faith and the Church clash when making those decisions?"

Young people stated that they "do not see freedom and choice in the Church". Who is to blame? Perhaps the most hard-hitting remark of the conversation: "By not engaging with young people the Church has made the choice itself to make young people feel outside the Church".

The youth ministers highlighted their own need for support: "Leading young people results in little time for personal reflection. We spend so much time leading that we end up not being led."

### **5. Young people show us new ways to do things**

Young people were quick to point out that they are already in parishes, events and activities. They ask to be taken seriously, and that resources - money and personnel – are provided for formation and work with young people.

They "need to sense that Church is interested in what young people have to say" rather than feeling that their ideas are not welcome in the parish or that the wider Church is "too set in its ways". The youth ministers suggested that the speed that the Church acts is an issue: "Give young people the chance... stop taking forever to do things!"

One young person said simply, "I feel I have more to offer the world than to the Church".

So there was an appeal to create a place where young people's ideas can be heard, whether online, face to face, or some facilitated discussion where young people and the rest of the Church can learn from each other. When young people aren't heard it was suggested that this may be why they lose their link with faith.

There were ideas about how young people can shoe the Church new ways, such as supporting parish communications, retreats and pilgrimages. But also the fun and social side of the Church, not just spiritual. And a reminder: "Not all young people have the confidence to speak. All have different gifts and talents e.g. dance workshop, sports music, computer design. More diverse and inclusive set of opportunities will mean more young people involved."

The narrow focus of male vocation was raised: "Young men are pressured into vocation. Every vocation is important but if you are an active Catholic male, then there is pressure!" And, in a more general sense, people shared that "you can feel inadequate unless have a religious vocation. Sad that's the reality. If do have a religious vocation you are put on a pedestal. Can't have an open conversation space to work it out." One of the youth minsters shared that the Church should "focus more on young people having a personal relationship with God rather than being drilled on vocations. Our relationship with God is personal and unique." Elsewhere the decline in the importance of marriage was noted, with a suggestion that the Church should focus on educating young people about this vocation.

The youth ministers also made a heartfelt plea: "Tradition has it's place. But without fresh ideas the Church will stagnate. We're not saying we have all the answers but we have the drive, the intention, the spirit, the creativity, the accessibility, the strength/numbers and the wanting to keep on building our Church. So let us. Let us practise our faith freely. We're not against you - we are building His kingdom too." The youth minsters also pointed to the Catholic youth movements as a place where people can contribute to the world and the Church.

### **6. Fulfilling my personal mission**

Young people say that the Church must "believe in our potential" and be supportive, allowing us to take the risk, even if it is a disaster. They raised the question of what opportunities they should

take in the secular world and “where is the guidance for this?”. They suggested that the Church should provide opportunities to explore “careers and work... not just on states of life”.

Although some people said that the Church helps young people to discern - Jesus Youth was praised - many young people don't know what is available to them. They asked for more support. These are some of their suggestions:

- Encouraging and providing Spiritual Direction
- Refection and prayer, e.g. at their university
- Advertising discernment groups e.g. Samuel, Compass
- Support young people to incorporate our faith into work life. “It is difficult to talk about our faith at work and on an everyday basis.”
- Welcome new arrival young people well. Tell them what's going on in the parish, in the diocese and nationally
- Preparing school pupils to be aware of what will be on offer in university chaplaincy
- Mission experiences like at WYD repeated in other contexts
- Spending free time in the Church in a social environment
- Meeting different people of their own age
- Formation after confirmation. Catechesis to answer questions about faith
- Hearing the voice of other young people: “Hearing their testimony to encourage us”
- Support for discerning choices on a parish level (not just diocesan)

When it came to relationship choices, on the one hand it seems that some young people wanted assurance from the Church, noting that in the secular world the vocation to marriage is undermined, whilst on the other young people raising questions about sexuality and celibacy.

## Young people and the Church

### 7. Creating opportunities for young people in the Church

Put simply, one young person said: “The Church should be our home.”

In considering opportunities for young people, they focused on several points:

- Church should provide support in our own settings - eg “Support for A level students like what is available at University”
- Letting it be know what's available
- Support for priests to help them engage with youth and the older generation
- Social Media presence with information about local opportunities
- Informal ways to explore faith. Talking to other young people experiencing the same as us.
- Small communities in parish including social events
- More spiritual development for young people
- More youth engagement depending on their interests and talents - inviting people and welcoming everyone - help build confidence, equal opportunities
- Parish leadership training e.g. for Bible study in a parish, music involvement, or working with younger children
- Events for other young adults e.g. post university
- Invite non-Catholics to come and have fun with us. Socialising, share talents and common activities
- Opportunity for University students to connect with local diocese
- Provide opportunities for converts to the Catholic Church to get involved: “people who are passionate enough to leave a faith have a lot to give and need proper guidance”.
- Opportunities for young people from other countries who are a minority
- “Rotating opportunities” e.g. leadership role should be shared to avoid people getting complacent

- Make more places like Alton & Soli readily available
- More Masses that are youth orientated with homilies and ministries focused to young people. But making it accessible to all.
- Bringing upbeat music and praise and worship into parish Mass. Music should reflect the spirit of the Church.
- Opportunities must be affordable

The youth ministers spoke of creating personal moments of encounter “relating to young people everyday experience of faith” and resourcing the creation of leaders with “strong values” and “increasing an understanding of charisms”.

We also asked the older adults about this. They discussed much of the same issues, but also mentioned the importance of listening to young people, providing a safe space (as an alternative to the pub) and the tools of ‘faith sharing groups’ and ‘peer ministry’ to reach young people.

### **8. Young people as participants in the Church**

There were several appeals to “have young people on places of authority (e.g. parish council)”. This needs to be “first hand” participation, not simply asking for opinions. Young people “are willing to do things, but is someone ready to listen?”. They suggested there should be a mechanism for feedback and criticism at a local level “so that everyone can influence how things happen”. They also asked that parish priests “should hold themselves to account” and ask “how much am I doing for youth?”

There was a recognition that this will be a “give and take between young and old”. But these young people are not asking for a free for all - they would like to be treated equally, as adults with responsibilities, “not as a different species!”

They suggested having activities with older people so that the generations can get to know each other, and also discover what they can get involved in. This could also happen across parishes, broadening out the opportunities to get involved.

A theme mentioned in different parts of the conversation is ‘universality’: “We don’t do enough to make it feel universal. It’s important for there to be more opportunities for integration. Youth from different cultures are not so integrated into the parish”. As well as paying attention to including newcomers from different countries, they also suggested: “could the Church create some movement to welcome people” as “when you move, it can be difficult to get involved, and you feel like an outsider”?

Youth ministers also spoke of the importance of youth led activities, where there are “no over 30s” in the organising - this can have a “huge impact”. But they also mentioned the “wisdom and Zeal” that comes from “intergenerational committees”.

They also raised the importance of the church being an attractive place to work: “If the Church was more appealing to work for as an employer I think it would go a lot further... Our Church needs to have decent policies in place.”

We also asked the older adults about this. They spoke about the importance of having a plan to bring them forward as a group, to make personal invitations, and to treat them as adults, with sincerity. They called for levels of authentic engagement at all levels in the Church, including in liturgy and parish activities and allowing them to take initiatives and leadership.

### **9 Church: the need to listen to young people**

Although it was acknowledged that Pope Francis is involving young people and is “progressing the Church forwards” it was also felt that young people “should regularly be asked... so it doesn’t come as much of a shock”. There was a hope that this synod consultation would not be a one off but the



start of genuine participation. It was also hoped that the Synod itself will be representative in its workings, and young people not “seen as a token”. The youth ministers reiterated this.

It was stated that if the Church listened to young people, it will make a difference. It will enable young people to feel “more involved”. Asking questions of them will get young people more engaged, helping “to deepen and broaden our faith”. This sense of encounter is further encouraged: “Rather than instructing young people, the Church should take people as and where they are, as opposed to telling people what to do.”

Also, there is a real resource here for the Church. It was pointed out, that “young people often grow up differently to older generation” so there is a lot to learn from young people. Although it is easy not to ask, it is nice to be asked. We are all “still learning” and “have time to grow in faith with one another”.

This conversation also produced thoughts about doubts. This may emerge from the notion that the Church does not listen, and it’s not a safe space to have doubts (the Church was described as stubborn). It was asked if priests had doubts, and one person said that it is those people without doubts that scare them. The implication for this is that part of the Church listening is it being ready to encounter young people’s doubts and to talk openly. “The Church shouldn’t only focus on things that they are comfortable with”... “the Church needs to ask questions they might not like the answer to.”

The Church needs to hear some of the challenges that young people have, and understand how the Church has some responsibility. Such as why young people are not going to Mass, the competing pressures, the problems of expecting the same routine for young people every week, the problems caused by different types of priests, the lack of communication, and the need to give young people real responsibility.

The youth ministers considered what questions they’d like the Church to ask young people:

- What can we do for you?
- Why don’t young adults go to Church and what we can do about it?
- How can we listen and support you?
- What are young peoples thoughts and feelings and how does the Church impact their life?

We asked the older adults about the need to listen to young people. They spoke of the need to actively seek out those who are not engaged, sharing testimonies & stories, offering mentoring, being non-judgmental and open, and taking risks.

## Appendix 1

### Dear Holy Father...

*At the conclusion of the conversations everyone present was invited to share two comments which struck them – one from what they shared, and one thing that they heard from someone else – which they would most like to share with Pope Francis. I have offered these grouped into titles – chosen by me, simply to offer ease of reading. (I have not included repeats of similar comments).  
Danny Curtin*

#### **Gratitude and commitment**

Dear Holy Father, I think our Birmingham priests are the best! Keep inspiring them so they can inspire us!

I've been completely blessed in my life, from my parish at home to Chaplaincy life at University - I'm extremely grateful to have had these opportunities. Also that a lot of other young people feel the same way.

Young people love the Church and are ready to take on the challenges of the future as the Church develops so that more people can hear the joys of the Gospel.

I don't have a perfect life, it's not all peachy, but I can't thank God enough for my life.  
#GodNeverStopsBlessingMe!

Pope Francis, The Church as a whole has amazing opportunities for young people and this has helped me in my experience of faith and how I understand my faith. It has made me understand my faith and want to go on pilgrimage to places like Lourdes and help in doing anything I can as I know the smallest things can make a big difference but it's not often promoted well.

#### **Need of support**

Let the Church sincerely say WE CARE for young people!

We need encouragement to speak up to changing the Church. We are the Church now, not in the future, we need change quickly.

The opportunities are present but encouragement, involvement and a will to change is given little attention

There needs to be an opportunity for more spiritual development in the Church for young people.

Young people have an honest desire to know the truth - but we lack support of people in Church - help encourage us to grow in the truth.

Your Holiness, I would like you to be aware of the spiritual guidance that is needed at the university age.

#### **Challenges in the world and in faith**

I was really struck by our own need for stability in such a fast and changing world and all the rapid communication with technology.

One person/we discussed the importance of strengthening family life, so that this could be the key ground for peace and stability amidst all change. Holy marriages and loving communities are powerful and grounding amidst all change.

Make working for the Church more appealing. Work actual contracted hours etc.

## **Young People as Church**

Young people aren't just the future of the Church, we are the Church now.

### **Justice - inspiring young people**

The Church needs to... really needs to be supporting of the poor by visibly opposing unjust regimes. We do a lot but there's no such thing as enough. This will motivate young adults to participate in them.

We have so much passion and young people can change the world if we're given the opportunity and have the courage.

We need a loving Church of action

### **Formation**

Closing the gap from first Holy Communion to Confirmation and then adulthood.

Young people want to take ownership of the Church and their faith. But they (need) clear, strong formation to become capable of doing this.

The need for further formation after Confirmation which allows young people to really explore what it means to believe as an adult and to explore their talents (vocation in a wider sense).

Formation and resources to train people to be spiritual directors/mentors to help young people become part of the Church community.

### **Discernment and decision making**

We must ensure that the next generation is protected as society gives us more and more choices and pressures.

More assistance + life on vocations + on the types of resource points eg: Compass  
- Young people should have a voice in decision making.

The future is so important for young people in sixth form, there are so many pressures and choices to be made especially to do with vocations and careers and extra guidance would be great.

We make a habit of changing our minds and making new decisions all the time.

The solidarity of marriage is being lost.

I would like to inspire a young person to become a missionary in faith and to really live their life through and in Christ.

There needs to be reassurance within the Church for young people when facing the future and having doubts about what choices and decisions to make regarding career, vocation etc.

What do we do if what we discern through prayer opposes what the Church tells us?

### **In our parishes/communities**

Parish priests need to consider how much time they spend on young people as a percentage of time per week.

Youths should be involved more in the Church as Eucharistic Ministers, members of parish council and so on.

Doing a lot of youth activities in line with the parish (bowling, sports events)

Please can we have more readily available opportunities e.g.: social media, open chapels, engaging Catholic communities etc.

### **Need for resources**

Parishes and Churches need to have more people to promote religious youth events so that all people can get involved not just those in certain schools or youth groups.

### **Technology and new media**

Social media creates a boundary between reality and expectations. It can cause a lot of damage to young people in their future.

Better advertising on social media for opportunities e.g. events so that more people can get involved.

Christian voices are drowned out in modern society through social media.

Technology is having too much of an influence on society today.

Digital technology does not have to limit our creativity. Instead it can be the greatest tool for imagination and the creative mind since the beginning of history.

### **Inclusive Church**

The Church should invite ALL - regardless of age, gender, sexuality, life choices. We should be united by Christ's LOVE

The young people need to feel involved and feel part of a family. A community needs to be formed within each parish, enabling friends (faith or no faith) to be involved

WE NEED MORE communities where young people can feel welcome to share their talents.

We need young people to share their gifts in all aspects of Church life. We are incomplete when young people are excluded.

Newly converted Christians/Catholics should be given more opportunities to get involved in the Church, parish work as well as community work so they feel an important part of the Church. They possess tremendous enthusiasm to contribute to the Church today and can become an inspiration for (the) future.

There should be an event to connect non Catholics and Catholics together! In a non-threatening way!

Young people belonging to countries where they are a part of a minority community need to be brought into the Church as well by creating enough opportunities for them like events like 'Brightlight' to give them assurance the Church cares for them.

I think there are too many people in the Church on a Sunday Mass to get to know each other, I think the Church needs to make small group opportunities for sensitive, passive and nervous people to be able to open up in confidence.

People feel lost. but aren't feeling they have a tangible place in a Church.

Church needs to be more inclusive, welcoming and loving to LGBT+ groups and the LGBT+ Community. BE MORE INCLUSIVE.

LGBT young Catholics are living in silence and sometimes turn away from the Church because of the emphasis on vocation of marriage or priesthood - not option. Core beliefs against core of persons identity.

I have learned that women feel their potential is limited in the Church.

The Church is UNIVERSAL this is not portrayed through a mundane Mass which doesn't involve other cultural traditions

To create more spaces and opportunities for international people in order to join countries together through Catholic Church.

### **Leadership and engagement**

I want to see more young people in leadership, having a real say in their future.

Giving more opportunities to young people within the Church.

Need to use peer ministry to reach young people.

Risk letting young people take charge of something (event, publication, charity task) in each parish. let's see what happens!

### **Dialogue in the Church**

Dear Pope Francis, What I really learnt today is that youth want to work and have ideas but they are often not listened to by people that work in their parishes because they are afraid of change so although young people ARE a source of change, they are often stuck and disempowered by other older people.

The Church's role is to give the wisdom to make decisions, not to impose decisions.

Young people want to be involved - give us the opportunity

Young people are passionately following Jesus. THE CHURCH MUST LISTEN.

if priests are stuck in their ways, what hope do parishes have? We need dialogue between multiple groups in Church/society.

Young people aren't aliens - we are adults with responsibilities...please don't patronise us.

Young people are special and deserve to have their voice heard - we are not tokens.

We want to build OUR Church and HIS kingdom, not build something new. We are part of the Church - let us be and empower us.

Empowerment of lay people to be involved in the structures, decisions and development of doctrine in the Church. Especially women. Our voices and experiences need to be heard and listened to - we have gifts and talents to offer.

The synod is not a one time thing but the beginning of a perpetual conversation.

If the Church listened to young people, we'd be more involved and engaged with the Church and our faith.

Please help the different generations in our parish to work together and respect each other opinion and decisions.

Church should encourage young peoples questions and ideas for change rather than sticking to the traditional ways and rules.

The Church should ask questions outside the comfort zone - this will help deepen our faith.

Church begins in people, when older generation works and inspires the younger generation, which will empower and can grow in faith.

Young people are the future of the Church so should be included in decisions about the Church

Importance of the clergy building personal relationships with the people - young and old

Lay involvement (young or old) cannot remain dependent on local clergy. It must be written into our structure.

Dear Papa F, Young people hate authority, they want to rebel and make choices and be accompanied in their mistakes. This is the only they will find a meaningful faith. They do not want rules, they want humanity

Dear Pope Francis, Be bold, have courage. Please change Church structure to end clericalism so that all God's people may be heard in Church governance structures. Only then will the Church be responsive to the needs and aspirations of young people of all ages!

### **Certainty**

The truth is always relevant not relative.

do not compromise/water down Church teachings.

The Blessed Sacrament is the answer! People encounter Christ in the Blessed Sacrament!

Young people NEED to know they are wanted, matter, relevant to, loved by, can grow in, be at peace in the Church. They want TRUTH not watered down. Need to know the Church is theirs now not tomorrow! Please pray for us.

### **Prayer**

I think that parishes need to keep praying for their youth in parishes. Show that youth have a place in the Church.

## Appendix 2

### Group Discussions

#### 1. Young people in the world

##### ***An ever-changing world – opportunity & vulnerability***

Young people live in many worlds at once. They are fast paced with lots of change and fluidity. This often brings uncertainty and young people can feel vulnerable.

- How is the world fast paced and changing? How do you relate to it? How does it make you feel?

##### ***Technology and new media – connectedness & loneliness***

Young people's lives are dominated by technology, which offers endless possibilities and promises, and easy connectivity to one another. But life can also be sad and lonely.

- How does technology and new media impact your life? When do you feel connected? When do you feel lonely?

##### ***We are agents of change 'verses' We can't make a difference***

Young people are often ready to participate, to try to make a difference. But sometimes they can also feel there is no point even trying – that nothing will change anything.

- How are you sometimes disempowered to participate? When and how do you feel you can make a difference?

#### 2. Choices and discernment

##### ***So much choice – so little freedom***

Society offers so much choice - possessions, fashions and trends, even in relationships and beliefs. So, in our "throw away" culture choice can appear transient; we can simply choose something new tomorrow. Coupled with the lack of real choice in so many areas (e.g. home life, living conditions, employment), young people are not free to choose.

- What do you recognise in this? Who, or what, supports you to make real choices in life?

##### ***Young people show us new ways to do things***

When they discover that they don't have a place or a role, some young respond by proposing new ways to do things. These can sometimes be challenging, but they show alternatives of how the world and the Church could be. The Church needs to leave for young people to take action.

- Where and how do you feel able to offer yourself to the world and the Church?

##### ***Fulfilling my personal mission***

Every vocation is directed towards a mission – accepting it implies the willingness to risk everything and to be occupied by God's will, not our own. Older people in the Church have the task of accompanying the younger generation, in a way that supports and does not 'take control' of young people's faith.

- How would you like the Church to accompany you in discovering the mission God has for you?

### 3. Young people in the Church

#### **Young people as participants in the Church**

Young people are not 'objects' for the Church to do things to. The Church is called to learn from young people, and needs to give priority to young people's involvement in the structures of diocesan and parish communities.

- In what ways would you like to get involved in the structure and activity of the Church?

#### **Creating opportunities for young people in the Church**

Sometimes the Church needs to realise when to abandon rigid attitudes and out-dated way of doing things. Young people will find the Church more attractive, when they see that their unique contribution is welcomed. The Church needs creative ways of addressing and supporting young people in a personal way. This is about starting a process, rather than seeking to dominate young people's spaces.

- How can the Church address you personally, and support your personal development?

#### **Church: the need to listen to young people**

The Church needs to be willing to spend time with young people, to listen to the story of their lives and to be attentive to their joys, hopes, sadness and anxieties. This approach does not seek to decide for the young people where they should be, or what they should do. It will begin when older adults set aside their presumptions and are prepared to ask questions which have no ready-made answers.

- What do you hope the Church would be willing to ask you? How would the Church listening make a difference to you?