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Pastoral Approaches in Campus Ministry Today: Where to Begin

MIKE HAYES

On a recent service-immersion trip, my colleague, Kaitlyn, took a group of 10 students from our small Northeastern Catholic-Jesuit College to Rochester, NY, about an hour away from campus, to do a week of service with the Sisters of St. Joseph. Each evening, the sisters would lead an evening of reflection on the service that had taken place and did a great job of linking that service to the Catholic tradition.

But at one point things got awkward. The sister offering the reflection asked the students to “Name a prophet.”

Silence. “Any prophet at all.”

More silence. Awkward silence. Kaitlyn considered bailing the students out when one finally said, “Moses?” in the most unsure voice imaginable.

That tends to be the baseline for many college students. Their religious literacy is at an all-time low when, ironically, we have the best-educated laity in history. In campus ministry when it comes to religiosity, we live by the mantra, “Assume little, explain lots.” Even current events like the election of Pope Francis and details about the sexual abuse crisis are unknown to many of them. A fairly practicing Catholic student found me at a local movie theatre after the movie “Spotlight,” which detailed the Boston Globe’s investigative reporting of the mismanagement of the rampant clergy sex abuse that was prevalent in the Archdiocese. She said to me, “That was hard to watch, I didn’t know any of this and it makes me embarrassed to be Catholic.” She was a small child at the height of Boston’s scandal and the details did not trickle down to her in the fifteen or so years since. Yet her experience of the church was one of great care in a parish that molded her and fed her spiritually. It’s likely a rare experience these days.

In this article, I will offer observations from the perspective of campus ministry on religious experience of college-age people today, and

then further observations on the various ways that Catholics might express, or not express, their faith. I will then review basic steps that pertain to reaching this cohort whatever their religious or Catholic expression might be. From there I will offer some pastoral strategies that have seemed effective in campus ministry, particularly in terms of deepening catechetical experience. Near the end of this article, I will offer some observations about basic approaches to campus ministry that are operative today, with a special emphasis on the “Missionary Disciple” strategy, and the Latino/a college student.

Varieties of Religious and Non-Religious Experience

Christian Smith, the noted Notre Dame sociologist, has pointed out throughout his National Study on Youth and Religion, “82 percent of children raised by parents who talked about faith at home, attached great importance to their beliefs, and were active in their congregations were themselves religiously active as young adults, according to data from the latest wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion.” (See https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-no-1-reason-teens-kee_b_606783) “As the parents practice, the children practice.”

I truly believe that for the most part, that tends to be accurate. There are, of course, the cases of rebellion in college where many students want anything but their experience of “growing up Catholic.” That said, over ten years of working in campus ministry I have come across four clear denominations of students regarding their religious practice.

1) Serious Adherents: These are students who have always been Catholic. It’s been a huge part of their family life, they usually have been active in youth ministry in their home parish, and they can’t imagine their life without their religion. The Catholic devotees are serious Mass-goers and never miss a Sunday. Some practice traditional devotions like the rosary or Eucharistic Adoration. Some have been inspired by groups like Life Teen and Steubenville conferences, and some have attended Jesuit or other Catholic High Schools and have gone through some additional formation experiences there. They run the gamut on the ideological spectrum as well, with some being serious advocates for the rights of immigrants and other social justice causes and others championing religious freedom initiatives and anti-abortion activism on campus. The main point to come away with about this group is that they have been serious adherents to their faith for a long time and are unlikely to change

that pattern in college. This is the smallest of the four groups. They are the early adopters of ministry and wish to continue. The influence of their family runs deep. This group probably represents 3–5% of the students I meet on campus, but they are a significantly strong presence, especially if they are strong leaders and can attract others by their enthusiasm. One great example is a science student who was very active in youth ministry and wanted to “keep that up” as she put it. She surrounded herself with many atheistic science students and other feminist students who often ridiculed her religious adherence and the tenets of the faith in general. The student became the President of Students for Life and in her spiritual search in college she became a vegan, developed an unwavering support for refugees, and became a strong advocate for women’s rights issues and the rights of the unborn. She was an animal behavior major and was a serious proponent for animal rights as well. One of her classmates quipped, “She’s very consistently pro-life on every issue. Pro-baby and mother, pro immigrant, pro-environmental issues, pro-woman . . . she’s even a vegan! I can’t argue with that! She’s the real deal . . . not an ounce of hypocrisy in her!”

2) Can Take It or Leave It: This second group is the largest group. Simply put, these are students who simply *don’t mind* Catholicism (or even religion in general). They will attend Mass from time to time. If friends are going they might willingly tag along. They are open minded about their faith and may even dabble in other faith traditions out of a healthy curiosity, but it is not the centerpiece of their lives. They’ll go to a wedding or a funeral willingly, but they are not going to skip the sorority meeting to attend the evening Mass on campus. They will get involved as they feel like it, not out of any sense of obligation. Their families usually have the same “loose affiliation.” Religion to them is a casual affair. A little prayer never did anyone much harm, but they’re likely not to make a regular practice out of it, unless they are inspired to by other people or feel need to pray when life gets out of control. This largest group will go on a retreat, they’ll take on a service-immersion trip, they may even do RCIA and become confirmed; but they are not likely to be regular Mass attendees, at least not initially. Invitation is needed and often accepted. They are not angry at the church, it’s simply just not in the forefront of their daily activities. They have some experience with their faith and may recall certain things from their earlier years of spiritual formation, but they are by no means well catechized. This is likely a good half to 60% of the students I encounter. I often get calls from the parents of those in this group who cite concern that their child

could fall away from their faith in college. Their fears are legitimate. At a Symposium at Santa Clara University the authors of the book *Going, Going Gone: The Dynamics of Catholic Disaffiliation* (McCarthy and Vitek, St. Mary's Press, 2018) noted that "a 2018 study on young adults leaving the Catholic Church found people stopped identifying as Catholics at a median age of 13 years old, long before they ceased attending a parish." (See <https://cal-catholic.com/median-age-for-leaving-the-church-is-13/>.) This seems to show a dissatisfaction among households with regard to religious practice even despite the parents' adherence and perhaps even despite mandating that practice as a family. The younger members are seemingly "faking it until they can't take it anymore." I've seen all of this first hand at my Catholic college despite the convenience of having Mass feet from the residence halls. Many often have had some experiences that simply are staid or boring and find religion in general easy to dispense with in favor of other priorities as well.

3) The Nones: This is a growing group of students for whom, religion, never mind Catholicism, is simply a foreign experience. They have little or no experience with religious practice. They know little of prayer or how to do it. They have never been church-goers, not even on Christmas or Easter. It is simply an unfamiliar experience for them. It has *never* been a part of their family life and that is unlikely to change. This is by far the hardest group to evangelize and, more importantly, in my experience it is the single fastest growing group of students I meet. They are also not embarrassed about their lack of faith and share the fact that they are an "atheist," "agnostic," "a non-religious," or as one medical student would say to me . . . "I'm a double S. Strictly secular." Although they are sometimes called the "nones," they may exhibit some curiosity when they see their friends practicing or find some humanistic reason to link with campus ministry in community service or social justice work; but in general, they are mired in this group fairly solidly. This does not mean, however, that they don't have spiritual experiences! They often have deep and rich spiritual experiences and cite a need to have those unpacked in conversation. This experience is simply not placed in a formal religious community of faith, nor does it adhere to any strict sense of dogmatic principles. They just do not practice a faith tradition regularly. Some non-denominational Christian Churches grab quick adherents from this group. They are looking for a place to help them make sense of their experiences but often will only do this in non-traditional ways. (Some of these churches have created safe spaces for these students well.) For some, they may have practiced something at one point, but

simply stopped and are looking to reassess their beliefs during their college years by starting from scratch. Families tend to be supportive of their spiritual search, even if they have no desire for this exploration themselves. Some are strong atheists and defend that mightily, both parent and child, but this is the minority of the group. Many just don't see the need for religious community, preferring a private spirituality that merely highlights the vertical relationship between the divine and each individual. This is a growing group on campus. I'd say probably 20% of all the students I meet are in this category. That's 1 out of 5 that have little or no religious experience. When we consider that generously 10–15% of people who identify as Catholic practice their faith by going to Mass every Sunday, this is a fairly astonishing number. To shed some light on this statistically from my own campus, I offer the following. Our resident students are our primary Mass attendees on campus. Of the 900 residents on campus, less than half are Catholic. So let's generously say we're looking at 425 students. If 20% of those students have no religious experience that's about 82 students total. If only 10% of all those students come to Mass on Sunday, that's 42 students who will come to Mass no matter what we do or don't do. So while 42 students reflexively come to Mass, nearly double that number don't even know what Mass is upon entering college.

4) The Dones: While the vast majority of students are “nones,” there are a growing number that are now “dones.” These are those who have intentionally disaffected from the church. They may have been sexually abused or know someone who has been abused, but that's merely the most extreme example. Many have just not seen the value in a church community, prayer, ritual, or sacramental life despite being part of these experiences when younger. While some have baggage from bad experiences with clergy; most have disaffected from church life because they disagree with the church's teaching on abortion, gay marriage, the ordination of women or married men, or some other issue. Many in their group are angry with the church and often for very legitimate reasons. Great sensitivity may allow some to return, but even a loose affiliation is tenuous. They ask great questions like “How can I be Catholic and be gay?” Hypocrisy looms large here. Many do not want to be seen as hypocritical and therefore finding a religion to which they can completely adhere is difficult to find or attain for many. Some have simply given up trying to find the right fit while others have had such an awful experience that they no longer wish to take part. Their family experience varies. Some have had parents who were extreme adherents to faith and

pushed religion on them strongly. Many of these parents even have a blind adherence to their faith tradition. A student I met who was abused by clergy years ago cited how his parents sided with their local priest who had abused him and failed to come to his aid when he needed them most. Others have parents who have written them off because of a spiritual search or some questioning of their faith. Of course, students who are gay have a most difficult time because of the Catholic Church's prohibition of same-sex sexual activity. Their parents may also find it difficult to reconcile the relationship they have with their child and their adherence to church teaching and often find they need to choose between one and the other. This is a fairly small number of students, but they are often loud and have significant influence over their peers because they can grab their attention. Others might also identify with their anger and join readily in disaffecting. Likely about 5–10% of the students I meet are in this category and that number might grow by the end of their first year of college. With the hypocrisy of the sexual abuse scandal, this number is likely to grow even more in the coming years.

Questions for the Ministry Team

The larger question that exists even before students come to campus is what we are seeking for them as a campus ministry team? What are our goals and what do we think a literate Catholic ought to know? These goals, however, need to square not with the same sense of literacy that one would expect from a teenager ready to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Instead, they need to match the goals of a critical-thinking adult. After all, this is college life, is it not? Universities are where we challenge assumptions, break the molds of uncritical thinking, and open people's worlds just a crack further than they could have been previous to this moment in time. That challenge can be immense for the entirety of the four above cohorts considering their vast differences in experience and, yes, adherence to or the lack of commitment to a faith tradition.

The goal for any college campus ministry is for people to be converted to the radical message of Jesus Christ to love one another as he has loved us. No easy task since Christ's love brought him to the cross! There is an Ignatian maxim of "living the *magis*" which can apply here. Often this term gets a watered-down definition that just pushes people to do "more" (the literal translation of the Latin word *magis*), or even to be more. But living the *magis* goes further than trying extra hard. *Magis* is truly a call to radical love. Living the *magis* invites students to love as generously as God does—to literally "give and not count the

cost,” to deepen one’s sense of this kind of self-giving love. The more here is the same more that God offers to us with his inexhaustible love for us. Campus ministry often works on providing opportunities that may maximize the opportunity for experiencing God’s love more tangibly in the lives of college students. The goal, at the end of the journey is that these students might allow their hearts to stretch further than they think they can go initially; and then when barriers to loving others are placed before them, they might have the tenacity and the shrewdness to find ways around the obstacles placed in that path. Religion, and certainly Catholicism, is about more than simply being nice. It means loving others when it is difficult. It is about being in right-relationship with one another, despite the pain and even the harm that people cause one another. It is about the experience of Peter on the seashore being forgiven by Christ three times for his denials and having that forgiveness propel him to go out to the world and tell the Good News of Jesus Christ boldly (John 21:15–19).

But the danger is that there is a lot to assume when we think about Catholic college students here and, therefore, we need to take a step back and remind ourselves of the experiences of our above cohorts. How might this approach need to manifest itself with various groups? Not only are there varieties of religious experience among our college population today; there are also varieties of particularly Catholic expressions of faith. These varieties raise questions about the particular context in which we are inviting college students to conversion.

Varieties of Catholic Expression

In addition to the groups I have identified above, there are general ways in which Catholics can be identified in terms of their faith. These Catholic expressions interplay with the four basic types described above. I will now highlight these groups and give a hint about how they prefer to be evangelized. Or perhaps, better stated, how they engage, at least initially, with their own personal spirituality, and, therefore, how you might best move them into catechetical conversations. These groups include:

1) Private Catholics: These are the students who show up at Mass but don’t participate in anything else. They pray alone and not in groups. They don’t equate religion as a place to socialize with others but, rather, as an outlet to connect with the divine quietly. They prefer the quiet mystery of the cloister to even the smells and bells vibrancy that others like; and certainly they reject the livelier community centered approach

to church culture. An easy way to connect with this group is to provide printed materials explaining much of the themes of the weekly scriptures. Handouts and web-accessible information on any number of subjects and a good curation of religious topics and information that one can provide via a website and, more importantly, social media. Ministers should consistently be re-tweeting, sharing, posting explanations of the faith that can provide people who prefer to search in private with the materials that can deepen their own sense of spirituality. These materials also make good conversation starters with those folks. “Hey did you see the article that I posted to our Facebook group?” Follow up with questions and an invitation to ask more questions. We’ve gone as far as to start a podcast that answers questions each week from students who simply write them on index cards at a campus event.

2) Ecumenical/Interfaith Minded Catholics: Many students don’t understand the differences between religions and some prefer not identifying with a particular religion because it seems exclusionary to them. They don’t want to exclude their friends or alienate themselves from others. Providing at least some loose support to people of all faiths often gives credibility to campus ministry, but, more importantly, it builds bridges. Invite the local Imam over to talk with the Catholic campus community about the differences and similarities between Catholicism and Islam. We had a great “visit exchange” with a local Mormon community where we went to their church on “testify Sunday” and got a tour of their stake (the equivalent of a parish); then their community came to our evening Mass. After Mass we asked questions about each other’s faith experience and beliefs. We continued to collaborate with them and even started a small social basketball pick up tournament together.

3) Evangelical Catholics: This group looks for an emotive sense of liturgy and often a more “black and white” fundamentalist experience. Some are great leaders who can change your church community for the better by providing an invigorating spirit to the campus. Some are students who are hard to have a conversation with because they have studied the catechism and seem to have all the answers with nothing more to learn. Many are sheltered and have grown up around the church and more frequently prefer a rigid model of clerical culture. While some would seem to be ideologically conservative, most don’t have the sense of the church’s political divides in any real sense. They just simply wish to love God as best they can as rule-followers and expressive adherents. My experience with this group of students varies. I’ve had some who

are outstanding leaders and who have run amazing Adoration services and Lenten reflection groups; they have promoted the sacraments and led small Christian communities. Many have been excellent sacristans and altar servers and have organized student groups at our Masses well. Others have been alienating of others and have served more to create a “sense of the weird” around their practices. I found one young man dressed in an alb incensing the entire chapel at eleven o’clock one night. While I admired his piety, he seemed to be an odd duck; the other students avoided him. I’ve found conversation with them needs strong facilitation, and the informal conversations around servicing others can often run deep and bring life-altering connections to their faith. Have these conversations often. This is a group where a class might really work. These students might find new avenues to express their faith, and they would certainly make it a priority to attend campus events and possibly to bring friends.

4) Sacramental: This is a group that holds the sacraments in great regard. This group wants things to “count.” Sunday Mass, Confession, RCIA Leadership—if they can see it and touch it and there’s a tangible result in doing it, they’re on board. This group can be rather easy to relate with as they are a captive audience at Mass and often get involved there. After-Mass catechesis often can work here, but it should be purposeful. A four-week series on sexuality works better than one night on the history of the papacy. Teaching moments around the sacraments are also needed. Explain a lot; assume little. Explain Confirmation on Pentecost. Talk about the Eucharist on Holy Thursday (or on any given Sunday really). Help students consider the sacramentality of the world where they can find God in all things. This group I’ve found are more apt to go on a hiking retreat than on a peer-led one. Why? There’s more action involved. It serves a purpose for them in seeing God in new ways. Build sacramental moments and explain them.

5) Prophetic: Social Justice adherents are in this group—and not necessarily social justice Catholics. These folks are into sustainability initiatives, women’s rights, pro-life causes, animal rights, LGBTQ+ rights, gun-control and more. Many of these folks did not get their activism from a sense of faith and certainly not a sense of Catholicism. Many are surprised to learn that the Church’s stance on any number of issues squares with their own (the environment is a big one; they have not heard of Pope Francis’s and Pope Benedict’s constant call for the care of creation). This creates good ground for collaboration on any number

of avenues. We often bring the church's teaching on the issues in question; occasionally some roundtable discussion can take place with some future action items. I always offer these students books and articles to read but then ask for their criticism. It's actually widened my own world view on any number of subjects and keeps conversations going.

6) Communal: These are the party people. A good example is our local sorority here. They began to ask various clubs on campus if they would "sponsor" the after-Mass social at our 8:30 p.m. Mass. They led by example, and the women's groups on campus responded very well to this. Our softball team also was invited, and it led to them coming to Mass in record numbers. Our women's rowing team considers campus ministry to be their biggest fans now (we are—and they are seriously involved in many of our programs). Colleges Against Cancer "pinked out the chapel" as we promoted their cancer fund raiser and prayed for the dead during October's breast cancer month. These are all good things and provide ways we can keep people in conversation and become trusted sources. We invited many into our retreat and service-immersion programs as a result of this.

7) Eclipsed: This is the vast abyss where most people live. Other things take precedence over their own spiritual needs. I've found trying to fit into their schedule with some informal catechesis works well. I call it "Did ya ever know. . ." spirituality. Surprisingly, these are the people who often go on retreat. They can block out a weekend and make it a priority despite other things predominating their schedule. Their friends are often the best evangelizers and buzz about the retreat's success to others. Although the retreats are rife with Catholic material, many find them to be welcoming and respectful of their own spiritual search.

Phases

There are distinct phases in the approach of campus ministry to each of these types of Catholic expression. Wherever a student may be in his or her expression of Catholic faith, these are necessary phases, even though students may react to these initiatives in different ways depending on their past experience of faith:

1) Pre-evangelization: This is where campus ministers become trusted sources, earning the right to be heard by others. There are many who are not ready to be evangelized yet. Our first job is to create a spirit of

trust on campus between students and our campus ministry staff. They have no reason to believe any of us, despite our fancy credentials. The church also has become suspect in terms of hypocrisy, with the sex abuse crisis topping the list of reasons that young people no longer trust clergy and lay ministers in the church. They need to rebuild that trust with each campus minister and clergy member they meet. Our actions speak louder than words do. At the same time, our own sense of vulnerability is paramount. Are we willing to share our own struggles with faith and even with life itself? Each group is looking for someone who can “walk the walk.” That’s not someone who is perfect, but someone who is truthful. Someone who will speak the truth of their own life and share where their hearts have been moved by God in life shattering ways. Example always beats an academic knowledge of catechetical material at this level.

2) Evangelization: I often call this portion the “Now that I have your attention. . .” part of ministry. Once you have engaged the students, you have a great opportunity to proclaim the kerygma. I find myself proclaiming the word in traditional and untraditional ways often. Some folks like formal training and classroom learning, and that’s not unimportant; but, again, just a few willing participants might go along with a catechetical class or even a short catechetical lecture. More often on campus I find that I get the opportunity to share our tradition during an experience where I can bring the tradition into the light of day. What does the church teach about migrants on the border and why do they teach that? How might God be calling us to accompany the pregnant teens we met at the pregnancy crisis center, and what does the Church offer to us to consider about the protection of all life, including the life of the mother? How does Chapter 25 of Matthew’s Gospel speak to us as we serve the poor? Even the most adherent of Mass attendees can always find new implications in the Gospel, and it is our job to awaken them to that. We need to refresh and renew that kind of a practical spirit and to explain critically the context in which Jesus Christ lived and how the Gospel can be looked at with new eyes. This is true for our first three groups (“*adherents*,” “*take it or leave it*” and “*nones*”) where they can find space to latch on to at least some portion of the church’s wisdom, if it is presented creatively. For the “*donees*,” I find it important to point out that the Church has been at the forefront of much of the world’s social justice initiatives. I haven’t exactly seen the secular humanists picking up the slack for the world’s ills. Catholic Charities does more than just talk a good game. Credibility with the “*donees*” is difficult but pointing to our actions over our dogma is a much better strategy initially.

3) Discipleship: We seem to have worked somewhat in reverse. We can give people experiences that they should be sent forth from the Word into the world. But instead on campus we often find that people are sent from the world back to the tradition to learn more and deepen that experience with more knowledge of the Church's traditions. This is why follow up and reflection from any variety of service-immersion experiences or local service projects are paramount. This is our opportunity to teach and inspire discipleship. Simply giving someone who is experiencing hunger a sandwich is not enough. Seeing the sandwich as the first step in the opportunity to restore dignity to others is the key.

4) Community: Unfortunately, regular-attendees are stand-offish and simply choose to sit alone and newcomers find no welcome at the door or even in the pews, even amongst their peers. In a completely non-scientific survey that I conducted on my campus, which consisted of me walking through the first floor of the library (more of a social scene than a study place on my campus) and talking to about three dozen students that I didn't recognize, I asked one simple question of people who were Catholic and who didn't attend Mass on Campus: "What are the reasons that you have for not attending Mass on Campus?"

One very strange consistent answer arose. "I don't have anyone willing to sit with me."

We sometimes overthink our catechesis. We need to start more simply than ever before, emphasizing actions over simple book learning. If Mass is a community affair, then one needs to be part of the community, and we often lack the welcome needed. We leave people alone often when they enter into our church building, or we give the regulars "jobs" to help break the ice, like giving out music sheets or hymnals. Often they hand someone a book and look away with no sense of hospitality. While the strong adherents will likely come no matter what we do, those who wish to be more active will easily find a new place of worship if the experience of liturgy is vibrant. How might one use these stronger adherents in ways that welcome others into the experience of Sunday liturgy?

Pastoral Approaches

How do we accomplish the evangelizing and catechizing of Catholic students in order to engage them in the various phases that were outlined above? In this section, I will offer (1) some simple processes that

any campus ministry can employ that can begin engaging the student in terms of evangelization and conversion; (2) I will then look at the “Catholic Missionary” approach which has emerged on many Catholic campuses, reviewing the advantages and some potential disadvantages; and (3) offer a quick peek at the experience of Latino/a students.

Simple Processes

One young man who has been a vibrant music minister and has helped engage other students on retreat and in small Christian communities pulled me aside recently and stated that those who identify as “strong Catholics” are in need of catechesis that pushes them into more depth and breadth in their own faith experience. At the same time, these same students can ghettoize themselves, preferring the solitude of the chapel to the soup kitchen or the immersion trip. This will be a group that says they like traditional devotions like Confession and Adoration. Yet often when these are offered we have found sporadic attendance at best. This group sees those devotions as outward signs of faithfulness and they come from a model where the Church has always been present to them. “How come this devotion isn’t offered here?” they ask. It’s a mark to them that the campus isn’t identifying with Catholicism enough. At the same time, other Catholics might find those devotions minimally strange and maximally exclusive.

But there are ways to appeal to both types of campus Catholic. Here are some easy ways that I’ve tried to provide students with more opportunities to deepen their faith while providing welcome are:

1) The Question Box: I usually invite clergy and others with theology degrees into a Q&A session where no question is out of bounds with regards to Catholicism. Questions are anonymous and written on index cards to avoid embarrassment. Questions often involve simple definitions: “What the heck is the Paraclete?” said one index card. Others are more complex: “How do I stay in a Church that disregards my experiences as a female and doesn’t recognize my leadership ability?” There’s always a question about gay marriage or homosexuality and church teaching. Questions are “answered” by inviting more conversation on the topic, but also by not shying away from the Church’s teaching and, more importantly, stating the wisdom behind the Church’s teaching. It’s often a big hit. I try to do this as often as I can. I’ve moved this technique into retreat formats from time to time which seems to work well with graduate students in particular.

2) Mass Buddies: We often have what we call the +1 Mass. Here we ask those who come regularly to bring a friend who has thought about coming to Mass but hasn't yet. Or to simply invite someone else to come along with them. We usually get about thirty percent more attendance when we do this. This combats the "I don't have anyone to sit with issue."

3) Formal Speaker's Series: "Agape Latte" is a program started out of Boston College that addresses a variety of topics of spirituality and religion. The speaker is interviewed by a panel of students who help craft the speaker's talk by letting the speaker know what they really want to learn about. Topics included overcoming addiction, grief and healing, life after college, and knowing one's vocation in life. All included pieces of tradition linked to real life experience.

4) Catholic 201: This is for people who simply want to deepen their knowledge of the Church's tradition. We take a book like *The Confirmed Catholic's Companion* and push people a bit further in their academic knowledge of the church's teaching. Young women seem more interested today in participating in a Bible study exclusively for women. For those with high interest, offerings that provide some knowledge of the Church's teaching and some biblical literacy also help students grow in confidence. At least they now feel like they know more about faith and might even invite someone else along. Moreover, the influence of those who find these groups helpful can be quite contagious.

Missionary Disciples Approach

Besides the simple pastoral approaches described above, there are some more systematic approaches that have had great results on college campuses. For many years, Campus Crusade for Christ, a Protestant evangelical association, began a more overt evangelism on campus. They would offer direct invitations to students to join bible studies, even when they were unaware of their religiosity. The invitation would also come with a concerned caution for its recipient. "Are you saved?" The underlying message is that one needs the saving message of Jesus and the Crusade often took every opportunity to proclaim that message boldly.

Some Catholic groups have utilized a similar version of this model (FOCUS, Campus Renew, and St. Paul's Outreach come to mind immediately). Those of us in ministry circles often call this the "Missionary Disciples Approach." Simply put, these organizations offer for-

mally trained missionaries to learn “evangelization techniques” in a series of summer workshops and then are sent onto campuses to assist in the evangelization of college students by forming small Christian Community groups. These are simple bible study and discussion groups. The follow-up to these group discussions is to invite these students to Sunday Mass on campus and to assist the campus ministry staff in getting them involved in campus ministry activities.

The positive influence of these groups come from the fact that this is peer-led ministry (even if the missionaries are only a few years older than the undergraduates). Simply put, students like to hang out with folks their own age. That is why it is often paramount for campus ministry staffs to hire people in their twenties and thirties. (My last three hires were all in that age group).

I’d add that the experience of the conference that FOCUS manages each year is by and large well received by many college students. Many flock to this conference which draws in tens of thousands of college students from mostly large college campuses.

Despite much success, there are a few negatives with the missionary disciple approach. One is simply practical. Sometimes the missionary disciples and the campus ministry staff clash. Many times, a missionary disciple team will be assigned to a campus by the bishop without consulting with the campus ministry staff. Differing opinions or a distaste for the missionary disciple approach could also be present. An easy panacea would be to create a working agreement with the group of missionary disciples before they begin their work. Everyone needs to get on the same team and the same page. Divisiveness serves nobody well. I would add that I know many campus ministry groups that have simply developed their own missionary disciple program or placed this into someone’s job description. The results are similar, but, obviously, two factors remain potentially difficult: age and time spent. These ministers need to be young and, with other job responsibilities, this ministry becomes just one more thing for a Campus Minister to do with shrinking resources.

A second issue that I have seen develop is a judgmental elitism among participants in the small groups. Some can claim a certain moral superiority and thrust that judgement onto other college students by shaming them for a lack of sexual mores, drinking, or simply questioning faith. This is something that needs to be tempered in these groups by a strong supervisor. One need not cast aspersions on others in order to lead them to conversion.

A final issue with any peer-ministry based approach is the lack of experience and nuance that the peer-leaders possess. Experience does

count, especially when it comes to mentoring others. Peer ministers of a younger age often lack theological literacy themselves, in particular, biblical literacy. Campus ministers can be of a great help to the missionary disciples by having regular meetings with them to discuss the theological messages that are being planned as well as to go over the biblical exegesis that is being presented to avoid a well-meaning, but unthinking, piety.

Latino/a Students

According to the studies on the V Encuentro consultation, Hispanic students (aged 18–24) represent 16.5% of all college students (more than 2 million overall). This includes 25% of all community college students. The majority are part-time students and many do not live on campus and have job responsibilities in addition to their schoolwork. According to Marilyn Santos, Associate Director at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis, the rate of disaffiliation from Catholicism among Latino young adults in particular, does not differ much from their Anglo colleagues. It should be noted that identifying as Catholic looks extremely different in a Hispanic culture. Mass attendance for instance in many Latino countries differs because there is often not a resident priest in the community. Communion services by "cataquistas" (lay catechists) are often the norm and church attendance is not often cited as the mark of being Catholic. Moreover, a cultural Catholicism is more prevalent overall, still one that is steeply immersed in a Catholic sense of their own culture.

Some factors cited by Santos in their disaffiliation are that Spanish is often a "spiritual language" for Latinos. Simply put, "they prefer to pray in Spanish, even if they are bilingual." Often campus ministries don't offer bilingual Masses or even have the resources to do so. Hispanic Masses at local parishes are often held at inconvenient times that conflict with family Sunday meal rituals as families try to balance keeping one foot in Latino culture and the other in an assimilated American culture. The vast majority of those who disaffiliate join the "nones," while some join other religious denominations. This is despite a family commitment to Catholicism.

Santos also pointed out that Latino students who assimilate often take on the religious practices of their peers. Second generation Latino students may very well mirror their Anglo counterparts in many ways and even first generation students might display sporadic Mass attendance but for different reasons than their Anglo peers. Their adherence to spiritual practices and participation may well be eclipsed not by a gen-

eral malaise but by a financial need to work on Sundays. Those that retain much of their Latino culture and truly become bi-cultural Americans, retain much of their faith, even if that still looks different from their Anglo friends.

When it comes to these Latino students, we should learn from the mistakes of the past. Inclusion is not enough. It often makes someone feel like a tolerated guest to merely include them in the ministry offerings that we give to the overall Anglo population. Including a vast array of cultures in our leadership teams and planning teams is very much the key to success and gives inclusion a new face (literally). That said, we have to make our efforts at training all of our leaders to be more inclusive so as not to set ourselves (or them!) up for failure.

By way of example, at one point, we made a serious decision on a parish young adult team to have our leadership reflect the representative population of the church at large. That meant that 40% of our young adult leaders were Hispanic. On a ten person steering committee, four of the ten people were Hispanic intentionally. It made a huge difference, not merely in recruiting others but also in the offerings that we programmatically expressed. This is also true across other cultures, so a good cross-cultural analysis of your own local area is necessary. Colleagues in Manhattan decided to include representatives from a growing Filipino community on their leadership committee and their first event drew a huge contingent of young Catholics from the Philippines who were seriously looking for a way to get involved. One of the leaders simply extended the invitation to attend and it lent legitimacy to the group.

Conclusion

The main thrust of catechesis on campus takes the following into account always. We are dealing with a group whose majority is highly religiously illiterate. Therefore, we must always “assume little and explain lots.” We need to do this formally and informally. And, most importantly, with the few who are more literate than others, we must challenge their faith so that the faith of their youth ministry experiences can stand alongside their newfound sense of adult critical thinking. They need more support here, not less. Far too often, we don’t explain enough.

Working with the plurality of Catholics on college campuses today, a variety of simple and complex, formal and informal, strategies are available to campus ministers as we deepen the faith of students, engage with

those who are distant and have questions, and attract those who seem quite far from faith.

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