

I'm taking a risk writing this because I have no idea if it will be heard, or shot down in a maelstrom of opposing comments. So here goes:

I feel as though I am part of a hidden group within my own generation who by default and circumstance take a (somewhat) conservative view of the world around them.

I am writing this at risk of ridicule, and of being told to yet again sit down and keep quiet, because 'you're not one of the majority'.

I feel as though I am part of a generational group who do not exist; in the eyes of the parish, diocese, country, media and government. I don't have the confident articulate ability and athletic physique that makes people sit up and take notice. Yet I am at Mass every day, pray, read the Catholic press and papal documents, serve as a Senior Server at Mass at least twice a week, and am familiar with the inside of a confessional.

I am concerned that the government of my country is only interested in getting my vote and has no will to actually tackle issues like youth unemployment. There are others like me who are frightened out of their wits about whether or not they will be employed anywhere! When all employers in the job listings are ONLY looking for 3+ years of previous experience and who would not even consider someone with less, let alone actually help someone new to learn and earn that experience. The government employment agencies put young people through so many hoops before they even begin to offer any real help.

It is no wonder youth are taking a conservative stance when they have NO idea about the future of their own lives let alone anyone else's. It feels like only the extroverts and the successful-looking have any hope of being employed, it's hard cheese for the rest of us.

I live in a parish that has been in care-taker mode for nearly ALL my life, and the vast majority of the people I see at church are in their 70s, 80s and 90s -which makes it an uphill struggle to attract interest in doing something new for the young and for the needy.

Our local youth group is just— well... just. Just limping along enough to look like something is happening so that the bishop can show a good report card. The youth group is concerned (yet again from my perspective) with keeping pre-teens and adolescents in the church and away from the evangelical churches. I'm not in the target market.

So often I feel like a fraud when listening to the 'all or nothing' evangelistic preaching happening in youth gatherings. Certainly it needs to be preached, but at the same time no one is taking time to explain that most of these things happen at God's time, not ours. We CAN'T force faith, we can't force an experience of God, we can't force a response to God.

I have NO desire to leave the church or join an evangelical church (thank you EWTN, Mother Angelica and Marcus Grodi).

There are many times at local youth group and deanery youth gatherings that I feel like the proverbial spectre at the feast. Only I don't know if the feast is actually wholesome and lasting or not. Feasts are the current vogue for the deanery 'over 18' gatherings that consist of about 30-40+ people that are so huge that previously built relationships are the only things being strengthened. Heaven help anyone wanting to build new relationships. Diocesan 'Praisefests' seem to be an excuse to put a rock band inside a church, and jump around and scream your head off in some kind of

preparation for the next World Youth Day. Loud music and crowds are not my thing, so I come away feeling alienated rather than connected and not uplifted at all.

I personally cannot see value in this current trend of youth events ALL trying to be an attractive alternative to what is on offer at the evangelical churches and in the process forgetting about all the rich traditions and sacramental experiences of the Catholic Church.

At Confirmation time our previous bishop gave the SAME homily to the mostly 8 year olds and their families, WORD FOR WORD. We have rarely seen those children since. It feels like families become Catholic in name only as a means to access Catholic Education and are willing to put up with a few archaic hoops to jump through to attain that goal, and then join the people with no religious affiliation whatsoever. From time to time there is a 'School Mass' at the regular Saturday vigil Mass, and really they are just a 'school extravaganza' with a cameo by the priest for the Eucharistic prayer. I lose count of the number of times I wince at such 'school extravaganzas' due to inappropriate music and disregard for the rubrics of the Mass.

While it is true that 'The Youth are the Future of the Church' and many of you would have a whole thesis ready to explain why this is so, but for me these are amongst some of the most frightening words you can hear as a young person. Who wants to be reminded of such a heavy responsibility when things are so bleak? The next most frightening words are a catechist or parish member saying that they will 'only talk for a little while' before the final blessing and then after a lengthy time (garbed as a senior server) you have to poke Father awake to say the final blessing while in the meantime everyone else has scurried away.

Can the youth be the future of the church if they themselves know nothing about the church, about its history, about the bible, about Jesus?

Where do the Youth gather? Either they are at reasonably-sized SMALL retreats that have a true sense of community and selfless love or at a giant over-blown Rock Concerts centred around Cathedrals with shake your arms, jump all around, and somehow pray (how?) amongst all the young Catholic school girls screaming their heads off. I get claustrophobic easily and would rather not have to get hearing aids before I HAVE to.

I'm amazed at what Fr Mallon has been doing in Canada with the Alpha program and the outspokenness of Dr Jordan Peterson receiving so many views (channel 4). I'd so like to see something positive happening locally.

I had so hoped that what Emma Sullivan from New Zealand wrote on the Facebook group (c.17 March 2018) would have been listened to: about how all the questions and answers on the Pre-Synodal Facebook group were going over the heads of the young people who are supposed to be taking part. The questions are framed in legalistic language, and most of the answers are in the same incomprehensible jargon. It was so sad to see that in the replies that we weren't being listened to or taken seriously.

I have great fear that this synod's outcomes won't actually reflect the TRUE common problems facing ALL the Youth from 17-18 to 29-30+, only those problems that the highly favoured and popular youth are able to identify.

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