

The Spirituality of Contemporary Young Adults

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SPIRITUALITY

Campus ministers have the challenging task of helping young adults move through the transitions from high school to college and beyond. These transitions have a spiritual dimension which can be described in religious and secular terms. Christian spirituality has to do with submitting to the will of God the Father, putting on the mind of Christ and being attentive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Authentic spirituality has a communal character which suggests coresponsibility for the church, active participation in the liturgy, and collaboration in the work of justice and peace. The spiritual quest seeks reconciling relationships with God, other human beings, the whole of nature and our true selves. The word "spirituality" points to the depth dimension of all human experience and to the Mystery which sustains and encompasses human existence. In more secular terms, spirituality is concerned with the search for meaning in the midst of absurdity, commitment in a society of open options, purpose in an aimless world, depth in a superficial culture, and integration in a fragmented existence.

For campus ministry, discussion of spirituality raises challenging, practical questions. How can we help collegians pray with greater devotion, get more out of reading the Bible, integrate more completely love of God and neighbor, participate more actively in the liturgy and live their faith more fully in everyday life? Put in less explicitly religious language, how can we help them maintain an inner peace in a stressful world, find their vocation in life, contribute to the common good and work for peace and justice in the world. In helping collegians develop a

viable spirituality, what theological framework guides our efforts and what programs, practices, activities, and strategies work best.

RESOURCES

In helping collegians manage transitions, Catholic campus ministers have been guided for almost two decades by the bishops' pastoral letter *Empowered by the Spirit*. Effective ministers have found creative ways of adapting the general principles in this document to the needs of their students. The sociological studies of young adults such as *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choices* by Dean Hoge et. al. and *The Search for Common Ground* by James Davidson provide helpful data. I have learned a great deal from my personal interaction with students during almost 35 years of serving in university parishes. Recently, about thirty of my students, who participate in our Christian Leadership Program, filled out an extensive questionnaire on transitions and spirituality. It is not a scientific survey, but suggests how our best Catholic students manage these transitions. Over those years, I have been impressed with the great creative ministry offered on campuses throughout the United States and have tried to tap that great fund of practical wisdom. I draw on all these resources as a Catholic pastor and as a theologian heavily influenced by the German Jesuit Karl Rahner. My hope is that my personal experience rooted in the Catholic world will be helpful to others.

The Transition from High School to College

INFLUENCES

Students entering college at the beginning of the new millennium reflect the influence of various spiritual, religious and cultural factors. These millennials, as they are sometimes called, have the same spiritual longings as previous generations for meaning and purpose in life. They have to contend with the essential conflict between their infinite longings and their finite capabilities. Their challenges sound familiar to all campus ministers: forming their personal identity; developing good friendships; finding a life partner; choosing a career; appropriating their religious heritage; cultivating habits of good citizenship; and deciding how to relate to the dominant culture. Over four decades of dealing with collegians, I have been more impressed with the similarities among generations than the differences. Human nature is common. Millennials still fall in love and empathize with suffering loved ones. It is more important for campus ministers to understand the spiritual character of human existence than to know the latest popular songs (cf. *Apologetics and the Eclipse of Mystery*, by James Bacik).

As with previous generations, today's collegians are influenced by their parents and family life. They are, however, more likely to come from broken homes and are less likely to experience the sense of security nourished by a stable loving family. Some studies suggest that they are closer to their parents than previous generations, more demanding of a secure environment on campus and more respectful of social conventions and institutions (cf. *Millennials Go To College*, by Neil Howe and William Straus (2003)). Reflecting on discussions with my students, I am impressed with how often they refer to one of their parents in a positive way as a role model, a spiritual guide, a confidant or a friend. Some universities are responding to this trend by appealing more directly to parents.

American culture continues to exercise great influence on millennial collegians, often at a preconscious level. Some cultural trends, such as rugged individualism, unbridled hedonism,

lavish consumerism and uncritical nationalism are anti-Gospel and harmful to healthy spiritual growth. Other ideals, including authenticity, self-actualization, freedom and volunteerism, when placed in a Christian framework, can promote healthy spiritual development. Collegians grow up in a country where over 90% of the citizens say they believe in God and pray periodically and over 60% are affiliated with a religious organization. The Christian entertainment industry generates over \$3 billion a year in movies, concerts and books. During the last four years of the twentieth century, polls indicated that interest in spirituality among teenagers increased almost 25%, a trend which anecdotal evidence suggests is continuing. Our culture is an ambivalent mix of secular and religious currents (cf. *Spirituality in Action*, by James Bacik).

For the most part, the richly textured Catholic subculture which shaped Catholic spirituality in the past has largely disappeared, although remnants remain in predominately Catholic areas where the parish is still the prime socializing institution. I have a few students from rural Ohio who come from intact Catholic families, went to Catholic schools for twelve years, have only Catholic friends and relatives, and live with the assumption that you go to Mass every Sunday. Most of my students, however, have gleaned fragments of their spirituality from various sources, including parish liturgies, youth retreats and religious education classes. Those who attended Catholic high schools have at least been exposed to resources which can help to integrate these diverse spiritual elements.

Millennial collegians are living through one of the great transition periods in all human history as we move from the modern to the postmodern world. (cf. *Spirituality in Transition* by James Bacik). They are developing their fundamental spiritual outlook in a world which is post-patriarchal post-denominational, post-industrial, post-colonial and post-Cold War. Their consciousness and very mode of processing information is shaped by the electronic age of

television, computers and the Internet. Millennial collegians often manifest characteristics of the premodern and modern world as well as the postmodern. An individual student may, for example, simultaneously hold a naive premodern literal interpretation of the Bible, maintain a modern trust in science and technology as the sole instrument of human progress, and function with an unexamined postmodern assumption that any absolute truth claims are absurd and oppressive. All collegians today deal with transitions in their personal lives in the larger context of a world characterized more by change than stability.

Millennials carry in their memory vivid images of the Columbine shooting spree and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. From a young age, they have lived in a world threatened by random, unpredictable violence. Some commentators believe this has produced a sense of "radical vulnerability," which can lead to a greater awareness of absolute dependence on God. Other scholars have noted that collegians seldom talk about September 11th now and already show diminished interest in the annual campus commemoration of the terrorist attack. Pearl Harbor directly affected the daily life of everyone in the United States and the assassination of President Kennedy eventually led many into the civil rights movement. It has been much easier for the millennial generation to go on with life as usual after September 11, 2001. My own opinion is that it is too soon to tell what effect the attack has actually had on millennial spirituality. This will become more evident as today's collegians establish their own families and choose child rearing patterns.

Recent sociological studies of young adults indicate that most Catholic collegians today maintain the fundamental beliefs that ground a viable spirituality. Around 90 percent affirm the divinity of Christ and believe that at Mass the bread and wine become his body and blood. They consider helping the poor as important to their faith as believing in the real presence of Christ in

the Eucharist. Although most Catholic collegians have no explicit working knowledge of the Second Vatican Council, many have appropriated (presumably from diverse ecclesial and cultural sources) important conciliar themes. Foremost is the crucial notion that we are the church, that all the baptized are in some way coresponsible for its well being. Most also have a general perception of the communal nature of the liturgy, the importance of religious liberty, the value of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, the expanded role of laity in the church, the unique mediatorship of Christ and the need to work for social justice. My students usually find that the explicit study of these conciliar teachings affirms the perceptions that already influence their spirituality.

TYPES

The sociological studies help campus ministers understand general trends among collegians. We recognize, of course, that not all millennials are the same and that we serve them best by respecting them as unique individuals. In order to put some order into our pastoral work, however, it is helpful to cluster these unique individuals in categories or types which reflect their dominant spiritual passion or interest. My experience with Catholic collegians suggests seven types of spirituality.

Eclipsed: A good number of Catholic collegians show no particular interest in religious or spiritual matters. They do not attend Mass on campus and seldom pray. Some feel they are too busy or have higher priorities, while others experience guilt feelings which blunt their spiritual longings. Yet they remain religious beings and identify themselves as Catholics in surveys. Their spirituality is not destroyed, but rather eclipsed by their current concerns. We can hope

that the ordinary process of maturation or some major events, such as a personal crisis, the death of a loved one, getting married or having a baby, will uncover their latent spiritual needs.

1. Private: Some Catholic collegians seldom attend liturgies or participate in church activities, but pursue spiritual goals in other ways; for example, reading religious books, communing with nature, and praying privately. Their private spiritual journey can be fulfilling but, unconnected to traditional wisdom, it is threatened by fads and superficiality. Our hope is that they will discover and tap the rich spiritual tradition of their Catholic heritage.
2. Ecumenical: A growing number of millenials simply assume that the divisions among Christians make no sense, and that we all should unite and work together. Some are loyal to their Catholic heritage, but others have little institutional loyalty and would join another Christian denomination if it brought them closer to Christ and better served their spiritual needs. In this competitive situation, we need vibrant Catholic parishes which will utilize the gifts and meet the needs of today's collegians.
3. Evangelical: A small percentage of Catholic collegians manifests a piety that resembles the evangelical Christian groups on campus. They speak easily about their personal relationship to Jesus and gravitate to prayer groups with high emotional energy. Some are charismatic in orientation, emphasizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A few are really fundamentalists, who act aggressively in preserving their Catholic heritage from the threats of the contemporary world and the reforms of Vatican II, which appear to them as excessive and dangerous. The

church on campus should make room for the evangelical Catholics and learn how to tap their energy and enthusiasm.

4. **Sacramental:** Many Catholic millennials still love their church and find their spiritual nourishment through fairly regular participation in the official liturgy and traditional practices. As a result, they are attuned to the presence of God in everyday life and have a general sense of the sacramental character of the whole world. Some of them report mystical experiences, while others simply trust that God is present in their daily lives. These students often need affirmation that their spiritual intuitions are in accord with the core spirituality of the Catholic tradition.
5. **Prophetic:** Most campus ministry programs have a small group of students committed to working in various ways for justice and peace in the world. They align themselves with the goals of organizations like Pax Christi and Bread for the World, devote themselves to causes such as racial harmony and environmental health, and try to help those in need. The developing tradition of Catholic Social Thought can be a great source of guidance and inspiration for them.
6. **Communal:** Many millennial Catholics feel the need to associate with others who share their values. They like worshipping with kindred spirits at Mass, using their gifts for the benefit of the church, and participating in faith-sharing groups. They often need reminders that an authentic communal spirituality maintains dialogue with the larger world.

These categories obviously overlap. For example, most Catholic collegians in all these categories maintain a sacramental sense of life. Millennials with a communal spirituality may also be committed to helping the poor. Despite their limitations, these types are helpful for

pastoral planning because each model suggests a passion or interest which campus ministers can tap in planning programs and developing practices. The models also suggest spiritual limitations and weaknesses which require pastoral care. Developing types based on the current interests of collegians moves us beyond the older categories of progressive, conservative, liberal, neo-conservative and reactionary, which represented various responses to Vatican II, but no longer fit the millennials, who have no experience and little knowledge of the Council.

GOALS FOR CAMPUS MINISTRY

In the broadest terms, campus ministry has the goal of helping collegians become better disciples of Christ, more attuned to the will of God and more effective vehicles of the Spirit. We want the graduates of our programs to take seriously their baptismal call to holiness and their task of spreading the reign of God in the world. They should be serious about developing a rich interior life nourished by private prayer and meditation as well as regular and active participation in the liturgy. Well-formed collegians will have a relational spirituality which enables them to establish good marriages, to sustain healthy friendships and to cooperate with colleagues in the workplace. Their spirituality will be communal, prompting them to function as responsible citizens, good neighbors, active parishioners and effective participants in voluntary associations. They will bring a sense of dedication, joy and hope to their life in the church and society.

In guiding collegians to a more mature spirituality, campus ministers must respond to the specific challenges of the contemporary world. One of our important tasks is to overcome the unfortunate split between spirituality and religion, which contributes to the private spirituality prevalent in our culture (cf. *Catholic Spirituality Its History and Challenges*, by James Bacik).

While "spirituality" is generally a positive word today, institutional religion carries negative connotations of rigid authoritarianism and stifling hierarchical power. We have to demonstrate to our students that the doctrines, creeds, rituals and laws of the Christian religion have an inherent power to make us wiser, more fulfilled and more loving persons. Christianity provides a solid foundation for the spiritual quest and powerful motivation for pursuing it wholeheartedly. Students consciously pursuing spiritual growth will get more out of their religious activities. Institutional religion and spirituality are not essentially opposed, but are components of an integrated human life. An authentic Christian spirituality is necessarily ecclesial.

Campus ministers also have the challenging task of rooting spirituality in a solid theological foundation. Religious illiteracy is a major problem in the culture as a whole and clearly affects the millenials. When spirituality is divorced from theology, it is in danger of becoming faddish, superficial and unbalanced. Collegians who rely on the popular self-help books for spiritual guidance are in danger of neglecting the social dimension of spirituality. An untutored ecumenical spirituality is tempted to neglect the concrete particularity of various traditions while settling for a lowest common denominator. Catholic students who know little about the Bible and modern biblical criticism are often easy prey for aggressive fundamentalists. Collegians passionate about social justice but unacquainted with Catholic social teaching can drift into a merely horizontal spirituality which neglects private and liturgical prayer. Students nourished by their small faith-sharing communities who do not have an adequate ecclesiology can forget that they are part of a larger church. Millenials who have maintained a strong sacramental sense of life may remain stuck in a false consciousness which neglects social sin, institutional evil and systemic injustice.

Campus ministers can help students deal with these concerns by giving due attention to the practice of appropriating the faith. We must help students overcome religious illiteracy and gain a more mature understanding of their faith. Solid catechesis is crucial to healthy spiritual development. Theology is our ally in the task. As Karl Rahner put it, the more scientific theology is, the more spiritually relevant it will be. We want our students to see their Christian faith as a valuable resource for understanding the great questions of meaning, purpose and identity and for living as responsible, mature persons. Our graduates should be committed to a lifelong process of appropriating the faith so that they can grow ever closer to Christ. Adopting the terminology of Jacques Maritain, they need not only "tender hearts" which reflect the compassion of Jesus, but also "tough minds" which enable them to apply Christian principles to complex situations. They should come to see their Christian faith as a comprehensive, organic wisdom system, and not as a disparate collection of doctrines, rituals and laws. Christianity is a total way of life, an integrated symbol system with a clear focus on commitment to Christ, the definitive prophet and absolute savior.

In addition to these fundamental attitudes, we want our Catholic collegians to gain a variety of theological skills: to read the Bible intelligently; to defend their faith against both secularists and fundamentalists; to engage in theological reflection which relates their faith to everyday life; to find unity in the midst of great pluralism in the church; to participate in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and collaboration; to appreciate the distinctive characteristics of Catholicism especially the sacramental principle; to know how to use resources such as *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, biblical commentaries and the documents of Vatican II for answering questions as they arise.

Graduates of our campus ministry programs should have acquired specific information about various aspects of their faith: the Bible, its meaning and interpretation; the broad outline of Church history; the spirit and various teachings of the Second Vatican Council; the main themes of Catholic social teaching; the major saints and spiritual masters; the great theologians; and the fundamental themes of contemporary theology. These attitudes, skills and knowledge are essential for the development of a viable, balanced spirituality.

Spiritual growth involves a process of developing virtues which are like a second nature enabling us to act habitually like Christ in changing circumstances. We want to assist our students in the task of growing in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the moral virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice. To function efficiently in the postmodern world, collegians are well served by what we might call "dialectical virtues," which enable them to keep opposed tendencies in fruitful tension (cf. *The Gracious Mystery*, by James Bacik). The dialectical virtue of committed openness, for example, provides them with the facility to be so committed to their Catholic faith that they are open to truth, goodness and beauty wherever they are found. Hopeful realism prompts them to avoid both a naive optimism and a cynical pessimism while finding signs of hope in embracing the reality of life. Reflective spontaneity encourages them to maintain a regular regimen of prayer which grounds wholehearted engagement in the present moment. Enlightened simplicity moves collegians to ongoing study of their faith so they can be more Christ-like in their daily lives. We want our graduates to be prayerfully prophetic Christians who are nourished by private and liturgical prayer for the arduous work of creating a more just and peaceful world.

Students associated with each of the seven spiritual types have specific interests and needs. The goal is to help them build on their strengths and rise above their limitations. Those

overwhelmed by busyness or guilt need to get in touch with the eclipsed spiritual longings of their hearts. Those on a private spiritual journey need positive experiences of church which suggest that institutional religion can enrich their spiritual quest. Helping ecumenical Catholics develop stronger institutional loyalty is a difficult but worthy goal. Fundamentalist Catholics need to learn that their ultimate security is in the faithful God and not in a rigid, closed Catholic identity. Catholics with a communal spirituality must remember their connection with the larger church. Those with a prophetic spirituality need reminders to nourish their passion for justice by private and liturgical prayer. Catholics who see the world as sacramental often need a stronger sense of social sin. Campus ministry programs should have the general goal of meeting the spiritual needs of diverse groups of students.

PRACTICES, PROGRAMS, STRATEGIES

For almost two decades, *Empowered by the Spirit* has encouraged Catholic campus ministers to organize their programming around six practices or ministerial functions: forming community, appropriating the faith, facilitating personal development, forming the Christian conscience, educating for justice and peace and developing future leaders. All of these practices have a spiritual dimension and each one contributes to the general goal of helping students develop an integrated, balanced spirituality rooted in the Catholic tradition.

FORMING COMMUNITY

For most Catholic campus ministry programs, the eucharistic liturgy is the key to forming community and developing a healthy spirituality. Students growing up without a Catholic subculture depend on the liturgy for their sense of Catholic identity. Regular participation in the

Eucharist inculcates the sacramental sense of human existence and prompts efforts to bring greater justice to our world. Students who help plan liturgies get more out of them. They generally prefer music that is lively, upbeat and singable and homilies that relate the scriptures to their everyday experiences. Special liturgies throughout the year can gather larger crowds and demonstrate the power of the Eucharist to create a sense of community. One of our most successful liturgies is a pre-Christmas Mass on the Sunday before finals which draws large crowds and even brings alumni back to Corpus Christi Parish. The students put in a great deal of time and effort planning the liturgy, which often includes liturgical dance and special proclamations of the scripture readings. The liturgy taps the Christmas spirit and celebrates the end of the semester. The Second Vatican Council taught that the liturgy is the font and summit of the Christian life. At our pre-Christmas Mass, students experience the inherent power of the Eucharist to nourish a healthy spirituality.

Reaching out to collegians whose spiritual impulses are blunted or eclipsed is a great challenge for campus ministers. We can help them indirectly by cooperating with the university in creating a campus community which embodies high ethical standards and human values (cf. *Campus Life: In Search of Community*, ed. by Ernest Boyer). A variety of cooperative efforts are possible: for example, programs to combat binge drinking, credit card debt, sexual promiscuity, classroom cheating, and substance abuse. Campus ministers should lead the way in challenging the widespread and destructive pattern of "work and spend" which traps collegians in an insidious cycle of working more hours in order to have more consumer goods.

More direct approaches are also needed to minister to this group. Following the advice of a local advertising firm based on focus group data, our parish puts great effort into getting students' names and contacting them during the first two weeks of the new academic year. Our

students go around campus on golf carts giving away free goods, such as mugs and sweatshirts, and getting individuals to sign up for a raffle of a bicycle or DVD player. The parish provides free breakfasts, entertainment and other inducements to get these students to come to our facility. During the summer before school begins, we make a great effort to get the names of Catholic freshmen so that our students can write them a personal letter inviting them to our parish services and activities. All of this effort is based on the idea that collegians make decisions in their first weeks on campus which affect their spirituality for the next four years.

Our parish also sponsors small faith sharing groups in each residence hall on campus with the explicit purpose of reaching out to the inactive Catholics. They read and discuss the scripture readings for the following week. Active members accept the responsibility to seek out inactive Catholics and personally invite them to the weekly discussions. The group also meets on Sundays and walks over together to the church for Mass. We find that collegians often come to our programs in groups and that many students find it hard to come alone. Even my more mature students report that as freshmen they felt insecure, afraid of the unknown, lost in a large university, doubtful about making friends and worried about what others think of them. Our parish provided them with an opportunity to meet other students with similar values, to get involved in a structured organization and to use their gifts to serve others. Thanks to the blessings of a vital faith community, these students say they grew spiritually, coming closer to Christ and learning to love themselves and others.

Echoing the common experience around the country, our students have found that retreats led by peers are one of the most effective ways of overcoming isolation, building community and promoting spiritual growth. Forming community in this and other creative ways is absolutely critical to the spiritual formation of collegians today.

APPROPRIATING THE FAITH

At our university parish, we put a great deal of emphasis on appropriating the faith as the basis for solid spiritual growth. We continually repeat the message that collegians cannot function in today's world with a high school understanding of their faith. They need a more mature faith which can deal with the challenges of the postmodern world.

To this end, Corpus Christi Parish worked with the University of Toledo, a state university, in establishing a Chair of Catholic Studies. We collected an endowment of \$1.5 million and gave it to the university under a contractual agreement that a recognized scholar on the Catholic tradition would be hired as a tenured faculty member to teach two courses each semester on some aspect of the Catholic tradition. In conjunction with this initiative, we encouraged other religious traditions to establish their own professorships or chairs and worked with the university to establish a religious studies major. The chair, now held by the outstanding Catholic ecclesiolgist Richard Gaillardetz, has worked extremely well. He has brought the Catholic perspective to important public discussions on campus and in the community. His courses have been well attended and the number of religious studies majors has gone up. This year alone, five students from our parish have chosen to go on for graduate studies in theology or religious studies at fine schools including Notre Dame, Boston College and the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

At our parish we try to supplement the courses on campus with our own programs: regular bible study, independent studies on particular religious topics, and periodic seminars on current topics, such as Gibson's *"The Passion of the Christ"* or the sex-abuse scandal in the church. East semester we run a series of six lectures by prominent theologians from around the

country on various topics including scripture, theology and spirituality. All of these efforts to help our students appropriate their faith help set a foundation for a spirituality which avoids fads and reflects the long and rich Catholic tradition.

DEVELOPING LEADERS

Another major initiative of Corpus Christi is our Christian Leadership Program, which offers theological education, leadership training and spiritual formation over a four year period for selected Catholic students at the University of Toledo. The goal is to prepare leaders for the church and society who are solidly grounded in their Catholic tradition. Twelve students are selected by a committee each year to receive \$5,000.00 scholarships and are required to take classes and assume leadership positions. During their first year, they take a credit course from me which is a popular version of Karl Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith*. In the second year, six experts in leadership lead a series of discussions designed to give students practical skills. In the last two years, the students assume leadership positions in the parish and on campus and write theological reflection papers on their experience.

We need leaders in the church and society who are not only dedicated but are also firmly rooted in their Catholic tradition. Students graduating from this program are well prepared to serve on parish councils, liturgy committees, social justice action groups, and other parish organizations. After completion of the program, the students receive certification which will facilitate their participation in their new parishes.

The initial success in producing excellent student leaders (one served as President of Student Government and another as Chair of the National Catholic Student Association) grounds

the hope that this program will indeed help prepare graduates for future leadership positions in church and society.

One of the delights of this program is to see students develop gradually over a four year period. I find myself inspired by their personal stories, their struggles and their progress toward greater Christian maturity. Statistical reports about collegians take on a human face through my close interactions with these select students.

OTHER PRACTICES

Our parish is also involved with the other ministerial practices outlined in *Empowered*. Providing spiritual direction for students is an important part of facilitating their personal development. Our "busy student retreat" each year provides students with an opportunity to interact daily with a spiritual director over a five day period. We run a series of "pairing programs" which put collegians into contact with members of our permanent parish community. For example, we pair a student with a faculty member and ask them to meet three times a semester outside the classroom setting. We also make connections according to career choices; for instance pairing an engineering student with a practicing engineer. These interactions, which facilitate personal development, have a spiritual dimension which can be made more explicit through theological reflection and discussion.

We have found that our social justice activities, such as Habitat Spring Break, are more beneficial spiritually when we gather for prayer ahead of time and spend time in theological reflection afterward.

Homilies provide a great opportunity for conscience formation. This is especially true if preachers address the personal issues that interest students, such as premarital sex, as well as the more public issues of justice and peace.

These few examples suggest that *Empowered* provides a useful framework for strategies, practices and programs which can assist the spiritual growth of our students. These practices work especially well when geared to the specific needs of students of various types.

Leaving College

Students leaving college and embarking on a career face numerous spiritual challenges: carving out time for prayer in the midst of busy lives; finding meaning in their work; balancing work and leisure; combating destructive cultural trends, such as individualism, hedonism and consumerism; establishing a healthy family; working for greater justice in society; living as good citizens. In order to function as effective Christians, graduates will need a local parish which sustains and guides them. They also need role models, individuals who find God in ordinary life and bring Christian principles to the marketplace and political arena.

Campus ministers should think in terms of helping prepare graduates for life in the world. They need to recognize that family and career offer new opportunities to grow spiritually. The spiritual journey is lifelong and leads eventually to the transition into eternal life. The virtues developed in college should help graduates act as Christians in new and complex situations.

Marriage preparation programs which draw on the experience and wisdom of married couples are helpful to the collegians who take them seriously. The habit of applying the lessons of the weekly liturgies to student life can also carry over to life in the world.

Campus ministers should remind students of their responsibility of taking what they learned in campus faith communities to their new parishes. They need encouragement to stay

loyal to their religious tradition. Many Catholic graduates will shop around for a parish they like. They are in a supermarket situation where there is competition among denominations for new members. Some may be willing to stay with a Catholic parish that is less fulfilling in order to try and make it better. We expect the graduates of our Christian Leadership Program to use their training in a constructive ways to build up local parishes.

At the end of the academic year, Corpus Christi Parish has a special liturgy celebrating the blessings of the year and the challenges ahead. We honor the graduating seniors and have one of them give a witness talk on what the parish has meant to him or her. This usually includes expressions of gratitude to the permanent members of the parish who teach the marriage courses, participate in our pairing programs and feed the students after every 6 p.m. Mass during the year. The homily at that Mass encourages the graduates to be lights to the world, to share what they have learned with others. This farewell liturgy reminds us that our graduates are on a continuing spiritual journey. Our hope is that they find guidance and nourishment from their Catholic heritage as they make still another life transition with its distinctive challenges and opportunities.