

# YOUNG ADULT SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2024



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In alignment with the Youth and Young Adult priority in the Diocese of San José's pastoral plan "Renewed in Christ, Together in Mission," a comprehensive online survey was conducted between July 1 and August 30, 2024. The survey targeted individuals aged 18-35 and gathered nearly 1,000 responses and more than 4,000 comments. The feedback offers valuable insights into young adults' engagement with the Church, their spiritual practices, and what they hope for in the future and will guide future Young Adult ministry initiatives.

The full survey report can be found here: [Young Adult Survey Full Report](#)

## Demographics

- **Age Distribution:** 24% are 18-23 years old, 39% are 24-29, and 30% are 30-35.
- **Gender:** A majority (54%) are female, 43% male, and 3% preferred not to disclose their gender.
- **Ethnicity:** The respondents are diverse, reflecting the diversity of Santa Clara County, with 38% identifying as Hispanic/Latino, 28% as Caucasian/White, and 28% as Asian/Asian Indian.
- **Family Status:** 29% married, with variations in those having children across ethnicities.
- **Education & Employment:** Most were engaged in full-time employment.

## Faith and Religious Practices

- **Sacramental Life:** A significant majority of respondents were baptized Catholic (90%), with a high rate of participation in Communion (95%), Reconciliation (92%), and Confirmation (89%).
- **Mass Attendance:** 51% of respondents attend Mass weekly, with 18% attending more than once a week. A notable minority (7%) rarely or never attend.
- **Personal Prayer:** Personal prayer is central for many young adults, with 54% rating it as "extremely important."

## Digital Engagement and Service

- **Religious Content:** Young adults are increasingly turning to digital platforms for spiritual growth, with 51% using religious apps or websites, and 63% of younger respondents (18-23) engaging with religious digital content less frequently than older respondents.
- **Community Service:** 85% of respondents have participated in community service projects, with younger respondents (18-23) reporting the highest level of involvement.

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## Joys

The young adults in the diocese find joy in various aspects of their faith, especially through sacramental life, community involvement, and liturgical experiences.

- **Power of the Sacraments:** Young adults find profound meaning and connection to God through the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Confession. Confirmation is often seen as a pivotal moment of faith commitment.
- **Importance of Community:** Participation in youth and young adult groups and retreats provides a sense of belonging and spiritual renewal. Retreats are highlighted as transformative experiences.
- **Liturgical Experience:** Many young adults find joy in reverent worship, with some favoring traditional forms like the Latin Mass, while others are drawn to culturally rich and joyful liturgies.
- **Personal Spiritual Practices:** Prayer, especially personal prayer practices like the rosary, Eucharistic adoration, and spiritual direction, plays a significant role in their spiritual lives.
- **Service and Outreach:** Young adults find fulfillment in acts of service, living out their faith through mission trips and social justice initiatives.
- **Intellectual and Theological Engagement:** Opportunities for faith formation through Bible studies, RCIA, and theological education are sources of joy for many, who strongly desire deeper engagement in Church teachings.

## Hurts

The survey responses also reflect areas of pain that have distanced young adults from the Church.

- **Exclusion and Bias:** Many young adults, especially LGBTQ+/SSA individuals, women, and racial minorities, feel excluded from the Church. Gender inequality and cultural biases contribute to feelings of marginalization.
- **Community and Engagement Issues:** A lack of welcome and judgmental attitudes and insufficient support for young adults contribute to feelings of isolation and disconnection from parish life.
- **Liturgical and Doctrinal Concerns:** Some respondents find certain liturgical practices irreverent, lackadaisical, or impersonal, while others struggle with inconsistent teachings and doctrinal confusion amongst priests and church leadership. This inconsistency has left some feeling uncertain about their faith.
- **Scandals and Trust Issues:** The Church's handling of sexual abuse scandals has caused significant distrust, alienating many young adults and making them question their place in the Church.
- **Leadership and Clericalism:** Frustrations with unapproachable clergy, clericalism, and lack of pastoral sensitivity have created emotional and spiritual barriers for those seeking guidance.
- **Relational and Emotional Challenges:** Family dynamics, strict religious upbringing, and the Church's response to trauma and mental health issues have strained young adults' relationships with the Church.
- **Political and Social Tensions:** Many young adults are uncomfortable with the Church's alignment with specific political agendas and its perceived neglect of broader social justice concerns like poverty and racism.



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## Hopes

Despite the hurts, young adults remain hopeful for the future of the Church, desiring greater inclusivity, community, and spiritual growth.

- **Faith Formation and Spiritual Growth:** There is a strong desire for deeper catechesis and spiritual formation. Some tend to favor traditional practices, while others advocate for more formation addressing modern issues like mental health and social justice.
- **Welcoming and Inclusive Church:** Young adults yearn for a Church that welcomes everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race, socio-economic status or ethnicity. They desire a community where they feel safe, accepted, and valued for who they are. Many respondents also emphasize the need for more significant roles for women in Church leadership.
- **Community and Connection:** Building stronger parish communities through social events, small groups, and retreats is seen as crucial for fostering meaningful relationships and engagement.
- **Support for Youth and Young Adult Ministries:** There is a strong call for increased support for youth and young adult ministries, including leadership development and mentoring.
- **Engagement with Modern Society:** Young adults want the Church to engage with contemporary issues like social justice, mental health, and environmental concerns, while maintaining its core teachings.
- **Leadership and Accountable Leadership:** A strong desire exists for more transparent, approachable, and accountable leadership that listens to and addresses the concerns of young adults.

## Ideas

Young adults provided a range of suggestions on how the Church can better serve their spiritual needs and attract more young people back to the faith.

- **Building Authentic Community:** Create welcoming and inclusive spaces through social events, small groups, and fellowship opportunities that cater to diverse interests and backgrounds.
- **Engaging Worship:** Strike a balance between traditional and contemporary worship styles, ensuring reverence and relevance to appeal to a broader range of young adults.
- **Intellectual and Spiritual Formation:** Provide opportunities for in-depth catechesis, theological discussions, and engagement with contemporary issues through workshops and programs.
- **Service and Social Justice:** Meaningful service opportunities and a greater emphasis on the Church's social justice teachings can attract young adults passionate about making a difference in the world.
- **Personal Outreach and Relationships:** Direct invitations and mentorship programs are seen as effective ways to re-engage young adults who have drifted away from the Church.
- **Leverage Technology:** Utilize digital platforms to connect with young adults, share engaging content, and build online communities that foster spiritual growth and discussion.



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## Conclusion

The survey reveals that young adults in the Diocese of San José seek a Church that balances tradition with the need to address and engage modern trends and issues. They value spiritual depth, community involvement, and inclusivity, while calling for stronger leadership and support for youth and young adult ministries.

The insights provided offer a clear path forward for the Diocese of San José to create a more welcoming, inclusive, and spiritually enriching environment for young adults. By addressing their needs, the diocese can foster a broader and deeper sense of belonging and renewal within the faith community.

Readers are encouraged to read the full report for a more detailed exploration of these findings. The rich tapestry of feedback offers a comprehensive understanding of young adults' experiences and their hopes for the future of the Church.



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