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50th Anniversary of Vatican II Proclamation; Young Catholics Celebrate Across Country

This Sunday marks the 50th anniversary of Pope John XXIII's proclamation of the Second Vatican Council. To mark this anniversary, Call To Action's (CTA) NextGeneration Leadership Team is initiating a series of celebrations with young adult Catholics in five cities across the United States.

There is a prevailing belief that young adult Catholics are not carrying on the faith in this post-Vatican II era, but evidence points to the contrary. While this new generation of Catholics may disagree with the hierarchy of the Church on some of its teaching, it does not diminish their faith. Many young adults remain faithful Catholics; choosing to live their faith in new, dynamic ways that honor the heart of the gospel message while carrying their faith beyond the confines of church doors--a vision articulated at the core of Vatican II documents.

In fact, a study revealed that 91% of Millennial Catholics, the youngest group surveyed, believe that "helping the poor" is a church teaching very important to them, as opposed to 84% of the Pre-Vatican II generation. It is clear that this generation of Catholics is living out the message of Vatican II that focuses on "scrutinizing the signs of the times" and meeting the needs of the world (Gaudium et Spes, Vatican II document).

"Today we see a generation of Catholics who are putting their faith into action," says Nicole Sotelo, Coordinator of CTA's NextGeneration Program. "You may not see as many young adults in church every Sunday, but attending mass is not the only measure of faith to them. Most important is following the model of Jesus who reached out to the poor and oppressed."

"Our faith remains an important part of our lives," says Kate Childs Graham, co-chair of CTA's NextGeneration Leadership Team, "but we, like the growing majority of Catholics in the United States, believe that Church teachings often do not reflect gospel values. Jesus reached out to those on the margins of his religion and culture. As a Church, we must do the same, we must welcome the women, the sexual abuse survivors, the people of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who remain on the margins of our church."

The young adult celebrations in honor of Vatican II will take place in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis, and Washington, DC. The FaithSharing Communion gatherings hosting these gatherings are sponsored by Call To Action/USA, FutureChurch and Women's Ordination Conference.

The Vatican II anniversary celebrations this weekend kick off a year of events for Call To Action that will include dinners and talks across the country, concluding with Call To Action's annual conference in November 2009 whose theme reflects Vatican II's promise: "Everyone at the Table: Rejoicing as People of God!"

25,000 Catholic lay people, religious and clergy working together to foster peace, justice and love in our world, our church and ourselves in the spirit of Vatican II and the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Call To Action.
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