

THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE ON CHURCH MANAGEMENT

A CALL TO COMMUNION: CO-RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH

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EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE TO FULFILL THEIR BAPTISMAL CALLING

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John Kerrigan

I'd like to start with a short story from the Kerrigan family dinner table. I have a 17-year-old vegetarian, a 13-year-old carnivore, and a 7-year-old macaroni and cheese gourmet, so you can imagine that dinners are never state affairs in our house. Typically, the dinner conversation revolves around the goings on of the day or imitations of teachers' idiosyncrasies. But from time to time, we play a game called "table topics," a little box of cards



Deacon John Kerrigan

that have questions on them, open-ended questions that are meant to spur discussion. So, a few weeks ago during one of our "table topics" sessions, the question was: "If you could know only one thing about the future, what would it be?" Whereupon my middle child said, "Dad, you should sit this one out because you're so old, you don't have much of a future!"

Now, this is the same child who, a few years ago after she and I had a disagreement over homework, marched into the kitchen, hands on hips, and said, "Daddy, I want your divided attention." I said, "Honey, divided attention? You've got it."

I share these snippets of family bliss because I think they bring to mind larger questions that relate to this panel, and to the Leadership Roundtable overall. And one of these questions is, does the Church have much of a future? How can

we find effective ways of communicating and evangelizing to young people and early adults whose attention is very divided and who live in a very distracted, complex worlds?

I'm going to give a few more factoids, sort of dour statistics, some from PEW and some from CARA. Only 30 percent of Americans who are raised Catholic are still practicing. Fully 10 percent of all adults in America call themselves ex-Catholics. And the number of marriages celebrated in the Church has decreased dramatically by nearly 60 percent between 1972 and 2010.

Now, I would say that is quite characteristic of a burning platform. If I had cited those statistics without mentioning the Church, you might think I was talking about JC Penny or Sears. I think that similar to these organizations, it's not necessarily the fault of the most recent leaders, but a collection

of problems including norms and unwillingness to change. Fr. Bob Beloin, [Catholic chaplain at Yale University], had asked a question: "What if you had an organization where your membership was declining by 1 percent a year, if the number of people in the pews was declining by 1 or 5 or 10 percent a year, and that was compounding over one or 10 or 15 years?" I think you have a distinct crisis, and I think it underscores the urgency of evangelizing young people and reversing some of these trends, which is what this panel is about.

Rather than go on with the reasons for decline in membership and my simple solutions to it, let me simply say that ESTEEM is first and foremost about relationships. It's students being invited to explore their relationships with the Lord, and God's call to them as servant leaders. It's students' relationships with each other, their relationships with their mentors, and their relationship to the great Catholic spiritual and intellectual traditions that we all possess and having a lived experience of those traditions.

Let me say a word on my involvement with ESTEEM. A little more than four years ago, I had lunch with Fr. Nathan Castle, the director of the Catholic Community at Stanford. Before lunch, I didn't know anything about ESTEEM, and after lunch, I was running ESTEEM!

We began with ESTEEM at Stanford with 9 students the first year, three years ago, and then 24 students last year. We've had between 25 and 30 participants ranging from undergraduates to postdoctoral fellows. At Stanford, there are actually more graduate students than there are undergraduate students.

Katie Diller

ESTEEM seeks to reverse the challenge of having young adults remain an

underutilized resource in the Catholic Church. We seek to train, encourage, and support young adult Catholics in their baptismal call, using their gifts and talents and serve the Church. Sites recruit college-age Catholics who are already committed to their faith, who command notice for their intellectual acumen, innate leadership skills, passion for excellence, and their desire to serve the Church in various disciplines and backgrounds. These students are an elite group: they're socially motivated, they're from diverse majors, and they're the future leaders of our Church.



Katie Diller

They make a significant commitment through the course of an academic year and sometimes multiple academic years. They attend an opening retreat to build community and to share their faith stories so that they know one another. They commit to a 12-session catechetical program usually spread across their academic year. Topics include ecclesiology, Catholic social teaching, understanding structures of Church governance, Catholic leadership and skill development, and much more. Sessions may include guest speakers, field trips to regional service sites, study of spiritual books or articles, and certainly the most important element is group debate and

open discussion of current events in Catholic thought and culture.

Every student is paired with a mentor who shares their career and service interest. These mentors are already leaders in their parish, their dioceses, or local Catholic nonprofit network. Finally, they take part in the national capstone conference that brings together students from all the university sites for a weekend of Catholic leadership, enrichment, and training. We are at 12 sites currently across the country. These students love the time they spend together at the national capstone conference. So far, for the last three years, we've gathered at Yale University.

The schools involved are UCLA, U.C. Berkeley, Stanford, UNLV, Texas Tech, Wash U. in St. Louis, Purdue, Ohio State, Michigan State, Robert Morris in Pittsburgh, and Yale University, with more in the pipeline.

Rachel Hochstetler

There are many things that make ESTEEM special and incredibly valuable to the Church. Two of the things I want to talk about are the opening retreat that Katie just mentioned, and the quality of the theology content that is presented and discussed at our meetings.



Rachel Hochstetler

The retreat occurs at the beginning of the year. Everyone in this room has attended, facilitated, or led more retreats than we can count, so I don't need to sell you on the value of retreats and having time to draw closer to God and reflect on your life. However, the ESTEEM retreat is different. It's not just about facilitating a good experience for the individual and the individual's faith development. It is optimized, both for the individual's experience at the retreat and for the community building. I think that's really essential because there are 25 to 30 individuals. At Stanford, those are graduate students and undergraduates who don't necessarily know each other.

At the retreat, you have time to reflect personally, but then a lot of it is getting to know the other people in your ESTEEM cohort. That's where the value comes in because that's where you get to know people: you build a community, you build a sense of authenticity and vulnerability. John mentioned the importance of relationships to ESTEEM, and that is really pivotal. They start to develop here at the opening retreat.

Something else that makes it really special is having peer speakers. There's an automatic sense of authenticity, credibility, and trust, and I think that's really what kicks the retreat off for being a place to be yourself and to be vulnerable. One of my favorite authors says, "Imperfections are not inadequacies. They're reminders that we're all in this together." To me, the opening retreat of ESTEEM is about reminding us that we're all in it together as students, as college students that have a million things going on, and as Catholics, and as humans, and incorporating that Catholic social justice teaching.

You leave the retreat with the sense of enthusiasm for the year ahead and a new community. You have these meetings that are spread out throughout the academic year based on the school schedule. I'm sure every ESTEEM site has incredible theological content. I have to recognize John because he truly was a relentless champion for recruiting the best guest speakers for our class. The quality of the speakers that visited was truly phenomenal. John can give you a list, and it's just astounding the people he recruited to come speak to us. It's so important because the people who come to speak talk about everything from Church history and Church governance to Catholic social teaching and more applied leadership skills, both within the Church and outside the Church. The power and witness of expertise of these guest speakers were captivating and enlightening.

A really special thing about ESTEEM is that you have people in it who are cradle Catholics. They were baptized, went through the sacraments, but never had a personal faith relationship. You have people who have been engaged with their faith at all levels of their life. And you have everyone in one room with someone who's an expert at what they study or what they're speaking about, and they're able to draw in every single person in that room regardless of their faith, background, or experience in the Church previously. We have small group discussions about each of these topics to really wrestle with and grapple with the content that's just been created and to hear each other's opinions. It's invaluable to have a community that's so trusting and open.

Last but not least, John always made sure to include scripture in our meetings, and I think that's really important. We always read the upcoming gospel for the week

and reflected on that. Again, building a sense of community and relationship, and growing in our faith together. If I had one way to describe ESTEEM, it would be faith seeking understanding, and leadership skills, because I truly think that's what this community is all about.

Megan O'Neil

One of the greatest things about ESTEEM is that you bring together all of these people into a room. You have mentors, you have undergrads, you have freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, graduate students of all ages, and everything is off the table except faith. You're gathered there as Catholics. That is so great because it allows the relationships to be really genuine, and to be really founded on what you're trying to get at. No one is trying to impress. Everyone is there to learn, and to seek, and to ask questions, as Rachel mentioned. I think that's really valuable because I don't think there are many other opportunities in the Church for an 18-year-old to be conversing with a 50-year-old and asking the same questions about faith.



Aside from the professional relationships and the networking, it really is fun, especially at Stanford. We love to go to our meetings and there are friendships

that happen outside of ESTEEM. It really is a community at Stanford, and that really has been such a blessing for all of us to make those connections.

I went to the capstone conference this past year in April and Rachel went the year before. You are with your own ESTEEM community and the vast community that is the national ESTEEM network. It was really great to see these people that are having parallel experiences, that are asking the same questions at different universities, and that can bring a new perspective to something that you have talked about. I know that the capstone conference this year was an absolute blast. I made connections with many others from different ESTEEM sites. We all went out one night after the conference and just got to know each other. I think that's really important, too. The mentorship, theology, and scripture are so integral, and the icing on the cake is making these friendships and lasting connections. The capstone conference was a great way to see all the people that are really involved in it.

Pat Rice

You posed the question of whether the Church has a future. I'm sure that you will feel the same as I do when I hear these young people speaking, and you'll say that the Church definitely has a future. We may not know exactly what it looks like or what shape it may take, but it definitely has a future. I look at it from quite a different perspective, from the other, older end of the lifespan.

My experience as a mentor has been richly rewarding for me and for all the mentors that I've spoken with. I think the role and the value of the mentor is to listen to the hopes, aspirations, beliefs, and doubts of the students, and to help them put some



perspective on their current life experience and on the information that they are getting from the speakers. Sharing our own path as a Catholic who seeks to make a difference in the world. As one of our mentors, Valerie McGuire, a research scientist in epidemiology at Stanford says, "I realized after my two diverse experience that for me, it meant being myself, sharing my experience of faith, how I integrate that faith into my professional life in the area of the sciences, and being a good listener. Being able to dialogue about our differences while still having the same fundamental belief system. It also doesn't mean talking about religion all the time, but walking with that person for a time, and connecting in ways that might not be too obvious."

We have a variety of mentors at Stanford and I'd like to mention a couple of them. Bill Galliani is a partner in a local law firm specializing in intellectual property law. Bill has also taken his entire family, his wife and children, to work in a poor rural parish in Peru. Dave Mount is a graduate of Yale. He's an associate in the venture capital firm of Pioneer Perkins and also teaches with his wife in the pre-Cana courses for the Dioceses of San Francisco and San Jose. My wife Claire, who's a marriage and family therapist, is quite a connector, and she connects with people.

She's connected especially well with the students that she has mentored. She was asked to be a co-sponsor for her most recent mentee's confirmation. So she was able not only to participate in this significant event in this young woman's life, but be with her family at the same time. Another lawyer, Jack, is a partner in his law firm and a judge. He's a Eucharistic minister in his parish and he helps deliver Meals on Wheels. With Jack and Kathleen being of my vintage, we have a perspective that these young people just haven't been able to have with their shorter life span. We lived through Vatican II; they've heard about Vatican II.

One mentor, Ron Peterson, told me he was terrifically inspired by the student that he was mentoring. That's another thing for mentors: it is an inspiration and a joy to be able to be with these people. I feel like not only can I be with a group of young people, I can have a course in theology without paying any tuition. He told me he was terrifically inspired by his mentee, a young man named Carl, who last year was awarded the Cardinal Bernardin Prize for Leadership.

For 16 years, I volunteered as a cuddler in the intensive care nursery at Lucille Packard Children's Hospital. I took the student I was working with on a tour of the hospital and the intensive care nursery. While walking the halls of the hospital, we had quite a discussion on orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Although we had some different perspectives on orthodoxy, we fully agreed on orthopraxis.

He offered me some comments on the mentoring component: "It's given me a chance to access the life experience of Catholics who have been in the Church much, much longer. And to take stock of the mismatch between my expectations

and my abstract values, and the way the life of the Catholic faith plays itself out in the parishes and on the street on a day-to-day basis.”

John Kerrigan

With Pat’s comments about mentors in mind, and particularly that last anecdote, we obviously don’t have a particularly ideology. We take on all comers. We’ve had people who could be fairly characterized as very orthodox or traditional. We have people who are nominally Catholic and curious, and maybe much more relativistic. And we try, in the curriculum and the discussion, to just play it right down the middle of the alley because we think that the alley is so wide that we don’t need to go to the fringes. We can remain authentic and still stay in the middle of the alley.

There was a student a few years ago who joined the program with all the answers, and who could spout doctrine almost verbatim. He was an extremely bright student. At one point I said to him, you seem to be sure about everything and I’m not sure about anything. I think he was able to see through the curriculum, and especially through the relationships with other students, and through the discussions, that things were actually a bit more nuanced.

There was a woman in our group a few years ago whom I happened to sit next to at a dinner. She was talking about how her roommate was doing bad things and how she was immoral, and how wrong she was in what she was doing. I can only imagine what those things were, but I said to her, have you ever sat down and talked with her about who she is and the background and context of her life? She said no, I don’t need to do that because she is wrong, and that’s all that matters. I said to her, I tried that once in

my marriage—telling my wife that she was wrong—to very bad results. I don’t recommend that as a way of getting on in the world! We had an interesting discussion after that. So, it really is about seeing the full spectrum of richness of the Catholic intellectual, the Catholic social tradition, and the Catholic spiritual tradition. But there’s no need to go to the fringes, one way or the other.

One question I have for the panelists: The Leadership Roundtable emphasizes excellence and best practices in Church matters. Everyone who attends these Annual Meetings subscribes to that notion, as well as to incorporating the expertise of the laity. When it comes to supporting evangelization of teenagers and young adults, what key messages would you have for this group as to ways it might be done best or how it’s done poorly?

Rachel Hochstetler

I think about the young people I know at Stanford and in the area, and everyone’s talking about startups and new ideas. People get so excited about new ideas. And being in Silicon Valley, there’s this culture that says, if there’s a good idea, you put your energy and your time behind it, and it becomes a force to be reckoned with. We have all these startups, and most of them fail, but a lot is learned in the failure and the iterations that come from that trial.

In terms of harnessing that energy and the innovative spirit, the Church could gain so much from its young people. There is a trend that started in Silicon Valley, but it’s everywhere. Young people are some of the most passionate people you’ll ever meet. If you go to any college campus, you will very quickly pick up on the palpable excitement that is there. If the people and the Church are able to give young people

in a parish the opportunity and authority to take something and run with it so they have a sense of ownership, you will just be blown away. I think it’s just a matter of giving that opportunity. I’m young in my parish, and I was asked to join the finance council, which was very flattering. It’s something that I never would have pursued on my own because I’ve heard about the finance council, but I don’t know exactly what they do. It wasn’t until my initial meeting with one of the members that they explained it, and I expressed concern over being able to add value.

It’s about having a diversity of opinion and knowing that there are other people in the Church my age, and that my opinion does matter. Sometimes it’s just extending the invitation because people are eager to get involved, and it’s just giving them an outlet for their energy and enthusiasm.

Megan O’Neil

I think that within the Church, there is such a long history, and a lot of the people in the pews are a lot older than Rachel and me. I think there’s an intimidation factor there, and young people see these people that have been going to the same parish, sitting in the same row, the same seat, for years and years, for probably as long as we’ve been alive. And you think, gosh, how do I get past that barrier? How can I make a relationship with that person? How can I get involved in something that seems so secure? I think that parish leaders extending their hands and saying, we do want you, and here’s a doorway into this community, and here’s where we could use a new, fresh idea. Getting rid of that intimidation would take us leaps and bounds in the right direction.

Pat Rice

I’m sensitive to the term ‘evangelization.’ I don’t think young people should be over-

evangelized until they feel understood by you. I think our ability to influence anybody, but particularly young people, is directly related to the degree that they genuinely feel that you understand them. I think that's the first plank on the deck of your relationship that you can begin to move ahead.

All the mentors have talked about listening. With listening, you have to be genuine in your faith and in your belief and practice, whatever shape that particularly takes for you. Young people will spot a phony immediately. It has to be genuine even if you might not be too comfortable without it. That genuineness and that empathetic kind of listening and understanding, and especially that unconditional love, really inspires them. Your love is about something that really matters in this world and can make a difference. I think just to have that mind and approach to interacting with these young people is incredibly rewarding.

Katie Diller

One thing that most ESTEEM sites do when they recruit is not necessarily recruit the students who already are the super Catholics, the ones who go on all the retreats and serve in all of these service projects, but students who come to Mass sometimes, or attend an event and seem like they are really inspired, but then fade away or get too busy.

We actively recruit those students who are one foot in, one foot out. The invitation is huge, and I'd say that over the last three years we have created over 200 ESTEEM alumni of educated, thoughtful, interested young adults. They're available. They're a resource to you and your foundations, your organizations, your parishes, your dioceses. One thing that you could do

is create internships—paid, unpaid, whatever works.

The way the educational system works today is that there's one person sitting here, and there's many people sitting out there. The people out there don't necessarily get the chance to meet the person at the podium. That's the way our education system works today, and it wasn't always like that. A lot of our Church history is filled with people like St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, St. Francis, St. Jane de Chantal—people who were closely mentored. A mentor has to give a lot. What can a mentor do?

You could walk into your mail room and give a copy of your favorite book to a young adult who works in your mail room and say, "this is my favorite book, I'd love for you to read it," and then walk away. And they think, "wow, I just met the head of the organization, and they gave me their favorite book." That's transformational. It's invitational. That would be something that you could certainly do with ESTEEM alumni or anyone in your organization. Even your own children. Bringing your children, your nieces, your nephews, the guy who works in the mail room to an event like this, sponsoring them would let them see the excitement within leadership within the church.

Rachel Hochstetler

I wish you all could have seen the energy at the end of the capstone conference this year, and I'm sure in years past. Everyone there was itching to get in somewhere. We would love an opportunity. Every single student there wanted to find a place in a diocese, in a parish, in a Catholic organization, and I think Katie's ideas are great, and there's plenty of us out there.

SELECTED QUESTIONS, ANSWERS, AND COMMENTS

Kirk Hanson

*Executive Director, Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University*



I'm worried about the transition from this wonderful relationship-based experience on campus, which I think has been created at a lot of Catholic communities over time. But it's that transition beyond the time in school. I see so many of those very dedicated people going out and encountering weak parishes. And I wondered if the students had other suggestions about how we might help the transition into the parish as Rachel's experience of being invited to the finance council.

Katie Diller

That is the goal of the ESTEEM program. It's part of the mission. It's part of how the program is run. We work very hard to make sure that students have a sense that it's not necessarily going to be easy when you leave campus and find a parish. When

you graduate, it's not going to be handed to you. For many students, there isn't a natural transition. Sometimes they take a job somewhere in the country where there isn't a parish that's warm and welcoming to young adults. And we talk to them about that and prepare them. That's part of the capstone conference experience. We usually have a panel of young adults who've been out for two or three years and they share their experience of having to look around for the parish that fits them well, or for service opportunities that they feel called to.

We encourage them and try to build their confidence to say okay, if it doesn't work the first month, keep looking. You belong to us for the rest of your life. It might not happen in the first three months, it might happen later. One of my favorite emails was from one of the students I had my second year as site coordinator for ESTEEM. He went to Virginia for the summer for an internship. He emailed me and said, "everything you said came true." And I thought, "yes!"

He went to a local parish for about four weeks, and he said that he just felt dead inside every time he walked out. That's unfortunate, and perhaps that parish is able to serve others with different needs at a very high level. But they weren't serving his needs, and he said he felt the confidence to try out a couple other parishes. He said he found a parish about 45 minutes away. "I had to drive 45 minutes every Sunday, but I found it, and the people there were awesome, and they spiritually feed me, and I'm so happy to be a part of that parish. Thank you for

teaching us that we can keep looking." And that's a huge success for us. We don't know what the first parish would have done for someone else but they weren't doing it for that young man.

Megan O'Neil

I think, as ESTEEM has been around for more years, we can tap into the alumni network there and connect with them. Maybe they know people in the parish, and that might be a few years down the road as we get a larger database. I think if we can really nourish that community, that's a great way to fill the gap.

Rachel Hochstetler

There's a Facebook group for ESTEEM members. It's a network you can tap into. The other thing is when you see young, new people appear in your parish, invite them to dinner. That is something that the Catholic community at Stanford does very well. Fr. Nathan Castle invites people to lunch or coffee, and he'll treat. Just to make time and get to know them. That touches on that relationship piece that's so important. These are people who really value the relationships in their lives, and they're hungry for new ones, especially in a new area. That makes people feel at home immediately.

We are always accepting new lectors and Eucharistic ministers. That's how I first got involved. I think having someone who can initially reach out to build a relationship and a friendship, maybe not in the formal mentor role, but some type of relationship, and then being able to pitch being a Eucharistic minister once a

month. It builds because you grow in your relationship with the Church.

John Kerrigan

There's the invitation component that I think is really important, and then there's the need. For example, one of the ESTEEM alumni graduated from the Graduate School of Business at Stanford last year, and he's working and volunteering at the Archdiocese of Chicago in finances and strategic planning. I could go into details as to how he networked his way to that position, but he is adding a lot of value to their process because he has this fresh perspective from this world-class graduate school of business program.

Sally Vance-Trembath

*Professor of Theology,
Santa Clara University*

I'd like to make an observation because I've visited John's ESTEEM group, and it focuses on the mentors, whom I think are Vatican II Catholics. They've been formed in the Church where the focus was not on power, but about lived life and being ministers of the Church so that we're called here by baptism. To be around someone like Pat, who is Catholic from the inside out, expresses it sacramentally and who can talk about it theologically, is where the leadership gets translated.

Pat Rice

I agree with you. Having lived through Vatican II and being what I would call a Vatican II Catholic, it's exciting. I think we have to meet people where they are. And I think most of the mentors I know are able to do that. Part of what it means to be a so-called Vatican II Catholic is a broad scope in terms of the spirituality

that is so important and that is being manifested even in the people, young people particularly. Their spirituality and their passion are extremely valuable, and there's no need to try to re-baptize it. But together I think we can come together and grow into the future together.

Penny Warne

*Pastoral Associate, Holy Spirit and
Our Lady of Refuge Parishes, San Jose, CA*



Penny Warne

We've been trying to, for as long as I can remember, engage young professionals or young adults in the parish itself. I wonder if there are some elements of the model from campus life that could be trained or brought to the parish level to be able to do that, and what ideas you have about doing that.

Kate Diller

We are working with a few dioceses right now to talk about how to adapt the ESTEEM curriculum for dioceses and ministers with the slightly older subset of young adults in their late 20s. So, we're in communication with at least three dioceses right now.

Rachel Hochstetler,

responding to a question about being a young woman in the Catholic Church
As for the role of women in the Church, that is something that I spoke to Katie about after one of the panels at the capstone conference. This is the hardest thing for me about being a member of the Catholic Church. I sometimes wonder if I can be a full member. When we knew John before he was Deacon John, my husband and I were talking, and I asked if he would ever want to become a deacon, because he's someone whose faith is really important in his life and we were in ESTEEM together. We talked about it for a long time, especially because we saw John going through the process. He said he won't make any concrete decisions, but he doesn't think he would, because it's something I couldn't do.

He and I have had many conversations about my role in the Church and his role in the Church. I feel so blessed to be a part of this Catholic community at Stanford where, every once in a while, we have two women who will give part of the homily. Being in that type of setting is phenomenal and incredibly inspiring. I was involved in the liturgy through reading and serving as a Eucharistic minister, and then being asked to join the finance council. I realized I can't become a deacon, I'm not going to become a nun. I'm married and I love my husband, and that's my calling.

But there's a way for me to be a bigger part of our parish, and it may not have a specific title. It may not get the same level of recognition, but it's a way to shape things and a way to shape my skills. I can't put labels on it, and that's okay, but it's something very challenging for me. When we move from Palo Alto, it may be more

challenging to find a parish that's more open to having women in meaningful leadership roles. But I'm excited and encouraged by my ESTEEM experience and my experience with the Catholic community at Stanford to take that on.

Rev. Anthony Cutcher

President, National Federation of Priests' Councils



Fr. Tony Cutcher

I was recently a pastor in the wilds of northwestern Ohio, very rural. One of the critiques of the parish was that there was no programming of any sort for young adults who weren't married. It was either middle-aged and old folks or young families. So if you didn't have a husband or wife and at least one toddler, there was nothing for you. I'm sure that's a fairly normal occurrence. Can you give us some suggestions that we can take back to our parishes for young single people?

Megan O'Neil

Just graduating from college and moving into the world, what I'm looking for is a community of peers, and people who I can interact with at these events and outside of events as well. I think that a

first priority is just getting those people together. Maybe it's not theology or catechism, but maybe it's just going out to dinner once a month just to socialize and get those young people talking. I know that would make the Church that much more welcoming and much more enjoyable to go if I had friends at Church. The social aspect is important for people who are 25 to 30 and not married.

Rachel Hochstetler

It's about building community and social relationships because just like ESTEEM starts with a retreat, you need to build those trusting relationships first before conversations can go to the next level. Just having a place where people feel like they belong is the first step.

John Kerrigan

I would imagine most of us have had this experience with Cardinal Bergoglio being elected pope and taking the name Francis. In some ways there is a *kairos* moment, and it's not a commentary about Benedict or John Paul II. I think for some of us the air seems to be ionized with a sense of hopefulness and an invitation to be entrepreneurial, and we can seize that.

In one of our ESTEEM meetings this year, people were able to share their hopes and insights and opportunities through the projective of the new pope. Sometimes it's as easy as having a conversation over pizza with the recent college graduates and talking about the new pope. Things that you wouldn't think are inviting, so to speak, actually are.

Katie Diller

One thing that is critical after fellowship is remembering that Jesus invited all the so-called wrong people to be his disciples. He didn't just invite them to be his

disciples, he expected them to contribute. So when you are trying to build a young adult network, don't necessarily look for the perfect young Catholic. Look for the one that was raised Catholic, and that's how they describe themselves. Invite somebody who maybe comes once a month. Invite that person to be in the parish finance council. When they go to the finance council meeting, they might wonder why they were asked, but they go. They may be completely transformed by the experience of seeing what the parish needs and what the parish is doing with its finances. Then you've got a full-time Catholic on your hands, it's fantastic. Some parishes invite young adults to write the homily once a month. That's terrifying, I'm sure, but aren't you curious what they would say? It doesn't have to be the full-time Catholics. It could be the half-time Catholics that write this week's homily. Just once. That's exciting. You don't need to invite the perfect people. Invite the weirdoes. They can give a lot, and you'll get a lot!

Pat Rice

I think we should also be smart enough to learn from other Churches. There's a Presbyterian church in Menlo Park that is so vital. It's not a mega church but it could be. They do a lot of things with their young people. They are entrepreneurial. I think we can learn from that.

From their perspective these young people are naïve, pushy and disrespectful with a very limited understanding of the world. Unfortunately, when young people are given an opportunity to lead a common response from long-term leaders is to abandon them – to say to them, “So you want to lead?” We need to be their “armour bearers”, their champions, advocating for them as they step out into their vision and calling, defending them from the attacks that will surely come, believing in them when others don’t and empowering them to be all that God has designed them to be. The best place for these young leaders to be is at the cutting edge of mission and ministry, with the freedom to make decisions and respond to the constant changes in culture. Because young people stopped doing stupid and anti-social things. Now they are trying to keep out of trouble. And it’s all the result of a new project. Two Bristol policemen organised a football league for teenagers in one of the poorest parts of the city. The idea is to prevent teenagers from committing crimes. They want to show teenagers how they can spend their free time in a better way. The policemen introduced a system in which football results are connected to young people’s behaviour outside the football grounds. Some people also think that a similar system should be used for professional footballers. If a professional player gets into a fight on the football ground, his team loses points. In this way footballers will try to behave with more respect to other players. Your employees understand their jobs. They know their tasks, roles, and functions within the organization, and it’s time for you to let them do what they need to do to get the job done. But there is a critical point that is often missed: It isn’t possible for a leader to “empower” someone to be accountable and make good decisions. People have to empower themselves. Your role is to encourage and support the decision-making environment, and to give employees the tools and knowledge they need to make and act upon their own decisions. By doing this, you help your employees reach an empowered state