



## The ABC's of Ministry with Gen Z

# Wasau Catholic Deanery

PRESENTED BY TOM EAST

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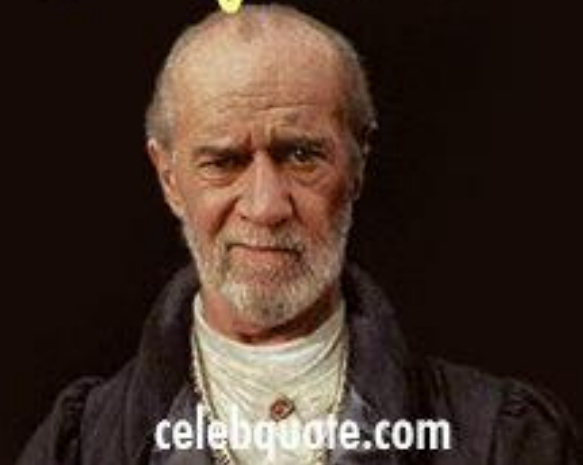


**"Those who proclaim the Christian message must know and love the culture and the people to whom they bring the message..." NDC**



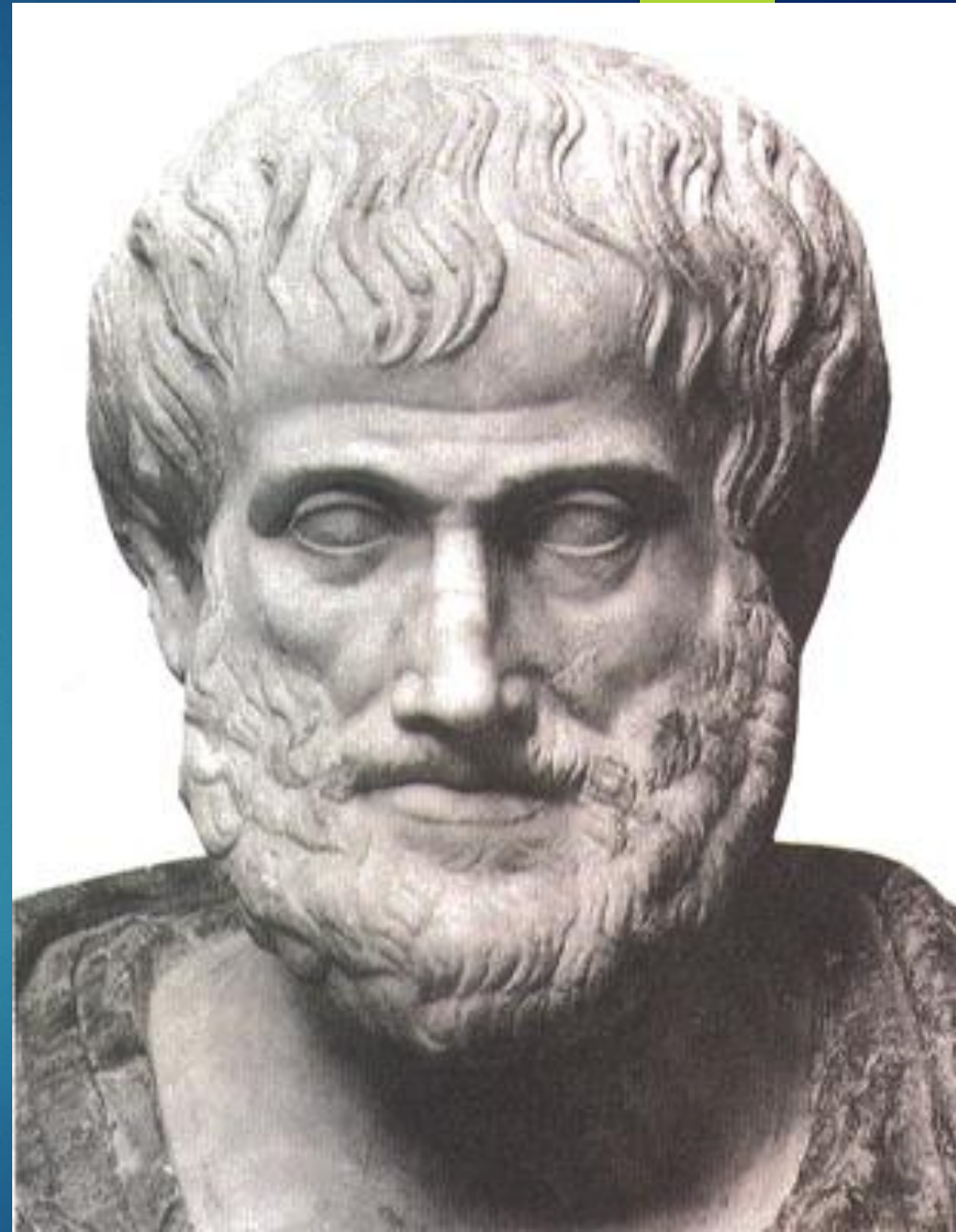
HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT  
ANYBODY **DRIVING**  
SLOWER THAN YOU IS AN IDIOT  
AND ANYONE GOING  
FASTER THAN YOU IS A MANIAC?

*George Carlin*

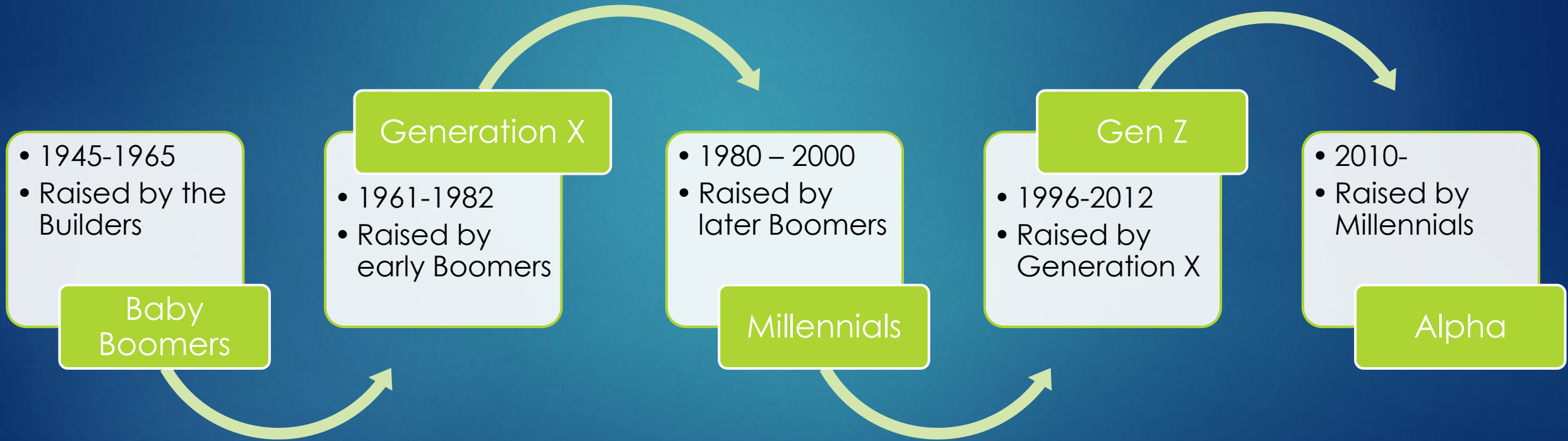


# Those young people...

*They [Young People] have exalted notions, because they have not been humbled by life or learned its necessary limitations; moreover, their hopeful disposition makes them think themselves equal to great things ...all their mistakes are in the direction of doing things excessively and vehemently. They overdo everything -- they love too much, hate too much, and the same with everything else.*



# Generational Cohorts



Each young person is unique.



“We don’t  
know what  
we don’t  
know.”



What are some stereotypes  
associated with Gen Z youth?



# Tech Addicts



## Reality

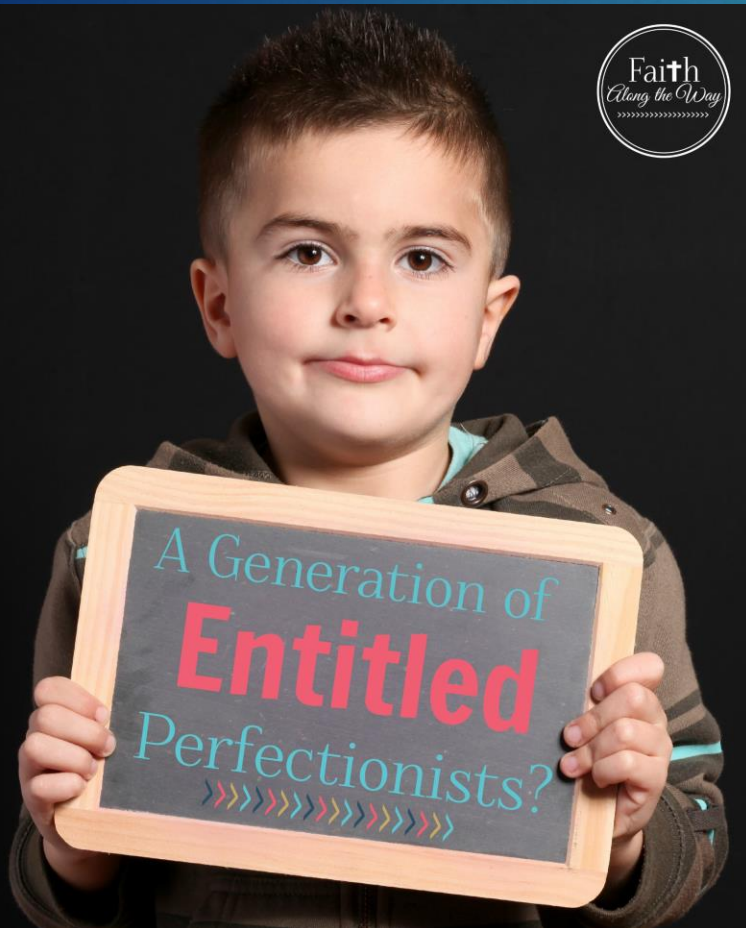
- ▶ Digital Connection is a given, and youth are connected an average of 9 hours a day... **but**
- ▶ Gen Z youth prefer face to face communication and seek “unplugged” time.



# Entitled

Reality: Gen Zers

- ▶ Are accustomed to comfort **but...**
- ▶ Are not particularly materialistic (crave experiences more than stuff).
- ▶ Are economically conservative and were very shaped by the Great Recession.



# Gen Lay-Z



## Reality: Gen Z

- ▶ Can be distracted and anxious **but**
- ▶ Have grown up in a constant state of war and social change
- ▶ Most educated generation in history
- ▶ Are entrepreneurial and desire to address root issues of challenges and change the world





**TELL US  
ABOUT YOUR  
EXPERIENCE**

- ▶ How would you describe young people in Gen Z?
- ▶ What do you notice about their gifts and characteristics?
- ▶ What are their challenges?

# Synched with Technology



- ▶ Digitally Integrated Technology →
- ▶ building relationships
- ▶ engagement with community and with the world
- ▶ learning
- ▶ engagement with faith

# Expecting Access



- ▶ Not looking for pre-packaged ways to engage and belong
- ▶ Looking for customized pathways to access what they need

# Hungry for In-Person Connections and Transforming Relationships



- ▶ Face to face is preferred way to communicate
- ▶ Seek relationships with adults and peers based on mutual respect and understanding

# Seeking to Change the World

- ▶ Interested in fostering sustainable and long-term social change
- ▶ Volunteer in high numbers
- ▶ Have grown up being “voluntold”
- ▶ Want to create solutions, found a movement, become the change
- ▶ Can become disillusioned



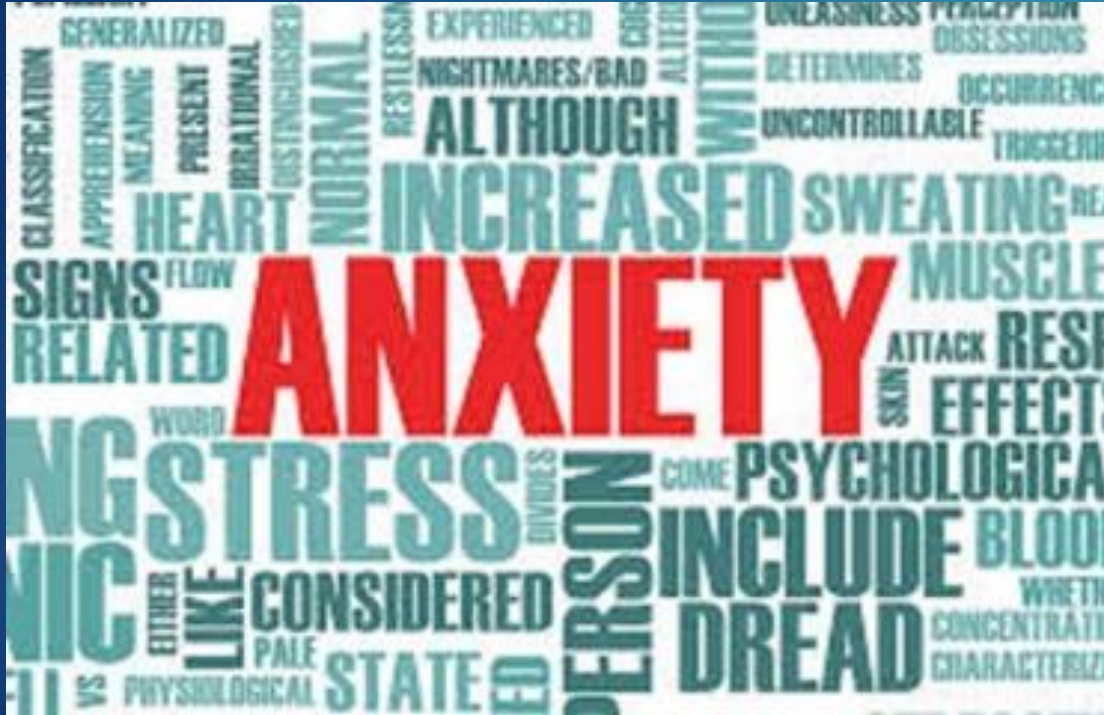


# Hungry for experiences of prayer, silence, mystery



Constant digital connectivity, anxiety, and competing demands enhance a hunger for opportunities to disconnect, experience awe and be engulfed by peace

# Anxiety Epidemic



- ▶ 1 in 3 youth has anxiety disorder
- ▶ Reasons for this “anxiety epidemic” among youth:
  - ▶ Uncertainty
  - ▶ Over-commitment
  - ▶ Managing various expectations
  - ▶ Overuse of media
  - ▶ Over exposure to violence
  - ▶ Genetic factors

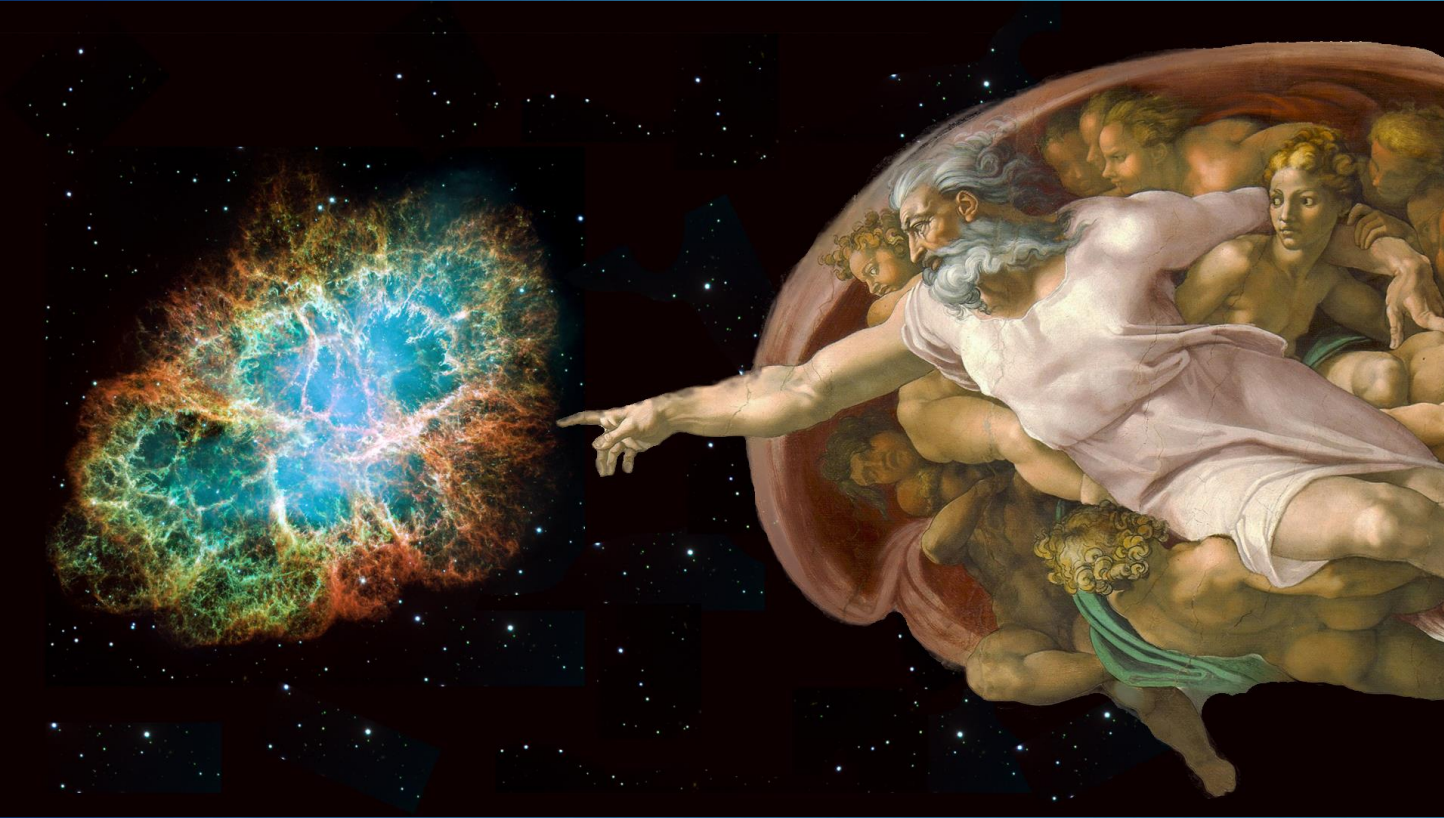
# Liturgy Can Make a Huge Difference

“The predictability, pattern, and rote behaviors that liturgy and ritual provide calms and soothes. This is not something most teens today can anticipate, but something they discover after experiencing it.”

Roy Petifils



# Need to connect faith and science



- ▶ Faith and science seem incompatible, which is reinforced by culture
- ▶ Rise of the “None’s” – No affiliation is now largest denomination.

# Science Leads Us to Faith

“...we are not afraid of what science discovers and where scientific discovery will lead us. Science is not a threat to our faith; instead it leads us deeper into the mystery of our faith.”

Robert Feduccia



# Exploring New Ways to Learn



- ▶ Highly educated (1 in 2 will be university educated)
- ▶ Crave learning and new information
- ▶ Expect engagement
- ▶ Short attention span
- ▶ Learn through experience, collaboration, creation, engagement of senses, emotions, and relationships



# Tolerant and Diverse



- ▶ Most racially diverse generation in United States history.
- ▶ Highly values tolerance, not just accepting, but affirming differences





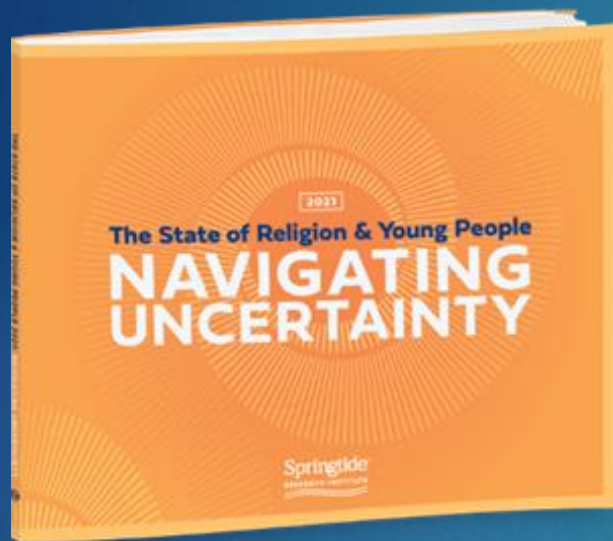
- ▶ In the US - 2020, 55% of those under 18 are non-Caucasian.
- ▶ There is a 50% increase in youth who identify as multi-racial since 2000.

# More Religious and Spiritual

“Gen Zers’ participation in religion is up compared with previous generations. When asked about spirituality, 47 percent said they were religious, and an additional 31 percent said they were spiritual but not religious. Church attendance is also up during young adulthood, with 41 percent saying they attend weekly religious services, compared with 18 percent of millennials at the same ages, 21 percent of Generation X, and 26 percent of baby boomers.”

Joan Hope, Ph.D., Editor, “Get Your Campus Ready for Generation Z”,  
The Successful Registrar – Managing Records, Systems and Staff,  
September 2016, Volume 16, Issue 7.





**71%**

of young people say they are **religious**.



**78%**

of young people say they are **spiritual**.

**58%**



of young people ages 13 to 25 told us,  
“I do not like to be told answers  
about faith and religion, I’d rather  
discover my own answers.”

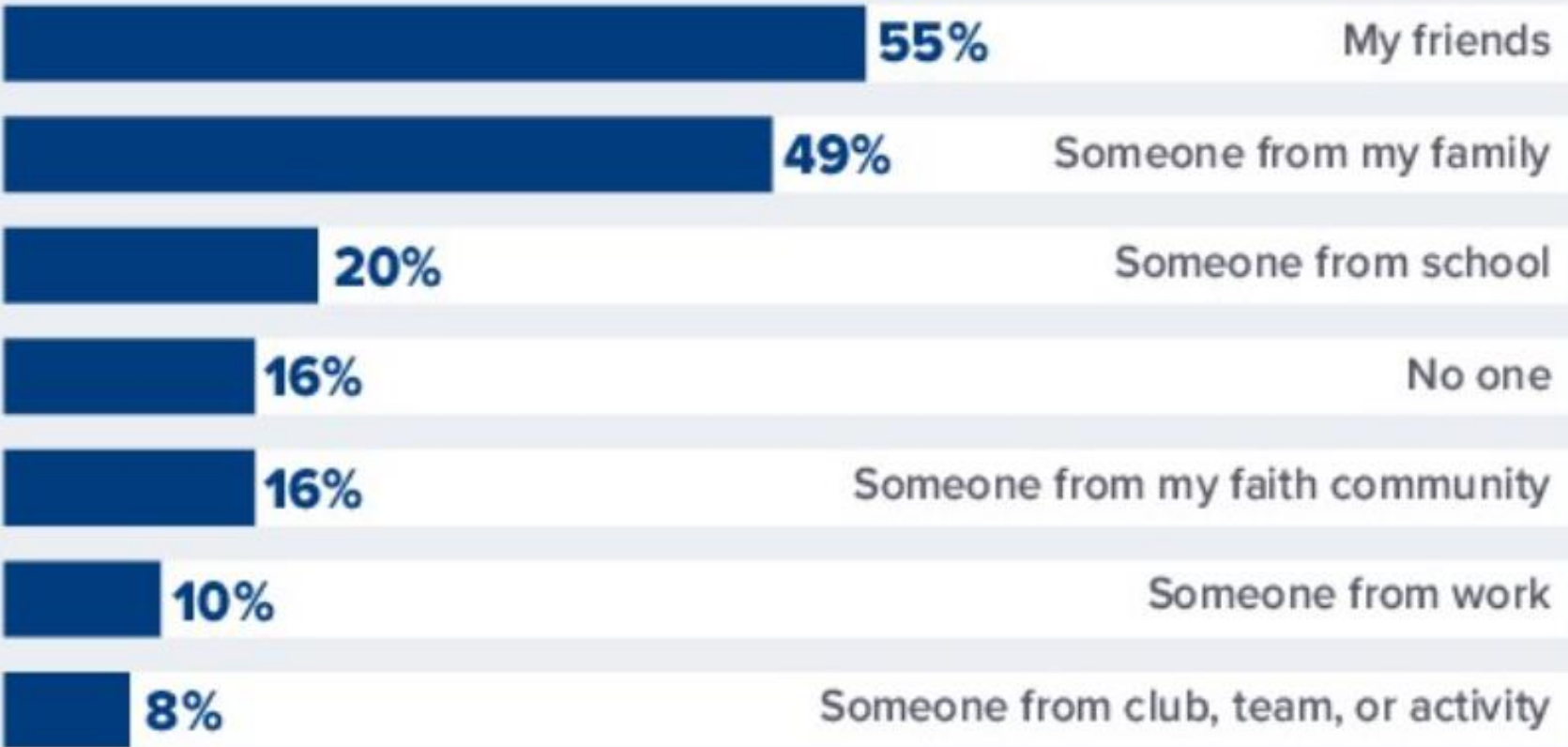
**54%**



report, “**Religious communities**  
try to fix my problem, instead  
of just being there for me.”

# When you have felt overwhelmed and didn't know what to do about something, who did you turn to for help?

Participants were allowed to select more than one option.



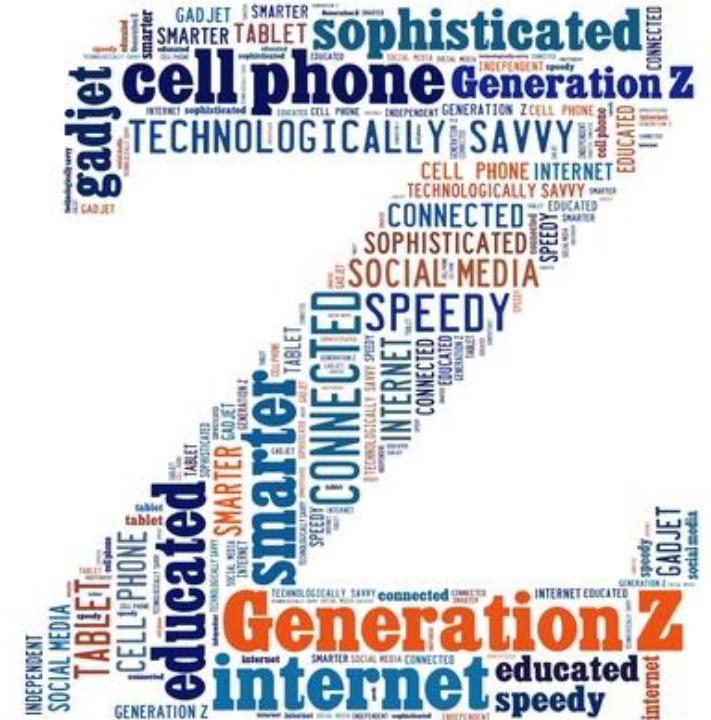
Nearly 70% of young people tell us that after the pandemic they “won’t take for granted relationships and opportunities the way [they] did before.”

# Faith Unbundled

*Faith Unbundled* is a term that describes the way young people increasingly construct their faith by combining elements such as beliefs, identity, practices, and community from a variety of religious and non-religious sources, rather than receiving all these things from a single, intact system or tradition.

# Members of Generation Z...

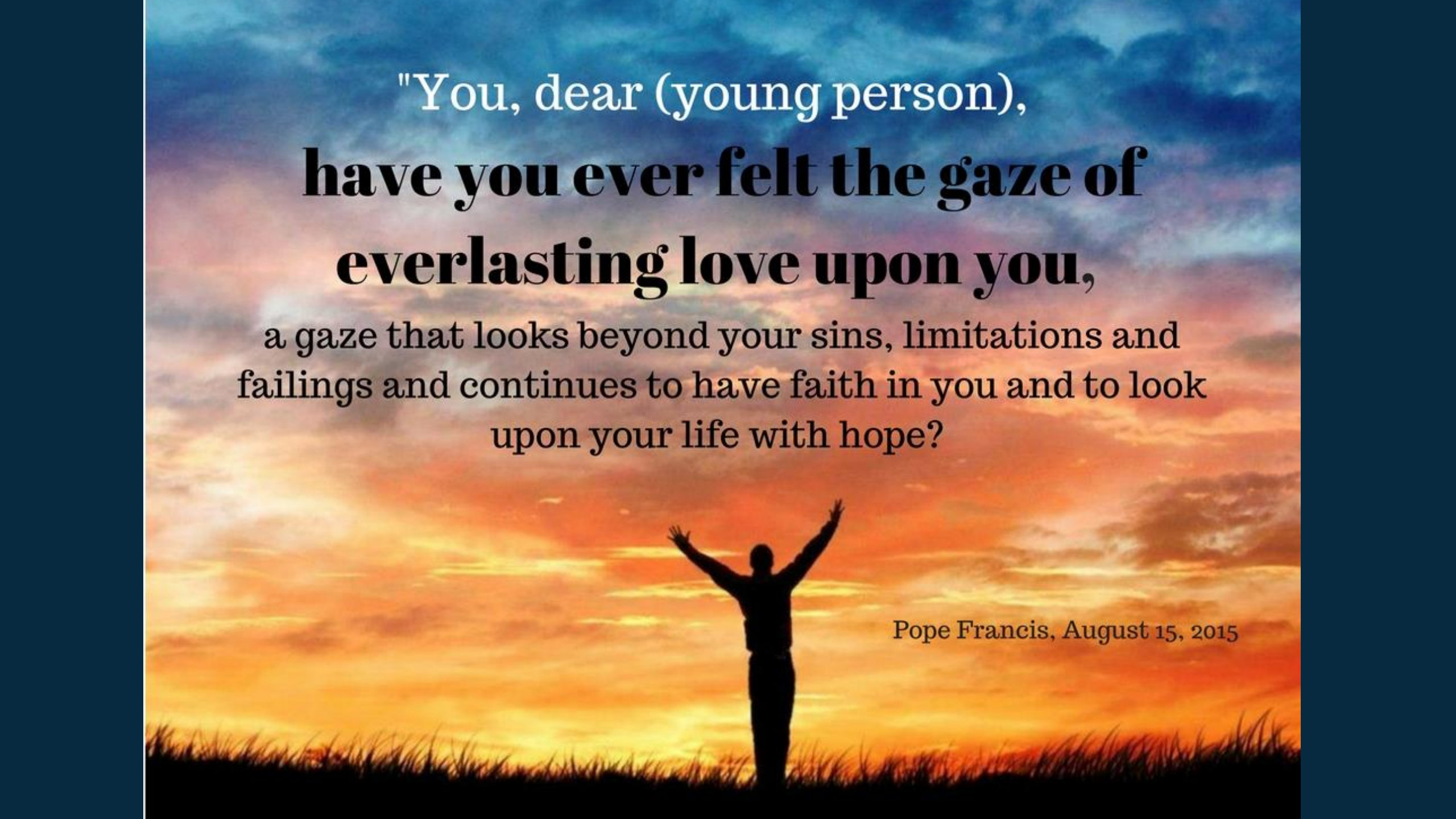
- Are synched with technology
- Expect access
- Look for in-person connections and transforming relationships
- Seek to change the world
- Hunger for experiences of prayer, silence, mystery
- Need to connect faith and science
- Explore new ways to learn
- Are tolerant and diverse



# What does all this mean?





The image features a silhouette of a person standing in a field with their arms raised in a gesture of praise or joy. The background is a vibrant sunset sky with orange, yellow, and blue hues. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

"You, dear (young person),  
**have you ever felt the gaze of  
everlasting love upon you,**  
a gaze that looks beyond your sins, limitations and  
failings and continues to have faith in you and to look  
upon your life with hope?

Pope Francis, August 15, 2015



*not looking for*

**Force fit into  
joining a group**

*not looking for*

**Passive  
reception of  
information that  
is dispensed on  
our timeline**





*not looking for*

**A way to be  
bored**

*not looking  
for*

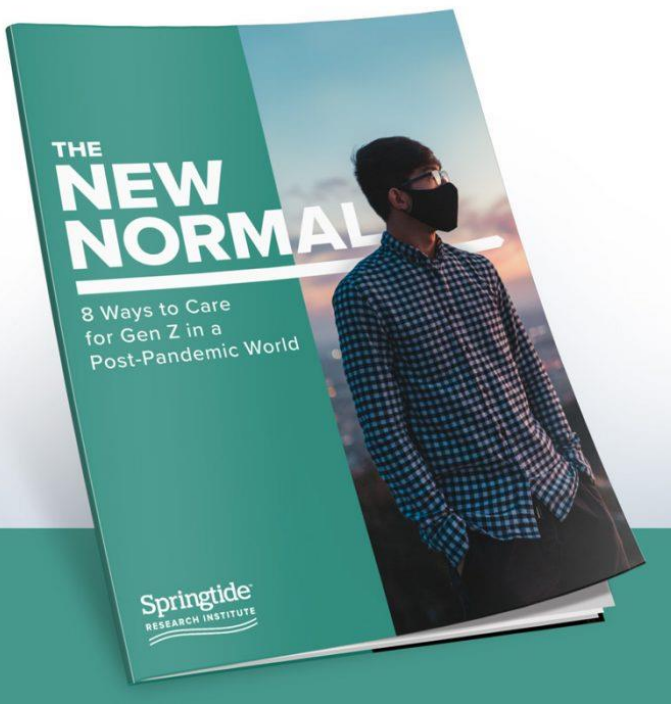
**A place  
where they  
feel locked  
out**





- *Rebuild Trust*
- *Understand Where Young People Are*
- *Exercise Empathy*

SO, WHAT CAN WE DO?



- *CREATE SAFETY* to help young people regain their footing
- *GRIEVE WHAT'S BEEN LOST* without dwelling on the negatives
- *CELEBRATE WHAT'S BEEN GAINED* without insisting on optimism
- *RESIST COMPARISON* by making space for a range of emotions
- *GET TOGETHER* to combat isolation with intentional gatherings
- *TAKE CARE OF THE BODY* to help the body and mind process stress
- *TURN TO THE ARTS AND NATURE* to find new modes of expression
- *FOCUS ON THE PRACTICAL* by offering young people concrete help

# GROUP WORK

Review this list.

- What do you sense youth need the most?
- How do the resources of your ministry and your parish match up with what youth need in this moment?
- What do you want to do to welcome youth back to ministry and accompaniment?



# Doing Youth Ministry in A Missionary Key



Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”.

Evangelii Gaudium #33

# Be Bold and Creative



I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.

Evangelii Gaudium #33

# Story of Samuel

- ▶ Put them in a place that is close to the holy.
- ▶ Teach them to respond.
- ▶ Get out of the way!

