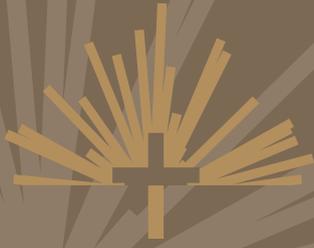


C21



RESOURCES

THE CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY CENTER

A Catalyst and Resource for the Renewal of the Catholic Church

SPRING 2017



FORMING CONSCIENCE





ON THE COVER

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The Church in the 21st Century Center
 is a catalyst and resource for the renewal
 of the Catholic Church.

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“While I do not presume to have the overarching answer to the question of how to help emerging adults make good moral decisions, I have developed some strategies that seem to have helped.”

— Michael Sacco

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Guest Editor C21 Resources Spring 2017

MICHAEL SACCO is the executive director of the Center for Student Formation and Office of First Year Experience at Boston College. He has held positions within the areas of both Student Affairs and University Mission & Ministry at Boston College and the University of Notre Dame. Sacco began his career at BC in 1995 and considers himself fortunate to have accompanied many students through their formative years on the Heights. His work allows him to spend significant time with students and his insights have been developed through contact made on retreats and international service trips and through the mentoring program. He holds a master’s degree in Higher Education from Indiana University and a doctorate from the Institute of higher education at the University of Georgia.



“WE WERE NEVER THEIR AGE”

AS A CHILD I VOWED never to begin advice as my grandfather used to do: “Well, when I was your age...” Forgetting my vow, I recently began some counsel to my 16-year-old son with that unfortunate preface. He stopped me in my tracks with, “Dad, you were never *my* age.” And he was right.

In selecting and crafting essays for this edition of *C21 Resources* on the role of conscience in emerging young adulthood, I realized all the more that “we were never their age.” Just note the dizzying explosion in communication technology and the limitless access that smart phones lend to this generation—compared to mine.

This postmodern culture has dramatically altered the context of moral choices. In my youth, to be sexually active before marriage was contrary to norms of faith and brought the danger of unwanted pregnancy besides—perhaps a stronger deterrent; now there are copious means of birth control. Pornography might be found in a seedy red-light district of a big city; now it is available, 24/7, through myriad apps—making what we considered X rated look like Friday night TV. To cheat on exams or assignments was almost impossible; now there are copious Cliffs Notes and term papers to download. And the list goes on. This is a far more challenging time for forming and following conscience.

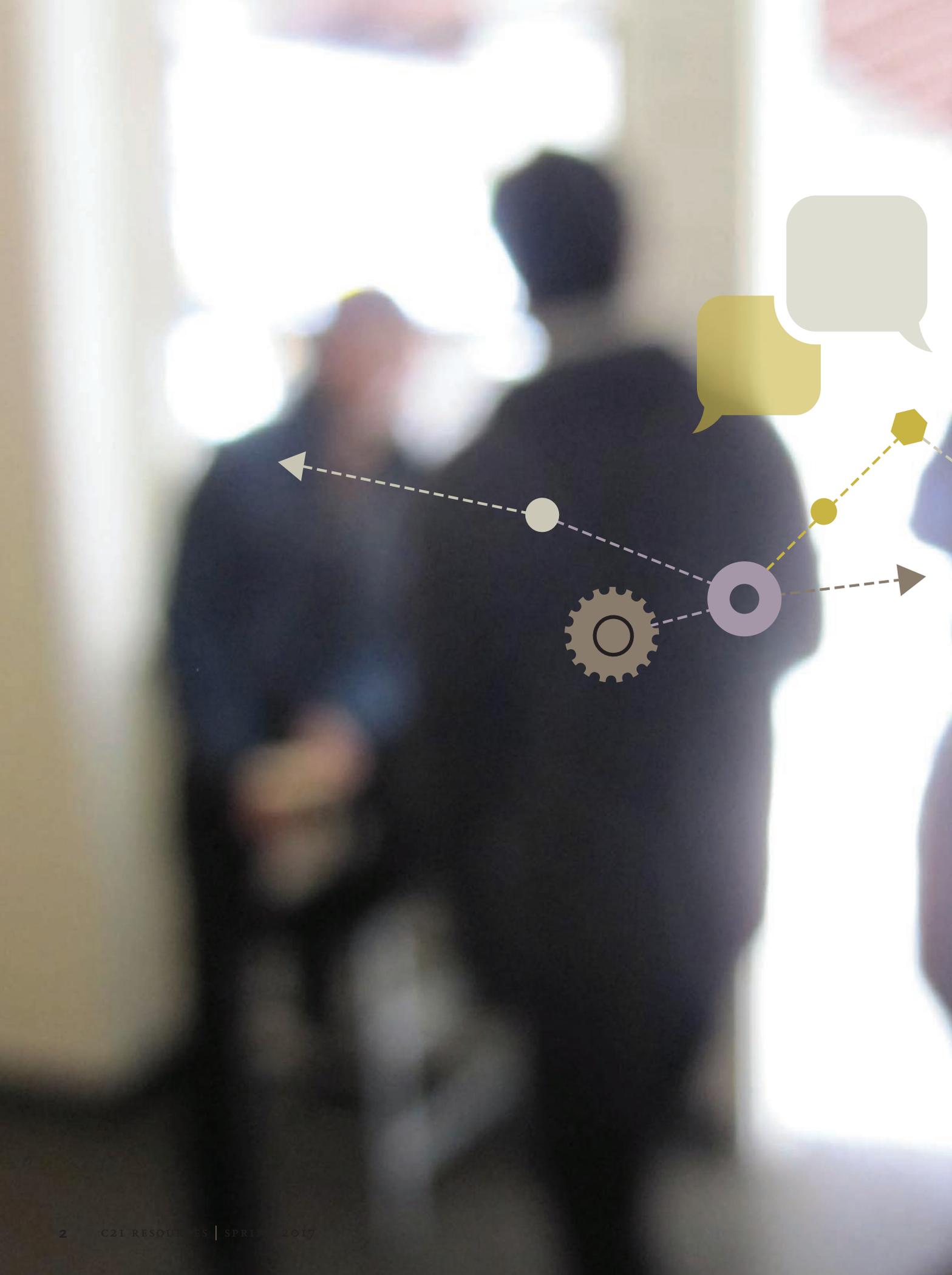
I also recognize that on some moral issues today’s young adults have a far sharper conscience than my generation had. They are more conscious of the immorality of racism, sexism, homophobia, and the responsibility to care for the environment. They are most generous in volunteering for works of compassion and justice. This being said, it is still more daunting now to forge a strong moral compass to guide the ethical decisions that come with life.

Here we continue the conversation of the previous issue of *C21 Resources*, with focus on conscience in the lives of young adults. Again, we propose that there is a rich resource in our Catholic tradition of conscience. It provides a corpus of strong moral teachings based on faith and yet the conviction that our own conscience must ultimately be our guide.

We thank Mike Sacco, executive director of BC’s Center for Student Formation, for being guest editor and bringing together a fine set of essays. We hope this issue will be helpful especially to emerging young adults and to those who love and care for them—parents, and then teachers, mentors, and others. Read on!

Professor Thomas Groome
Director, Church in the 21st Century Center

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CONVERSATIONS OF CONSCIENCE

Helping Young Adults Make Moral Decisions

MICHAEL SACCO

IN MY 21 years of working at Boston College I have been with countless students in a variety of settings: I have taken BC students to serve at elementary schools in the rural mountains of Jamaica, adjudicated conduct meetings with students who face serious consequences for poor decision making, and attended to young people as they shared their gifts and brokenness on retreats. While the core of my work has focused on designing formational programs that assist students with the integration of the intellectual, social, and spiritual dimensions of their lives, I'm most grateful for the many one-on-one meetings I am privileged to have with students.

I am frequently surprised at the level of honesty and vulnerability that students bring to these conversations, and often find myself discreetly reaching for a small button that activates a white-noise machine strategically placed outside my office door. I discovered the need for such a machine a few years ago, when more and more students started to co-opt otherwise routine conversations into exchanges in which they sought counsel on some life predicament or moral dilemma. Unexpected questions of conscience would emerge, like “Do you think it’s cheating if I take a friend’s prescription ADHD drug to do better on my exam? Is it wrong for me to accept a job offer from a company and then renege later if I get

a better offer? Should I confront my boyfriend about information I got by secretly checking his text messages?”

I activate the white-noise machine to provide a small element of privacy for students who seize upon the opportunity to consult with an older adult who is willing to listen and engage. I am not alone serving in this capacity to our students. Increasingly, my faculty and administrative colleagues also report being called upon to serve as ad hoc confidants or confessors for our students during times of moral uncertainty. They look to older adults in their lives, both on campus and at home, to help them clarify their faith and values, process their guilt, and try to make sense of what it means to be a young and moral person today. While my colleagues and I remain keenly aware of the limitations of our roles in this regard, and, when appropriate, refer students to the proper mental health professional or priest—depending on the issue—the rise in these types of conversations demonstrates the increasing need that our students have for people, programs, and communities that can assist in the formation of their conscience and moral decision making.

“Emerging adults” are members of our society who range in age from 18 through 25. They are part of a generation that has no notion of a world without the Internet, cannot remember a time that the United States was not involved in armed

The fact remains that our students crave mentors who will challenge and help them navigate the often-rocky first few steps into adulthood.

conflict, and, if they identify as Catholic, have grown up in a Church that is likely very different from that of their parents or grandparents.

We who work in formational roles at Catholic colleges and universities have noted for quite some time that many of our students arrive on campus with a lack of foundational catechesis. They have grown up as cultural Catholics, mostly unaware of Catholicism's rich moral and spiritual tradition. They are largely untouched by any significant formative opportunities that encourage the integration of the teachings of the Church and the experiences of their lives. In order fully to understand and integrate faith into their daily lives, young adults need to wrestle with their faith tradition—whatever it may be—and to make it their own. This lack of understanding and personal ownership of one's faith contributes to the moral relativism that permeates many of the difficult questions and life decisions made by our students and young alumni.

Over a decade ago, the sociologist Christian Smith led a research team with the National Study of Youth and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill that examined the religious beliefs of over 3,000 American teenagers. Smith's research shed light on the significant gap that exists between the faithful temperaments of the teenagers he studied compared to the generations that came before. When they reflected in their interviews about "grace," they took it to be a character in a popular television show—not about God's grace. When they discussed "honor," they were almost always talking about taking honors courses or making the honor role at school, very rarely about honoring God with their lives or striving to live as honorable people. When they mentioned being "justified," they almost always meant having a reason for doing something behaviorally questionable, not having their relationship with God made right.

When one juxtaposes some of these results against an authentic Catholic faith that has lent spiritual and moral wisdom to people's lives for some 2,000 years, it is disappointing that, regarding some of the most crucial

questions of values and beliefs, many of those young people studied only shrugged and offered a casual "whatever." Yet despite the generational and cultural forces that hold influence over the conscience development and moral decision making of these emerging young adults, I find myself activating my white-noise machine more and more. The fact remains that our students crave mentors who will challenge and help them navigate the often-rocky first few steps into adulthood.

It is within this context that those of us associated with the Boston College Church in the 21st Century Center present this issue of *C21 Resources*. Our hope is to engage in a conversation about emerging young adults first with themselves and then with those who love and work with them. We want to engage these young people in ways that might inform and form their conscience and their faith, and enhance the ways they make decisions that will define the rest of their lives.

While I do not presume to have the overarching answer to the question of how to help emerging adults make good moral decisions, I have developed some strategies that seem to help. Across the years and after innumerable white-noise conversations, I have become all the more convinced that rather than "letting them do their own thing and find themselves later," caring, questioning, and listening adults can make very positive interventions in the lives of our young people. When we approach them respectfully and through conversation—rather than dictation—they can benefit from our mentoring and wisdom, often hard-won, in ways that are enriching to their lives. We have no better way to love them. ■

MICHAEL SACCO is the executive director for the Center for Student Formation at Boston College and guest editor of this issue of *C21 Resources*.

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Eight Helpful Strategies

1 Get beyond the screen.

Emerging adults are immersed in a world of digital communication. They text, they snap, they post... all in a curated attempt to best represent themselves in order to keep up with their peers. The energy that is dedicated to constructing an online persona that appears happiest, prettiest, craziest, or most flawless is mesmerizing. Like all of us, emerging adults crave social validation and acceptance. However, this new way of communicating discourages young adults

from engaging in authentic, vulnerable, face-to-face conversations that might best welcome the revelations of insecurities, the sharing of awkward questions, or the acknowledgment of mistakes—all things that are crucial in the formation of conscience. Older adults should offer an alternative mode of communication and invest the time to talk with, not just text, the young person in their lives. Car rides, dinner tables, and neighborhood walks are time-tested techniques that usually do the trick.

2 Throw formational elbows.

While the dignity of and respect for a student or young alum should always remain at the forefront of our interactions, conversation partners should not hesitate aggressively to challenge an emerging adult about a decision that they feel is morally objectionable, or sometimes downright stupid. Many young people often live in what I call “bubbles of enablement,” where friends, classmates, roommates (and even the occasional parent) rarely object or speak up

continued on next page

against behaviors or decisions that defy logic and are often immoral—even harmful.

From the research, young adults report that the most significant people in their lives possess two characteristics: they demand excellence, and they demonstrate care for them as persons. Tough love can sometimes make all the difference.

3 Encourage meaningful activities. Many young adults join college or community organizations that provide them with social, physical, or professional nourishment. While there can be value in activities like the campus accounting society or the after-work kickball league, those types of organizations are not likely to have a significant impact on the character or conscience of a young person. Campuses and local communities, however, are full of organizations that can be influential and formative. Students grow most when they are involved with a group that: a) is large enough to have diversity, yet small enough to create community—I like to suggest 16 people or less, b) demands a lot and meets on a consistent basis, c) pushes the students outside their comfort zone, d) encourages authenticity and vulnerability, e) includes a structured space and time for reflection or prayer, and f) has some sort

of wisdom figure (older adult) who has a relationship with the group.

4 Revive reflection. Gone are the distraction-free, introspective moments that used to exist on bus rides, in waiting rooms, or in bed before sleep. These environmental niches that once provided young people with the chance to reflect on their lives, and the moral decisions that affect them, have been decimated by their ability to now simply tweet, scroll, or view. Inviting students into a space for intentional reflection and prayer dramatically increases their self-awareness and formation of their consciences.

5 Listen, don't just wait to talk. Many mentors frequently have to censor themselves, and their egos, when sitting with an emerging adult who is detailing a type of moral dilemma that they might have heard dozens of times before. There can be, after all, some repetition in the sort of issues that young people face. Predicaments involving decisions over sex, choice of major or career, use of marijuana and other drugs, or political views that conflict with one's families are all familiar topics in the world of young adults. Sometimes mentors may catch themselves starting to engage with

advice or questions even before the student is done talking. In such moments one should consciously recalibrate attention to focus on the person in front of them. It is crucial that we make time to truly listen to the student's issues, and how he or she feels about them, regardless of how comfortable and qualified you might feel with the topic. Oftentimes, students need simply to be heard more than they need advice.

6 Clarify the ambiguous. Young people will often be ambiguous when seeking advice on a particular moral decision. They will hide behind words like "hookup" or "turnt" or "funk" when trying to describe their actions or feelings they are wrestling with. Our job as older adults is gently to ask for clarification when appropriate. While healthy boundaries help keep mentors from wading too deep into the personal lives of students, sometimes a clearer explanation of what exactly is on their mind is called for. When appropriately prodded, students find consolation in being open and honest about the specifics of their lives.

7 Harness the power of peers. It is important to remember that the number one influence on an emerging adult is another emerging adult. While conversations with family members or mentors are essential for young people, the power of a positive peer group can provide insights and inform a conscience in ways that older adults cannot. Structured, conversation-based interventions such as peer-led mentoring programs and faith-sharing groups are shown to have significant

influence on the decision making of young people.

8 Model vulnerability and faith. "Character is more effectively caught than taught." Young people look to mentors for wisdom as much as they do for examples of how to live a life that incorporates faith into everyday decision making. Personal stories of faith that exemplify difficult decisions are sometimes the most effective pieces of advice for emerging adults. It is essential

to remember that the focus of the conversation should NOT BE ABOUT THE MENTOR, but rather how a certain life experience might be useful in aiding the young adult. It is important for mentors to exclude the more personal or inappropriate aspects of their story in order to maintain proper boundaries.



Personal stories of faith that exemplify difficult decisions are sometimes the most effective pieces of advice for emerging adults.

SUFFERING, SELFISH, *Slackers?*

MYTHS AND REALITY ABOUT EMERGING ADULTS

JEFFREY JENSEN ARNETT

FOR EMERGING ADULTS, three key myths concern their overall well-being, their “selfishness,” and their alleged unwillingness to “grow up.”

Are emerging adults confused and unhappy?

One claim made frequently about emerging adults is that they are a miserable lot, wracked with anxiety and unhappiness, intimidated to the point of paralysis about their grim prospects for entering the adult world. According to this view, the years from age 18 to 25 are a dark and dreary period of the life course. Emerging adults are typically confused and glum, and overwhelmed by what the world seems to require from them.

In fact, the evidence shows emerging adults overall to be highly contented with themselves and their lives, and remarkably optimistic. In one national survey, 96 percent of 18-29-year-old Americans agreed with the statement “I am very certain that someday I will get to where I want to be in life.” Overall well-being rises steadily from the late teens through the mid-twenties. If the majority of emerging adults are miserable, they certainly are hiding it well.

This is not to portray emerging adulthood as entirely a time of pleasure-filled glory days, free of problems. Like every other period of life, emerging adulthood contains its distinctive developmental challenges and difficulties. As noted, there is validity to the “quarter-life crisis” insight that many emerging adults experience anxiety over the instability and identity challenges of their lives, even as they also celebrate their freedom and the wide range of possibilities before them. Their optimism frequently coexists with an undercurrent of trepidation.

Furthermore, even as emerging adulthood is mostly enjoyable for most people, there are some emerging adults who have particular difficulty handling the requirements of the age period. Emerging adulthood is exceptionally unstructured, the time of life when people are least likely to have their lives structured by social institutions. Emerging adults have mostly left their families of origin and not yet established new families, and they have not yet committed themselves to stable long-term work. Most of them thrive on this freedom, as indicated by their high levels of well-being, but some find it overwhelming. Schulenberg and Zarrett (2006) describe this paradox in detail. For most emerging adults, well-being increases, depressive affect decreases, and a wide variety of problems decrease. However, emerging adulthood is also a period when major depression spikes sharply. Thus, the variance in mental health functioning expands during emerging adulthood, improving for most people even as it declines precipitously for a small proportion.

Even for emerging adults who are contented and optimistic about their lives, it is important to note that their contentment and optimism does not extend to the world around them. On the contrary, emerging adults are largely skeptical and even cynical about political and religious institutions, and they are less civically involved and more disengaged than older generations (Putnam, 2000). They tend to have “high hopes in a grim world” (Arnett, 1997).

Are they selfish? Or self-focused?

Another myth about emerging adults is that they are selfish. In this view, the main reason emerging adults wait until at least their late twenties to enter enduring adult responsibilities is that they prefer to spend their time and

money solely on themselves. They live a self-indulgent, materialistic lifestyle and care little about the world around them. This view is found in the United States, but it is perhaps especially prevalent in countries that are experiencing extremely low birthrates in recent decades, so low that their populations are expected to decline in the decades to come (Douglass, 2005).

Perhaps the criticism of emerging adults as selfish stems in part from a misunderstanding of where they are developmentally. Most American emerging adults leave home by age 19 (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1999), and for the next seven years (on average) they live with neither their family of origin nor a marriage partner. This makes emerging adulthood an exceptionally self-focused time of life, in the sense that it is a time of life when people have the most opportunity to focus on their self-development, including their educational and occupational preparation for adult life. Many emerging adults take advantage of their self-focused freedom to travel, to live somewhere they have always wanted to live, and to obtain experiences they believe they will not have the opportunity to obtain once they enter the commitments that structure adult life (Arnett, 2004).

It is hard to see how this warrants the epithet “selfish.” On the contrary, there is considerable wisdom in emerging adults’ recognition that they are in a period of life that grants them exceptional freedom and that there are many things they can do during their self-focused time of emerging adulthood that will be inaccessible to them later. Nearly all of them plan eventually to make the commitments to others that structure adult life for most people (Arnett, 2004), and three-fourths of them are married and have a child by age 30 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006). Far from being selfish, emerging adults tend to be considerably less egocentric and better at seeing others’ points of view than adolescents are (Arnett, 2004; Labouvie-Vief, 2006). Furthermore, they reject selfishness in themselves and in others.

Are they slackers? Do they refuse to grow up?

There is little doubt that it takes longer to reach full adulthood today than it did in the past. This is verifiable demographically, in terms of traditional transitions such as finishing education, becoming financially independent from parents, getting married, and becoming a parent (Aquilino, 2006; Arnett, 2004). It also seems confirmed subjectively by emerging adults’ reports that during the 18–25 age period most of them feel not like adolescents and not like adults but somewhere in between, on the way to adulthood but not there yet. My proposal of the term emerging adulthood was predicated on the assertion that reaching adulthood takes so long today that it is necessary to recognize that a new period of the life course has developed in between the end of adolescence and the attainment of young adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2004, 2006).

Is it true after all, then, that “they won’t grow up”? Not in the sense that they wish to remain in a childlike state of self-indulgent play. On the contrary, their views reflect a shrewd grasp of the realities of adult life. Are they not right to recognize that adulthood, whatever its rewards, involves constraints and limitations to their lives that emerging adulthood does not have? At least, it seems evident that their ambivalence about adulthood is reasonable, and does not merit contempt or derision.



Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BC Bigs) event with children from Dorchester’s Franklin Field housing project.

The myths of emerging adulthood are built around a kernel of truth but have become exaggerated into gross falsehoods.

Few do, after all, fail to “launch.” By age 30, for better or worse, three-fourths have entered marriage and parenthood, nearly all have entered stable employment, nearly all have become financially independent, and hardly any live with their parents (Arnett, 2004). Thus all the criticism and hand-wringing about their alleged refusal to grow up seems overblown.

The myths of emerging adulthood are built around a kernel of truth but have become exaggerated into gross falsehoods. Emerging adulthood is often a time of instability and identity crises, even if it is rarely a time of despondency or collapse. Emerging adults are often self-focused, but it is inaccurate and unfair to call them selfish. Emerging adults often have mixed feelings about reaching adulthood, not because they wish to remain childish but because they have discerned that becoming an adult has costs as well as benefits. Today these subtleties are often lost when emerging adults are discussed. ■

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Examine Everything with Discernment

CARDINAL CARLO MARIA MARTINI, S. J.

It would be very easy to draw up notebooks of complaints, full of things that are not going very well in our Church. But this would be to adopt an external and depressing vision, not to see with the eyes of faith, which are the eyes of love. Of course, we should not close our eyes to things that are not going well, but we need to understand the overall picture in which the problems to be resolved are situated.

TO TEACH THE faith in this world is nonetheless a challenge. To be prepared one must take to heart the following attitudes:

Do not be surprised by diversity. Do not be frightened by what is different or new, but look upon it as something in which is found a gift from God. Prove that you can listen to things quite different from what we usually think, but without immediately judging the speaker; try to understand what is being said and the basic arguments put forward. Young people are very sensitive about an attitude of nonjudgmental listening. This attitude gives them the courage to say what they really feel and to begin to distinguish what is really true from what only appears true. As St. Paul says, "Examine everything with discernment; keep what is good; keep your distance from every trace of evil" (1 Thes 5:21-22).

Take risks. Faith is the great risk of life. "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but the one who loses his life for my sake will save it" (Mt 16:25). Everything has to be given up for Christ and his Gospel.

Befriend the poor. Put the poor at the center of your life because they are the friends of Jesus who made himself one of them.

Nourish yourself with the Gospel. As Jesus tells us in the discourse on the bread of life: "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (Jn 6:33).

CARDINAL CARLO MARIA MARTINI, S.J., was an Italian Jesuit and cardinal of the Catholic Church. He was archbishop of Milan from 1980 to 2002 and was elevated to the cardinalate in 1983.

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PHOTO CREDIT: Page 10: ©Boston College Office of University Communications, Caitlin Cunningham, St. Joseph's Chapel at Boston College.

To help develop these attitudes, I propose four exercises:

- 1 Lectio divina.** This is a recommendation of John Paul II: "It is especially necessary that the listening to the Word becomes an essential meeting, following the ancient and present-day tradition of *lectio divina*, enabling us to discover in the biblical text the living word that challenges us, directs us, which gives shape to our existence" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, No. 39). "The Word of God nourishes life, prayer and the daily journey, it is the principle of unity of the community in a unity of thought, the inspiration for continuing renewal and for apostolic creativity" (*Setting Out Again from Christ*, 2002, No. 24).
- 2 Self-mastery.** We need to learn anew that the frank opposition to desires is sometimes more joyful than endless concessions to everything that seems desirable but ends in boredom and satiety.
- 3 Silence.** We need to move away from an unhealthy slavery to rumors and endless chattering, from characterless music that only makes noise, and find each day at least one half-hour of silence and a half-day each week to think about ourselves, to reflect and pray for a longer period. That may seem difficult to ask, but when you give an example of the interior peace and tranquillity that result from the exercise, the young take courage and find it to be an unprecedented source of life and joy.
- 4 Humility.** Do not think that it is up to us to solve the great problems of our times. Leave room for the Holy Spirit, who works better than we do and more deeply. Do not wish to stifle the Spirit in others: it is the Spirit who breathes. Rather, be sensitive to its most subtle manifestations, and for that you need silence.

THE LIMITATIONS OF BEING SPIRITUAL

but not religious

RABBI DAVID WOLPE

DO YOU LIKE feeling good without having to act on your feeling? Boosting your self-esteem no matter your competence or behavior? Then I've got the religious program for you.

According to the latest Pew report, almost one in five Americans identify themselves as “spiritual but not religious.” In other words, they have some feeling, some intuition of something greater, but feel allergic to institutions. Yet as we approach Passover and Easter, it's important to remember that it is institutions and not abstract feelings that tie a community together and lead to meaningful change.

All of us can understand institutional disenchantment. Institutions can be slow, plodding, dictatorial; they can both enable and shield wrongdoers. They frustrate our desires by asking us to submit to the will of others.

But institutions are also the only mechanism human beings know to perpetuate ideologies and actions. If books were enough, why have universities? If guns enough, why have a military? If self-governance enough, let's get rid of Washington. The point is that if you want to do something lasting in this world, you will recall the wise words of French Catholic writer Charles Péguy: “Everything begins in mysticism and ends in politics.” Got a vision? Get a blueprint.

Spirituality is an emotion. Religion is an obligation. Spirituality soothes. Religion mobilizes. Spirituality is satisfied with itself. Religion is dissatisfied with the world. Religions create aid organizations; as Nicholas Kristof pointed out in a column in the *New York Times* two years ago, the largest U.S.-based international relief and development organization is not Save the Children or Care, it's World Vision, a Seattle-based Christian group.

Aid organizations involve institutions as well, and bureaucracies, and—yes—committee meetings. There is something profoundly, well, spiritual about a committee meeting. It involves individuals trying together to sort out

priorities, to listen and learn from one another, to make a difference. I have found too often that when people say, “I stay away from the synagogue—too much politics,” what they mean is that they did not get their way. Institutions enable but they also frustrate, as do families and every other organized sector of human life. If you want frictionless, do it alone.

To be spiritual but not religious confines your devotional life to feeling good. If we have learned one thing about human nature, however, it is that people's internal sense of goodness does not always match their behavior. To know whether your actions are good, a window is a more effective tool than a mirror. Ask others. Be part of a community. In short, join. Being religious does not mean you have to agree with all the positions and practices of your own group; I don't even hold with everything done in my own synagogue, and I'm the rabbi. But it does mean testing yourself in the arena of others.

No one expects those without faith to obligate themselves to a religious community. But for one who has an intuition of something greater than ourselves to hold that this is a purely personal truth, that it demands no communal searching and struggle, no organization to realize its potential in this world, straddles the line between narcissistic and solipsistic. If the spirit moves you to goodness, that is wonderful. For too many, though, spirituality is a VIP card allowing them to breeze past all those wretched souls waiting in line or doing the work. Join in; together is harder, but together is better. ■

DAVID J. WOLPE is the Max Webb Senior Rabbi of Sinai Temple.

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To know whether
your actions are
good, a **window**
is a **more**
effective tool
than a mirror.

Faith and Spirituality

AMONG EMERGING ADULTS

IT WAS ONCE common for sociologists to argue that even if young adults “dropped out” of religion in their late teens or early twenties, they would “come back” once they were married and started having children. But it is not clear that “coming back” is the right way to think about the religious trajectories of emerging adults. Larger numbers of them were not religious in the first place or were raised by boomer parents who taught them to think of religious involvement not as an obligation but as a choice. And for all emerging adults, it is unclear whether coming back to participation in organized religion is the automatic choice once one has lived for up to a decade without religious involvement.

The meaning of being religiously unaffiliated changes when the number of the unaffiliated increases. Once a gesture of rebellion for young adults, today’s young adults do not interpret having a secular outlook or being unaffiliated as shocking or as a “statement.” It is one of the taken-for-

granted options. Overall, 20 percent of Americans identify as “spiritual, but not religious,” and about 40 percent identify as both spiritual and religious. Younger adults (those born after 1965) are more likely to self-identify as “spiritual, not religious,” and among emerging adults (those under 30), a language of spirituality is sometimes used as a way to signal a kind of “critical distance” from organized religion.

In a survey of 18- to 23-year-old Americans, sociologist Christian Smith identifies six religious types. Committed Traditionalists embrace a strong religious identity, know religious doctrine, and practice regularly (15 percent). Selective Adherents (30 percent) adopt some of the religious beliefs and practices of a particular religious tradition but reject others. The Spiritually Open (15 percent) are not religiously committed, but are open to the idea of religious faith and practice. The Religiously Indifferent and Religiously Disconnected either do not know much about religion or do not care about it either way (30 percent combined). And the Irreligious (10 percent) are secular in orientation and often critical of religion. Adding together the last three categories, a majority of emerging adults (55 percent) are neither committed to nor knowledgeable about mainstream religious institutions. When they do choose to become involved in organized religion, emerging adults are understood, by some scholars, as the driving force behind the development of new forms of worship and religious organization. Some point to new kinds of congregations, for example, “emergent church” congregations that are consciously postmodern, eclectic, and organized in a nonhierarchical way. Others point to the fact that emerging adults are more comfortable with multiculturalism and value diversity; studies of congregations that resemble a racial/ethnic mosaic find that they are, largely, young congregations. Still others wonder whether the megachurch phenomenon is driven in part by emerging adults wanting to “plug in” to large and multipurpose communities with modern music and aesthetics. But it is too soon to know whether any of these trends constitute a movement toward a new kind of emerging adult spirituality or religious practice.

New Realities

Today’s emerging adults are less involved in organized religion than are older adults:

- They are half as likely to attend church weekly or more (15 percent of 20-year-olds and 20 percent of 30-year-olds attend church weekly or more, compared to about 40 percent of older adults).
- Over 20 percent of emerging adults say they belong to no religious tradition, compared to 14 percent of all adults.
- Thirty-five percent of emerging adults are not members of a church, synagogue, or mosque, compared to 19 percent of all adults.
- Twenty-three percent of emerging adults (ages 18–29) say they are “secular” or “somewhat secular,” compared to 15 percent of those ages 35–64, and only 10 percent of those over 64.

Emerging adults today are also less involved than their parents were:

- In the early 1970s, 31 percent of those under age 45 attended church weekly or more; only 25 percent do today. Fourteen percent said they “never” attend church; 20 percent say that today.
- Comparisons using other measures—daily prayer, the saliency of religion—show similar patterns.

Why faith and spirituality matter

Scholars who study the faith and spirituality of emerging adults sometimes view the reduced religiosity of this generation as a cause for concern. In his book *Souls in Transition*, sociologist Christian Smith speaks to a “contemporary cultural crisis of knowledge and value” that has so shaped the lives of emerging adults that it has left the majority of them thinking of the truth as relative at best or, at worst, unknowable. While he points to a laudable trend of increasing tolerance for diversity, he worries that their culture has failed them, leaving them “lacking in conviction or direction” and in “larger visions of what is true and real and good, in both the private and the public realms.”

Others, however, reach different conclusions. Jeffrey Arnett (see page 8), a developmental psychologist, has studied the spiritual and religious lives of young adults, and he also finds that some emerging adults are deists who are not all that concerned with doctrine and that some are not religious at all. Moreover, all the young adults he studied adopt an individualistic approach to faith and spirituality. But Arnett sees this as a normal developmental feature of young adult life, in which a period of exploration and self-focus is a necessary step on the way to adult autonomy. He cautions researchers to be careful about transferring the stereotypes that were once common regarding adolescents—that they are lazy, selfish, and angst-ridden—to emerging adults. He points to the overall high levels of optimism, well-being, and life satisfaction among emerging adults as evidence that their tolerance and openness do not undermine a sense of identity or worth. He uses their high rates of volunteering as one example of how emerging adults exhibit a moral seriousness and a compassion for others that belie common stereotypes. From Arnett’s perspective, there is no generalized “crisis of values” among emerging adults. Rather, there is a long period of healthy exploration and the

forging of new, generationally appropriate norms regarding relationships, consumption, and the like.

From the point of view of religious leaders, the faith and spirituality of emerging adults matters for a much more practical reason. It is one thing if emerging adults are less involved in mainstream religious institutions because they are “stretching out” the period of adult establishment and plan to affiliate when they are older and have formed their own nuclear family households. It is quite another if the lower religious participation rates of today’s emerging adults signal a long-term trajectory of reduced religious participation. Such a trend would effectively “shrink” mainstream religious institutions. This could be understood as religious decline if the reference point is the 1950s. More accurately, this should be understood as a return to more normal levels of religious involvement, because the religious expansion of the 1950s and its high rates of church attendance and affiliation were the exception, not the rule, in the history of American religion.

While it is important for religious leaders to attend to the cultural changes ushered in by today’s emerging adults, it is also important for religious leaders to recognize the continuities in faith and spirituality between today’s emerging adults and earlier generations. Emerging adults are restless and voluntaristic and critical of traditional authority figures and institutions. When it comes to matters of faith, they are pragmatic therapeutic moralists, and in this, they are quintessentially American. ■

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PHOTO CREDIT: Page 15: Boston College students volunteering in Appalachia during spring break. ©Boston College Office of University Communications



ABOUT once a month I run across a person who radiates an inner light. These people can be in any walk of life. They seem deeply good. They listen well. They make you feel funny and valued. You often catch them looking after other people and as they do so their laugh is musical and their manner is infused with gratitude. They are not thinking about what wonderful work they are doing. They are not thinking about themselves at all.

When I meet such a person it brightens my whole day. But I confess I often have a sadder thought: It occurs to me that I've achieved a decent level of career success, but I have not achieved that. I have not achieved that generosity of spirit, or that depth of character.

A few years ago I realized that I wanted to be a bit more like those people. I realized that if I wanted to do that I was going to have to work harder to save my own soul. I was going to have to have the sort of moral adventures that produce that kind of goodness. I was going to have to be better at balancing my life.

It occurred to me that there were two sets of virtues, the résumé virtues and the eulogy virtues. The résumé virtues are the skills you bring to the marketplace. The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral—whether you were kind, brave, honest, or faithful. Were you capable of deep love?

We all know that the eulogy virtues are more important than the résumé ones. But our culture and our educational systems spend more time teaching the skills and strategies you need for career success than the qualities you need to radiate that sort of inner light. Many of us are clearer on how to build an external career than on how to build inner character.

But if you live for external achievement, years pass and the deepest parts of you go unexplored and unstructured. You lack a moral vocabulary. It is easy to slip into a self-satisfied moral mediocrity. You grade yourself on a forgiving curve. You figure as long as you are not obviously hurting

anybody and people seem to like you, you must be OK. But you live with an unconscious boredom, separated from the deepest meaning of life and the highest moral joys. Gradually, a humiliating gap opens between your actual self and your desired self, between you and those incandescent souls you sometimes meet.

So a few years ago I set out to discover how those deeply good people got that way. I didn't know if I could follow their road to character (I'm a pundit, more or less paid to appear smarter and better than I really am). But I at least wanted to know what the road looked like.

I came to the conclusion that wonderful people are made, not born—that the people I admired had achieved an unfakeable inner virtue, built slowly from specific moral and spiritual accomplishments.

Commencement speakers are always telling young people to follow their passions. Be true to yourself. This is a vision of life that begins with self and ends with self. But people on the road to inner light do not find their vocations by asking, what do I want from life? They ask, what is life asking of me? How can I match my intrinsic talent with one of the world's deep needs?

Their lives often follow a pattern of defeat, recognition, redemption. They have moments of pain and suffering. But they turn those moments into occasions of radical self-understanding—by keeping a journal or making art. As Paul Tillich put it, suffering introduces you to yourself and reminds you that you are not the person you thought you were.

The people on this road see the moments of suffering as pieces of a larger narrative. They are not really living for happiness, as it is conventionally defined. They see life as a moral drama and feel fulfilled only when they are enmeshed in a struggle on behalf of some ideal.

Those are the people we want to be.

MORAL BUCKET LIST

DAVID BROOKS

If we wanted to be gimmicky, we could say these accomplishments amounted to a moral bucket list, the experiences one should have on the way toward the richest possible inner life. Here, quickly, are some of them:



character understand that no person can achieve self-mastery on his or her own. Individual will, reason, and compassion are not strong enough to consistently defeat selfishness, pride, and self-deception. We all need redemptive assistance from outside.

THE HUMILITY SHIFT We live in the culture of the Big Me. The meritocracy wants you to promote yourself. Social media wants you to broadcast a highlight reel of your life. Your parents and teachers were always telling you how wonderful you were.

But all the people I've ever deeply admired are profoundly honest about their own weaknesses. They have identified their core sin, whether it is selfishness, the desperate need for approval, cowardice, hardheartedness, or whatever. They have traced how that core sin leads to the behavior that makes them feel ashamed. They have achieved a profound humility, which has best been defined as an intense self-awareness from a position of other-centeredness.

SELF-DEFEAT External success is achieved through competition with others. But character is built during the confrontation with your own weakness. Dwight Eisenhower, for example, realized early on that his core sin was his temper. He developed a moderate, cheerful exterior because he knew he needed to project optimism and confidence to lead. He did silly things to tame his anger. He took the names of the people he hated, wrote them down on slips of paper, and tore them up and threw them in the garbage. Over a lifetime of self-confrontation, he developed a mature temperament. He made himself strong in his weakest places.

THE DEPENDENCY LEAP Many people give away the book *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* as a graduation gift. This book suggests that life is an autonomous journey. We master certain skills and experience adventures and certain challenges on our way to individual success. This individualist worldview suggests that character is this little iron figure of willpower inside. But people on the road to

ENERGIZING LOVE Dorothy Day led a disorganized life when she was young: drinking, carousing, a suicide attempt or two, following her desires, unable to find direction. But the birth of her daughter changed her. She wrote of that birth, "If I had written the greatest book, composed the greatest symphony, painted the most beautiful painting or carved the most exquisite figure I could not have felt the more exalted creator than I did when they placed my child in my arms."

Dorothy made unshakable commitments in all directions. She became a Catholic, started a radical newspaper, opened settlement houses for the poor, and lived among the poor, embracing shared poverty as a way to build community, to not only do good, but be good. This gift of love overcame, sometimes, the natural self-centeredness all of us feel.

THE CALL WITHIN THE CALL We all go into professions for many reasons: money, status, security. But some people have experiences that turn a career into a calling. These experiences quiet the self. All that matters is living up to the standard of excellence inherent in their craft.

THE CONSCIENCE LEAP In most lives there's a moment when people strip away all the branding and status symbols, all the prestige that goes with having gone to a certain school or been born into a certain family. They leap out beyond the utilitarian logic and crash through the barriers of their fears. ■

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GROWING IN PRODIGAL LOVE

THOMAS GROOME

FEW STORIES ARE told more often than the one called “the prodigal son.” But there were two young adults in that story, a father who was *prodigal* in his love, and a mother who likely encouraged the dad to watch with hope for their lost son to return—and supervised the feast. So it involves a whole family and could have been told of two daughters as well. To rethink it as a family story (perhaps read Luke 15:11-32) can help us understand the development of conscience.

When we are kids, our conscience is simply to follow the directives of our parents. This initial stage functions more like a superego than a conscience. It is based on authority,

often motivated by the hope of reward or fear of punishment. Our choosing is not based on our own discerning what is right or wrong but on what authorities dictate. Let’s call this *Stage One Conscience*.

As we come into adolescence and young adulthood, we have a natural tendency to begin to listen to our own heads and hearts in order to discern and choose between right and wrong. Now we can make somewhat autonomous (peers often replace parents) decisions. Let’s call this *Stage Two Conscience*—when we first have some moral perspective that is our own.

Mediating between our interior guide and exterior guidelines moves us toward maturity of conscience

As *Stage Two* emerges, we often embrace an either/or posture. The “either” is that we become fundamentalist about the ethic of our parents or original authority, embracing it as absolute. While this may sound like *Stage One* again, *Stage Two* makes somewhat autonomous choices. The “or” stance is to reject entirely all those values that we encountered in our parents, original culture, or community of faith. Neither of these stances yet reflects a mature conscience—*Stage Three*.

In some ways, *Stage Three Conscience* puts the best of *Stage One* and *Two* together. As such, it draws on both the teachings, norms, and traditions of some moral authority outside the self (like one’s family or faith community) but also listens to “the voice within...where we are alone with our God” (a Catholic definition of conscience). So a mature conscience takes account of both our own interior reflection and sense of right and wrong, *and* likewise consults some tradition of ethical norms and spiritual wisdom. Mediating between our interior guide and exterior guidelines moves us toward maturity of conscience, with a sense of responsibility to ourselves, others, and the common good.

In this light, let us look again at the behavior of those two young adults and their parents. Clearly the younger one—the “prodigal”—was beginning to make up his own mind about things when he rejected the moral values of his parents, demanded half of the family property, and set off for “a far country” (Luke 15:13). The amazing thing is that the parents consented (perhaps seeing it as emerging adulthood) and off he went. Meanwhile, the eldest son stayed at home. Let us grant that this also was by choice; he knew he could take off like the prodigal and still inherit half the property. Instead he chose to “always do” (v 29) what his parents commanded. Both youths were at *Stage Two Conscience*—albeit choosing either/or.

The Prodigal’s wayward life out on the town brings him into a kind of slavery. He fell so far as to eat with pigs, as low as a Jewish lad could sink. However, this helps him to “come to himself” (v 17). So he makes a better choice, not based on his own desires alone but on what he remembers of his parents’ values. Out of his own interiority he decides, “I will go home” (v18). He surely knew that this would require him to leave behind the high life of the far country and to reengage the moral norms of his family.

The Prodigal presumes that his parents will return him to his *Stage One* moral status—to simply obey what “they” say. He even has a speech ready suggesting as much, that he be treated as no more than an obedient hired hand (v 19). Imagine his amazement, then, when the Father rushes out to embrace and welcome home their wayward son, even before his apology—what prodigal love!

But far beyond fitting him back into blind obedience—like a servant—the parents promote the Prodigal within the

family—this is what the robe and sandals reflect (v 22). They treat him as if all grown up now. Then, to welcome him home fully and celebrate his new moral status, the parents “kill the fatted calf” (v 23) and a great party ensues.

The Prodigal was welcomed back into the family to act as an adult member—faithful to both his own interiority and to the moral norms of his people. We can presume that he continued to make up his own mind about things, and yet honored the values that marked his parents’ home.

All of us have access to such ethical norms, and especially through our family and faith traditions. Many reflect thousands of years of hard-won wisdom, for example, the Ten Commandments, Jesus’ Beatitudes, or his greatest commandment—to love God and neighbor as oneself. Because such norms reflect great wisdom, we can choose to live them out of conviction rather than coercion, precisely because they are their own reward. It is far more life giving to choose love over hate, honesty over cheating, and so on.

What, then, of the older son? Well, he too had his moment of rebellion. He protests the party and reminds his parents that he had *chosen* to stay home rather than running away to a sinful life like the Prodigal. He reminds that he had always obeyed them and complains “you have never even given me a young goat to celebrate with my friends” (v 29).

The father sympathizes with the elder son’s feelings, even promising “all that is mine is yours” (the youngest had already received his half). Yet the father holds his ground and insists, “we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother...was lost and has been found” (v 32). Note that the parents’ love was unconditional for both sons, which is precisely why Jesus told the story; even if in a “far country,” we can always come home to God’s love.

What is the eldest son to do—follow his own sentiments alone (*Stage Two*) or blend them in with the family’s values of mercy and compassion (*Stage Three*)? If he got over his peeve, went to the party, and truly celebrated his brother’s return and his parents’ compassion, then he, too, would have embraced a *Stage Three Conscience*. What do *you* think? Did he go to the party? Will you? ■

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CARING *For* EMERGING ADULTS



STEPHENIE LIEVENSE

BUGS ARE A big deal at our house, and this time of year my boys and I love to observe butterflies in each of their life stages. From caterpillar to chrysalis to adult butterfly, we marvel at the magnificence and beauty of the transformation.

As a researcher of emerging adulthood (ages 18 to 29), I can't help but connect the radical change taking place within the bug house in my laundry room to the equally radical change experienced by families as adolescents emerge into adulthood.

“Emerging adulthood” has been recognized as a separate developmental life stage for more than a decade. The economic shift from manufacturing jobs to careers in information, technology, and human services has prompted a greater number of emerging adults to spend more time and energy on secondary education. The Clark University Poll of Emerging Adults is the first comprehensive national survey of the lives of emerging adults. Researchers interviewed 1,029 18-29-year-olds about their experiences. Many emerging adults have more choices than ever before. They may find themselves continually searching for the absolute “perfect fit” when it comes to career, marriage, or parenthood. These elements stretch out the time between adolescence and adulthood, creating an in-between stage that can last from seven to 10 years, usually from age 18 to somewhere between ages 25 and 29. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, a leading researcher in the field, coined the term *emerging adulthood* and proposes five features that distinguish it from either adolescence or adulthood:

- ① **It is the age of identity exploration:** Emerging adults may frequently try on different identity possibilities as reflected in shifting interests, hobbies, styles, career goals, romantic partners, and even religion.
- ② **It is the age of instability:** Unbound by parental rules and expectations, but not yet committed to a career, spouse, or family of their own, emerging adults often feel as though nothing in their life is stable.
- ③ **It is the self-focused age:** The developmental objective to reach full adulthood (defined by emerging adults as financial independence and self-reliance) results in an inward focus as emerging adults attempt to make sense of who they are and where they fit in the world.
- ④ **It is the age of feeling in-between:** Emerging adults, while “adult” in physicality and often in lifestyle, are not likely to experience the traditional markers of adulthood like marriage, children, and a stable career until they are well into their twenties or thirties. They are “adult” in many aspects of their lives, but unable to define themselves as “husband/wife,” “father/mother,” or by a specific career. The most socially recognized relational epithets they hold are “student” or “son/daughter,” keeping them in between adolescence and adult status.
- ⑤ **It is the age of possibilities.** Most of the defining categories of the emerging adult's life are undecided, and therefore still rich with possibility. Will he get married or not? Will she stay in the same town or move away? When? Who? Where? Emerging adults face countless possibilities.

Tips for staying connected:

- 1 Refrain from “jiggling the habitat.”** Let your emerging adult come to you when he or she is ready for advice or counsel. Allowing time and space for young adults to sort out their choices will serve you both.
- 2 Be curious about your emerging adult,** but avoid interfering. When they share details about their upcoming choices and commitments, help them to discover their wants and needs, not yours. One way to do this is to ask three types of open-ended questions, nuanced to the particular context:

“What elements of that job offer excite you?”

“What are your concerns about possibly moving away?”

“How do you feel about this transition?”

The objective is to open up space for the young adult to explore their ideas and become more confident in the decisions they are choosing for themselves.

So what does this mean for parents and mentors? How can we best support emerging adults and stay connected? Let’s look at common big questions about emerging adulthood and their implications for parents and mentors who want to stay in healthy relationship with the newly winged.

Question: What is happening in there?

Emerging adults are emerging from the physical changes of adolescence, finding themselves in a fully formed adult body, and often living away from home for the first time. This is a season of major identity development, particularly in the areas of work and love. Arnett asserts that identity exploration in these areas now takes place not in adolescence as in decades past, but during emerging adulthood

So what kind of work are emerging adults looking for? The most recent research shows that a large majority (86 percent) of emerging adults believe it is important to them to have a career that does some good in the world, and that it is more important to *enjoy* their job than to make a lot of money (79 percent). Moving from one job to another, going back to school, or “taking a year off” are some of the ways that emerging adults develop their professional identities.

As emerging adults wrestle with what to do with their lives professionally, they are also stretching their wings romantically. Of today’s emerging adults, nearly 80 percent report being involved in some type of romantic relationship. But what are they looking for? Consistent with their search for work, emerging adults are taking time

to find a partner they *really want*. Between 1980 and 2009, the U.S. median age at first marriage increased from 24.7 to 28.1 among men and from 22.0 to 25.9 among women. Eighty-six percent of emerging adults believe that their marriage will “last a lifetime,” and they are taking time to choose the right partner.

Strategy: Be patient

Parents of emerging adults can feel frustrated or impatient with the slow progress of their young adult’s development. It can be tempting to “jiggle the habitat” with unsolicited advice about career directions or love interests. Parents might feel that by urging or encouraging their emerging adult to choose a direction, they are supporting their child.

In fact, just the opposite is true. In a study, researchers concluded that the more emerging adults felt controlled by their parents, the more difficulties they experienced in establishing committed choices. Even more discouraging, they were less likely to identify with or feel certain about choices that they *did* make. Many parents feel compelled to *increase* their use of psychological control when their children explore different life alternatives in a broad fashion, further hindering their child’s ability to make a commitment. ■

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Original article entitled “The Proper Care and Feeding of Emerging Adults” by Stephenie Lievens. ©2013. Reprinted with permission of the Fuller Youth Institute.

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Characters Who Have Shaped MY CHARACTER

THE CONVERSATION SHIFTED from the topic of our lives after Boston College to our thoughts on finding a vocation.

“Is there a difference between a job and a vocation?” one student asked.

“How do I know if something truly gives me joy?” replied another. Sitting in a circle at the Connors Family Retreat Center in Dover, Massachusetts, I recently led a group of six seniors and an administrator from the University in a discussion centered on vocational discernment. Each of us voiced our hopes, fears, and anxieties about the future as participants on Halftime, a weekend retreat offered through the Center for Student Formation. Throughout the weekend, we tackled questions ranging from “Who are the conversation partners in my life?” to “What does the world need me to be?” As a group consisting of seniors increasingly worried about the future, it was rewarding to take a step back from our tumultuous lives at BC and reflect on what lies ahead after graduation.

I’ve found that authentic conversations like this have pushed me to challenge my views on the world. As a 21-year-

old student, there are many issues I’m facing in my life: uncertainty about the future, managing relationships with friends, family, and significant others, balancing classes and extracurricular activities, and dealing with issues of social justice, to name a few. But I’ve learned that the authentic relationships I’ve formed with family, friends, roommates, and mentors have shaped my personal character and moral conscience. These characters in my life have made me who I am today, and how I go about making future decisions.

I grew up in a suburb outside Minneapolis, Minnesota, and my childhood and family life revolved around one person: my brother. My brother Sam was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder when he was three years old. His first two years of development seemed completely normal. Before autism overtook him, he would constantly smile, giggle, and repeat words like “mommy” and “daddy” over and over again. But in the coming weeks, Sam gradually lost all of his vocabulary, and before my parents knew it, their first-born son seemed to be gone.

Ever since I was born, I have been immersed in autism. My brother today cannot speak, go to the bathroom, or



take care of himself. Sam needs to be supervised 24 hours a day, and his behavior is often very challenging. Growing up, I was forced to deal with his disability on a daily basis, frequently helping my parents take care of someone who could not take care of himself. Needless to say, it was not easy. There were countless times when Sam would become violent and uncontrollably hit himself, often to the point where he was bleeding or would have a seizure. He was a nightmare outside of the house, regularly letting out deafening shrieks and crying on a daily basis. He would often break down in public, drawing sharp glances and whispers from strangers. My parents and I would try everything we could to calm him down during these difficult times, but we often failed.

Whenever I see a child with autism, I know that family has a difficult situation. It certainly is not easy caring for an autistic child. However, helping take care of my brother has been an irreplaceable part of my life and has shaped who I am today. I have become more flexible as I've dealt with Sam's odd behaviors. I am also more empathetic and compassionate as I've seen how countless doctors, therapists, teachers, and social workers continue to help Sam and my family on a daily basis.

Coming to BC, my brother has had a significant influence on my decision-making process and how I

choose which people to let in my life. The love shown by my parents and caretakers of my brother is something I inherently seek in my relationships with others.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle references three different levels of friendship. The first, or lowest level of friendship, is a friendship based on utility. This is a friendship where two people derive some mutual benefit from each other. He views this friendship to be shallow, or easily dissolved. The second level is a friendship based on pleasure. Aristotle describes how both of these kinds of friendship are short-lived because one's needs and pleasures are bound to change over time. But the third and highest level of friendship he describes is based on goodness. This friendship is rare, and takes time to develop. It is based on character and virtue. A "friend of the good," as Aristotle describes, sees the inherent goodness in you and strives to push you to become a better person.

I seek friends of the good through a number of different outlets at BC. Through various retreats like Halftime, Kairos, and 48 Hours, as well as programs like Freshmen League, I have found friends, mentors, and conversation partners who consistently challenge me to be the best version of myself. Through personal reflection and genuine conversations with these influencers in my life, I have formed a basis of what it means

to be a man of character. I consistently seek out people who possess the inherent goodness that Aristotle describes. I look to them as I contemplate meaningful decisions in my life and how I should act.

Over the past month, the types of conversations that take place on retreats like Halftime have extended into my dorm room. Recently, my roommates and I have been discussing our fears about finding jobs after graduation, while balancing financial pressures and pursuing our interests. My roommates come from vastly different backgrounds, faiths, and beliefs—but we all see the goodness in each other and push one another to be the most authentic versions of ourselves.

PROVERBS 27:17 SAYS,
"AS IRON SHARPENS IRON, SO ONE
PERSON SHARPENS ANOTHER."

Through my experience growing up with an autistic brother and seeking authentic relationships at BC, I've discovered that friends of the good have formulated my conscience and how I want to act in the future. ■

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Who has shaped
your character?



NOURISHING THE CREATIVELY MALADJUSTEDS

EMILY JENDZEJEC



In the fall of 2010 I attended a retreat for postcollege young adults at the Agape Community in western Massachusetts. Many of the participants had recently finished a year of service with the Jesuits, Franciscans, or L'Arche. We quickly connected over missing the faith communities we had been a part of within our service programs and within our prior experiences with college campus ministries. These communities had provided support and encouragement for us as we navigated how to live integrated lives based on the values of justice, simple living, and spirituality. The obvious answer to our common nostalgia was: find a local church! But many of us had parish-hopped and found we were in an awkward in-between stage of being too old for college ministry yet not ready to join the Sunday morning family crowd without spouses or children of our own. There was a general sense of feeling disheartened and spiritually lost.

The second morning of the retreat, one of the participants shared a Martin Luther King Jr. speech that changed the spirit of the group. The excerpt of the speech ended with the following:

There are certain things in our nation and in the world which I am proud to be maladjusted and which I hope all men of goodwill will be maladjusted until the good societies realize. I say very honestly that I never intend to become adjusted to segregation. I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. In other words...I'm about convinced now that there is need for a new organization in our world: The International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment.

The concept of creative maladjustment resonated. The quote inspired us to want to support our shared attempts to creatively maladjust as we began our careers or dove back into graduate school. We began to meet monthly for prayer, dinner, and themed conversation. Themes were broadly based on how to live an integrated life and ranged from specifics like how to eat sustainably in a city on a simple budget to greater justice issues like how do we speak out against mass incarceration.

Our numbers grew as friends invited friends, and soon our soups and homemade breads were feeding dozens of Creatively Maladjusteds each month seeking to gather, in a faith context, to discuss topics of social justice. We expanded to form weekly small groups and put on biyearly retreats at Agape. One small group even decided to live together for a year, modeling their home on the values of simplicity, community, social justice, and spirituality. But alas, after three years, people started to move away, transition out of graduate school or into graduate school, get married, have children, and the group fizzled.

The Creatively Maladjusted group wasn't sustainable because it wasn't rooted in a physical faith community, nor in a Eucharistic community. Parishes have an incredible opportunity to provide physical and sustainable spaces for young adults like the Creatively Maladjusteds to come together to navigate the urgent matters on their hearts while

The need for parish-based young adult ministries as spaces to cultivate moral development and religious belonging has never been greater.

also being invited to engage in intergenerational Eucharistic communities. Creating young adult ministry programs should be a priority for any parish that is committed to evangelization.

The need for parish-based young adult ministries as spaces to cultivate moral development and religious belonging has never been greater. As the average age for marriage continues to rise, there is an increasing number within an expanding age group of young adults who fit in the life stage of emerging adulthood that is often explained as inhabiting the “in-between” of postcollege and premarriage and family life. Parishes can actively welcome emerging adults by committing to help them navigate the particular complexities of their lives.

The question remains, but how? In 2013, I was hired by the Paulist Center Catholic Community in Boston to build up its young adult ministry. With the experience of the Creatively Maladjusted in mind, I began by first focusing on cultivating belonging, by inviting young adults to help create the space they desired. Within three years the ministry program has become a sustainable and vibrant community that is not just an insular group within a parish, but actively engaged in the larger Paulist Center Community. The following steps are the basic community organizing tactics that helped grow the ministry. These steps will hopefully be a helpful launching pad for parishes interested in creating young adult ministries of their own.

Start by listening and cultivating individual



relationships. You must reach out and meet with young adults in your community. If your answer is **THERE ARE NONE!**, I challenge you to look more closely. While they may not be signing up to lector or even attending Mass regularly, young adults are

present in your communities. You can usually find them more readily in the service oriented work of the parishes (think soup kitchens and volunteer opportunities) or engaging in peripheral ways online like with your Facebook page. (Side note—if your parish does not have an online presence, then you must start one now, it is not an optional part of parish ministry anymore.)

The second step is to build a ministry team of young



adults that in itself is a small faith community that creates an opportunity for moral formation and leadership development. A team of four or five individuals who are committed to helping the ministry grow will inevitably be more sustainable than

hosting a few dinners trying to draw bigger numbers from the start.



The third step is to encourage the ministry team to invite young adults to events focused on meaningful conversations that go beyond just meet and greets or pub nights. While a pub night is a great initial event, it is

futile to rely on social programming no matter how much free beer and pizza you offer if there is not something substantial behind it. There are plenty of social secular meet-up groups out there. What faith communities have to offer is something deeper and there is a hunger for that. Creating opportunities to dialogue in community about relevant questions that young adults are struggling with in isolation is what will get young adults to stay and engage. Having free pizza and beer to go along with these conversations won't hurt.



The fourth step is to focus on the ultimate goal: cultivating the Kingdom of God on earth. The motivation to start a young adult ministry should not be simply to get more non-grey-haired people into the pews. It should be to provide meaningful opportunities for

young adults to discern what it means to live as a 20-/30-year-old Christian in the 21st century, so that individuals are invited into deeper relationship with their authentic selves, the Christian community and with Jesus Christ. Then if done well, the pews will perhaps begin to be inhabited by the Creatively Maladjusted, not just seeking but finding home again in the Catholic Church. ■

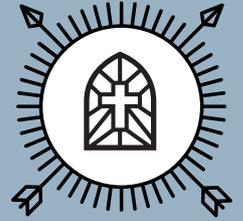
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If your parish does not have an online presence, then you must start one now, it is not an optional part of parish ministry anymore.

HOW

Do I Make Good Decisions of Conscience? Four Steps



Each day we need to stop and decide what is the best thing to do in many differing circumstances. On some days we even need to make momentous decisions that involve choosing between serious right and wrong, moral and immoral. This is where our conscience comes into play.

Catholicism has a rich tradition that can guide toward good decisions of conscience for people of any faith. It insists that we consult both our own reasoning and then some moral law higher than ourselves. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church advises, we need to listen to both our own “reason and to the divine law” (CCC #1786). Putting these two sources of moral discernment together is precisely the work of conscience.

TO MAKE A DECISION of conscience, especially a major one, we do well to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Then, a good decision can emerge from the following four steps:

- 1 First, look at the circumstances.** As the Catechism of the Catholic Church notes, to make a good decision, we need to “interpret the data of experience” (#1788). Such interpreting requires us to recognize the moral choice involved, the context, the possible options, and to look to the likely consequences of any decision—for ourselves and others.
- 2 Second, look at the moral norms offered by Christian faith** (or by whatever is your spiritual tradition) as relevant to the issue. Surely a time-tested tradition of moral teaching that is 3,500 years old (reaching back to the Ten Commandments given to Moses) has lasting wisdom for people’s lives in every generation.

- 3 Look to the promptings of your own heart.** Vatican II advised: “Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. There we are alone with God, whose voice echoes in our depths” (*Church in Modern World*, #16). So, we must listen to the depths of our heart to make a good decision.
- 4 Integrate both the norms of divine law and the prompting of your own heart.** With good reasoning, integrate these two sources, decide the best way to proceed, and then act upon the decision. In other words, we have both the freedom and responsibility to follow our conscience. Nothing less would honor “the dignity of the human person” (CCC #1780). ■

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LET GO

WITH



MEGAN KRAKOWIAK

MY CATHOLIC SCHOOL education formed me with relatively few points of contention, up until eighth-grade confirmation classes because I couldn't quite wrap my brain around transubstantiation, let alone claim to *BELIEVE* it as a 14-year-old. Of the sacrament itself I mostly remember having oil smeared on my forehead and hoping it wouldn't worsen my acne.

Unfortunately, somewhere in my education and process of collecting the sacraments (not unlike Pokemon, or Pogs) I internalized the idea that I wasn't good enough—but maybe if I said all the right things I could be struck with just the right amount of magic to make me holy. To be fair, no one ever explicitly said to me, “Megan, you're not good enough.” If anything, the list of “good job,” “excellent!” and “well done's!” added up to a type of crippling quest to maintain a spotless existence. Somehow, it became the task of a lifetime to hold on tight enough and maintain some illusion of understanding, holiness, and perfection.

Somewhere between leaving Liverpool Township, Ohio, with a deer hauler full of Tupperware containers and moving into Medeiros C, the quest for perfection started to morph into something very much more important. I was given the tools to ask “What about me?” and I did so while sitting—often crying—in the St. Joe's chapel under Gonzaga every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday after classes ended at 3 p.m. It wasn't just that I couldn't be perfect, it was that I realized I really truly deeply **DID NOT CARE** to continue to try. I didn't want to fight to hold onto the illusion anymore. For the first time in my life I was completely overwhelmed with a desire to just let go.

My sophomore year I participated in the Jamaica Summer Service Program. On a humid Wednesday afternoon in April in a FedEx store in Newton, I applied for my first passport. That summer, I saw for the first time the way we (humans) live in true poverty. I sat on an itchy red couch with my BC peers, looked at the world in a new way with them, experienced exhaustion and vulnerability, all of our imperfections on full display. And it was beautiful. And my soul stretched out in a way she never had before.

If I claim to believe that I must only say the word and Jesus will **HEAL** me, then if they say the word in Kingston, Jamaica, will He heal them, too? And if so, what's the word? And why haven't they said it yet? And if they have said it, why is He waiting so long? These questions agitated me into a senior honors thesis, a year living in the Caribbean, and a master's degree in theology. And the truth I have come to know is this: God has no interest in perfection. Being Catholic has nothing to do with being perfect.

Of all the challenging, formational, and at times, seemingly impossible tasks of being a graduate student

of theology, one that stands out in my mind was of a prompt from Fr. Richard Lennan, which asked of all of us, “Why bother?” What is the point of “the Church” and why should anyone care to be a person of faith?

As a result of that assignment, I now can say I understand the role of my faith in my life like this: If God’s mission is to bring all of creation back to God’s self, then an understanding of the community of believers as those who live lives witnessing to this truth is a call for an active engagement in the world here and now. To be a member of the Church is to be a follower of Jesus, attempting to live, for the first time in history, as a disciple faced with the current challenges of the modern world.

This attempting to live as a believer and “modern woman” comes with its fair share of challenges. At times I find myself spending time I don’t have explaining my choices and decisions to myself, my peers, or the guy at the DMV who scolded me while demanding I register to vote in my new state (as opposed to maintaining my absentee status in the swing state of my birth).

When questions of conscience become particularly dicey, I tap into my greatest advantage: a place of deep, meaningful rootedness in my faith as a personal relationship. Catholic guilt is a real thing, and there are mornings I wake up feeling like I’ve done something wrong before I even get out of bed. But when God had to finally break into human reality, put on flesh, and walk, and talk, and form friendships just as we do, he was called Jesus. And when Jesus walked and talked and formed friendships in the fullest knowledge of the Love that is God, people followed him. People trusted him, loved him, and tried to live as he did. My conscience, on good days, is my relationship with the friend I have come to know as the Son of God.

Being a person of faith at times becomes overwhelming—especially when there is a new Latin-titled document released on behalf of the Church and I have to find a translation to read and interpret into my everyday life. It can feel like receiving a performance review. It is in times of greatest struggle and distress that I must use all of my gifts and talents to discern what it means to be a woman attempting to live, for the first time in history, as a follower of Christ *here* and *now*.

It is at these times I find it most beneficial to circle up my most trusted conversation partners, roll up our sleeves, and hold each other in thoughtful discussion. If I believe I am made in the image and likeness of God, it is not only in my capacity for rational thought, but in my relationality, my co-creatorship in the mission, and in my *loving* that I am asked to help bring about the fullness of life on earth. My conscience is my call to magnanimity in making decisions not just for others, but for myself, too.

My faith is my anchor.

It is my **friendship**
with a **God** who will
never let me down.

My faith allows for
me to **just let go**.

The mission of a community of believers called to witness to the good news of God’s love is to be a living, breathing, screaming invitation to believe in something better, deeper, and more. It is to recognize the Truth in Jesus Christ and understand his life as my call to active participation in God’s working in the world. It is to play a role in bringing about the processes that lead to right relationship. This mission unabashedly is to demand better, speak truth to power,

and work for change. It is to laugh along the way, recognizing we are all a mess, and to hug people—because sometimes people need hugs. It is to climb mountains, run barefoot in the grass, and jump into the ocean because life is a gift. It is to enjoy what I have, recognize my own privilege, and open my eyes to the reality of the Other—never pretending I don’t play a role in the global economy. It is to be a really, really good friend. It is to love like today is all we have. It is to look for the good, follow the signs, and NEVER apologize for believing that somewhere—and everywhere—amidst all of the muck, is beauty. It is to surround myself with others who believe it, too—because sometimes we need help remembering.

Today, in my life away from Boston College, the School of Theology and Ministry, roommates, late-night study sessions in the library, and a world full of people engaging the same “why bother?” questions on a daily basis, my spirituality looks like Googling “parks near me” and driving to the sound of Siri’s voice. It means recognizing my exhaustion and desire to burrow into a pile of blankets and tea, but dragging myself in multiple layers for warmth to the waterfront to walk, inviting Him to join me. It means making plans with friends around Sunday Mass, and figuring out how to coordinate our participation in “the Catholic Super Bowl” that is Holy Week. My faith to me, today, is the subtle reminder that I don’t have to be perfect, no one ever asked me to be. My faith is the call to try, to *really truly try* to engage the Truth of the Gospels in the muck of the million-snapchat-per-hour millennial lifestyle. My faith is my anchor. It is my friendship with a God who will never let me down. My faith allows for me to *just let go*. ■

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STEPHANIE QUADE

RETURNING TO FORGIVENESS

“THE VERDICT OF JUDGEMENT OF CONSCIENCE REMAINS A PLEDGE OF HOPE AND MERCY. IN ATTESTING TO THE FAULT COMMITTED, IT CALLS TO MIND THE FORGIVENESS THAT MUST BE ASKED, THE GOOD THAT MUST STILL BE PRACTICED, AND THE VIRTUE THAT MUST BE CONSTANTLY CULTIVATED.”

1781 CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ON CONSCIENCE

IN TERRY GILLIAM’S 1991 film *The Fisher King*, Jeff Bridges plays Jack, a narcissistic shock-jock. While auditioning for a television show, Jack is given a tagline that becomes his mantra throughout the rest of the film, simply “Forgive me.” At various times, Jack yells, whispers, cries—giving various readings to the imperative, trying it on with accents, with attitude, but he has trouble seeing it as more than a line reading.

As dean of students, I often find myself being asked for forgiveness, in cases where it seems as out of place as it does to the character in the movie. I encounter students and their families after there has been an alleged violation of university policy. In these at times tense meetings, the student is frequently grappling with many emotions: embarrassment, regret, sadness, anger. It is usually after these conversations that the question of forgiveness is introduced. In fact, it is typically after a challenging conduct decision has been made that a student or his or her parents reminds me that

Marquette is a Catholic school, built on the responsibilities of conscience and then on forgiveness and mercy.

I do not mean to suggest that these calls for forgiveness lack genuineness—when facing a significant disciplinary outcome that may have long-lasting consequences, they are understandable. But from my vantage point, forgiveness is not really what’s at stake. Let me explain: Like most colleges and universities, our conduct system is grounded in our being an educational institution, meaning in any given situation, our goal is to maximize the learning from the situation, in an attempt to help guide future behavior. So, forgiveness doesn’t really have a place in the equation.

Or does it? And, how does our Catholic identity inform this work?

Most of the students who enroll in our schools do not have a lot of experience of “being in trouble.” They worked diligently in high school and kept on the straight and narrow in order to enroll in a good college. Starting college,

often away from home, students find themselves facing all kinds of decisions that can test their mettle and moral development, many involving underage use of alcohol or illegal drugs. And, while peer pressure is something most students will have dealt with in high school, now they are in a new environment, testing boundaries and striving for independence away from family members and other support systems.

More often than not, when a new student is documented for a violation of the code of conduct, the student accepts responsibility almost immediately. A little experimentation, a hearing with a minimal outcome, and we never see the student in the conduct system again. Lesson learned. A minor moral developmental task accomplished.

But, in order to uphold our educational imperative, we cannot just let the student “check the box.” It’s not just pay a fine and move on: We want to engage the student’s conscience, to help the student consider his or her decisions in a larger context. We are in the business of looking for teachable moments—of capitalizing on dissonance to help a student grow as a moral agent. If a student holds his or her hand up right away to say “I did it,” the administrator conducting the hearing looks for other openings in a dialogue with the student in order to maximize learning. In our hearings, this is done through a “developmental conversation.”

In a very simple sense, one way the Catholic identity of our schools is brought to life is through these conversations, which help students realize that the focal point of a hearing is not their poor decision, but themselves—their adjustment to college, their interests and aspirations, and developing their own conscience. One of the key goals of these encounters is that the student experiences being treated as a whole person, not defined by a poor decision.

The goal is never to shame the student for making a poor decision, but instead to try to understand what led to that decision: How do you see yourself in terms of the broader community? Tell me a little about the friends you’ve made since you’ve started at Marquette: What is your role in your friend group? Often, there is tremendous dissonance between the leaders students see themselves as and the followers they seem to become in group situations. Typically, when a conduct administrator hears the truth in the situation, expressed often as vulnerability or even surprise from the student, that little kernel becomes the basis for the outcome assigned following a hearing. These outcomes include a host of possibilities, such as follow-up conversations, reflection papers, involvement in campus activities—anything to try to reinforce the learning from the hearing.

Once we decide that the hearing is not about reiterating the rules (or at least not exclusively about the rules), we can

use that setting to not just address the situation at hand, but to engage students in fundamental questions about what is most important to them as they discern this in the depths of their own hearts—their conscience. At the outset of many hearings, the students will simply try to accept responsibility and get it over with. They will apologize without really understanding what’s at stake. In many ways, they do not see their behavior as consequential, and they do not see that it is connected to who they are. To be present to students who have come to terms with having disappointed their parents, who realize their capacity to hurt another person, who recognize how they may have failed to stand up for another person is a remarkably privileged opportunity. These settings are absolute crucible moments for the students involved, and for the administrators who are guiding them. And, in my experience, the more significant the case at hand, the more essential that the student be treated with care, so that even in cases that may result in the separation of the student from the campus, that care for the student defines the encounter.

One of the key goals of these encounters is that the student experiences being treated as a whole person, not defined by a poor decision.

To return to the question of forgiveness. My work with conduct is a constant reminder of how hard it is to forgive ourselves. We return and return to the places of our regret—continually trying to square particular actions with our understanding of ourselves. And this is precisely why these conduct meetings are ideal settings to help students begin to develop a sense of themselves as adults—as people who make mistakes, as people who understand that others make mistakes, and yet need not be determined by their mistakes. As their inner light of conscience can alert them to their mistakes, it can also bring them to a change of heart, to new places. They are places of reflection, growth, and change. And sometimes, they are places of great learning and forgiveness. ■

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FAMILY AND FAITH FOR YOUNG LATINAS



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“

...PURITY...EVERY TIME THAT I pray to Mary I say: *Que tu luz brille* [May your light shine] in my values and morals. I may not be pure completely, but I still have morals and values learned at home...” These are some of the words that Rosario quietly and reflectively shared when she was asked to share her understanding of Mary. Working as a Catholic campus minister in South Florida, I have had the opportunity to reach out to a diverse student body. Moreover, my social location as a Latina Catholic, who is also a mother, wife, and a recent doctoral graduate, has expanded my lenses to listen well to the everyday life of the young people with whom I work.

Similar to Rosario, a 20-year-old college student from Argentina, I have encountered a generation of Latino/a students who in addition to overcoming the transitions

to young adulthood and all the seeking for meaning and purpose in life that comes with their generation, have to rethink, reflect, and live between two worlds. First there is the world that they have at home, constructed from the culture that their parents or grandparents brought with them from Latin America, and then there is the context of the U.S. culture into which they were born or raised, grew up, and now where they attend university—most often the first generation of their family to do so.

In my doctoral dissertation research with such young people, I have used participatory action research (PAR) in order to explore the faith and religious identity of college-age Latinas (women only) who were born or raised in the United States of immigrant parents from Latin America and who self-identify as Catholics, regardless of the level of their participation in a local church or ministry.

This theological and sociological approach provided a deeper understanding of the lives of young adult Latinas as well as their faithful Christian and resilient families that immigrated to the United States. Results from this research suggest that *la familia* (the family) functions as *Iglesia domestica* (domestic Church) and is the primary locus in which young adult Latinas encounter and participate as active members in their Catholic faith. By way of their moral faith formation within their families, memory and the heart play a critical role. Memory—interpreted as remembering or keeping in one’s heart—represents the favorite family narratives and stories that they heard from childhood. It includes the dangerous memories, such as the original immigration journey, the hard labor that parents and grandparents had to take on here, and the struggle in order to stay in this country. However, their family stories also highlight the redemptive memories of hope that sustained them, such as giving birth, breaking bread and sharing meals, praying together, being able to get a new job, or being the first generation of their family to graduate from college. These memories reaffirm and help to sustain resilient and faithful lives with a communal call and purpose. They also form young Latinas in a Christian ethic, with a keen sense of the call to social justice for all.

Primarily, Latinas reported affiliation with Catholicism because they first learned of God’s love for them and the love of their family and local community through the home. My research results suggest that Latinas’ faith and moral formation are learned from their families, particularly from their mothers though also from *las abuelas* (the grandmothers); these are the primary educators of Latinas’ faith. Also, through their families, Latinas continue to reimagine the symbols, rituals, teachings, and values of Catholic faith with the particularities of the church and the language of their countries of origin. Daily faith is constructed in light of the ordinary expressions of faith such *las abuelas*, or mothers’ daily prayers, blessings and *consejos* (teachings), approval of new friendships, encouragement to go to college, and so on. Expressions of faith, in most cases associated with Jesus, Mary, and the saints, represent *acompañamiento de Dios* (God’s accompaniment) that were found first in sacred places within the home. To quote another student from my research, Rosa:

When there is nothing else, when we do not have money or are sick, we always know that there is still someone who watches us all...my mom has a little altar in her room, so every time we feel that there is something wrong, we feel alone...she will always light a candle and just pray...we just pray there...it is like our little church inside home...it makes us feel better and we feel that we are not alone.

Rosa’s description of the little church inside her home suggests that the memories of family faith expressions come to mind for Latinas in times of sorrow, need, or decision making. Sacred places highlighted by Latinas are *altarcitos*

(home altars), *repisas* (shelves), walls with holy water holders, and prayer rooms. Other sacred symbols are the *medallitas* (medals) they carry with them around their necks, hands, or in their backpacks that remind them of their values as faithful Catholic women. Moreover, Spanish is no longer simply a linguistic tool. It represents the language of the heart from which they still enter into communion with God and their people.

It is also clear from the research that young adult Latinas receive their moral formation within the family; as they grow up, they develop a sense of responsibility and duty from their parents. Results from my research with young adult Latinas who attend local universities and are, the first generation of their family to do so, attest that obtaining a college degree originates from the efforts of their families. It is primarily from their families that they receive the values of responsibility, sacrifice, steadfastness, discipline, and selflessness that enable them to make it through college. And their success in school is not built in isolation, but is shaped by their experience of the ongoing support and encouragement of their families. Their success in school represents and reflects the fruit of family prayer, hard labor, economic efforts to support them, and *la lucha* (the struggle) to survive in this country. To quote another Latina from my research:

My mom es una de esas madres que hace todo por sus hijos [she is one of those mothers who does everything for her children] ... muere por sus hijos, moriría por sus hijos [she dies to herself for her children and she would die for her children]... and I think it is time to repay her and make her proud of me, because of all the effort she has put for me.

The story of Rosario, la Merced, Rosa de Lima, and of other young Latinas unveiled throughout my research, reflect that *la familia* (family) becomes the domestic church where their voice and identity bloom in *convivencia* (to live with the lived experiences of the other). *La vida en comunidad* (the life in community) is a critical characteristic of faithful Christian Latinas. It is clear that nurturing the faith and morals of young Latino/as is primarily done in the family. Clearly, the Church must support, nurture, engage, and actively encourage *las familias* to be the primary sources of sowing and growing the seeds of faith in our young adults today. So it has always been; may the Church support this to continue. ■

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This article was inspired by the author’s doctoral dissertation: “Understanding Contemporary Latino/a Theology through the Lenses of College-age Latina Catholics in Their 20’s: A New Marianismo?”

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CONSCIENCE WIDE AWAKE

KERRY CRONIN

MAYBE IT WAS just a case of moral panic. Perhaps I was just being old-fashioned, or just plain old. But when a wonderful, very bright, former student of mine told me in a chance meeting on campus that he had formulated what he considered to be a reasonable and responsible sexual ethic and he wanted to run it by me, I was both interested and apprehensive. I admit that my heart sank a bit when he laid it out: It's when you sleep with someone a second time that feelings will come into play and need to be considered. Thus, at that point a person would presumably have feelings about what has happened and should think about those feelings. Moreover, he shouldn't be surprised—indeed, perhaps he should expect—that at least one person in the scenario will have feelings, or a feeling, or the beginnings of a feeling about the other that call for attention. So those feelings need to be considered. By the second time.

In 2013, sociologist Martin Monto's analysis of college student surveys regarding sexual behavior and attitudes led him to a diagnosis: a severe case of moral panic. This diagnosis is not of an ailment so much as a sociological phenomenon whereby we perceive the activities of a group (in this case, college students or young adults) to be an overwhelming threat to the moral and social fabric of a

culture. In some cases, this perception leads us to a unique form of moral hysteria or panic. On the contrary, I would say I was simply sad and concerned for the young man walking and talking with me.

Each summer I finalize my course syllabus for the fall. That syllabus serves to outline the objectives of the course, to distribute course materials reasonably so as to get my students somewhere close to those objectives, and, if that syllabus is really good, to create an arc of questions and themes that will draw students in, ignite the questions, and inspire their own pursuit of understanding the world and themselves more deeply. That last bit, the part about understanding themselves, is usually something we often include in the list of course objectives since we'd be hard-pressed to measure the outcome. In the current educational climate we feel largely ambivalent about education's role in the moral formation of young adults. Though it's still embedded in most university mission statements, the character and integrity of our students remains on many campuses a relic of a patriarchal past. So for the most part, the moral lives of our students follow a "second syllabus," which runs parallel to the ones we use in our classes.

The objectives of the second syllabus are formed long before students arrive in our classrooms and reflect many developmental demands: figure out how to fit in and belong, plug into the community, find space to safely unload a range of personal and emotional baggage, gain habits and skills of “adulating,” and find and develop gifts and talents. The texts of this syllabus are a strange brew of our culture’s romantic-expressivist scripts mixed with one’s own family values and a dash of campus culture: pursue your dreams—as long as the money follows; if you can figure out how to “be yourself,” whatever that might mean, everything will work out as it should; while love and romance are a goal in the long run, it’s important to calculate your currency in the sexual marketplace; learn the hyper-stressing and

Encountering another as another involves finding out what questions, concerns, needs, loves, and values they are living and to make those, at least in part, my own.

hyper-unwinding rhythms of the daytime and nighttime campus cultures; create a moral code that is at least practical, if not truly moral.

We hope that this second syllabus is impacted by the first, official syllabi that we hand out at the start of the semester, though we’re hesitant to ask about it. We like to leave it to Student Affairs, Campus Ministry, Mission and Ministry. The reality is that moral growth is among the areas of student development that sees the most expansion in college, particularly among students who attend four-year, primarily residential colleges, but many of us in American higher education seem to have decided to sit this one out. Educational research has long shown that participation in college, especially in the first year, influences moral growth profoundly, even when controlling for a host of other factors including a wide array of demographics, cognitive abilities, and cognitive motivation. In short, something is apparently happening in college that sets the condition for significant growth in moral sensitivity and moral reasoning. And it’s happening despite our best efforts to ignore it.

I find that students are often surprised when I tell them that they brought a moral philosophy with them when they arrived that first day at Boston College. They tend to think they haven’t developed a moral framework yet and are planning to find one when they begin “adulging”

at some vague point in the future. The moral codes they bring are typically pragmatic and ruggedly personal, marked with various cultural signposts and capitalist bottom lines. Years ago a good and noble friend told me that he learned what a moral life looked and felt like from reading *The Lord of the Rings*, since even at a young age he could tell that his family’s notions of integrity, honesty, and courage were pretty lame. What is a young adult to do when her culture gives her such a stripped-down moral sensibility that it’s hard to even construct a scaffold around it to shore it up? How do you build a robust moral conscience when no one around you ever talks about having one or using it? Over the years, I have found that, like my friend, my students have a deep desire for the companionship of good questions and conversations as they wonder about the sufficiency of their own moral philosophies. They feel unsure that they have what they need to become a brave and true friend, to be able to make a promise and keep it, to become a good partner and parent, to do the right thing when it is called for, even in the face of sacrifice. I think it was for this reason that my former student walked with me along College Road, telling me of his new ethical theory. It was also why we met up again several weeks later to talk about it and why several of his roommates came along to get in on the conversation.

Pope Francis might agree that it won’t be the incessant buzzing of an alarm clock or the ringtone of my phone under my pillow that awakens my conscience, but instead it is an encounter with another person. It was for this reason that, as his Province’s formation director, the young Jesuit Jorge Begoglio required that seminarians work in the barrios as they studied theology, to be taught not only by their professors but by the needs of the community. Encounter keeps us grounded and reminds us that the concrete, lived experiences of God’s people are the home base from which we travel as missionaries into the world of theoretical understanding. But it’s not easy to encounter another person as another person. As Rev. Michael Himes notes, most of us experience other people simply as players acting out the bit parts and side roles in the stories of our own lives. Encountering another as another involves finding out what questions, concerns, needs, loves, and values they are living and to make those, at least in part, my own. When the central question that you are asking about yourself and the world becomes a question for me, I am awakened in such a way that what is “outside myself” may deeply move what is “inside myself.” This is surely one of the most important processes of developing moral conscience. I would like to give Pope Francis the last word here. For, he reminds us that the worst thing for a human being is not failure or rejection, but the worst thing is to make ourselves incapable of being moved by the plight of another, the beauty or joy of another, the pain of another, the desire for another. When we become incapable of that, yeah, I’m panicked. ■

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STEPS

in Repentance to Avail of God's Mercy



All of us sin, and as St. Augustine admitted—speaking from personal experience—we often “sin boldly.” St. Paul lamented that from “the sin that dwells within...the evil I do not want is what I do” (Romans 7:19).

Yet, in Christian faith, no sin, even the worst imaginable, is unforgiveable. Jesus himself assured us, “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners” (Mark 2:17). No matter our sin, we can be confident in what Jesus’ mother Mary well named as God’s “everlasting mercy” (check out Luke 1:54-55).

FORGIVENESS, HOWEVER, expects us to recognize and admit our sins, to repent of them and to try to avoid committing them again. That first step—recognizing our sins—may be the most difficult for people living in this postmodern age. We can readily admit to having issues for counseling but not sins for repenting.

Yet there is nothing more redemptive and renewing than to recognize and repent of our sins. Recall Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (read it in Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee tries to justify himself (so this is not new to our age), whereas the Publican admits his sins and says, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Give a guess which of them won God’s mercy.

True repentance, whether to a person we have wronged or to God, requires four simple but essential steps. Speaking personally, I must:

- a) admit that I did wrong—no excuses
- b) say that I am sorry—regretting the harm done
- c) ask forgiveness—as a favor rather than being entitled
- d) resolve to try my best not to hurt or sin again.

Such a genuine apology makes it very difficult for a person we have wronged to refuse forgiveness. For sure, God’s mercy is guaranteed upon such repentance. Catholics are so confident in God’s mercy that they have made repentance into a sacrament called Reconciliation. It celebrates and assures us that God forgives our sins when we genuinely repent. What a gift! ■

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C21 SPRING EVENTS

Leadership through Conscience, Service, and Relationships

January 31, 2017 | Magazine Launch

Presenter: Michael Sacco, Director of the Center for Student Formation
Location/Time: Murray Function Room, Yawkey Center, 7:00 p.m.

Sponsors: The C21 Center, The Center for Student Formation, BC Theology Department

Homeboy Industries and the Ennobling Formation of Conscience: Being Reached by the Widow, Orphan and Stranger

February 7, 2017 | Lecture

Presenter: Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J., Founder and Director of Homeboy Industries
Location/Time: Robsham Theater, 5:00 p.m.

Sponsor: The C21 Center

La cuaresma como camino de integración espiritual y humano

February 25, 2017 | Workshop

Presenter: Felix Palazzi, Visiting Associate Professor, School of Theology & Ministry
Location/Time: Lannon Chapel, St. Ignatius Church, 10:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

Sponsor: The C21 Center

How to Truly Love Yourself

March 15, 2017 | Lecture

Presenter: Fr. Ron Rolheiser, O.M.I., President of the Oblate School of Theology
Location/Time: McGuinn Hall, Room 121, 5:30 p.m.

Sponsor: The C21 Center

Opening the Horizons of Priesthood and Ministry

March 16, 2017 | Lecture

Presenter: Rev. Eamonn Conway, Professor & Head of Theology & Religious Studies at Mary Immaculate College

Location/Time: STM, Simboli Hall, Room 100, 5:30 p.m.

Sponsor: The C21 Center

Conscience: The Challenge of Pope Francis

March 22, 2017 | Lecture

Presenter: Simone Campbell, S.S.S., Executive Director of NETWORK

Location/Time: St. Ignatius, Upper Church, 7:00 p.m.

Sponsors: Campus Ministry and The C21 Center

Sentido histórico y teológico de la Pasión de Jesús

March 25, 2017 | Workshop

Presenter: Rafael Luciani, Visiting Associate Professor, School of Theology & Ministry

Location/Time: Lannon Chapel, St. Ignatius Church, 10:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

Sponsor: The C21 Center

Race in the American Catholic Imagination

March 27, 2017 | Episcopal Visitor

Presenter: Bishop George Murry, S.J., Bishop of the Diocese of Youngstown
Location/Time: Gasson Hall 100, 5:00 p.m.

Sponsor: The C21 Center

WOMEN'S VOICES SERIES

Conscience and the Role of Women Religious into the Future

March 30, 2017 | Lecture

Presenter: Sr. Teresa Maya, C.C.V.I., President-Elect of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Location/Time: Cadigan Center, Brighton Campus, 6:00 p.m.

Sponsors: Women's Resource Center, STM Women's Group, Boston College Women's Council, and The C21 Center

Women's Voices Fall 2017

November 9, 2017 | Lecture

Presenter: Sr. Dianna Ortiz, O.S.U., Editor of Education for Justice, and Founder of the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition

Location & Time: The Heights Room, Corcoran Commons, 5:30 p.m.

Webcast videos will be available within two weeks following most events on bc.edu/c21

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With a view to our next issue of *C21 Resources* on *Living Faith*, we invite responses to the following question: **How does the faith based education and environment experienced at Boston College shape your life today and sustain you in times of need?**

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