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## Where are the Young Adults on our Parish Websites?

by SR. SUSAN WOLF, SND on JUNE 24, 2014

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There have been a number of articles written on the “graying of the Church in America.” We only need to look around many Catholic Churches to see it for ourselves. That’s not to say that we do not have young families and young adults in the Church, but it is saying that they are not there in

the same proportion as they used to be.

There are several reasons for that. The two most obvious are that people are living longer and so we have more seniors in Church than we used to have. And secondly, many young adults do not have the same feeling about attending Church and belonging to a parish as possibly their grandparents did. I am skipping over their parents, because some of them are also absent.

All young adults are not irreligious or without values. But they have grown up in a different world—a world where institutions, including the Church, have less pull in their lives.

What concerns me is not only that many baptized catholic young adults (singles, couples, and young parents) are absent from our churches, but that we may not be supporting and appreciating the ones who are there enough. I am interested in learning if we can use our parish websites and social media platforms to include young adults more intentionally. Can we be sure to include images of members of their generation on our websites and can we provide content that adds value to their everyday lives? FYI: relevant, positive faith-enriching content will be

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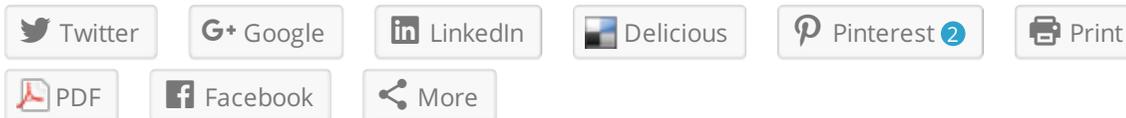
If you are wondering whether young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 are visiting your website, you can find out through Google Analytics. If you have a parish Facebook page, you can get this data through the Insights section.

According to the Insights for a parish that I am working with, 30% of its Facebook likes (420+) are from followers between the ages of 18 and 34. According to Google Analytics 61% of the approximately 1000 unique visitors to the parish website in the last month are between 18 and 34. I think these are significant numbers, but I would like to know how they compare with other parishes. If you have access to this data for your website and/or Facebook page, please share it with us.

Large numbers of young adults know and use technology (smartphones, tablets, and computers). If they visit our websites using any of those devices will they find attractive, engaging sites that are easy to navigate and that give them the information they are seeking? Will they find a warm welcome? Will they see images of happy people their own age engaged in religious and Church related activities? Will they learn something about their faith that will make their life better or richer?

Please share your thoughts on this topic. We have a lot to learn and we can benefit from sharing our experiences. Thank you.

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**Rita Leitch** June 24, 2014 at 8:04 am

Great idea, very interesting!

**aneesah mcnamee** June 24, 2014 at 9:38 am

same goes for websites for religious congregations.



**Sr. Susan Wolf, SND** June 25, 2014 at 9:27 am

Aneesah,

You make a good point. Thanks.



**July 1, 2014 at 3:04 pm**

This whole issue is simply another part of the failure of our church leadership in today's modern world. From the bishops down to the parish priests, I don't see any real efforts to being the church into the 21st century. There are many articles published and much lip service given to making the church relevant in today's society, but I don't see anyone doing anything in my corner of the world.

Church leadership makes fine speeches, but talk without action is meaningless

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**Jim McGovern** July 30, 2014 at 1:35 am

Would like to know what are the criteria used in judging a web site. We have received contradictory judgments of our site design. Many clergy seem unwilling to promote sites built by lay people. Fear of errors? Many parish sites don't list ANY sites other than USCCB or EWTN. God bless your work. Jim

**Sr. Susan Wolf, SND** July 30, 2014 at 5:36 am



Jim, The question you raise about criteria is probably one of the main reasons that those in Church leadership do not link to any sites other than "official" sites like the USCCB and the Vatican. Determining the criteria, reviewing sites and then monitoring them to be sure that they maintain their quality could be a full-time job for many people and even then the critics would be looking for opportunities to condemn the Church for linking to sites they don't like or agree with. There would be way too many headaches. Who wouldn't want to be linked to the official Church sites? The flood of requests would be too many to process. (Believe me, I have worked in national Catholic organizations and everyone thinks that the book, the program, the website they have created should be listed or promoted by them.) So the response is "We only link to ...." As for trusting the laity, just look around, there are thousands of laity in responsible Church positions, so I don't think the generalization that clergy don't trust laity is true or fair.

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