

# National Dialogue: Listening with a Purpose

By Angel Barrera



## Purpose

In this session, participants contribute their insights and perspectives about their faith and the Church. The purpose of this conversation, like many others taking place within the National Dialogue, is to more deeply understand the lived experience of youth and young adults so that as a Church, we can transform our ministry practice to more effectively encounter and accompany the young church.

**Component:** Evangelization

## Session at a Glance

7:00 PM	Welcome and Introductions
7:10 PM	Community Builder
7:25 PM	Opening Prayer Service
7:40 PM	Listening Session
8:15 PM	Closing Prayer
8:25 PM	Announcements and Refreshments

## Extend the Session

- Invite participants to continue the dialogue with parish leadership and staff about how the parish community might be able to respond to situations, opportunities, and challenges named during the session.

## Taking It Home: Connecting with Families

- Consider hosting a National Dialogue conversation with parents and families of youth and young adults. Questions and other resources can be found online here (<https://www.nationaldialogue.info/qr-step-two-parents-and-families>).
- Invite families to pray for the ongoing dialogue and conversation between the Church and young people.

## Materials Needed

- <https://www.nationaldialogue.info/s/National-Dialogue-Conversation-Facilitator-Guide.pdf>
- Conversation Recording Form, one copy per adult leader
  - <https://www.nationaldialogue.info/s/Conversation-Recording-Guide.pdf>

- <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59514503414fb53b58d679fb/t/5b6dc17a4ae23782be200006/1533919612143/Conversation+Recording+Guide.pdf>
- Consider completing the responses in the online form here (<https://www.nationaldialogue.info/quick-reference>).
- Nametags and a pen
- **Recording Form** or online form
- Copy of **Resource 1**, one per adult leader
- Copies of **Resource 2, Taboo Cards**, one for every two participants; cut into cards
- Copy of **Resource 3**, one per adult leader

### Prepare in Advance

1. Prepare for this session by becoming familiar with the session outline. Recognize the important dynamic of facilitating a discussion rather than making a presentation. This session hinges on the important dynamic of the facilitator as an effective and empathic listener. Consider the recent words of Pope Francis:

*The Synod recognized that the members of the Church do not always take the approach of Jesus. Rather than listening to young people attentively, “all too often, there is a tendency to provide prepackaged answers and ready-made solutions, without allowing their real questions to emerge and facing the challenges they pose”. Yet once the Church sets aside narrow preconceptions and listens carefully to the young, this empathy enriches her, for “it allows young people to make their own contribution to the community, helping it to appreciate new sensitivities and to consider new questions”.*

*-Pope Francis, Christus Vivit #65*

2. Review the available video and digital resources for the facilitator online (<https://www.nationaldialogue.info/comprehensive-reference>).
3. Set up chairs to create a welcome environment for listening. Adjust temperature and lighting as needed. Relax and be ready to welcome participants.
4. Use **Resource 3** as a reference for the questions you can expect in the online survey.
5. Follow up on any pastoral issues that may have surfaced in your conversation. For example, a young person may have shared challenging experiences or may have indicated in interest or a need to know more about the faith. Connect with ministry leaders in your setting to plan for ways to follow up with participants in a way that matches their needs but also respects the confidentiality of their sharing.
6. Complete this section immediately after the conversation.
  - What did you hear that the Church needs to know to understand youth?
  - From what you heard, what are youth looking for from the Church?
  - What is helping youth grow in faith?

- What are the challenges or obstacles that youth encounter in their relationship with the Church?
- What are the challenges or obstacles that youth encounter with their faith in God?

To engage youth, what does the church need to:

- Grow and enhance (current efforts or strategies that are working)
- Eliminate (efforts, programs, strategies, or initiatives that need to stop)
- Create (new strategies that could be developed)

After reflecting on these questions, use your reflections and the questions in **Resource 3** to share what you heard with the National Dialogue through an online survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nationaldialoguebasicquestions> You should also reflect on the implications of the conversation for yourself and for the ministry you are part of. This may be part of a meeting where all the conversations that took place in one setting can be shared. Similarly, you can share the results with your diocese, who may use online tools, and/or gather all the facilitators for sharing results.

After sharing the results and reflecting on the ministry, take some time to prayerfully consider the implications of the conversation for yourself. Heart to heart sharing is something that changes the way we look at things. Consider how this conversation has impacted you:

- How does this change or grow the way I feel about youth?
- What do I feel called to do or to do differently in the way I interact?
- What can I do in my ministry to respond to youth?
- What am I called to pray about?

## Session Outline

### Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

Invite the participants to gather together and introduce themselves. Begin with a brief welcome and introduction:

Welcome! Thank you for coming out and participating in tonight's session. Tonight's session is geared to have us really listen to young people like you. It's part of a larger initiative called the National Dialogue which is a tool to engage young people in conversation. The Church is listening and would love to hear your voice, so that - together - we can discover what the future holds. Before we begin, let's play a game.

### Community Builder: Taboo (15 minutes)

Invite each participant to form pairs and directly across from one another. Distribute a pack of cards cut from to **Resource 2, Taboo Cards** to one person in each pair. When

you begin the game, the person with the pack of cards must describe the keyword listed at the top of the card without using keyword or the other words listed below. The other person calls out as they guess what the keyword on the card is. The first pair to correctly identify the keywords wins!

Allow for few minutes to play. After you determine a winner, continue by saying:

Great job everyone! That was fun. This game makes it clear that it can sometimes be difficult to communicate! Even though your partners were listening to every word that was being said, they struggled to guess the right word. And even though the words were easy, it was difficult to describe what it was without using some other important words.

Let's pray.

### **Opening Prayer (15 minutes)**

*Gather*

Song suggestions about listening

Play the song, *Christ in Me Arise* by Trevor Thomson.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXcYgTtO5qg>

In *Christus Vivit*, a message to young people, Pope Francis writes:

"Drawing together creates the conditions for the Church to become a place of dialogue and a witness to life-giving fraternity". We need to make more room for the voices of young people to be heard: "listening makes possible an exchange of gifts in a context of empathy... At the same time, it sets the conditions for a preaching of the Gospel that can touch the heart truly, decisively and fruitfully". (*Christus Vivit* 38)

Let us ask God to bless our time this evening and make this encounter one of "dialogue and witness."

Beginning with the Sign of the Cross, say:

Loving God, thank you for this opportunity to gather tonight.  
Bless this our time together and this conversation!  
We know that words are powerful and help us share ourselves with one another.  
We pray for the grace to be open and honest in our sharing so that we might be able to grow as a community.  
Be with us as we listen to each other and strive to know you better.  
We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Listen*

Invite a student to proclaim the reading from Luke 24:13-17a.

This reading comes immediately after the Resurrection of Jesus and account when Jesus meets two disciples on their way to Emmaus. The story continues with the two disciples sharing their sadness with Jesus. We pray that this evening be an opportunity be for a faith-filled conversation. One that involves sincere listening and heart to heart dialogue. May we follow Jesus' example of listening and accompanying one another.

*Respond*

Prayer Leader:

Let us continue our prayer.

Pope Francis reminds all young people that "Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!" (Christus Vivit #1). Let us bring our prayers before our loving God that we can arise and encounter the living Christ: ***Christ, help me arise and be alive!***

For us gathered here tonight, that we can be courageous and heroic in response to the challenges and opportunities before us, we pray: ***Christ, help me arise and be alive!***

For the young people of the Church, that they may be welcomed and received into our community, we pray: ***Christ, help me arise and be alive!***

For the leaders of the Church, that they may be enriched and rejuvenated by the how the young people present Christ alive and young: ***Christ, help me arise and be alive!***

*Send Forth*

Loving God,  
Open us to the beauty of dialogue  
that allows us to hear with our hearts  
and speak with our souls.  
May our conversations ignite your Spirit within us  
to go out into the world as missionary disciples.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Listening Session (40 minutes)**

Play the YouTube video, *National Dialogue by NFCYM*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXeo1CVZwW4>

This conversation is part of the National Dialogue which is a response in the United States to Pope Francis' call for the Church to listen to youth and young adults. The purpose of this conversation is to more deeply understand your experience of that as a church, we can transform our ministry practice to more effectively encounter and accompany you and your peers. You each have different experiences and views about faith and involvement with the Church. You each have a unique perspective to offer.

I will be taking some notes during the conversation. (Name) will be serving as a listener to record some key ideas. Nothing you say in this conversation will be identified with you personally. All information will be presented as summarized ideas. Your identity will not be known and nothing you share will be identified with you or shared outside this group unless you share something that indicates that you might harm yourself or someone else. When we are done with all the conversations, we will be reviewing the conversations for our ministry and sharing key insights with the organizers of the National Dialogue.

We really want each person here to participate, to feel that they are heard, and to be respected. These ideas will help our conversation:

- One person will speak at a time. Avoid interrupting or talking over each other.
- Each person will speak for themselves. Speak from your experience. Try not to interpret what someone else has shared.
- Respect each person's sharing and avoid judging other's responses. You can share perspectives and experiences that are different from what you've heard, but this is not a debate.

Begin the conversation with the group. Remember that the conversation questions from **Resource 1** are a guide.

You can use the questions provided or rephrase them in your own words as long as you keep the intent of the question the same. You can use this sequence of questions or skip around. You can go deeper into topics that seem important to understanding the experience of your participants. Your own skill and the "conversational path" your group interview takes will determine the nature of conversation. The participants may take you places you did not anticipate and that are very relevant to the dialogue. Be open to this!

*Note to Leader:* After you record key ideas and responses that are shared, be sure submit then via the online survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nationaldialoguebasicquestions>).

When you are finished asking questions, thank the participants for their sharing. Remind them of the importance of their input and your commitment to share these ideas. Invite them to upcoming ministry opportunities in your community.

### **Closing Prayer (5 minutes)**

Prayer in gratitude for this opportunity to listen and serve in ministry.

Let us pray.

Lord God,  
If the young and old journey together,  
we can be firmly rooted in the present,  
and from here, revisit the past and look to the future.

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Help us revisit the past in order to learn from history  
and heal old wounds that at times still trouble us.

Help us to look to the future in order to nourish our enthusiasm,  
cause dreams to emerge,  
awaken prophecies and enable hope to blossom.

Grant that together we can learn from one another,  
warm hearts, inspire minds with the light of the Gospel,  
and lend new strength to our hands.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Adapted from Christus Vivit, #199

**Announcements and Refreshments** (5 minutes)

Make any needed announcements. Thank the young people for their participation and invite everyone to enjoy refreshments.

<p>This session was prepared by Angel Barrera, Coordinator of Youth Ministry Services at the Center for Ministry Development. More information and resources about the National Dialogue are available online at <a href="https://www.nationaldialogue.info/">https://www.nationaldialogue.info/</a>.</p>
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## Resource 1

# Questions for Actively Engaged Youth

1. Please describe a time when your Catholic faith made a difference in your life.
  - a. In what ways do you grow in your Catholic faith?
  - b. How would you describe your relationship with Jesus?
2. What three words would you use to describe your experience of the Catholic Church?
3. Why do you remain Catholic or active in your Catholic faith?
  - a. What do you enjoy about being Catholic?
  - b. What don't you like about being Catholic?
  - c. Why do you think some people decide to stop being Catholic?
4. What can the Church do to support you in your life and your Catholic faith?
  - a. Are there things the Church should stop doing?
  - b. In what ways could the Church help you listen to and answer God's call for your important life choices?



## Taboo Cards

<p><b>SUMMER</b> Hot Season Sun Water</p>	<p><b>PHONE</b> Technology Call Charge Screen</p>
<p><b>SCHOOL</b> Class Students Teachers Learn</p>	<p><b>CAR</b> Wheels Drive Vehicle Transportation</p>
<p><b>FAMILY</b> Mom Dad Brother Sister Relatives</p>	<p><b>CHURCH</b> Mass Priest Parish Sunday</p>
<p><b>FAITH</b> God Belief Church Religious Spiritual</p>	<p><b>LOVE</b> Heart Boyfriend/Girlfriend Husband/Wife</p>

### Resource 3

#### Sharing the Content of the Conversation National Dialogue Conversation - Active/Engaged Youth

Complete this section immediately after the conversation.

- What did you hear that the Church needs to know to understand youth?
- From what you heard, what are youth looking for from the Church?
- What is helping youth grow in faith?
- What are the challenges or obstacles that youth encounter in their relationship with the Church?
- What are the challenges or obstacles that youth encounter with their faith in God?

To engage youth, what does the church need to:

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After reflecting on these questions, use your reflections and the questions in **Resource 3** to share what you heard with the National Dialogue through an online survey:

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You should also reflect on the implications of the conversation for yourself and for the ministry you are part of. This may be part of a meeting where all the conversations that took place in one setting can be shared. Similarly, you can share the results with your diocese, who may use online tools, and/or gather all the facilitators for sharing results. After sharing the results and reflecting on the ministry, take some time to prayerfully consider the implications of the conversation for yourself. Heart to heart sharing is something that changes the way we look at things. Consider how this conversation has impacted you:

- How does this change or grow the way I feel about youth?
- What do I feel called to do or to do differently in the way I interact?
- What can I do in my ministry to respond to youth?
- What am I called to pray about?

Please note, if you did not discuss a particular question during your conversation, please just skip it and reply to the questions that were included in your conversation.

1. Of the "Basic Questions" below that could have been a part of your conversations, please select the questions below that were discussed and shared about the most.

- Please describe a time when your Catholic faith made a difference in your life.
- In what ways do you grow in your Catholic faith?

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- How would you describe your relationship with Jesus?
- What three words would you use to describe your experience of the Catholic Church?
- Why do you remain Catholic or active in your Catholic faith?
- What do you enjoy about being Catholic?
- What don't you like about being Catholic?
- Why do you think some people decide to stop being Catholic?
- What can the Church do to support you in your life and your Catholic faith?
- Are there things the Church should stop doing?
- In what ways could the Church help you listen to and answer God's call for your important life choices?

Any other questions asked or topics that were discussed? Please share those here:

2. Please share where the Catholic faith made a difference in the lives of your group participants.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3. In what ways do youth grow in their Catholic faith?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

4. How did youth describe their relationship with Jesus?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

5. What words did youth use to describe their experience with the Catholic Church? (Share up to seven of the most common words.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

6. Why do youth remain Catholic or active in their Catholic faith?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

7. What do youth enjoy about being Catholic?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

8. What don't youth like about being Catholic?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

9. Why did your group think some people decide to stop being Catholic?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

10. What can the Church do to support youth in their life and their Catholic faith?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5.

11. What did the youth say the Church should stop doing?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

12. In what ways could the Church help youth listen to and answer God's call for their important life choices?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

13. What were other statements, topics, themes that were discussed within your group?

### **Facilitator Reflection**

Please take a moment to reflect on the conversation and the implications it has on ministry with youth and young adults in your setting.

1. In light of your overall conversation, what were issues and concerns that were mentioned that the Church needs to understand about the life and/or faith experiences of youth and young adults? (Please check all of the topics, issues, or concerns that were mentioned by youth or young adults in your conversation?)

- Experience depression and/or anxiety
- Are very busy and over-scheduled
- Experience abuse (sexual, physical, emotional)
- Are healthy and doing well
- Struggle with their family situations such as divorce, or blended families
- Struggle with their sexual or gender identity
- Have parents that are gay
- Have lost faith in church leaders
- Engage in pornography
- Use technology and social media frequently
- Experience addiction
- Have many friends
- Are lonely



3. Because of what I heard, one way I want to transform youth and/or young adult ministry is to:

4. Please share three words that describe the experience you and your group had in engaging in the conversation:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.