



The Fifth Gospel

A discussion paper from the Australian Young Christian Workers



Joseph Cardijn, founder of the Young Christian Worker movement, proclaimed that: “Your life is the fifth Gospel” (Gigacz, 2021a). 2021 marked the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Australian Young Christian Workers Movement (AYCW), in Melbourne. In the decades that followed its founding, AYCW and its sister movement Australian Young Christian Students (AYCS) have played a significant role in forming young people in the Gospel and encouraging them to take action to bring about God’s Kingdom in and through their daily lives, engaging directly with the “joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties” (*Gaudium et spes* N1) of young people, “especially those who are poor, or in any way afflicted” (*Gaudium et spes* N1).

On marking this significant anniversary, the young leaders of the movement, at their National Council meeting in January 2020, reflected on their current work and now seek to engage in a process of intentional dialogue with the Catholic Bishops of Australia to ensure that the rich partnership that has characterised the relationship between AYCW and the Catholic Bishops of Australia is renewed and revitalised in order to more effectively be of service to the Gospel in and through the hopes enjoyed and challenges faced by young people today.

This paper is framed in three sections corresponding to the Review of Life method of See, Judge and Act. This methodology, as Pope Francis notes, has its roots in the experience of the earliest disciples:

“When the disciples walk with Jesus on the road to Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24, 18-35), they begin by remembering the events they have experienced; then they recognize the presence of God in those events; and finally, they act by returning to Jerusalem to proclaim Christ’s resurrection. To *see*, to *judge* and to *act*.” (Pope Francis, 2022a N2)

It is this method, promoted by Cardinal Cardijn, that has been foundational to apostolic work of the YCW and which remain an integral element of the movement as it guides young people to reflect on their lives in light of the Gospel and to act purposefully as disciples of Christ in bringing about God’s Kingdom.

The first section – See, sets out pertinent realities of the Catholic Church in Australia, the lives of Catholic young people and the personal and social challenges faced by young people in Australia today. The second section – Judge, provides some analysis of these realities in the light of the Gospel and with particular reference to the Apostolate of the Laity. This section includes the vision of AYCW in contributing to God’s mission today. The third section – Act, is quite brief as it simply foreshadows the potential for fruitful outcomes from the dialogue and expresses the intention to pursue this dialogue over the coming months.



1. See

1.1 *The Reality of the Catholic Church in Australia*

The steadily declining affiliation of Australian Catholic families with local parish communities (Dixon et al., 2007; National Church Life Survey, 2018) and the corresponding growth of secularism (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017) present profound challenges to leaders of the Catholic Church in Australia. Catholic Parishes exist in the relatively secular Australian environment where few people are formally aligned with a religious tradition and an environment in which religious authority and religious institutions are not highly regarded (Mackay, 2016). Additionally, large metropolitan centres are very multicultural with an accompanying multi-faith dimension (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

In the broader context, Western societies are undergoing rapid and extensive change at a social and personal level which clearly have implications for the ways in which people engage with spirituality and religion and find meaning in their lives. Pope Francis has highlighted the profound nature of this transformation reflecting that “we are not living an epoch of change so much as an epochal change” (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 2).

The Catholic Church in Australia, in line with other Christian denominations, is experiencing a profound if not dramatic numerical decline. While Catholics nominally make up one-fifth of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017) only 11.8% were actively engaged with a local parish community in 2016 figures with the trend pointing to further decline (National Centre for Pastoral Research, 2019; National Church Life Survey, 2018). The demographics of the local parish communities are of an ageing population where very few young families are to be found. The traditional model of handing on Catholic faith and practice in the family, school and parish has all but vanished.

1.2 *The Reality of Catholic Young People in Australia*

The level of engagement of Catholic young people, between the ages of 18-30, with the local parishes is between 5 and 6 per cent, approximately half that of the Catholic population overall (National Centre for Pastoral Research, 2019; National Church Life Survey, 2018). While over 22% of these Catholic young people attend, or attended, Catholic schools (National Catholic Education Commission, 2017), only a very small proportion of these continue with any level of engagement with the Catholic Church beyond their secondary school years.

The Catholic Church in Australia has invested heavily in engaging with young people through the Catholic Education (Catholic Bishops of NSW and ACT, 2007; National Catholic Education Commission, 2000), as well as through Youth Ministry initiatives (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2018), especially in conjunction with World Youth Day in Sydney in 2008 and subsequent Australian Catholic Youth Festivals (Catholic Youth Festival, 2017, 2020) and Youth Ministry Conventions (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2021). The investment in over a decade of Catholic Youth Ministry and many decades of Catholic Education has not been able to respond to the broad and overwhelming social changes during this time, with the data clearly showing ever declining levels of engagement.


Beyond the question of engagement with the Catholic Church, young people in Australia report that they face significant personal, moral, and social challenges. According to the Mission Australia annual survey of over 20,000 young people, between 15 and 19, the global pandemic weighs heavily on their minds as do the issues of mental health and the environment. In the 2021 report the issue of equity and discrimination also featured as one the greatest concerns (Mission Australia, 2021). Among the more recent emerging trends in the Mission Australia survey is the notion of ‘eco-anxiety’ where young people are identifying concerns about the environment as impacting on mental health and wellbeing. One respondent writes: “One of my biggest problems is that it is hard for me to see the light at the end of the tunnel when there is so much climate change and it feels like the world is going to end.” (Mission Australia, 2021, p. 11).

Young Australians are also profoundly affected by socio-economic factors such as the crippling costs of tertiary study, the casualisation of the workforce and ever-increasing housing costs. While these factors are impacting on all young people, they are most profoundly affecting the most vulnerable of young people, those living with a disability, indigenous youth, those impacted by domestic violence and family breakdown, those who are newly arrived in Australia, especially those seeking asylum and international students.

These critical concerns are profoundly reflected in the experiences of current members of AYCW. National President, Marilyn Bellett notes:

“Many of our members faced realities of exploitation, lives of inequity, sexism, and gender based violence. [If not for our experience with YCW,] Many of us would have given up hope of saving the planet - would not have understood the





connection to the working class and would have given into materialism, capitalism and throwaway culture. Many, if not all of us would not be conscious of the need to care for our own mental health and wellbeing.” (Bellett, 2021, p. 3)

Despite their concerns about personal and social issues and the absence of meaningful engagement with the Catholic Church, there are two highly significant factors evident in the reality of Catholic young people today. The first is that a significant majority of these young people hold spiritual beliefs which are aligned, at least broadly, with the Catholic faith. Second, many of them are interested in taking action, which will contribute to making a better world.

Amid the trend towards an increasingly secular Australian society, researchers have reported a keen interest in spirituality despite the decline in religious affiliation (Mackay, 2016; McCrindle, 2017). The idea of being spiritual, but not religious, (Fuller, 2001) is now widely recognised in the literature (Hughes, 2007, 2017; Mason, Singleton, & Webber, 2007; Rossiter, 2018; Smith & Denton, 2005; Tacey, 2004). This shows the emergence of the spiritual but not religious phenomenon, whereby people are choosing to disassociate themselves from traditional religious expressions while continuing to hold spiritual beliefs and engage with personal and individual expressions of spirituality (Hughes, 2017; Mackay, 2016; Rossiter, 2018). Recent studies have shown that between 70 and 80 percent of final year students at Catholic schools hold spiritual beliefs (Hughes, 2017; Lentern, 2020; Maroney, 2008), yet, as noted above, very few of these continue with any engagement with the Catholic Church beyond their school years. On the one hand, this dimension of spirituality outside of religion, can be viewed as a confirmation of widespread disengagement from traditional religion. On the other hand, it can also be seen as an opportunity to engage with young people in and through their expressions of spirituality, notwithstanding that many of these expressions are non-religious.

While confronted with many challenging experiences, it is evident that many young people remain committed to taking action that will lead to a better world. Among Catholic school students, the interest in social justice issues remains high (Lentern, 2020; Rossiter, 2018) and many continue to engage with social issues beyond their school years (Mission Australia, 2021; Webber, 2011, 2012). The interest of many young people in taking action for social justice is, potentially, a rich area for engagement, however, this potential is stymied by two significant factors. First, despite the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, young people do not regard the Catholic

Church as a fruitful avenue for engagement with social issues. This is, in part, because of the demographic of Catholic parishes, where few young people are to be found. The Catholic Church is also viewed by young people as a conservative institution, focused on religious piety and personal morality with little vitality and sparse engagement with social concerns (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Hughes, 2017; Hughes & Reid, 2011). Second, very few young people make a conscious connection between religious faith and social action. While many young people see the work for justice as a worthwhile pursuit, very few regard this activity as an expression of religious faith (Lentern, 2020; Webber, 2012). Further still, there is evidence of a dichotomy in the minds of young people, who see religious faith in a spiritual domain of piety, prayer and devotion while social justice is seen as a secular endeavour, unrelated to spirituality (Lentern, 2020; McCrindle, 2017; Rossiter, 2018). On this point, the Council Fathers note: “One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and their day-to-day conduct” (Gaudium et spes N 43). Even young people who are devout in their Catholic faith and active in social justice often see these two dimensions through a lens of a spiritual/secular dualism which prevents them from developing an integrated perspective of faith and life.

Pope Francis, in his own reflection on the reality of young people in Europe, echoes many of these insights. He believes young people are “more vulnerable, more fragile than previous generations, less rooted in faith, but nonetheless in search of meaning, of truth, and no less generous.” (Pope Francis, 2022a N 5).





2. Judge

2.1 The Lay Apostolate

The emphasis on Youth Ministry among Catholic young people in Australia rests on an understanding of the importance of lay ministry, overall, in building up the community of the Church. As Pope Francis writes “from the beginning, the Christian community was characterized by many different forms of ministry carried out by men and women who, obedient to the working of the Holy Spirit, devoted their lives to the building up of the Church” (Pope Francis, 2021a N2). An emphasis on lay ministry is indeed appropriate to meet the needs of the Church community in the current times.

Notwithstanding the importance of lay ministry, and alongside the increasing emphasis afforded to it, it is evident that the principal role of the laity in the secular milieu (Vatican Council II, 1996) has received insufficient attention in recent decades. Pope Benedict XVI writes:

“Hand in hand with a proper appreciation of the priest’s role is a correct understanding of the specific vocation of the laity. Sometimes a tendency to confuse *lay apostolate* with *lay ministry* has led to an inward-looking concept of their ecclesial role. Yet the Second Vatican Council’s vision is that wherever the lay faithful live out their baptismal vocation – in the family, at home, at work – they are actively participating in the Church’s mission to sanctify the world. A renewed focus on *lay apostolate* will help to clarify the roles of clergy and laity and so give a strong impetus to the task of evangelizing society” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2010).

This articulation of the particular focus of the apostolate of the laity is given further emphasis in Pope Francis words when instituting the Ministry of Catechist. He writes:

“The lay apostolate is unquestionably “secular”. It requires that the laity “seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will” (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 31). In their daily life, interwoven with family and social relationships, the laity come to realize that they “are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it

is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth” (ibid., 33)” (Pope Francis, 2021a N 6).

This emphasis of the apostolate of the laity within the temporal order has been clearly and emphatically articulated through successive expressions of the Church’s teaching (Pope Benedict XVI, 2008, 2010; Pope Francis, 2013, 2019, 2021a, 2021b; Pope John Paul II, 1971, 1979, 1990; Pope Paul VI, 1966, 1975), yet, through these same decades, the Church in Australia has witnessed a decline in such emphasis which has, in part, contributed to the absence of engagement with Catholic young people noted above.

The profoundly rich opportunities afforded by the Plenary Council and the current synodal process invites the Church in Australia to look again at the vocation of the laity and their indispensable apostolate in the temporal order. As Pope Francis recently wrote: “If the music of the Gospel ceases to sound in our homes, our public squares, our workplaces, our political and financial life, then we will no longer hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman” (2021b N 277). When reflecting on the life of the Church at this most significant moment, it is prudent to ask, with Pope Francis, whether the liturgies and ministries “ignite in people’s hearts a desire to move towards God, or are they a “dead language” that speaks only of itself and to itself?” (Pope Francis, 2022b) and whether this conveys the reason that so few Catholic young people find meaning within the community of the Church?

Recognising that many young people remain committed to the idea of building a better world, it is incumbent on the Catholic Church to use this, more effectively, as a means of connecting with young people and their passion for “transformation of our world and the care of creation” (Pope Francis, 2021c). An intentional and strategic engagement with the heart of the lay apostolate has the potential to make these connections where the initiatives of Catholic youth ministries have been unable to do so. This is at the heart of the YCW’s Review of Life (SEE, JUDGE, ACT) method, an integral aspect of the formation of young leaders (*Review of Life and Worker Action; Task of Education, IYCW*).

Pope Francis highlights this missionary dimension of the lay apostolate work with young people in saying “it is your mission ... to go to them as they are, to enable them to grow in love of Christ and of neighbour, and to lead them to greater concrete commitment, so they may be protagonists of their life and of the life of the Church, so as to change the world.” (Pope Francis, 2022a N 5).





The Cardijn movements of AYCW and AYCS, once in receipt of institutional support from the Australian Catholic Bishops, are now mostly self-supported, other than in isolated cases where Diocesan support is provided. Support from the Australian Catholic Bishops appears to be directed exclusively to youth ministry initiatives at the expense of lay apostolate movements. While such youth ministry initiatives are of value to a proportion of Catholic young people who are involved, a more balanced investment is needed to engage those at the periphery of the Church, to “be a prophetic stimulus to others” (Pope Francis, 2019 N38) and “advance social harmony” (Pope Francis, 2019 N44).

2.2 Australian Young Christian Workers

The Australian Young Christian Workers (AYCW) draws its vision from the life and ministry of Jesus who had come to “bring Good News to the poor ... liberty to captives ... recovery of sight to the blind ... to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18). This vision impels AYCW to engage directly with the concerns of young people, and especially those who are the most vulnerable. “Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church and motivated by Christian charity, they ... act directly and in a definite way in the temporal sphere” (Apostolicam Actuositatem N7).

The Review of Life method of See, Judge and Act ensures that the reflection and action undertaken within the movement is measured, grounded in the Gospel of Christ, and practically engaged towards the goal of bringing the Kingdom of God on earth. YCW founder Joseph Cardijn spoke of three truths; the truth of experience, the truth of faith and the truth of method (Gigacz, 2021b). The truth of method; See, Judge and Act provides the means through which the Gospel vision; the truth of faith, can be brought to bear on the life situation of the young person; the truth of experience. Following this method, AYCW is fundamentally committed to the vision of the lay apostolate whereby young people are urged to not “stand aloof, but immerse (themselves) in the reality of life as Jesus did” (Pope Francis, 2019 N 174).

AYCW promotes a vision for young people where faith and life are integrated through the conscious reflection and action undertaken through the Review of Life. The young person of faith gives expression to their faith in the action to further God’s Kingdom and the young person with the passion to make a difference in the world finds deeper meaning in the intentional reflection of the Review of Life (AYCW, 2010). Thus, while firmly grounded in the Christian tradition, AYCW is able to engage effectively with faith-filled young people as well as those who do not share a religious conviction.

Among the members of AYCW today there are young people from a wide range of backgrounds. For many of these, AYCW is their only connection with the Catholic Church and while this connection will not necessarily lead to regular worship and involvement in parish life, it is, nevertheless a vital connection, and one to be cherished, given that so few young people are engaged with the Catholic Church community.

AYCW National President, Marilyn Bellett, highlights this reality in her own experience. She writes:

“The YCW has taught me to live by example - through actions not just words and for a young Catholic woman, this has become my central connection to living out my faith and remaining connected to the Australian Catholic Church. Where many of my peers have become disenfranchised - my involvement in the YCW has facilitated a deep and genuine connection to my faith and the same for many other young people in the movement today.” (Bellett, 2021, p. 2)

AYCW is deeply conscious of the privilege and the responsibility of being the single connection of many of these young people to the Catholic Church. The demographic of AYCW members is, therefore, quite different from Catholic youth ministry initiatives and the capacity of AYCW to connect with this demographic of, otherwise unconnected, young people presents an opportunity of profound significance for the Catholic Church today, given current trends of engagement with young people.

The commitment of AYCW to work in partnership with Catholic youth ministry initiatives at the local and national level has proven to be a fruitful means of furthering the connection between otherwise disengaged young people with various expressions of worship, community and service that might otherwise have been lost to them. The strengthening of these partnerships in formal and informal ways further enhance the opportunities of engagement of young people in youth ministry as well as with the lay apostolate.

In line with the culturally diverse communities in many parts of Australia, AYCW has attracted to its membership a number of young people from faith traditions other than Christianity. Conscious of the imperative of welcoming all, in a spirit of hospitality, while remaining faithful to its essentially Catholic character, AYCW has reflected on the importance of respecting the sincere faith of other traditions. This spirit of hospitality is reflected in the experience of young people such





as Umes from Adelaide who has been profoundly impacted by his experience with YCW.

“Umes says that without the YCW, the reality he faced as a migrant worker on a student visa, would have been taken as the normal struggle that workers from his background would face in the Australian labour market. The struggle/ exploitation and wage theft faced by temporary migrant workers, and by international students was very much normalized in Adelaide. The YCW educated Umes, helped him understand the concept of class and his identity and dignity as a worker and belonging to the working class. Without that education, the young, 25 year old, unaware of worker rights, fearful and struggling with the reality in the foreign country, would have always compromised his self-dignity for basic survival.

“Umes, of the Hindu faith, now works for Vinnies and understands the common values and shared ideals that were instilled in him through the YCW. Recently, Umes traded in his high school textbook, and represented Australia at the last ILO Conference.” (Bellett, 2021, p. 3)

While young people, such as Umes, have gained a great deal from their involvement with YCW, it is equally true that YCW has been enriched by their presence. This mutuality is also evident in the story of a young South Sudanese woman from Melbourne named Achut.

“She crossed paths with the YCW in 2019, through the YCW Cultural Arts Project. As a young writer, Achut is passionate about a range of issues that impact the realities of young people including: identity, racism, mental illness, relationships and healing and found connection with the ideals and values espoused by the YCW.

“Achut was nominated for the national team and represented Melbourne YCW alongside a new generation of young leaders. She also recently represented the Australian YCW at the International Council. She is an inspiring young leader - and Melbourne YCW is all the stronger because of her” (Bellett, 2021, p. 3)

The experience of sharing in the journey of young people of diverse faith and cultural backgrounds has allowed AYCW to

develop a deeper understanding of the breadth of God's mission and has led to a recognition of the values held in common and the opportunity of embracing the richness that comes from diversity of religious expression (Pope Francis, 2021b).

The reality of engaging with young people of different religious traditions has highlighted for AYCW the importance of understanding the true meaning of dialogue and the need to be better informed about the perspective held by others. In response to this need, AYCW has worked in partnership with Catholic Mission on its 'Interfaith Encounters' - a program which "provides the platform for students and staff to develop new friendships, celebrate difference, deepen faith and promote peace and social cohesion" (Catholic Mission, 2021). This project has, unfortunately, paused due to the restrictions of the pandemic, however, it has already seen fruitful discussions and rich encounters for the AYCW leaders involved in the planning and piloting of this project.

The development of young leaders is a critical dimension of the work of AYCW and, accordingly, a strong emphasis is placed on the engaging young leaders in intentional formation to facilitate their role (AYCW, 2010). This formation and leadership development takes place through the cycle of reflection and action with a particular emphasis on meta-cognition so that the young leader recognises the strategic nature of their role and the importance of engaging others in their action. In and through this cycle the young leader is encouraged to model appropriate reflection and action (do before), so that others are able to follow. To accompany others in their reflection and action (do with), so that others are supported in these steps and to follow up with further reflection and action (do after) so that the cycle of reflection and action is consolidated and deepened.

One of the challenges faced by AYCW in the task of the formation of leaders is that of spiritual guidance and direction as well as the informed use of scripture. Once the domain of the local YCW Chaplains, this has now fallen to the leaders and mentors of AYCW, few of whom have formal theological training. Research data shows that Catholic young people, even those who are graduates of Catholic schools have very low levels of biblical literacy with many relying on fundamentalist interpretations of biblical texts (Billingsley, Brock, Taber, & Riga, 2016; Carswell, 2018; Lentern, 2020). Further, researchers have recognised that young people's perceptions about biblical truth, often misguided, is a significant factor in emerging adults choosing to reject their familial connection with the Catholic Church (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; Lentern, 2020; Rossiter, 2018). AYCW has sought to respond to this challenge through





the development of ‘Gospel Enquiries’ which assist young people in using scripture appropriately to inform their response to social issues (AYCW, 2010), as well as drawing upon other suitable resources such as the ‘Scripture for Teachers’ website developed by the National Catholic Education Commission (2021) which provides brief commentaries on the Sunday Gospels. Notwithstanding the responses taken by AYCW to the issue of spiritual formation and biblical literacy, it remains a serious challenge.

The global pandemic has provided significant challenges for AYCW. National and Diocesan gatherings have, for the most part, not been held in 2020 and 2021. While online meeting platforms have provided a convenient and cost-effective alternative, these platforms do not allow for the quality of interpersonal connection so greatly valued in face-to-face gatherings. At the local level, group meetings have often been held in online settings with similar absence in social interaction. The impact of isolation has been acutely felt by many of our young workers and leaders who have been courageously and imaginatively seeking ways to keep the movement alive when so many of the normal activities have not been possible. Not surprisingly, there has been a significant increase in the number of young people reporting difficulties with their own mental health during this period as well as feelings of frustration at not being able to provide meaningful support to others who they know to be affected.

Notwithstanding the profound impact of the pandemic on mental health and the capacity of the movement to continue with its normal modes of engagement, it has been quite inspiring to see the determination and the imagination which has come to the fore. Local leaders have managed to come up with a range of initiatives from self-care ‘check ins’, to online sustainability classes and cooking classes, tailored to their local context, in order to maintain connections with members and provide opportunities for outreach and engagement with others.

As a movement steeped in the history of worker action and concerns for the welfare of young workers, AYCW maintains a strong focus on justice for young people in the workplace. As Saint John Paul II writes: “We must consequently continue to study the situation of the worker. There is a need for solidarity movements among and with the workers. The Church is firmly committed to this cause, in fidelity to Christ, and to be truly the Church of the poor.” (1981 N 8) Drawing on this vision, during 2021, AYCW leaders worked alongside young migrant workers to successfully address issues of wage theft, providing both material benefit as well as an affirmation of the dignity of

these young workers while working in solidarity to achieve justice in the workplace.

Conscious of the God-given dignity of each young worker and the need to show appropriate concern for its own workers, AYCW appointed a supervisor in 2021 to oversee the work plans of each of the local workers and to develop policies and procedures addressing workplace health and safety, safeguarding, risk management and financial accountability. This measure is responsive to the notion that “work itself can have greater or lesser objective value, but all work should be judged by the measure of dignity given to the person who carries it out.” (Pope John Paul II, 1981 N 6).

This step, together with the work of volunteer mentors at the local level has helped to ensure that all the activities carried out around the country are done with regard to best practice in these areas of responsibility. This is a vital part of the work of AYCW given that our young workers and leaders are lacking in experience in the workplace and, in most cases, have little prior knowledge of professional standards. The work of the AYCW supervisor and mentors is critical in providing safety and dignity in the workplace for our young workers as well as ensuring that activities are carried out with due regard to safeguarding, risk management and other requirements.





3. Act

The final section of this paper is intentionally brief with a view to it foreshadowing the outcome of the fruitful dialogue sought through presenting this paper. The following five areas are proposed as a focus for future dialogue.

3.1 Chaplaincy

It has been noted above that the absence of chaplaincy, in most areas, is keenly felt among the members of AYCW and it is hoped that, through this dialogue, the possibility of more widespread chaplaincy may ensue. There is a need for this at the local level as well as the national level.

3.2 Volunteer Mentors

Volunteer mentors have played a critical role in the work of AYCW in recent years and it has been found that there are many former YCW members, workers and leaders who are keen to provide voluntary support to guide and assist today's young leaders in their work. As the movement continues to expand into other areas of the country it will be important to invest in locating, recruiting and forming these experienced mentors so that the emerging leaders are well supported and guided in their work.

3.3 Church Connection

While many of the members of AYCW come from backgrounds of no affiliation with the Catholic Church, there is a need to develop structures through which these young people, through their local YCW experience, are more meaningfully connected with the Catholic Church.

3.4 Outreach

Recognising the importance of youth ministry for those young people who are engaged with the Church, there is a critical need for the Church in Australia to reach out with the vast majority of Catholic young people who are currently at the periphery and have no connection with the Catholic Church. This capacity to reach out to and form young leaders through the Review of Life method, formation through action, is a unique attribute of the AYCW and something that warrants closer consideration.

3.5 Lay Apostolate

AYCW is committed to furthering the lay apostolate, in fidelity to the Gospel and in the spirit of Vatican II. The movement calls upon the Catholic Church in Australia to renew its commitment to the lay apostolate and to work in partnership with AYCW to enhance this critical expression of God's mission.



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