

*“We cannot just say that young people are the future of our world.
They are its present.”*

– Christ is Alive – Christus Vivit, Pope Francis Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (64)

Welcome to the Vision 20/20 Convocation. This historical event in the life of the Diocese of Davenport will gather representatives from our parishes, religious congregations, and college campus ministries to reflect on how we can more effectively fulfill the mission of the Church to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to our world. The Convocation and the Vision 20/20 process has the potential to significantly impact our future as the Church of Davenport.



In the planning for the Convocation, a very intentional decision was made to include high school youth as full Convocation participants. It is important that both youth and adult delegates understand not only the reasoning behind this decision, but also that both youth and adults are prepared to enter into the Convocation proceedings as full participants. The information that follows will help you in both these respects.

We begin with a basic question: *Why include high school youth in the Convocation?* Here are a few reasons, some of which come directly from the listening session reports, along with a question or two that each one raises.

- The reports from the listening sessions indicate a clear desire to have more young people engaged in parish life. Participants in the listening sessions also articulated many of the challenges of doing so. *How can we better connect with and engage young people in the life of our faith communities?*
- The reality with Confirmation is that many young people simply disappear after they receive this Sacrament of Initiation – the opposite action of what initiation implies. *Why is that? What are some implications we can derive for parish communities and our diocese?*
- Through the various studies conducted on young people today, we know that many are looking for depth, meaning, and authenticity in and from their church but are simply not finding it. *How can faith communities reverse this?*
- Many young people who do stick around have a strong desire to be meaningfully involved in their faith community as leaders and full members, but many find the doors closed to them. *Why? How do we change this?*
- For a good portion of our young people and their families, faith practice has been reduced to another activity that needs to fit into the family calendar, and it is most often a low-priority activity in relation to everything else in family life. *How have our faith communities contributed to this view? What do we need to do to change our ways?*
- For many young people, church has little to no meaning, purpose or place in their lives. Some of these young people are not connected at all to our parishes, while others are actually right in our pews. *Does this say anything about our faith community, and, if so, how do we need to change? What do we need to do to reach out to these who can be considered part of our peripheries?*

These issues and the questions they raise need serious examination and reflection, and the Convocation's general sessions and breakout sessions will provide a rich context to do so. But this examination and reflection would be ineffective without the presence of our young people. Their voice, their experiences, their ideas, their passion, their deep desires, their longings, and their creativity are essential to finding answers to these questions and implementing solutions.

"...the Church should not be excessively caught up in herself but instead, and above all, reflect Jesus Christ. This means humbly acknowledging that some things concretely need to change, and if that is to happen, she needs to appreciate the vision but also the criticism of young people."

– Christ is Alive – Christus Vivit, Pope Francis Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (39)

If you are a young person reading this, know that your opinions, experiences, and voice are crucial to hear. Do not be afraid to share them, for this is why you have been included in this Convocation. Just as important, be sure to listen to the opinions, experiences, and voices of the adults in the room.

If you are an adult reading this, know that you have a key role in creating an inviting and safe space for our youth to speak. You can do this by asking young people what they think, being open to what they have to say, and truly listening to, reflecting on, and not dismissing what they share. Just as important, share your perspectives with them as well.

Whether you are a youth or an adult, make this simple phrase your mantra throughout the entire Convocation: *"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."* And be sure to practice "RESPECT" in your discussions by following these *Guidelines for Respectful Communication*.

- R:** take **responsibility** for what you say and feel, and speak with words others can hear and understand
- E:** use **empathetic** listening, not just to words, but also to feelings being expressed, and to non-verbal language including silence
- S:** be **sensitive** to differences in communication styles
- P:** **ponder** what you hear and feel before you speak
- E:** **examine** your own assumptions and perceptions
- C:** keep **confidentiality**
- T:** **trust** the process of the Convocation because we are *not* here to debate who is right or wrong but to experience true listening, dialogue, and understanding

So, once again, welcome to the Vision 20/20 Convocation. Let us, the People of God and the Church of Davenport, have a fruitful and Spirit-filled few days sharing in the joy of the Gospel and exploring how we can more effectively share that joy within our home communities and with all of God's people.

"Those of us who are no longer young need to find ways of keeping close to the voices and concerns of young people.... We need to make more room for the voices of young people to be heard."

– Christ is Alive – Christus Vivit, Pope Francis Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (38)