NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
MINISTRY WITH
YOUNG ADULTS

SEASONS

Take Courage: Celebrating Young People on Christ the King Sunday

A planning guide for the annual Global Celebration of Young People, for parishes, campuses, and young adult leaders

Understand
Why World Youth Day is celebrated every year, and this year's theme

Plan
Three ways to celebrate and a 90-minute evening of prayer

Continue
Conversation questions and the road to Seoul 2027

A free resource from the National Institute for Ministry with Young Adults · ministrywithyoungadults.org

WHY THIS SUNDAY

Yes, World Youth Day happens every year

Most people picture World Youth Day as the huge international gathering with the Pope. That gathering happens every few years. But the Church also celebrates young people every single year, in every diocese and parish, on the Solemnity of Christ the King.

Saint John Paul II began World Youth Day in 1986 as a yearly celebration in local churches on Palm Sunday, with an international gathering in a different city every few years. In 2020, Pope Francis moved the local celebration to Christ the King Sunday, beginning in 2021. Because "World Youth Day" kept being confused with the international event, the U.S. bishops now call the yearly local observance the **Global Celebration of Young People**. The Holy Father sends a message for it every year, and it is the first step on the road to the next international gathering.

TWO CELEBRATIONS, ONE JOURNEY

GLOBAL CELEBRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE	INTERNATIONAL WORLD YOUTH DAY
Every year, on Christ the King Sunday	Every few years, in the summer
In your diocese, parish, campus, or movement	In one host city, with the Pope. Next: Seoul, August 3 to 8, 2027
Open to everyone, at no cost	A pilgrimage that takes months of preparation
The date can be adapted to fit your community's calendar	A fixed week of catechesis, festival, vigil, and Mass

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2026 · THIS YEAR'S THEME

"Take courage! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

In his message for this year, Pope Leo XIV says Christian courage comes from Christ's presence, not our own willpower. Christ's victory is self-giving love, not domination. Young people's dignity rests on being loved by God, not on their image. And there is a courage of humility: letting Christ save us instead of trying to save ourselves.

PLAN YOUR CELEBRATION

Three ways to celebrate

Start where you are. A short notice is no reason to skip it, and a parish with one young adult leader can still mark the day well.

SIMPLE

At Sunday Mass

- Add a petition for young people, in the languages of your community
- Ask the pastor to bless the young people present at the end of Mass
- Invite young adults to serve as lectors, ushers, and musicians

GATHERED

An evening together

- Host the 90-minute evening of prayer on the next page
- Pair it with a meal or a service project inspired by Matthew 25
- Invite people who rarely come, not just your regulars

DIOCESAN

The whole local Church

- A Mass or vigil with the bishop
- A send-off blessing for Seoul 2027 pilgrims
- A listening session where young people speak and leaders listen

IF YOU HAVE ONLY A FEW DAYS

1 **Talk to your pastor today**
Ask for one petition and a blessing of young people at each Mass. These take five minutes to add and reach everyone in the pews.

2 **Invite five people personally**
Text or call five young adults and ask them to bring a friend to Mass or to a simple gathering afterward. A personal invitation works better than any announcement.

3 **Plan the next step before Sunday ends**
Set a date for the next gathering and say it out loud. The celebration should open a door, not close a season.

IF YOU ARE PLANNING AHEAD

The U.S. bishops allow the date to be adapted, so a celebration in early December or a new semester still counts. Start six weeks out, with a team that is at least half young adults, and use the bishops' National Pastoral Guidebook.

AN EVENING OF PRAYER

“Take Courage” night

A 90-minute evening for young adults, built around this year’s theme. Adapt it for a parish hall, a campus chapel, or someone’s living room.

0:00	**Welcome and food**	Greet people by name at the door. Everyone gets a name tag and sits with someone new.
0:15	**Opening prayer**	Light a candle. Pray the opening prayer at the end of this guide together.
0:20	**Scripture**	Read John 16:29–33 slowly, twice, by two different readers. Leave a minute of silence after each reading.
0:28	**A witness**	A young adult shares, in five minutes, a time when they needed courage and found it in Christ or in the community. Ask them ahead of time.
0:35	**Small groups**	Groups of four to six with a facilitator. Use two or three questions from the next page.
1:00	**Adoration or quiet prayer**	If a priest or deacon is available, expose the Blessed Sacrament. Otherwise, keep quiet prayer before a cross or icon. Offer Reconciliation if possible.
1:15	**Sending**	Invite each person to name one place they will need courage this week. Pray a blessing over the group, and over any Seoul 2027 pilgrims present.
1:25	**Next steps**	Announce the next gathering. Collect contact information from anyone who wants to stay connected.

MATTHEW 25 IN PRACTICE

Christ the King’s Gospel names the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner. Consider pairing the evening with a concrete act of service: collecting winter coats, writing cards to people in prison or in the hospital, or serving a meal. Choose something young adults can help plan, and do it alongside the people you serve, not just for them.

FOR CONVERSATION

Questions worth asking

These follow the four movements of the Holy Father's message. Choose two or three. Fewer questions with more time for each makes for deeper conversation.

WHERE COURAGE COMES FROM

1. What takes courage for you right now?
2. When have you felt Christ beside you, even if you only saw it later?

WHAT VICTORY LOOKS LIKE

1. Where do you feel pressure to prove yourself or win?
2. Who has shown you what it looks like to win by giving yourself away?

THE COURAGE OF HUMILITY

1. What makes it hard to ask for help?
2. What would it look like to let God carry something you've been carrying alone?

PEACE THAT SENDS US OUT

1. Where do you see fear having the last word, in your life or in the world?
2. Who needs to hear "take courage" from you this week?

THE ROAD TO SEOUL

If you are going

Christ the King Sunday is a natural moment to commission pilgrims publicly. Ask the community to pray for them by name, and ask pilgrims to share why they are going.

If you are not going

Most young adults will not travel to Seoul, and that is fine. Plan a local watch party or day of prayer during the week of August 3 to 8, 2027, so the whole community can take part.

PRINTABLE

Prayer and planning page

OPENING PRAYER

Jesus Christ, King of the universe, you told your friends, "Take courage, I have overcome the world." Be with the young people of our community: in their work and their studies, in their questions and their worries, in their friendships and their hopes. Give them the courage that comes from knowing they are loved. Make us a Church that walks with them, listens to them, and learns from them. And lead us all, together, toward your Kingdom of truth, love, and peace. Amen.

OUR PLAN

DATE _____ PLACE _____

TEAM _____

WHO WE WILL PERSONALLY INVITE

_____

_____

_____

WHO WILL SHARE A WITNESS

_____

OUR SERVICE CONNECTION (MATTHEW 25)

_____

_____

OUR NEXT GATHERING

_____

Keep going

These resources can help you plan this year's celebration and keep walking with young people afterward.

HOLY SEE

Message of Pope Leo XIV

The full message for the 41st World Youth Day, "Take courage! I have overcome the world," at vatican.va, in many languages.

U.S. BISHOPS

National Pastoral Guidebook

The full planning guide for the Global Celebration of Young People, in English and Spanish, with liturgy notes, prayers, and worksheets. At usccb.org.

U.S. BISHOPS

Guidebook webinar

An English webinar unpacking the guidebook, with Paul Jarzembowski and Jose Julian Matos Auffant, both of the NIMYA Board of Directors. A Spanish webinar is also available.

WYD SEOUL 2027

The official site

Theme, official prayer, patron saints, and pilgrim registration for the international gathering, August 3 to 8, 2027, at wydseoul.org.

FROM NIMYA

Young Adult Listening Session Guide

Christ the King is a natural day to listen. This guide shows how to plan, lead, and follow up on a listening session.

FROM NIMYA

Small Group Starter Kit

For the young adults who leave your celebration asking, "What's next?"

Free for your ministry

NIMYA resources are free for everyone who ministers with young adults. Copy them, adapt them for your community, and share them widely. No strings attached.

The National Institute for Ministry with Young Adults forms and accompanies pastoral leaders who minister with young adults in their late teens, twenties, and thirties, through pastoral formation, leader accompaniment, research, and advocacy. Learn more at ministrywithyoungadults.org.