Eleven Suggestions for Living Your Catholic Faith after High School

1. Join a Local Parish
   - Being a Catholic is a community endeavor. Become an active member of a local parish or college Newman Center.
   - Not all parishes are alike. Ask Catholics in your area where they worship. Stop by parishes and meet the staff.
   - Do not be intimidated by large parishes; many are subdivided into smaller faith communities and have committees that work in specific areas.
   - Look for a parish community where you can give some of your time and energy. Parishes that seem the least vibrant are parishes that may really need your gifts. Join a parish not so much for what you can receive, but for what you can give.
   - Do not wait around to be asked to get involved.
   - All types of gifts can be utilized within the church, but it is your responsibility to let the parish know you are willing.

2. Deepen Your Spirituality
   - Pray every day. There are many different ways to pray; find those that bring you closer to God.
   - Deepen and develop your prayer life through reading, reflection, or joining a prayer group. Some businesses/colleges already have prayer groups that meet before or after work/class or during lunchtime.

3. Unlock the Riches of the Bible
   - Educate yourself on Catholic approaches to reading and interpreting the Bible.
   - Buy yourself a good Bible. There are many available translations of the Bible. The one used at Mass is the New American Bible.
   - The Catholic Study Bible and the Catholic Bible: Personal Study Edition have very helpful notes and introductions.
   - Start reading the Bible. Do not be intimidated. Read a few passages each day and reflect on them.
   - It is probably best not to read the bible from cover to cover like a novel. Reading the scripture texts used at daily Mass during the year is a good place to start.
   - Find a Bible study group at your local parish, if there is none there, ask the staff to help you start one.

4. Learn More about Your Faith
   - Now is an excellent time to deepen your knowledge about church history, theology, spirituality, social teaching, etc. Contact staff members of your local parish or diocese for resources.
   - Participate in programs, retreats, and educational opportunities offered by your parish, diocese, Catholic educational center, or local Catholic college.

5. Prepare for Your Life Vocation
   - A vocation is more than a job. It is responding to your life’s deepest passion; it is a way of loving that shapes your whole life.
   - Whether marriage is in your future, you remain single, or choose to enter the priesthood or religious life, it’s important that you discern where God is calling you. Seek out friends, relatives, and people in your parish who can serve as role models and help you in this process.
   - If you are in a serious relationship, spend time as a couple understanding your similarities and differences and finding where God is in your relationship.
   - Take advantage of diocesan or religious order programs and retreats to assist in discerning if God is calling you to the priesthood or religious life.

- Subscribe to at least one Catholic publication. U.S. Catholic is a good upbeat Catholic monthly magazine (www.uscatholic.org). Maryknoll is a monthly magazine with a mission orientation (PO Box 302, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302 available when you make an annual donation).
- Check out the local diocesan newspaper. Your parish will have information on how to subscribe. If you are moving temporarily to another area, also consider a subscription to your home diocese’s paper (some now offer online editions) to keep up with local happenings.
- Read the Catholic press. Look for other publications in your local parish or public library. They often have Commonweal, America, The National Catholic Reporter, and other Catholic magazines and newspapers.
- Become a sponsor for someone entering the Catholic Church through your parish’s or college’s Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) process. You can learn much by journeying with another adult who is seeking to enter the Catholic Church.
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1. Become a Witness in the World
   - Integrate your faith life into all you do. Faith is not something that should be practiced only during Sunday Mass and then left at the church steps when you leave.
   - Consider career options within the church. There are many opportunities for the laity to serve professionally within the church.

2. Become a Volunteer
   - Graduation from high school does not mean the end of volunteer hours. Though no longer required for graduation or sacramental preparation, volunteering is a great way to explore and give back to your community.
   - Look into volunteer opportunities with local Catholic organizations like Catholic Charities, the St. Vincent DePaul Society, or a local Catholic hospital.

3. Make the World a Better Place
   - You do not need to do everything, but make a commitment to do at least one thing to help poor or oppressed people.
   - Assess what you are good at and where you can be the most effective. Often a member of the parish staff or a parish committee can help you get connected with local groups.
   - Join a local organization, volunteer at a Catholic Worker or homeless shelter, offer your assistance to the local Birthright office, help with fundraising or bookkeeping for a local charitable organization, visit the sick, rake leaves or shovel snow for an elderly neighbor, or work with your local chapter of Habitat for Humanity.
   - Influence your world and help change the structures that keep people down. Some organizations that can provide you information are Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org – international relief and community building), Bread for the World (www.bread.org – working to end hunger), Pax Christi (www.paxchristiusa.org – international nonviolent peace activists), and Network (www.networklobby.org – resources for influencing U.S. policy on a variety of issues).
   - Make justice a part of your life – be just where you live and work. Find out about the Catholic tradition of social justice teachings in documents from the Pope and the U.S. Bishops.

4. Expand your Knowledge of Catholic Culture
   - Much of our faith is reflected in art, music, literature, and theater.
   - Seek out opportunities that will expand your ideas and images of Catholicism.
   - When you travel, pay attention to the variety of images and ways in which others worship.
   - Invite your friends to watch movies with a message and discuss their significance.
   - Films with a religious content include A Man for All Seasons, Becket, Romero, The Mission, Black Robe, Entertaining Angels, Dead Man Walking, Babette’s Feast, and Jesus of Montreal.
   - Other films that might provoke discussion include Schindler’s List, The Spitfire Grill, Shawshank Redemption, Life is Beautiful, and Shadowlands.
   - Educate yourself about other religious traditions that impact Catholic culture.

5. Join a Faith Sharing Group or Small Christian Community
   - Get involved in a small group with other Catholics who have similar interests, are in similar life situations, or who live in your city or neighborhood. Many larger parishes have groups especially designed for young adults. The focus of a group will depend on the needs and interests of those involved. Start small and let the group evolve. Be sure to integrate the group into the larger parish community.
   - Consider career options within the church. There are many opportunities for the laity to serve professionally within the church.


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