

2026 USCCB Evangelization Summit

Participation Report to NFCYM – Oct. 2026



Executive Summary

My participation in the 2026 USCCB Evangelization Summit provided an opportunity to engage in prayerful dialogue and shared discernment about the Church's mission of evangelization. The reflections from Table 12 emphasized five interconnected priorities: authentic encounters with Christ, mutual accompaniment, communities rooted in God's love, the formation of missionary disciples, and openness to the Holy Spirit.

One particularly valuable outcome was experiencing spiritual conversation as a practical method of listening and discernment that can be brought into our ministries.

From the perspective of youth ministry, the experience also raised important questions about how young people are included in broader conversations about evangelization, how ministries collaborate as the Body of Christ, and how sacramental preparation supports lifelong discipleship.

These reflections offer an opportunity for NFCYM to contribute to broader conversations about evangelization by emphasizing the importance of young people's voices, collaboration across ministries, and ongoing accompaniment toward lifelong discipleship.

Introduction

The following reflections are based on my participation in the 2026 Evangelization Summit as a representative of NFCYM. They reflect the conversations and insights shared at Table 12, where I participated throughout the Summit.

These reflections do not represent the discussions of all 25 participating tables, nor should they be considered the official conclusions or recommendations of the Summit. Rather, they capture the insights that emerged from Table 12 through a process of prayerful reflection, thoughtful questions, open dialogue, and shared discernment.

It is important to note that the Summit approached evangelization from the broader perspective of the Church's mission. Although young people were occasionally mentioned in the conversations in which I participated, their distinct experiences, challenges, and perspectives were not a central focus.

However, at the end of this report, I have included a separate section with my personal reflections on the implications for youth ministry, drawing on my experience working with young people and the insights gained throughout the Summit.

Day 1: Encounter

Session 1: "Come and See" (John 1:46)

The first session focused on encountering Jesus Christ and inviting others to experience his presence in their lives. During our conversation at Table 12, three significant insights emerged.

1. Accompaniment is not simply a buzzword.

Accompaniment is a mutual journey. It is not just about one person guiding another, but about walking together, learning from one another, and supporting each other throughout life's journey. Authentic accompaniment requires relationships built on trust, openness, and a willingness to grow together.

2. “Come and see” God, not simply our programs.

Evangelization is not primarily about inviting people to participate in the programs or activities offered by the Church. It is about inviting them to encounter Jesus Christ. Programs and ministries can create opportunities for encounter, but they should never become the ultimate goal. The central question is whether our efforts are helping people develop a genuine relationship with God.

3. There is more than one way to encounter God.

People encounter God through different experiences and circumstances. Community, vulnerability, service, human connection, and love can all create opportunities for recognizing God's presence. During the larger assembly, 12 of the 25 tables had an opportunity to share their conversations. Among the insights I heard was the recognition that people encounter Christ through both suffering and joy, as well as through other experiences of everyday life.

Day 2: Accompaniment, Community, and Missionary Discipleship

Session 2: “Follow Me” (Matthew 9:9)

This session focused on accompaniment and the lifelong journey of discipleship.

1. Creating communities of accompaniment

Our conversation emphasized that accompaniment should not be limited to individual ministers or leaders. We need communities where people accompany one another and where everyone has access to the formation, resources, and training necessary to participate in this mission. Accompaniment should become part of the culture of our parishes, dioceses, and ministries.

2. Healing as a starting point for evangelization

We discussed the importance of recognizing that evangelization may begin with healing and human formation. Healing, proclaiming the Gospel, and teaching are important dimensions of evangelization, but they do not necessarily happen in a fixed or linear order.

One expression shared during our conversation was the importance of allowing people to “flirt with God.” This image was used to describe the freedom to become curious about God, explore questions of faith, and gradually develop a relationship with him without feeling pressured to reach a particular stage of belief immediately.

3. Building a culture rooted in God's love

An important question emerged from our discussion: *How can we create a culture within our dioceses that embraces God's love and accompanies others as the Body of Christ?*

This question challenges us to consider how accompaniment can become a shared responsibility rather than the work of a particular program or ministry.

Session 3: “Remain in Me” (John 15:4)

This session invited us to reflect on community, sacramental life, and remaining in a living relationship with Christ.

1. Sacraments with a capital “S” and sacraments with a lowercase “s”

Our discussion distinguished between the seven Sacraments instituted by Christ and the broader signs and experiences through which people may recognize God's presence in everyday life. These everyday experiences can be understood through the Church's sacramental imagination, which invites us to recognize signs of God's grace in relationships, service, creation, and ordinary human experiences.

Although these experiences do not have the same sacramental character as the seven Sacraments, they can help people become more attentive to God's presence and deepen their relationship with him.

2. Recovering kindness and recognizing the wisdom of the catechumenal model

We discussed the importance of developing a spirit of kindness rather than simply seeking relationships with people who are like us. Authentic Christian community requires openness, respect, and a willingness to encounter people with different perspectives and experiences. The catechumenal model was also recognized as a valuable approach to gradual formation, accompaniment, and growth in faith.

Our conversation acknowledged that tensions sometimes arise around liturgy. Although liturgy is meant to unite us, differences in perspectives and practices can sometimes create division. We recognized that conflict is not necessarily negative. When approached with humility and openness, it can become an opportunity for dialogue, understanding, and growth.

3. Recovering a sense of wonder in sacramental life

Another important reflection concerns the way we experience the sacraments. Sometimes our attention becomes focused on rules, regulations, and procedures, and we risk losing the sense of wonder that comes from encountering the living God.

While the Church's sacramental practices and requirements are important, they should always help us recognize the deeper mystery of God's presence and grace.

Session 4: “Go, Make Disciples” (Matthew 28:19)

This session focused on missionary discipleship and the shared responsibility of evangelization.

1. Collaboration and spiritual gifts

Our discussion emphasized the need for stronger collaboration among the different sectors involved in the Church's mission. Evangelization requires us to work together as the Body of Christ, recognizing that each person brings different spiritual gifts. Not having a particular gift is not a failure. Instead, recognizing our own gifts and limitations allows us to appreciate the gifts of others and collaborate more effectively. Our conversation also recognized the importance of creating opportunities for people, including young people, to exercise their gifts and assume leadership responsibilities.

2. Bringing people to church is different from forming missionary disciples

We reflected on the distinction between encouraging participation in Church activities and forming people who actively live and share their faith. Participation in parish life is important, but missionary discipleship goes beyond attendance or involvement in programs.

It requires an ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ and a willingness to share his love with others.

3. Missionary discipleship must be rooted in love for God

A missionary disciple is not simply someone who participates in ministry or promotes Church activities. Missionary discipleship begins with a genuine love for God and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Evangelization should flow from that relationship rather than becoming merely an effort to increase participation.

Day 3: The Holy Spirit and Shared Discernment

Session 5: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22)

The final session focused on recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit and allowing the Spirit to guide our lives and mission.

1. Creating space for prayer and surrender

Our conversation emphasized the importance of making time for silence, stillness, and prayer. To recognize the movement of the Holy Spirit, we need to create space in our lives to be present with God. Surrendering allows us to recognize God's love and become more open to his guidance. In the busyness of ministry, we can become so focused on activities and responsibilities that we forget the importance of simply spending time with God.

2. Surrendering does not mean disengaging

We reflected on the meaning of surrender and recognized that it does not mean abandoning our responsibilities or distancing ourselves from difficult situations. Instead, surrender involves recognizing our limitations and accepting that we cannot control every outcome.

It requires humility, trust, and openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

One particularly meaningful insight from our conversation was the invitation to: **“Speak without attacking and listen without defending.”** This approach encourages genuine dialogue and allows us to remain engaged in difficult conversations without allowing defensiveness or the desire for control to prevent us from listening.

3. Spiritual conversation as a gift of the Summit

One of the most practical lessons from our experience was recognizing the value of spiritual conversation. Beginning with a meaningful question, followed by prayer, reflection, and attentive listening, can help people discover new perspectives and discern their mission together. Our Table 12 conversation recognized that this method can be brought into the teams, communities, and ministries where we serve. We leave the Summit with an experience of shared discernment that can help strengthen relationships, collaboration, and openness to the Holy Spirit. This experience also demonstrated how spiritual conversation could be incorporated into ministry team meetings, leadership formation, and collaborative discernment, creating opportunities for participants to listen more deeply before making decisions.

Personal Reflections and Implications for Youth Ministry

The following reflections are my personal observations and considerations based on my experience in youth ministry and my participation in the Evangelization Summit. They are presented separately from the discussions of Table 12 and are not official recommendations of the Summit.

1. Bringing the Reality of Young People into Conversation

One of my most significant observations from the Summit was that, although we engaged in meaningful conversations about evangelization, accompaniment, community, and missionary discipleship, the realities and challenges facing young people were not a central focus of the discussions in which I participated.

This raises an important question:

How can we develop a vision for evangelization without intentionally including the experiences, needs, and voices of young people?

Young people are not only the future of the Church; they are an essential part of the Church today. Their experiences, questions, struggles, and spiritual journeys deserve a place in conversations about the Church's mission. Including young people in these conversations means more than discussing their needs or designing programs for them. It means creating opportunities for them to share their experiences, participate in discernment, and contribute their perspectives to the decisions that shape the Church's mission.

I believe there is an opportunity for NFCYM to continue advocating for the inclusion of young people and those who accompany them in broader conversations about evangelization.

2. Working Together as the Body of Christ

One of the strongest messages I take from the Summit is the need to work together as the Body of Christ. Evangelization cannot be the responsibility of one ministry, one office, or one group of individuals. It requires collaboration among dioceses, parishes, families, schools, youth ministries, and the broader Catholic community. This is especially important when we consider the faith formation of young people. Different ministries sometimes operate independently, even though we share the same mission.

We need to strengthen our relationships and recognize that accompanying young people into a lifelong relationship with Christ is a responsibility shared by the entire Church.

Youth ministry should not be seen as an isolated program, but as an essential part of the Church's broader mission of evangelization.

3. Confirmation and Lifelong Faith Formation: Beyond the Question of Age

One pastoral question that emerged for me from this experience concerns how we approach sacramental preparation, particularly the age at which young people receive Confirmation.

I recognize that different diocesan approaches reflect important theological and pastoral considerations. However, I believe we need to examine not only when young people receive the sacrament, but also how we accompany them before and after receiving it.

Whether Confirmation is celebrated during childhood or adolescence, the central challenge remains: How do we help young people develop a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ and remain connected to the life and mission of the Church?

If young people disengage from parish life after receiving Confirmation, changing the age alone may not address the underlying challenges.

This invites us to consider whether our models of faith formation are primarily organized around completing sacramental requirements or are intentionally designed to support lifelong discipleship. How are we engaging families and the wider parish community in this process so that faith formation does not depend exclusively on sacramental preparation programs?

Perhaps the more important question is not simply, “At what age should Confirmation take place?” but “What kind of Christian community and ongoing formation are we offering young people before and after Confirmation?”

I believe this is a conversation worth continuing among dioceses, parishes, families, Catholic schools, and youth ministry leaders.

4. An Opportunity for NFCYM

My participation in the Summit has reinforced my conviction that NFCYM has an important role in connecting the broader mission of evangelization with the lived realities of young people.

There is an opportunity to bring several questions into future conversations with Church leaders:

1. How are young people being included in conversations and decisions about evangelization?
2. How can dioceses, parishes, families, schools, and youth ministries collaborate more intentionally?
3. How can sacramental preparation become part of a continuous journey of discipleship rather than an isolated program?
4. What structures of accompaniment exist for young people after they receive Confirmation?
5. How can we better reach young people who are disconnected from the Church or have never experienced a meaningful relationship with Christ?

One possible next step would be to create opportunities for dialogue among NFCYM leadership, Diocesan youth ministry leaders, and young people themselves. Such conversations could help identify effective practices, recognize existing challenges, and explore how the broader mission of evangelization can more intentionally include the realities of young people.

These questions deserve continued attention, not because there is one simple solution, but because the Church's mission calls us to listen, discern, and respond to the needs of the people we serve.

Final Reflection and Gratitude

The Evangelization Summit was a meaningful opportunity to participate in prayer, listening, dialogue, and shared discernment about the mission of the Church. I am especially grateful for the experience of Table 12, where we had the opportunity to walk together through all five sessions, share different perspectives, and learn from one another.

One of the most valuable gifts I take from this experience is the practice of spiritual conversation: creating space for prayer, asking meaningful questions, listening without defensiveness, and remaining open to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

I also leave with renewed conviction that young people need to be intentionally included in the Church's broader conversations about evangelization. If we truly believe that evangelization is the responsibility of the entire Body of Christ, then young people must have a place at the table, not only as people we hope to reach, but as active participants in the life and mission of the Church.

I sincerely thank NFCYM for inviting me to represent the organization at this Summit and for the trust placed in me.

As I conclude this experience, I recognize that representing NFCYM involves not only participating in the Summit but also bringing these conversations back to our broader mission of accompanying young people. I hope these reflections can contribute to continued dialogue about how we strengthen collaboration, include young people's voices, and support lifelong missionary discipleship.

With gratitude,

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