



SPARKS FROM ASHES

AN ASH WEDNESDAY YOUNG ADULT EVANGELIZATION PLAN

*Blow the trumpet, Zion! Proclaim a fast! Call an assembly!
Gather the people! Notify the congregation!*

Joel 2:15-16a

**A special initiative from the Diocese of Joliet Young Adult Ministry Office
for use in the parish community in preparation for and during Lent**

What's This All About?

Welcoming young adults back home to the Catholic Church can be a challenge. However, Ash Wednesday and the Season of Lent offers parish leaders an opportunity to evangelize men and women in their twenties and thirties.

Recent studies have shown that while only 15% to 17% of young adult Catholics attend Mass each week, on Ash Wednesday those numbers rise to over 50%. That means there are more young adults coming to the Church the first day of Lent than on the vast majority of Sundays each year. This makes Ash Wednesday a perfect opportunity to welcome young adults home to the Catholic faith.

Even in the Hebrew Scriptures, the prophets encouraged the religious leaders to open their doors to the returning exiles from Babylon. The prophet Joel (in a passage we fittingly read each year on Ash Wednesday) tells us to make the most of the situation: "Blow the trumpet, Zion! Proclaim a fast! Call an assembly! Gather the people! Notify the congregation! Assemble the elders! Gather the children and the nursing infants! Let the bridegroom quit his room and the bride her chamber!" (Joel 2:15-16). Instead of complaining that young adults only come once a year to Mass, the prophets challenge religious communities of any century to roll out the red carpet just like the father did for the Prodigal Son (cf. Luke 15:11-32).

What will your parish community do this Ash Wednesday to welcome the young adults home - and to keep them connected beyond the first day of Lent? How will you create sparks from the ashes?

The full ***Sparks from Ashes Evangelization Packet*** is available online (see website below) or by contacting Paul Jarzembowski in the Diocesan Young Adult Ministry Office at (815) 834-4047 or pjarzembowski@dioceseofjoliet.org. The packet contains several suggestions on how to take at least one action step towards the evangelization (and re-evangelization) of young adult Catholics. These suggestions are ideally done on Ash Wednesday or Lent, but can be utilized or customized for specific times and situations. These ideas are just a stepping stone towards the larger goal of welcoming young Catholics home again.

Download the packet online: www.dioceseofjoliet.org/yam/documents/SparksFromAshes2009.doc

**The Diocesan Young Adult Ministry Office www.dioceseofjoliet.org/yam
is always available to any parish looking to develop
an intentional outreach to men and women in their late teens, 20's, and 30's.
For more information, or for parish consultations, see the website or contact
Paul Jarzembowski at 815-834-4047 or pjarzembowski@dioceseofjoliet.org.**