



Day 5 – Youth and Young Adults

Pray

St. Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680, North America) was the daughter of a Mohawk chief and an Algonquin Catholic woman in what is now upper New York State. When St. Kateri was only four years old, a smallpox epidemic killed her parents and younger brother and left her with impaired eyesight and scarred facial features. She also experienced isolation, family pressure, and marginalization from her earliest years of life. In her late teenage years, she was drawn to the Catholic faith, finding refuge and purpose with the Jesuit missionaries. She was a Christ-like example to all who encountered her. St. Kateri died at the young age of 24.



Jesus,

We pray that, through your holy presence and through us, you might give youth and young adults peace and hope today, as they may face isolation, pressure, loneliness, and marginalization, all of which can affect their mental health and wellness. Help us, we pray, to encounter and accompany the young people in our lives. Give us the courage to advocate for their well-being and respond with pastoral urgency to their needs and concerns.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, “himself eternally young [who] wants to give us hearts that are ever young” (Christus Vivit, no. 13). Amen.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, pray for us.





Learn

Severe loneliness is impacting young people to an incredible degree today, especially amplified by the effects of social distancing during the recent global pandemic.

Catholics are encouraged to be aware of the significant impact that social media has on the mental health and isolation of young people, as noted in the U.S. Surgeon General's 2023 advisory on [Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation](#). Incidents of cyberbullying, lower self-esteem, and broken relationships can creep into the lives of adolescents and young adults due to the manner of social connectivity (or lack thereof) related to digital engagement.

The World Health Organization (WHO) noted that mental disorders, depression, anxiety, behavioral issues, and suicide are significantly affecting adolescents around the globe. The American Psychological Association also noted that mental health issues are rising among the young adult population in the U.S. The impact of mental health challenges on young people was a theme of the global Synod on Young People. Pope Francis observed: "At times, the hurt felt by some young people is heart-rending, a pain too deep for words" (*Christus Vivit*, no. 77).

Act

Pope Francis dreamed of a Church that actively attends to the mental and physical care of youth and young adults: "May all young people who are suffering feel the closeness of a Christian community that can reflect [Jesus'] words by its actions, its embrace, and its concrete help" (*Christus Vivit*, no. 77). Build relationships of trust with young people and help them identify support systems available to them. Develop trust by establishing or engaging with intergenerational and intercultural faith communities in or beyond the Church. Several best practices and models for engagement can be found through the insights of the Catholic Church's [National Dialogue](#) and [Journeying Together](#) processes.

Take time to learn about issues impacting young people in your family and community. Listen more attentively to what youth and young adults are saying and how they are each navigating their transitions, relationships, and life experiences. Be mindful of any signs that point towards loneliness, anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts. Alongside identifying professional mental health care resources, attend to the spiritual needs of youth by encouraging them to participate in the sacramental life of the Church. Religious practices, particularly attendance at religious services, [have been associated with positive mental health outcomes](#).