



Getting to the Conversation

Five Keys to Truly Listen to Young People

1. Listening Starts with Proximity, Not Programs

“The first step in listening is to draw closer to young people: not just to talk about them, but to talk with them.” – Listen. Teach. Send, §17

Summary: Listening begins with presence. Jesus met the disciples on the road, not in the temple. Ministry starts when we show up in the places where young people already live and move.

Takeaway: Identify where young people gather and make intentional presence a ministry goal.

2. Listening Is the First Act of Evangelization

“Jesus began the Emmaus journey by asking questions.” – LTS, §15

Summary: Evangelization doesn’t begin with teaching—it begins with curiosity. Asking real questions uncovers where God is already at work in a person’s story.

Takeaway: Move from “inviting people to our thing” to “entering their story with curiosity.”

3. Listening Builds Trust Before Teaching

“Trust must be curated before deeper formation can take root.” – LTS, §22

Summary: Teaching without trust rarely lasts. Like Jesus, who interpreted the Scriptures only after the disciples had opened their hearts, we earn the right to teach by first listening long enough to understand.

Takeaway: Make trust-building conversations—not attendance—the first metric of success.

4. Listening Requires Learning Their World

“We must recognize the distinct cultural and generational expressions in their lives.” – LTS, §21

Summary: Every generation speaks its own language. Learning their world—music, games, stressors, humor—shows empathy and allows us to interpret the Gospel into their context.

Takeaway: Become a student of youth culture—learn before you lead.

5. Listening Leads to Healing

“The Church can be a field hospital after battle to heal the wounds.” – LTS, §22

Summary: Many young people carry isolation, shame, or anxiety. Listening creates safety where healing can begin. Presence, not answers, becomes the first expression of God's love.

Takeaway: Healing begins when young people feel heard and safe enough to share.

The Emmaus Story (Luke 24:13-35) – Key Moments

- **Jesus draws near:** He meets the disciples *on the road*, not in the synagogue.
- **He asks and listens:** “What are you discussing as you walk along?”
- **He interprets their story:** “Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained what referred to Him.”
- **He stays and breaks bread:** Relationship leads to revelation.
- **Their eyes are opened:** Listening prepared their hearts for encounter.

Action Steps

1. **One Conversation:** Have a single, intentional listening conversation this week. No fixing—just ask and stay with the story.
2. **Show Up Somewhere New:** Attend an event, game, or gathering where young people already are. Be present, not in charge.
3. **Ask Parents:**
 - What connects or differs between your teen's world and yours?
 - What's one thing your teen is passionate about?
 - What makes your teen unique?
4. **Build a Team:** Form a small group whose mission is to learn the local landscape and strengthen relationships between parish, families, and community.
5. **Pray for Ears to Hear:**

“Lord Jesus, help me walk, ask, and listen like You. May every conversation become a place of encounter and healing.”