



DALLAS, TX

# **THE NEED EXAMINED**

# THE PROCESS

After many months of conversation, a collaborative gathering of young adult leaders took place with the goal of understanding more deeply what challenges the church is facing when seeking to minister to young adults in this city. We asked what are the defining needs, and how can we best address those needs. The goal was to allow ourselves to think more broadly than we had previously allowed ourselves but to do so with clarity and strategy. We began with a large, fundamental Presenting Need, and then asked, Why is this need here? What is its cause? Each time we asked why we thought more deeply and more clearly about the opportunities for ministry before us. The needs laid out below are the needs that were articulated in that meeting. This is the foundation for the strategy behind the initiatives encompassed by the 635.

# THE NEED

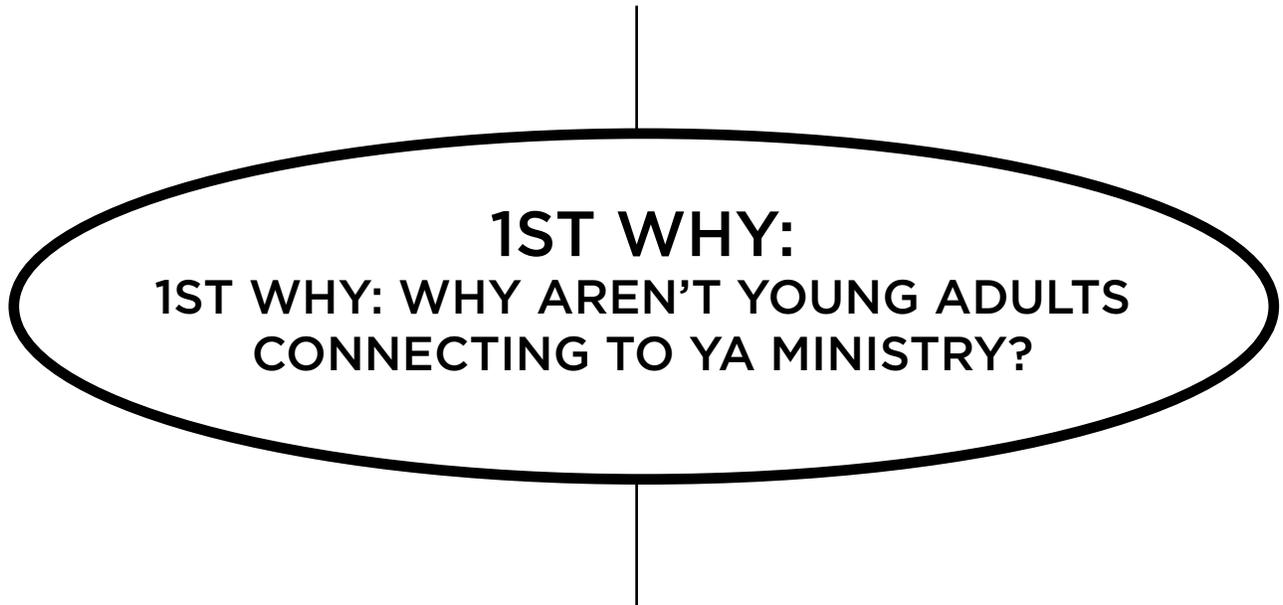
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*If I were given one hour to save the planet, I would spend 59 minutes defining the problem and one minute resolving it.*

*- Albert Einstein*

## THE PRESENTING PROBLEM:

*“There are 200k young adult’s in the Central Deanery 16k identify as Catholics. Only a fraction of them are active participants in their home parish or in any ministry”*

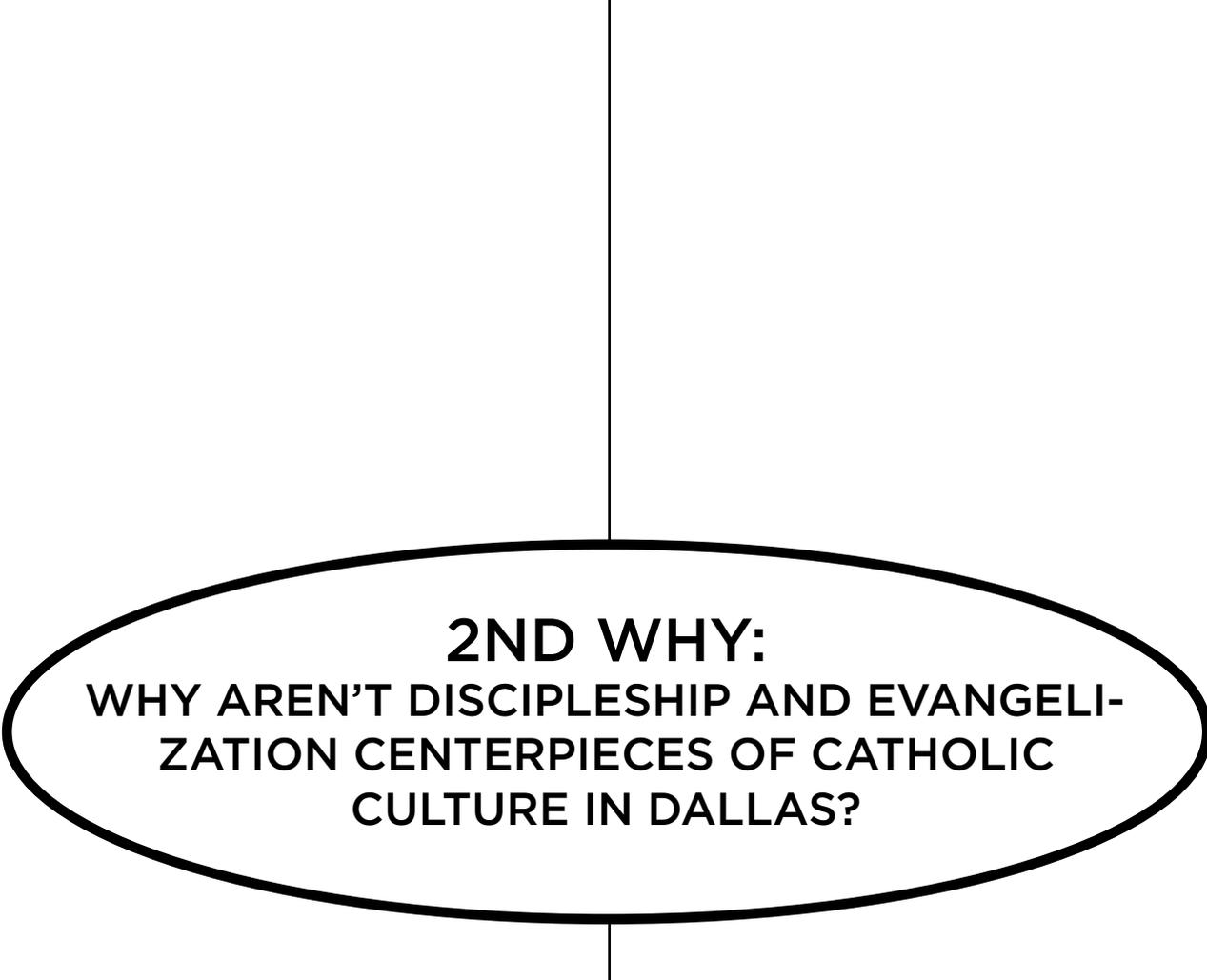


## ANSWER:

*Evangelization and Discipleship are not foundational characteristics of Catholic YA culture.*

Young adults will connect when Catholic culture in Dallas is an evangelical culture that prioritizes discipleship relationships. There are pockets of discipleship ministry happening in certain parishes, and this is something we are all proud of and excited about. Overall, however, evangelization & discipleship aren't a definitive part of the Catholic culture in most of our parishes.

*If we had an evangelical, discipleship oriented Catholic culture in Dallas, we would see more active young adult participation.*



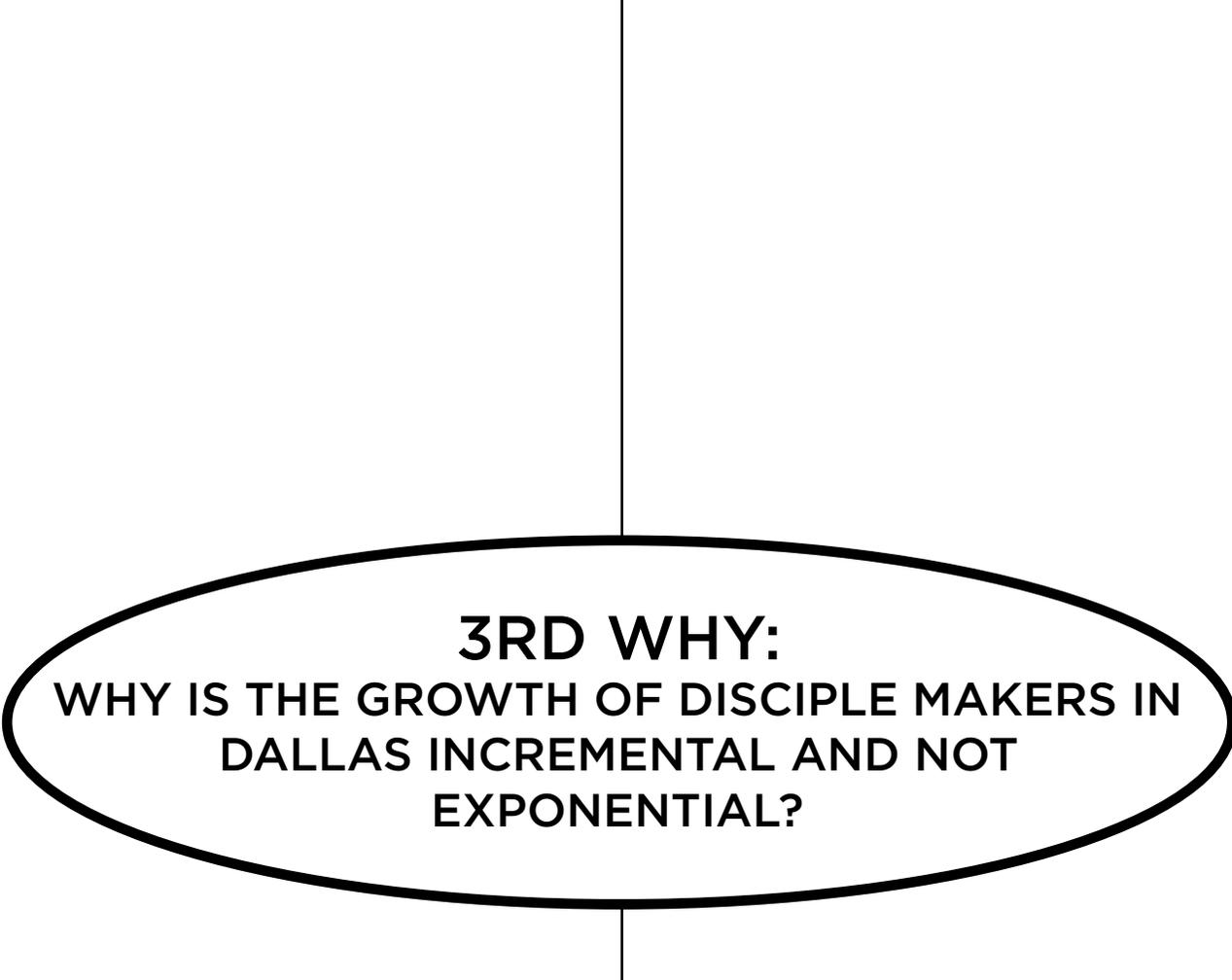
**2ND WHY:  
WHY AREN'T DISCIPLESHIP AND EVANGELI-  
ZATION CENTERPIECES OF CATHOLIC  
CULTURE IN DALLAS?**

***“We need more Disciple Makers”***

Ultimately the answer we came to was that for evangelization and discipleship to be the norm in Catholic culture, we need enough disciple makers in every parish that the parish culture adopts their missional way of life. Currently, there are many disciple makers in the Dallas Diocese, but there are few locus points where they gravitate, and there are many parishes and places that have few to no millennial leaders. The vision for discipleship and evangelization needs to be spread from the ministries that are doing it well to those places in the diocese that have not been exposed to this sort of vision.

*If disciple makers were being produced en mass we would see a systematic change towards a missional Catholic Young Adult culture.*





**3RD WHY:  
WHY IS THE GROWTH OF DISCIPLE MAKERS IN  
DALLAS INCREMENTAL AND NOT  
EXPONENTIAL?**

*“Young adults aren’t being fed, they aren’t inspired”*

While the vast majority of parishes in the US are struggling to incorporate discipleship into their ministries, many Dallas parishes have been exceptional in forming disciples. That is important to note, but the growth of disciple makers in Dallas is incremental, not exponential. Exponential growth can only come from making evangelization and discipleship normative in culture. In order to see that happen, we need to see a far larger amount of young adults evangelized and formed. Out of the 16k YA Catholics that identify as young adults, only a fraction of them are attending mass, and only a fraction of that fraction is engaged in ministry.

*In order to create a Catholic culture where discipleship and evangelization are the norm, we need more disciple makers, and in order to form more disciple makers, we need to reach, evangelize, and form a far larger number of young adults.*



**4TH WHY**  
**WHY ARE OUR EFFORTS NOT REACHING  
GREATER NUMBERS OF YOUNG ADULTS?**

**1.**

**NOT ENOUGH CONCEN-  
TRATED NUMBERS OF DIS-  
CIPLE MAKERS TO REACH  
CRITICAL MASS.**

What we're after here is a shift in culture. We believe God is calling us to make evangelization and discipleship normative. The fact of the matter is that in changing a culture, numbers make a difference. 3 or 4 disciples inside of a parish group of 150 might achieve critical mass (the number at which they begin to define the culture), but the growth curve towards it will be incremental and therefore take a very long time to reach the tipping point. In order to achieve critical mass, we need a gathering with a concentrated number of disciple makers where they work as force multipliers for each other.

*If we had larger numbers of disciples/disciple makers together, we could achieve critical mass & bring systematic change to young adult Catholic culture.*

**2.**

**YOUNG ADULTS OVERALL  
DO NOT EXPERIENCE BE-  
LONGING IN THEIR PARISH  
HOMES.**

In order to form disciple makers in great numbers, a far greater number of young adults need to first be evangelized and then formed. Parishes are where this should be happening, but parishes have been slow to adapt to the needs of this new demographic of young unmarried adults. Parish life therefore is rarely being made relevant to them. Instead, parishes are often doing important work to build youth ministries and strong families. In order to see young adults evangelized, we need to raise awareness of the need for young adult ministry and make this demographic visible to the Church.

*If parishes were intentionally ministering to young adults, we would see a more inspired and motivated Catholic young adult culture.*

# 5TH WHY

## WHY ARE SO FEW PARISHES INTENTIONALLY MINISTERING TO YOUNG ADULTS, & WHY ARE THOSE WHO ARE SO SEPARATE FROM EACH OTHER?

### ***1. Unified Desire, but Lack of Unified Vision:***

We all care deeply about seeing this generation come to know Christ, but if we have a vision for young adult ministry, it generally is one that stops at our parish boundary. Every faith community has its own flavor and way of doing things, and that's a good thing, but with a larger, connected identity and vision for young adult ministry in Dallas, we can dream for kingdom impact that none of us could achieve on our own.

*If we had a clear vision of what young adult ministry is and how it should be done, we would see more efforts in the diocese to reach young adults and more momentum in the groups that already exist.*

### ***2. No Model:***

Every parish that is being successful in young adult ministry in Dallas has discovered unique, important practices for doing young adult ministry, but those practices haven't been documented. If we can create a culture of sharing where the models, practices, and tools we've used to be successful, and actually turn those into resources for parishes who want to get started but don't know how to begin, we would vastly lower the barrier to entry into young adult ministry in the diocese.

*If we had a culture of sharing resources for ministry with models based on what is being done well now, more parishes would minister to young adults.*

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### **3. Lack of Resources**

Parishes are not putting forward the budget to hire full-time young adult ministers or to invest in the kind of production that will serve them. They aren't generally as aware of the need, so raising awareness for this need will be of the utmost importance. That said, what one parish cannot achieve on its own, multiple parishes could together.

*Greater awareness of the need for investing in young adult ministry and a unified culture of sharing would help marshal more resources and make them more effective.*

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### **4. Red Tape**

In its history, the diocesan and parish staff have, with the best of intentions, imposed unnecessary burdens on ministers. Volunteers and even staff often find navigating the red tape that can accompany ministry problematic. This has led to a greater isolation of the groups that are actually being effective from the diocesan office and from other parishes in their area.

*With more support from the diocesan office and a greater diocesan-wide awareness of the vision for young adult ministry, we can minimize some of these issues and make it easier to work together as communities.*

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# THE ESSENTIAL PROBLEM:

*To reach a tipping point toward evangelization and discipleship, Catholic YA culture in Dallas need vision, unity, and momentum.*

## SOLUTION #1

A large scale gathering that is on neutral ground, led by the diocese. This event's primary goal is to serve as a platform to cast this unified vision to the rest of the diocese and fan the flame that has been started in St. Ann's, St Thomas, & Prince of Peace.

*It will accomplish this by the following:*

- **Casting A Vision.** Too often, the diocesan offices attempt to lead by telling ministries what to do and how to do it. The 635 will strive instead to be a platform for casting a vision for young adult ministry. In everything we do at the 635, we will seek to embody the vision and lead by example.
- **Unified messaging.** From their first encounter with 635 on-line, the language and the vision for the Catholic YA culture in Dallas will be communicated at every junction. Our mission as a diocese is nothing less than reaching the 200k young adults in the Metroplex and transforming the city for Christ. This is a vision that none of us can achieve on our own. Our cause is unity, and this will be clearly stated and communicated both online and on the stage.
- **Safe Space.** Seeing lives transformed and experiencing love inspires the human heart no matter what your background. The 635 will be a safe space for inviting non-Catholics. From parking lot to parking lot, everyone who comes should feel welcomed and ushered into a spiritfull and moving environment. The talks will be accessible to the unchurched, the praise will be intimate prayer and familiar to protestants and Catholics alike.

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## SOLUTION #2

Along with the successful ministries in the Diocese, we will develop resources to be used in developing new parish young adult ministries. We don't know what those will be yet because this needs to be a unified effort on the part of those who have already seen success. Only after the channels of communication between parish YA leaders and the diocese are open can we truly create what is actually needed.

*The resources have yet to be determined, but we hope you'll be a part of their creation. Let's start the conversation.*

**THANK  
YOU,**

**YOUTH, YOUNG ADULT, &  
CAMPUS MINISTRIES  
THE DIOCESE OF DALLAS  
[WWW.THE635.ORG](http://WWW.THE635.ORG)**