



**The GIVEN Institute:**  
*Why Young Adulthood? Why Women? Why Now?*

## What is GIVEN?

The GIVEN Institute (“GIVEN”) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to activating the gifts of young adult women for the Church and the world.

GIVEN inspires and equips the next generation of female leaders to “receive the gift that they are; realize the gifts they’ve been given; and respond with the gift that only they can give.”

Through leadership training, faith formation, and dedicated mentoring, GIVEN forms women for mission and for life.

The GIVEN Institute is faithful to the Magisterium and entrusted to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the New Evangelization.

## What challenge does GIVEN address?

For some time, the Catholic Church has been bracing itself to confront one of its major challenges – the disaffiliation of its Millennial and Generation Z members. In 2015, the Pew Research Center reported that 35% of Millennials (19 million persons) identified as “nones,” or persons with no religious affiliation. A significant number of the unaffiliated had previously identified as Catholic.<sup>1</sup>

An update to the Pew report in 2019 showed a 13-point increase in religious disaffiliation among Millennials and a 10-point increase in religious disaffiliation among women, compared to 2009. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on religious practice remains to be seen.<sup>2</sup>

Springtide Research Institute released a study in 2019 detailing the struggles of “America’s Loneliest Generation”<sup>3</sup>. Generation Z, those born between 1997 and 2012, are identified as exhibiting “declining trust in social institutes (religious and cultural) and rising social isolation resulting in severe loneliness. The study goes on to say that:

- Nearly 25% of young people who attend worship gatherings weekly or more still feel as though no one understands them.
- Over one in ten (12%) of young people who attend religious gatherings feel left out *all* the time.

These numbers are striking, and even more so when considering how critical women have been to the life and mission of the Church. Catholic women have traditionally offered some of their most important contributions to society through the family. Because Millennials are increasingly delaying or foregoing marriage altogether, many Catholic women are finding themselves single without their choosing – for longer than desired or for good.<sup>4</sup>

According to a 2015 CARA study, eighty percent of lay ecclesial ministers – those involved in religious education, sacramental preparation, liturgy and/or music ministry, or general parish administration – were women, with a median age of 55.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” 2019

<sup>3</sup> Springtide Research Institute, “Belonging: Reconnecting America’s Loneliest Generation,” 2019.

<sup>4</sup> One-in-Four Millennials in their 30s Are Unmoored from the Institution of Family,” Wendy Wang, Institute for Family Studies, September 27, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> “Lay Ecclesial Ministers in the United States,” The Center for Applied Research in the United States. February 2015.

“Lay Ecclesial Ministers in the United States,” The Center for Applied Research in the United States. February 2015.

Religious sisters, who have played a significant role in religious education and service to the marginalized, have seen staggering declines since a peak in 1965.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that one of the Church's most pressing needs to ensure its future sustainability and mission-effectiveness is an investment in young adult Catholic women.

### Why young adulthood?

- The demographic of “emerging adulthood” is rapidly growing, meaning that increasing numbers of young adults find themselves on an unclear path to adulthood. There is now often a decade between college graduation and a vocational commitment. This period is characterized by anxiety, intense identity-exploration, instability, transience, and delayed commitments.<sup>7</sup>
- The weakening of what were previously ubiquitous centers of communal support – parishes, neighborhoods, civic associations – in addition to the weakening of marriage bonds and an unstable economy -- have left young adults looking for adults who can help them understand and meet the expectations and demands of adulthood.<sup>8</sup>

### Why women?

- The Catholic Church is one of the only institutions that esteems the role women play in shaping civilization as mothers. This leadership role is one that is undervalued and under-supported in our culture.
- Women – both lay and consecrated - have long been at the helm of some of the Church's most critical work, including ministry, education, healthcare, and the provision of social services to the marginalized.
- Lay Catholic women – through a diversity of professions – have answered the call to be “leaven to the world” by working to ensure that both the economy and society treasure the family, protect the vulnerable, and keep the person at the heart of all of its enterprises.<sup>9</sup>

### Why now?

- The distinct phenomena of the disaffiliation of young adult women, an aging population of religious sisters, and a culture which undervalues marriage and family life are converging. From its earliest days, women have been the backbone of the life and mission of the Church. This is a critical time for the Church to inspire and equip the next generation of Catholic women leaders to put their gifts in service of the Gospel.
- A surge in conversation surrounding the influence of women in the wider culture invites the Church to increase appreciation and opportunities for the exercise of feminine gifts and voices. Pope Francis exhorts the Church to be “a listening Church” in the area of women's equality, and that by doing so, “[the Church] can support the call to respect women's rights, and offer convinced support for greater reciprocity between males and females, while not agreeing with everything some feminist groups propose.”<sup>10</sup> The teachings of

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<sup>6</sup> “Population Trends Among Religious Institutes of Women.” Erick Berrelleza, S.J., Mary L. Gautier, Mark M. Gray. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> “Borders on Insanity, or Insanity on Borders.” Jack Fowler. National Review. 2018.

<sup>9</sup> In his 1995 *Letter to Women*, Pope John Paul II said, “Thank you, *women who work!* You are present and active in every area of life-social, economic, cultural, artistic and political. In this way you make an indispensable contribution to the growth of a culture which unites reason and feeling, to a model of life ever open to the sense of “mystery”, to the establishment of economic and political structures ever more worthy of humanity.”

<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Christus Vivit,” March 25, 2019.

the Catholic Church offer a holistic approach to upholding the dignity and value of women in alignment with Pope Saint John Paul II's call for a "new feminism."<sup>11</sup>

## **How does GIVEN address these challenges?**

Young adult Catholic women are an underserved though critical demographic marked by a search for identity, community, and purpose. GIVEN's programming is designed for women between the ages of 21-30, who are navigating a period of time between college graduation and vocational commitment or professional clarity.

There is a growing number of highly educated, talented young adult women who are looking to make this period of their lives fruitful and purposeful, who want to know that their gifts are needed. GIVEN identifies, equips, and positions these women to find a meaningful path for this period, one which also opens up possibilities for their future and enables them to find ways to put their gifts in service to the Church and the common good.

GIVEN fills a current gap in services to meet the needs of this demographic. Many excellent corporate leadership development programs do exist; however, growth in leadership is often framed as something in tension or at odds with other vocational responsibilities. There are many Catholic ministries and apostolates that provide faith formation to women, but few, if any, explicitly invest in their leadership development.

GIVEN brings together these elements of leadership development, faith formation, and dedicated mentorship to provide a comprehensive and transformative personal investment in the lives of future Catholic women leaders.

## **Identity**

GIVEN helps young adult women who are trying to form their identity to find it in Jesus Christ, "who is the answer to the question posed by every human life."<sup>12</sup> GIVEN's programming directly proposes that a woman's fundamental identity is a beloved daughter of God. GIVEN presents the Church's teaching on the dignity and vocation of women, with particular attention to their witness of living out their personal vocation. Programming highlights the distinctive ways that women form their identities, addresses common wounds and vulnerabilities, and helps participants to cultivate healthy relationships with themselves, others, and God.

## **Community**

According to Christian Smith, the sociological factor which makes the biggest difference in the religious and spiritual lives of Catholic young people (after the example of parents) are relationships with models, mentors, teachers, and friends who are serious about the Catholic faith.<sup>13</sup> GIVEN provides young adult women with an encouraging community of dedicated mentors and a network of peers who share their faith commitments and desire to lead a meaningful life. By pairing established Catholic women leaders with emerging ones, GIVEN creates an intentional mentoring network, one which guides women in their educational, professional, or vocational discernment and decision-making.

## **Purpose**

GIVEN embraces the truth expressed by Pope Francis: "Becoming a saint means becoming more fully yourself, becoming what the Lord wished to dream and create, and not a photocopy. Your life ought to be a prophetic

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<sup>11</sup> Pope Saint John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Saint John Paul II, Homily, Apostolic Journey to the United States, October 8, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Christian Smith, Kyle Longest, Jonathan Hill, and Kari Christoffersen. *Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults In, Out of, and Gone from the Church*. Oxford University Press. New York. 2014.

stimulus to others and leave a mark on this world, the unique mark that only you can leave. Whereas if you simply copy someone else, you will deprive this earth, and heaven too, of something that no one else can offer.”<sup>14</sup> The GIVEN network will collectively help young adult women better understand their gifts and identify opportunities and pathways to put them in the service of the Gospel.

**How does GIVEN do this?** GIVEN addresses this through its two signature programs and its wider network.

### **GIVEN Catholic Young Women’s Leadership Forum**

The flagship event of the GIVEN Institute is the Catholic Young Women’s Leadership Forum. The annual event brings together a diverse group of young adult women from across the country for a multi-day Forum. It is designed for young adult Catholic women seeking leadership training, faith formation, and support to better understand and pursue their particular mission. Applicants are expected to be engaged with their Catholic faith but come with different experiences and from diverse backgrounds. Each participant will develop and execute a post-Forum action plan in which they share their gifts with a particular community. This multiplies GIVEN’s impact beyond each cohort of women.

Participants will apply for a specialty:

- **Entrepreneurial:** This specialty is designed for young women who have an innovative idea for a new mission, organization, or apostolate. These young women will be guided by established leaders with business acumen and entrepreneurial experience who will support them as they develop their ideas, solidify their plans, and strategize for launch.
- **Catholic Professional:** This specialty is for women who are working within Catholic organizations (e.g. diocesan employees, youth/young adult/campus ministers, educators, non-profit employees) who would like to grow as leaders in their fields. Specific attention will be paid to the challenges and opportunities of working in non-profit and faith-based organizations. They will be mentored by experienced Catholic professionals who lead a variety of Church and non-profit ministries.
- **Secular Professional:** This specialty is designed for Catholic women called to a secular workplace or to the public square (e.g. business, finance/accounting, law, sports management/coaching, small business owner, educational leadership, government/public policy, journalist) who desire support as they integrate faith and professional life, navigate secular controversies with faith, and grow as a Catholic and a leader in the secular world. They will be mentored by Catholic professionals and executives who work in a diversity of fields.
- **Artistic:** This specialty is designed for women who are creative at heart and have a strong desire to use their gifts in the service of others. Whether a dancer, musician, painter, content creator, writer, or graphic designer, this specialty supports the unique calling and challenges of bringing the good, true, and beautiful to our world and Church. Mentors in this specialty are all experienced artists with varied gifts who will guide, challenge, and support the work of the artist.
- **Care for the Human Person:** A particular gift of the feminine genius is to nurture life, to care for the other. Although all women are called to nurture life in all vocations and professions, this specialty is designed for women who serve in direct roles caring for the human person. Those in the medical field, such as doctors and nurses, and other healing fields, such as counselors, life-coaches,

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<sup>14</sup> Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Christus Vivit,” March 25, 2019.

and psychiatrists, as well as those who serve as primary caregivers of children or the elderly will be supported in this group. Mentors who have made caring for the human person their life's work will serve to inspire and further equip the young leaders who share this calling and will particularly guide them to participate in the Church's rich tradition of social teaching and ethics.

No matter the specialty, every participant will:

- Hear keynote addresses and panel discussions from lay and religious Catholic leaders on topics relevant to the contemporary, Catholic woman
- Engage in exercises to identify her particular gifts, strengths, and aptitudes
- Engage in peer and professional networking
- Receive accompaniment from consecrated and lay mentors
- Receive support and guidance to execute a one-year, post-Forum action plan
- Deepen her understanding of the Church's teaching on the dignity and roles of women
- Have time for prayer, reflection, and renewal in their love of God, self, and neighbor. Mass, confession, adoration, and spiritual direction will be available throughout the Forum.

GIVEN works to attract and serve a proportionate representation of women who are not of European ancestry in order to reflect the current demographic of young Catholics in the United States. Speakers, panelists, and mentors who are not of European ancestry will also be reflected in each Forum and will serve as mentors.

Members of religious communities who have recently assumed positions of leadership or for whom the programming and networking would be beneficial are welcome to participate in the Forum. GIVEN aims to provide religious communities with opportunities for leadership development as well as new avenues to introduce their charisms to a wide network of young women and leading professionals.

### **The Art of Accompaniment Mentoring Program**

The GIVEN Institute has developed a signature mentoring program available to women who have participated in a Leadership Forum and will eventually expand to all members of The GIVEN Network. Catholic young adult women report that they primarily learn what it means to be an adult woman of faith through the witness of other women.<sup>15</sup> Research also confirms that in the absence of faith formation by their parents, many young adults have taken up the search for credible mentors outside of their families. For those well-formed at home, mentors reinforce faith commitments and broaden an understanding of vocational paths and opportunities.

The GIVEN Institute recruits and trains a network of Catholic women mentors who want to accompany young Catholic women to activate their gifts for the Gospel. Particular attention will be paid to the ways that women integrate faith, interpersonal relationships, professional aspirations, and vocational responsibilities.

The mentoring program includes the following:

1. **Mentoring through the Forum and Art of Accompaniment:** There are two components to this part of GIVEN's mentoring program. A lay woman and a consecrated woman are assigned a small group to lead through the Forum, and then after the Forum, each mentor works with young women one-on-one for a year to support them as they implement their Action Plans. The Action Plan is each young woman's initiative to activate her gifts in her own community for the Church and the world. All mentors are faithful Catholics and experienced leaders. They are eager to help the next generation of Catholic female leaders develop their

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<sup>15</sup> America Media/CARA survey.

gifts and succeed in their personal vocations.

2. **Mentoring through The GIVEN Network:** The Network is a vibrant, growing community of female leaders. As such, GIVEN recognizes that there are many Catholic women who desire to be part of this mission but cannot come to the Forum. Opportunities for one-time mentorship conversations and local gatherings take place throughout the year.

### **Sustaining the GIVEN Network:**

The Leadership Forum and the mentoring program generate a diverse community of faithful women who have a shared heart for putting their gifts in service to the Gospel. One significant fruit is a network of women who support one another through prayer and works of mercy. This community serves as a type of “Catholic Women’s LinkedIn,” in which Catholic women can connect with one another about work, ministry, service, or opportunities for collaboration and resource-sharing. GIVEN supports and sustains the network in several ways:

- Bringing together new and past participants at the annual leadership Forum and involving alumnae in the programming of each one;
- Hosting regional GIVEN Gatherings, which bring together women of all ages, centered around the themes of GIVEN: receive the gift that you are, realize the gifts you’ve been given, and respond with the gift that only you can give.
- Creating an online community through the use of social media, GIVEN Academy, and blog and website content.

### **What has GIVEN’s impact been?**

#### **2016 Forum Overview:**

The GIVEN Institute, Inc. (“GIVEN”) was incorporated on February 9, 2018, but its history began in June 2016, when nearly three hundred young adult Catholic women gathered in Washington, D.C., for a first-of-its-kind leadership and faith formation summit. The five-day event, developed by the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, was a response to the consistent call from the last three popes for a better appreciation and activation of the gifts of women for the Church and the world. The premise was simple: invite young adult women of faith to “receive the gift that they are, recognize the gifts they’ve been given, and respond with the gift that only they can give.”

The Forum brought some of the Church’s most prominent lay and consecrated female leaders, including Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, S.V., Helen Alvaré, Dr. Carolyn Woo, and Sister Norma Pimentel, among others, in contact with the next generation of young adult Catholic women. In addition to hearing keynote addresses, participants received mentoring and spiritual guidance from more than 75 religious sisters, had ample networking opportunities, and were guided in the development and execution of an Action Plan in their local communities during the year following the Forum. The participating religious sisters and speakers played a critical role in helping young women to identify their gifts and find communities in need of them.

Participants’ action plans included:

- Volunteering with immigrants at the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas with Sister Norma Pimentel. This participant went on to pursue a graduate degree in social work in order to return to serve the migrant population she encountered. She now works as Sister Norma’s assistant.

- Creation of a website called [The Catholic Woman](#), which was aimed at “[moving] away from reductive stereotypes of Catholic women and instead to speak of them as the unique persons they are.” It now reaches 70,000 people.
- Launching a day-long retreat in Kansas City to celebrate women’s dignity and vocation. This event has become an annual retreat in the Archdiocese of Kansas City with the approval of the archbishop.

The fruits of the first leadership Forum continue in local communities, in the “digital highways,” and in the peripheries where Pope Francis has encouraged the Church to be missionaries.

**2016 Forum Alumnae:**

In June of 2018, participants of the 2016 Forum were asked to respond to a survey about their experience during and after the event. Highlights of the survey:

- 7 women applied to enter religious life after attending GIVEN
- Nearly 90% of respondents said that the programming from the Forum was still relevant to them two years later
- 70% reported that GIVEN influenced their educational and professional pursuits
- 85% said that GIVEN was helpful in discerning/living their current state of life
- More than 80% stay in contact with members of the GIVEN network
- 100% of respondents would recommend the leadership Forum to a friend

Alumnae of the 2016 GIVEN Forum - single, married and religious - put their gifts in service to the Gospel as:

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|-----------------------|------------------|
| Lawyers               | Journalists      |
| Medical professionals | Youth Ministers  |
| NASA researchers      | Pro-life leaders |
| Dieticians            | Musicians        |
| Behavioral therapists | Entrepreneurs    |
| Campus ministers      | Artists          |
| Catechists            | Social Workers   |

**Testimonies:**

“There were so many examples of women in the Church living vibrantly through different vocations. As a single woman with a career in business, being present at GIVEN opened my eyes to see that God can do anything with your “Yes” if you give it to Him.”

“I had been discerning a vocation to the religious life for a few years before attending GIVEN, and although not expecting it at all, it was at GIVEN that God clearly called me to Himself. I went to the Forum simply looking for leadership skills and networking opportunities with other Catholic women, and I left joyfully accepting God’s call to be totally His. I am now applying to a religious order!”

“GIVEN helped me to reexamine what I always felt was a tension between the vocation of a wife and mother with professional aspirations. It helped me to understand better the many fruitful ways that women live out their vocations in an integrated way.”

**2019 Forum Overview:**



In June of 2019, the second GIVEN Forum took place in Washington D.C. This five day event is designed for young adult Catholic women between the ages of 21-30 who are seeking to better understand and pursue their particular mission and/or vocation. During the 2019 GIVEN Forum, attendees came from 30 states, Ireland, and Canada, proudly representing diverse backgrounds. The 120 attendees were paired with lay mentors and religious sisters who met with them in small groups to discuss their proposed Action Plans in the midst of the trainings and workshops. The 25 lay mentors, single and married women, shared their expertise in many sectors of society such as business, publishing, education, law, medicine, and athletics. The 50 religious sisters in attendance hailed from 13 different communities and many included novices still in formation. The attendees spent considerable time alongside the lay mentors and religious sisters by sharing meals, attending Mass and adoration, and enjoying recreational activities during break times. Highlights from the 2019 GIVEN Forum can be found at [giveninstitute.com/2019-given-Forum-highlights/](http://giveninstitute.com/2019-given-Forum-highlights/).

### **2019 Forum Alumnae:**

In the Spring of 2020, participants of the 2019 Forum were asked to respond to a survey about their experience during and after the event. Highlights of the survey:

- 4 women applied to enter religious life after attending GIVEN
- Nearly 99% of respondents said that the programming from the Forum was still relevant to them
- 86% reported that GIVEN influenced their educational and professional pursuits
- 92% said that GIVEN was helpful in discerning/living their current state of life
- More than 82% stay in contact with members of the GIVEN network
- 100% of respondents would recommend the leadership Forum to a friend

Alumnae of the 2019 GIVEN Forum - single, married and religious - put their gifts in service to the Gospel as:

Accountants	Geneticists
Book Editors	Non-Profit Managers
Campus Ministers	Physicians
College Professors	Professional Singers
Dance Instructors	Psychotherapists
Data Analysts	Registered Nurses
Development Directors	Special Education Teachers
Digital Media Specialists	Sports Coaches
Faith Formation Coordinators	Youth and Young Adult Ministers

### **Testimonies:**

“To have been in an environment where my entire self was loved, not just my spiritual self, not just my professional self, etc., but my whole life was ministered to at the GIVEN Forum and I will always be grateful for this.”

“You’ve helped me to know more fully who I am and how to live and love as a woman of God!”

“This is NOT like other ‘retreats’ where you come down off the spiritual high of the mountaintop and it fades into the background - with GIVEN you are walking back down the mountain with an army of sisters who will all help each other work in the vineyards down below.”

“The talks have made a deep impression on me and continue to pop up in my prayer. I am immensely grateful to be a part of the GIVEN network. I get to connect with this powerhouse of Catholic women.”

### **2020 Discover the Gift Overview:**

Discover the Gift took place from June 10-14, 2020 as a "taste of GIVEN" offering keynote speakers, leadership training tips, prayer with religious sister communities, and online networking. While this online event took place due to the global pandemic, great opportunities unfolded as a result. Over 2,000 women across the globe regardless of age or state in life had the chance to learn more about the mission of GIVEN and personally receive the gift that they are, realize the gifts they have been given, and respond with the gift only they can give. Participants reported that GIVEN's content was energizing and life-giving. One attendee said, "in the cacophony of raw emotions emerging in this current climate, this was what I needed most — a community in unity. Activating the most authentic desires placed in my heart, I felt my strength being refueled as I eagerly unpacked the feminine genius within me by listening to the success stories of other women and creatives." Another noted, "It was a beautiful light amidst a difficult time. I was not surprised by the quality of the talks and format, Given has a well earned reputation of excellence and beauty in all things!"

In addition to inspiring keynote talks on GIVEN's themes, Discover the Gift also offered leadership tips in English and Spanish from a diverse group of Catholic female leaders. These short videos offered practical tips about ministry, discernment, public speaking, and Christian identity, to name a few! After watching one of the leadership tips, one attendee said, "Thank you! I had never before considered entering into an apostolate gradually, as you suggest, to make sure that is where the Lord wants me to be. Thank you so much for that suggestion and your other recommendations." Each of the Discover the Gift leadership speakers shared her experience of using her gifts in practical ways in service to the Church and the world.

The Discover the Gift program was further enriched by an interactive online event guide, music in Spanish and English from women in the GIVEN Network, and daily guided Visio Divina prayer from GIVEN-Alumna-founded [Behold](#). These elements made Discover the Gift a truly immersive experience while maintaining the flexibility and longevity of online content. Women from all over the world tuned in to watch Discover the Gift including Sister Bernadette McCauley, a Sister of Christian Charity from New Jersey who said, “For so many of us this Covid pandemic has been a challenge and in many ways a heavy cross to carry these past months. And like any suffering or cross we carry, as Catholics we know it leads to resurrection. And so with confidence I can say the cross of Covid brought us to the beauty of new life through our participation in the Discover the Gift Program. Our Initial Formation community committed to setting aside time each day to participate in the virtual program. We truly were not prepared for the abundance of graces that came to us as we listened attentively to a variety of inspiring talks given by women.” GIVEN’s [YouTube channel](#) had over 16,000 views that month alone and there have been 800+ new subscribers since then as well as 100-200 new [Instagram](#) followers per month.

Discover the Gift attendees were surveyed after the event and reported:

68% single women, others married, entering religious life or prefer not to say

50% under 30, 20% ages 30-39, 30% above 40  
60% White, 17% Asian, 14% Hispanic/Latino, 4% Black/African American  
~55 religious sisters from 26 communities participated  
~20 states and 9 international countries were represented

[Additional findings on the impact of the GIVEN Forum and Discover the Gift are included in the evaluation executive summary found online.](#)

## **2021 Forum Overview:**

The 2021 GIVEN Catholic Young Women's Leadership Forum took place from Wednesday, June 9th through Sunday, June 13th at the Catholic University of America. At the 2021 Forum, GIVEN was proud to announce that an agreement has been made with the OSV Institute for Catholic Innovation that three Action Plan projects from the 2021 GIVEN Forum cohort will move into the semi-final round of the 2022 OSV Challenge. These three women will be awarded \$10,000 in seed money by GIVEN benefactors and then will take part in the OSV Challenge Accelerator and compete to be a finalist with a chance to win a \$100,000 prize for their Action Plan. More highlights can be found here: <https://giveninstitute.com/2021-given-forum-highlights/>

## **Testimonies:**

"I came away from the Forum with an abiding gratitude for the women of the Church. I highly recommend this Forum to any young woman in your life who is looking to share her gifts with the Church. I ask, too, for your prayers, as I work to carry out my action plan - a retreat for artists - within this next year." ~ Lindsey, 30, Illinois

"Excellent. A truly filling week, where I was able to encounter God and hear His voice. It was profound - I have never been surrounded by so many incredible Catholic women, women speaking truth and empowering one another not to shrink, but to stand tall in their giftedness. It was so unique - I have never experienced the closeness, glory, and sheer delight of being so enveloped by Catholic femininity. It was a joy." ~ Kathleen, 28, Alabama

"Amazing. As soon as I learned about GIVEN, I knew I had to attend. I was determined to attend the Forum and I'm so grateful I did. I grew in my faith, appreciation for my unique gifts, my ability to evangelize and my determination. I also gained a deeper appreciation for consecrated vocations." ~ Jensen, 28, Louisiana

## **What are GIVEN's short-term goals?**

By December 31, 2022 GIVEN aims to:

- Host a fourth Leadership Forum for a cohort of 100 young adult women who have a heart for mission and an aptitude for leadership and equip them to advance in their professional or vocational paths.
- Support Forum participants in the development and execution of a post-Forum action plan that will yield measurable impact within a particular community and utilize their unique gifts and talents.
- Recruit and train additional, diverse established Catholic leaders who will be paired up with the next cohort of participants in the Art of Accompaniment Mentoring Program.
- Provide more religious communities with an opportunity at the Forum to increase their visibility with established and emerging Church leaders who will collaborate with them in their ministries.
- Host additional GIVEN Gatherings to increase awareness of the mission as well as meeting the needs of women in local arenas.

- Continued opportunities for ongoing formation through GIVEN Academy and online networks.

### **What are GIVEN's long-term goals?**

- GIVEN expects that participation in Leadership Forums and the Art of Accompaniment Mentoring Program will become highly sought-after opportunities for this targeted demographic and will attract top-tier candidates who will be well-positioned to have an impact as leaders in their fields. GIVEN expects to see application numbers grow as well as participation in the GIVEN Network through regional events and online programming.
- GIVEN anticipates that hosting annual Leadership Forums, building up the dedicated mentoring network, and launching GIVEN Gatherings will help to foster a steady, incisive presence of faithful, skilled women--both lay and consecrated religious--in positions of leadership within the Church and within professions aimed at the common good.
- GIVEN expects that it will become a leading organization that supports the work of religious sisters in the United States. GIVEN will provide regular leadership development opportunities for religious sisters and provide communities with high-impact networking opportunities for their sustainability. GIVEN also introduces young women to diverse religious communities and the witness of self-gift in consecrated life throughout its programming.

### **How will GIVEN measure success?**

The GIVEN Institute will measure success by:

- Regularly measuring the effectiveness of programming
- Post-Forum surveys (short and long-term) of how GIVEN affected vocational commitments and decision-making
- Tracking numbers of applicants for Forum and mentoring and quality of applications
- Tracking numbers of women who serve as mentors and their evaluation of mentor training and program
- Tracking numbers of alumnae who give back to GIVEN with time, talent, treasure
- Tracking number of religious sister participants in GIVEN programming as well as the congregations that remain involved over time
- Tracking number of GIVEN Gathering requests and the geographical stretch of GIVEN programming
- Evaluating effectiveness and execution of participant action plans
- Tracking impact via social media platforms, online content, and ongoing formation opportunities

Assessment will be conducted through habitual program surveying in addition to the work of GIVEN's measurement, evaluation and learning partner. GIVEN recently contracted with Dr. Michael Welker, Director of Catholic Business Management and Entrepreneurship at Franciscan University, to conduct an external evaluation. This research project will be geared primarily towards understanding the internal transformation of the young adult women, the effectiveness of their Action Plans, and how the presence of religious sisters impacts their work. The project will track 30 women beginning with the 2021 Forum cohort and evaluate them over their time in the Art of Accompaniment Mentoring Program as well as the sustainability of their Action Plans after they graduate from the formal program. This process will be implemented with each cohort moving forward annually. This will ensure that the additional leadership training and ongoing formation through GIVEN Academy, Discover the Gift, GIVEN Gatherings and other GIVEN Network programming is truly impacting alumnae long-term. Results will be reviewed by the Board of Directors and shared in an Annual Report to supporters. GIVEN will gradually incorporate the research findings into systemic change and continuous quality improvement plans, year after year.

GIVEN Staff reviews key performance indicators for each of its programs which informs the internal surveying as well. Feedback from GIVEN's measurement, evaluation and learning partners and the continuous surveying is critical to improvement and setting the stage for strategic planning.

The research of GIVEN's programming conducted by Dr. Sophia Aguirre from the Integral Economics Department of Catholic University showed that the impact of the Forum is highly effective in a young woman's life primarily in her sense of self-worth, her divine affiliation, and understanding and exercise of leadership as service. In summary, there was positive and statistically significant evidence that the Forum has impacted the development of human and social capital. Results indicated the existence of a positive and statistically significant impact of the Forum on the treatment group's quality of life, as well as on the living of social and civic responsibilities by participants. However, the sustainability of the personal changes as well as the impact of the Action Plans struggle to remain consistent over the course of time. By continuing the successful launch of GIVEN Academy, Discover the Gift, and the wider GIVEN Network, alumnae of the Forum have the opportunity to engage with Catholic female leaders throughout their vocational journey & build upon the formation & training received during their formal cohort year. Also, the second installment of the research released in November 2020 showed that the matching system previously used did not always engage the young women with mentors that fit the skill-set needed to support the Action Plan's next steps. These findings have resulted in programmatic change including the partnership with Inscape Vocations on mentor training and the pursuit of a stronger mentor matching system for the GIVEN team.