



Understanding and Guiding the Next Generations

A Catholic Parent's Guide to Gen Z and Gen Alpha

Understanding and Guiding the Next Generations: A Catholic Parent's Guide to Gen Z and Gen Alpha



It's time to discuss something that's always on our minds as parents: how to guide our kids in their faith journey in this wild, ever-changing world. At Newman Connection, we've been connecting Catholic high school seniors with campus ministries since 2009 — over 600,000 of them! And let us tell you, we've seen some changes.

The culture has been pulling our youth one way, while the Church seems to be playing catch-up. But don't worry, we've got your back. We've spent 15 years working with thousands of parents, students, and

ministers across 118 dioceses, and we're here to share what we've learned about Gen Z and Gen Alpha.

Let's be real for a second — parenting today is no walk in the park, especially when it comes to faith. Our kids are growing up in a world that's light-years away from what we knew. But here's the exciting part: With the right approach, we can turn these challenges into opportunities. So, let's dive in and explore how we can nurture our children's spiritual lives in this complex, tech-driven world.



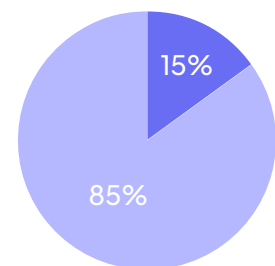
Understanding Gen Z

First up, let's get to know Gen Z a little better.

WHO ARE THESE GEN Z KIDS ANYWAY?

Born between 2001 and 2009, Gen Z includes your typical high schooler right now (ages 14–18 as of 2024). We're focusing on the ones in the U.S., but they're a diverse bunch all over the globe.

Gen Z Catholic



Non-Catholic

WHAT ABOUT THEIR FAITH?

Now, here's where it gets interesting. Gen Z's often called the least religious generation in American history. Shocking, right? A whopping **48.5%** identify as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular." Only 15% call themselves Catholic. But hold on, it's not all doom and gloom!

Here's the twist: Gen Z's relationship with religion is actually pretty complex. Sure, **they might doubt God's existence more than previous generations**, but get this — 76% of them are curious about the Bible and Jesus. And more than half (52%) are extremely or very curious. That's something we can work with!

DIGITAL NATIVES TO THE CORE

These kids were born with smartphones in their hands — okay, not literally, but you get the idea. On average, they got their first phone at 10 years old and spend about three hours a day glued to their screens. They're savvy consumers, too. They can spot a marketing ploy from a mile away and prefer experiences that grab their attention and offer immediate value.

When it comes to social media, [it's all about YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat](#). But remember, usage patterns can vary a lot depending on who you're talking to.



WHAT MAKES THEM TICK?

Gen Z is all about values. They're drawn to causes and organizations that align with their beliefs. They're also looking for inspiration and comfort in these uncertain times, and many are grappling with mental health challenges. For many of these kids, God and the Bible are seen more as sources of peace than practical life guides.

How to Guide Gen Z

So, how do we guide these tech-savvy, value-driven, curious young people? Here are some ideas:

1. TAP INTO THEIR CURIOSITY

Gen Z loves to ask questions and explore, so why not use that to dive into faith discussions? There are tons of Catholic apps, podcasts, and YouTube channels out there that speak their language. Try exploring some together—it's a great way to bridge the gap between their digital world and your family's faith journey.

Here are some cool resources to check out:

- Apps: Amen App ([Apple](#), [Android](#)), Hallow ([Apple](#), [Android](#))
- Podcasts: [The Bible in a Year](#) (Fr. Mike Schmitz), [Catholic Stuff You Should Know](#)
- YouTube channels: [Ascension Presents](#), [Bishop Robert Barron](#)
- Social Media: [@newmanconnection](#), [@catholiclink_en](#)

2. CONNECT FAITH WITH THEIR VALUES

Show them how [Catholic social teaching](#) aligns with the causes they care about. Introduce them to Catholic organizations making a real difference in the world. Organizations like [Mobile Loaves and Fishes](#), [Project Rachel](#), [Eden Invitation](#), [Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition](#), and [A21](#) are doing amazing work. Better yet, get them involved in local initiatives. It's a hands-on way to put faith into action.

3. USE THEIR DIGITAL SKILLS FOR GOOD

Help them find positive role models online who can strengthen their faith. Teach them how to think critically about what they see and read, using Catholic teachings as a guide. Show them how to fact-check using reliable Catholic sources, and discuss how to interpret Church statements.

Here are some skills to help them develop:

- Fact-checking using the [Catholic Catechism](#) or [the USCCB's digital resource library](#).
- Understanding Church authority and interpreting statements.
- Applying [Catholic moral teaching](#) to evaluate media content.
- Recognizing [logical fallacies](#) in arguments against faith.
- Balancing skepticism with openness to the mystery in faith.



Understanding Gen Alpha

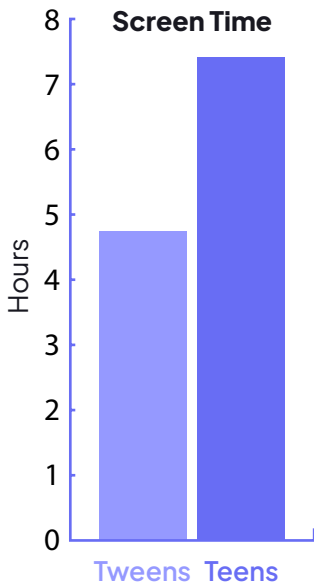
Now, let's talk about the new kids on the block - Gen Alpha.

WHO ARE THESE LITTLE ONES?

Born between 2010 and 2025, [Gen Alpha](#) is the first generation entirely born in the 21st century. As of 2024, they range from newborns to 14-year-olds. Most of them are the children of Millennials, which is why some people call them "[mini millennials](#)."

TECH-SAVVY DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO COVER IT

If you thought Gen Z was tech-savvy, wait till you meet Gen Alpha! These kids are true "digital natives raised by digital natives." They've been around technology since day one, which makes them the most tech-savvy generation in history.



Get this: tweens (that’s kids aged 8–12) are spending an average of 4 hours and 44 minutes on screens daily. Teens? They’re clocking in at 7 hours and 22 minutes! YouTube, TikTok, and Disney+ are their go-to platforms for entertainment and socializing.

WHAT MAKES GEN ALPHA UNIQUE?

These kids are incredibly brand-aware and mature for their age. They often mimic the consumption habits of Gen Z and Millennials. But here’s the kicker — they’re deeply concerned about social issues. Many of them are already advocating for things like environmental sustainability, diversity, and equality.

Gen Alpha is all about authenticity and community. They value connections with others and often trust influencers as much as family members when it comes to making decisions!

How to Guide Gen Alpha

Guiding Gen Alpha requires a slightly different approach. Here are some strategies:

1. FOSTER EARLY FAITH ENGAGEMENT

Since these kids are so young, we have a great opportunity to integrate faith into their daily lives from the get-go. Use digital tools and resources that resonate with their tech-savvy nature. For example:

- Use interactive apps to teach [about the Mass](#) and its parts.
- Educate your child on the reality of [Eucharistic miracles](#).
- Involve siblings and parents in [sacramental preparation](#).

2. SUPPORT THEIR SOCIAL AWARENESS

Help Gen Alpha connect their desire to make a positive impact with their Catholic faith. Show them how Catholic teachings align with their values around sustainability, diversity, and helping others. Encourage participation in age-appropriate service projects that connect them with their community and reinforce their Catholic values.



3. DEVELOP THEIR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Help Gen Alpha develop strong [emotional intelligence](#) within the context of Catholic values. Encourage open conversations about feelings, emphasizing virtues like charity, generosity of heart, and compassion. Model healthy emotional expression, rooted in faith, and guide them in developing strong social skills that reflect Christ-like love and respect for others.

Practical Tips for Parenting Both Generations

Whether you're raising Gen Z or Gen Alpha (or both!), here are some universal tips to help guide them in their faith:

Build open communication

[Create an environment](#) where your kids feel safe expressing their thoughts and doubts about faith. Listen without judgment, try to see the world through their eyes, and offer guidance with love and understanding.

Incorporate faith in daily life

Your example is powerful. Attend Mass together, pray as a family, read Scripture, and discuss faith during everyday moments. Let your children take active roles in Church activities or in leading family prayers.

Help them navigate the digital world

Use their familiarity with technology to their spiritual advantage. Introduce them to digital resources like [YOUCAT](#) that make Church teachings more accessible and relatable.

Address their mental health

Be vigilant for signs of struggle and reassure your children that they can talk to you about anything. Encourage them to find comfort in faith practices like prayer and Eucharistic Adoration, while also being open to professional mental health care when needed.

Address loneliness and build community

Despite being constantly connected online, many young people feel profoundly lonely. Encourage participation in church-related activities where they can build face-to-face connections. Remember, a strong family bond is the foundation of their social and emotional well-being.



Connect them with mentors

While you're their primary mentor, additional faith-based mentors, such as priests, religious educators, or older parishioners, can offer valuable perspectives and experiences.

Navigating Interfaith Relationships and Conversations

As our world becomes more diverse, it's crucial to guide our kids in maintaining their Catholic faith while respecting other religions. Here are some strategies:

1. Teach active listening and asking thoughtful questions.
2. Encourage finding common ground between faiths.
3. Promote sharing personal faith experiences rather than making broad generalizations.
4. Discuss how to set boundaries and respect others' comfort levels when talking about religion.
5. Explore resources for understanding other religions from a Catholic perspective.

Guiding Vocational Discernment

Help your children discern their [vocations](#) in the context of their faith:

1. Introduce the concept of vocation as a calling from God.
2. Discuss various vocations: priesthood, religious life, married life, single life.
3. Provide tools for discernment: prayer practices, retreats, and spiritual direction.
4. Address how to balance vocational discernment with career planning.

Making Catholic Traditions Relevant

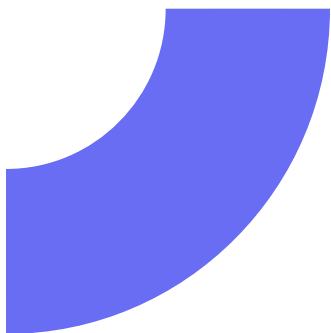
Help your children connect with traditional Catholic practices in ways that resonate with their digital-native lifestyles:

- Rosary: Introduce prayer apps, online rosary groups, or relate mysteries to current events.
- Eucharistic Adoration: Organize silent retreats, adoration with music, or explore virtual adoration options.
- Saint devotions: Use social media to share saint quotes and relate [saints' lives](#) to modern challenges.

Navigating Catholic Education Choices

When considering educational options, weigh the pros and cons of different approaches:

- Catholic schools: Immersive faith environment but potential financial considerations.
- Public schools: Diverse experiences but may require more at-home faith formation.



- Homeschooling: Tailored education and faith integration but requires significant parental involvement. (Here are some great resources: [NCEA](#), [The Institute for Catholic Liberal Education](#), [Catholic Parents Online](#), [Parents As First Educators](#), and [Catholic Homeschool Online](#).)

When making this decision, remember to pray for guidance, consult your parish, and evaluate your child's specific needs.

There's Hope for Gen Z and Alpha

By applying these insights and practices, you'll find that your children not only grow closer to their faith but also become more connected to your family. Praying, learning about the faith, and engaging in shared activities together will create lasting bonds and drastically impact your Gen Z or Gen Alpha child's faith for the rest of their life.

Remember, every family's journey is unique. Be patient with yourself and your children as you navigate these challenges together. Your efforts to nurture their faith, combined with openness to their perspectives and needs, will lay a strong foundation for their lifelong spiritual journey.

Keep the faith, parents! You've got this!

Newman Connection: We Exist For Catholic Students And Parents (That's You!)

As you continue on this journey, know that there are resources and communities available to support you and your children. Whether it's connecting your children with mentors or using the resources and programs discussed earlier in this report that resonate with their unique experiences, there are ways to help the next generation of Catholics thrive.

Your parish or child's school can partner with us at Newman Connection to implement this. For the past 15 years, we've been hard at work creating Catholic content and programs that connect high school students to their faith as they transition to college. Our mission is to bridge the gap between high school and college faith life, ensuring that young Catholics remain connected to their spiritual roots during this crucial period. Just to give you an idea of the breadth of our experience, **here are some stats about Newman Connection:**



600,000+

Students Connected

in **650+**
**Catholic High
Schools**



on **800+**
College Campuses

I've really enjoyed being a part of the Newman Association because it has led me to meet other Catholics on campus and made me feel less alone in my faith. Everyone I've met through the Newman Center is super nice and welcoming. Our meetings and weekly Mass have helped me feel close to God even when I'm away from home.

— Sophia, Student at Newman Association, SUNY Plattsburgh

The Newman Center completely changed my life! College without faith is very difficult... there are a lot of forces working against you. But having a community of Catholic friends and mentors was life-changing for me!

— Brandon H., St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center at the University of New Mexico

2,000+

Parishes Reached

If it weren't for the Newman Center at my university, I would be an atheist today. But thanks to the Newman Center on my campus, I had the support, guidance, and love of a faith-based community to keep me close to God!

— Stephanie F., Catholic Middle School Teacher

110+

**Diocese
Endorsements**

15

**Years of
Commitment**



We Connect Students so Their Faith Thrives in College and Beyond.

Connecting Students

Did you know that over 80% of students stop practicing the faith in college? We are changing this statistic.

Since 2009, our longest running program, High School Outreach, has connected over 600,000 students to a campus ministry. With endorsements in 110+ dioceses across the country, we ensure every college-bound student stay connected to their faith.

[Learn more about High School Outreach](#)



Building Stronger Communities

Students want to be apart of a community that is thriving, not one that is stagnant or where they can't relate to anyone. Our First90 program is the solution.

First90 is the first of it's kind, ministry leader training program that helps students transition smoothly into college life by building up their leader and soon to be community. Through personalized support, students can keep their faith strong and navigate the challenges of this new environment with confidence.

[Learn more about First90 today](#)

Supporting Campus Ministers

Get the support you need to lead your ministry with confidence and clear direction.

Through our cohort program—First90, digital community and resources, we offer services that inspire confident leadership in campus ministers.

[Learn more about our campus minister services](#)

