The Real World: A Toolbox to Help You Handle the Transition

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it still is a beautiful world.
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Introduction & Words of Wisdom
“Things will be different; there are many new challenges, but also new joys.”
~CCM Alum

“It's a big change ... But it's not something to be taken lightly – though each person will experience it and deal with it in a different way.”
~Laura Buchanan, 2010

“It can be tough putting out resumes, doing interviews, and then playing the waiting game, so make sure to stay powered up with Jesus.”
~Caroline Mains, 2007

“I think everyone I knew was depressed the week after graduation. You aren't going to be in an instant community of 5000 peers anymore, so it's ok if your social circle shrinks a bit and your schedule isn't packed with lots of different activities anymore.”
~Sarah LaVigne, 2008
Young Adult Ministries
“When you’re an undergraduate, you have a pre-built Catholic community waiting for you. When you graduate, you have to build your own.”
~Susan Metallo, 2010

“I would say [Theology on Tap] and getting plugged into volunteering (at your parish, a school, anywhere) are a good way to spend time with other Catholic young adults.”
~Sarah LaVigne, 2008

Diocese of Arlington YAM:  
http://www.arlingtondiocese.org/yam/young_adult.php

Diocese of Richmond YAM:  
http://www.richmonddiocese.org/cyam/youngadult.htm

Google your diocese and “Young Adult Ministry” and see what pops up!
Some diocese have YAMs for the diocese, others do it by parish. It’s okay to seek out a YA group at a parish that is not your home parish.

Scout out local parish bulletins for young adult events.  
Go to a few before you decide if the group is or isn’t right for you.  
Remember, it will take TIME for you to find your niche in a new community!

Don’t be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and try something new:  
Some YA groups revolve around activities, such as sports, service, or pro-life work.  
Join them, even if you have no experience in that area.
Parish Life
“One thing I both experienced myself and observed in others was that students come in as freshmen into an environment that seeks them out, then (often) rise through the ranks and graduate as leaders, at least to some extent. The transition from that to a "normal" parish can be difficult. Folks won't seek them out like they did at CCM. The system is already in motion, and newcomers probably aren't recognized or acknowledged. It can seem very cold if we don't understand this is happening. It's particularly hard for alumni who were active in CCM, because they rose to the top of the ladder, then suddenly found themselves back at the bottom. Their talents and acquired knowledge suddenly lose all their value, it seems. It takes an extra effort to reassert oneself in a new parish. It's not impossible, but can be difficult, but alumni really have so much to offer once we get beyond that initial discouragement.”
~ Fr. Jonathan Goertz, 2004

“Don't be shy to introduce yourself to your new parish's pastor and sign up for some liturgical duties. Priests see hundreds of people every Sunday, but if you get involved they'll remember who you are.”
~Sarah LaVigne, 2008

Parish life is – surprise! – different than CCM life. It’s not just a larger community and a wider age range, though that definitely is part of it. A parish community stays stable over the years, with families who have been there for decades. That means that people don’t rise to prominence in the course of a year or two, as they do with CCM.
The two P’s of finding your parish community:

1) Be proactive.
   People won’t seek you out the same way. Take the initiative to get involved in one ministry that interests you. Introduce yourself to people. Join a Bible study. Put yourself out there.

2) Be patient.
   It takes longer to enter a parish community than a campus community, and you are a newcomer. Don’t be discouraged by the time you have to spend with a parish before you feel a part of its community.

The Mass is the Mass, wherever you happen to find it. Jesus is there, in the Blessed Sacrament, no matter the parish. However, different parishes have different feels, different focuses, and different ways of living out our Catholic faith. Find a parish that makes you want to stick around after Mass, to linger with the community. Any parish will fulfill your Sunday obligation; some parishes will fill your need for a community more than others.

Break out of your peer group. While it’s healthy to have friends your own age, don’t stop there. It’s okay to be the only person under 45 in your Bible study. Our older brothers and sisters have much to teach us – and often we provide witness as young people alive in our faith.
Besides a Young Adult Ministry and your parish, there are tons of other Catholic communities out there. Here is just a small sampling. Remember, these might not be your peer group. Still they can be enriching communities who help you maintain your relationship with the Lord.
Parish Ministries:

Seriously, join a ministry in your parish! Yes, it is intimidating; yes, you probably are the new, young one. Yes, you will be serving God and growing in Him.

Knights of Columbus: [http://www.kofc.org/](http://www.kofc.org/)

Knights of Columbus [is] a fraternal benefit society. The Order is still true to its founding principles of charity, unity and fraternity. Social and intellectual fellowship is promoted among members and their families through educational, charitable, religious, social welfare, war relief and public relief works.

Daughters of Isabella: [http://www.daughtersofisabella.org/](http://www.daughtersofisabella.org/)

“The Order of the Daughters of Isabella is a charitable organization of Catholic women founded on the principle of its motto: Unity, Friendship and Charity. We come together as a sisterhood to uphold the teachings of the Catholic Church, bringing spiritual benefits to our members and contributing to the common good of humanity.”


“Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are men and women who strive to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to individuals in need. We are part of an international society united by of poverty, humility, and sharing, nourished by prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings, and adherence to a basic Rule. We collaborate with all who seek to relieve need and address its causes. The personalized involvement makes the Society unique.”

Legion of Mary: [http://www.legionofmary.ie/](http://www.legionofmary.ie/)
“The object of the Legion of Mary is the glory of God through the holiness of its members developed by prayer and active co-operation, under ecclesiastical guidance, in Mary’s and the Church's work of crushing the head of the serpent and advancing the reign of Christ. Members become instruments of the Holy Spirit through a balance of prayer and service in a family atmosphere. Works include evangelization, parishioner visitation, visitation of the sick or aged, Catholic education, visiting the newly baptized, visiting families, and meeting the other spiritual needs of the parish community.”

Militia Immaculata: http://www.consecration.com/

“The Militia of the Immaculata (MI) is an evangelization movement founded by St. Maximilian Kolbe that encourages total consecration to Mary as a means of spiritual renewal. It is open to all Catholics. It employs prayer as the main weapon in the spiritual battle with evil. MIs also immerse themselves in apostolic initiatives throughout society, either individually or in groups, to deepen the knowledge of the Gospel and our Catholic Faith in themselves and in others.”

Professional Organizations:
Many professions have groups or societies based on a common career interest. For example, Catholic doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.

Third Orders:
Many religious orders have lay counterparts. Explore different charisms, and if one appeals to you, look into its lay arm. For example, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Benedictines all have lay people affiliated with them. Remember, this is a discernment process, so give it prayer and time!
Personal Faith Life
“I would advise people to use transition as an opportunity to learn more about your personal relationship with God. While a good support network and social group like CCM is great, ultimately your faith is an affirmation of the person to God with devotion to His community. Many things will be beyond our control, but one thing we can always do is try to work on our relationship with the Lord. I would advise people to be very patient and steadfast here, realizing there will be challenges. I would advise people to be ok with finding what works in their faith.”
~CCM Alum

“As much as I grew in college, those experiences were only seeds for the growth after graduation. Such a large part of my spiritual life hinged on sharing with other people, since graduation I have been able to build a relationship with Jesus which involved only the two of us. As daunting as this adventure may initially seem, having ‘no one’ to rely on but God can be the richest experience.”
~CCM Alum, 2009

“It's nice if you can find a community wherever you are going next, but it takes a lot of personal strength to keep a prayer life going on your own.”
~Laura Buchanan, 2010

As you leave a community of faith, your personal prayer life becomes even more essential in keeping you anchored to Christ. Keep it meaningful and vibrant.
Book Recommendations
(from alumni and friends of CCM)
Jesus of Nazareth, Benedict XVI
- Encyclical about the life and mission of Jesus

The Shack, William P. Young
- Novel about pain, forgiveness, and mercy

Trustful Surrender to Divine Providence, Father Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure and St. Claude de la Colombiere
- “The Secret to Peace and Happiness,” according to the subtitle

The Story of a Soul, St. Thérèse of Lisieux
- Autobiography of St. Thérèse

The Wisdom of the Desert, tr. Thomas Merton
- Sayings and parables from 4th century hermits

The Way/Furrow/The Forge, St. Escriva
- Spiritual advice from St. Josemaria Escriva

The Listener, Taylor Caldwell
- Collection of stories for mediation on life

Testimony of Hope, Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan
- Collection of messages based on the author’s years in Communist prison

Community and Growth, Jean Vanier
- About the L’Arche communities, and the spirituality of community in general

True Devotion to Mary, St Louis De Montfort
- Shows the way to Jesus through Mary
The Imitation of Christ, Thomas a Kempis
   Spiritual classic – advice on how to live like Christ
The Lamb's Supper, Scott Hahn
   Describes the Mass and book of Revelation in relation to each other
A Simple Path, Mother Teresa
   A look at the life and path of Mother Teresa
Come Be My Light, Mother Teresa
   A collection of Mother Teresa’s personal writing published after her death
Crossing the Threshold of Hope, John Paul II
   Discussion of spiritual and theological concerns of the modern era
I Believe in Love, Jean C. J. d'Elbée
   A personal retreat based on the writings of St. Thérèse of Lisieux
Intro to the Devout Life, Francis de Sales
   Discerning how to live God’s call in a secular world
A Man for Others, Patricia Treece
   Story of Maximilian Kolbe, in the words of those around him in the concentration camp
Mary Was Her Life: The Life of Venerable Teresa Quevedo, Sister Mary Pierre, R.S.M.
   Biography/discernment story of a popular girl who became a nun
The Screwtape Letters, C.S. Lewis
   Collection of “letters” from a devil to his apprentice
Catholicism Online

“BustedHalo.com strives to reveal [the] spiritual dimension of our lives through feature stories, reviews, interviews, faith guides, commentaries, audio clips, discussions and connections to retreat, worship and service opportunities that can’t be found anywhere else. We are committed to creating a forum that is: open, informed, unexpected, unpredictable, balanced, and thought-provoking. Every time we ask questions about what our lives mean and what keeps us alive, we are talking about something that’s relevant to BustedHalo.com.”


“Headline Bistro is a service of the Knights of Columbus dedicated to bringing readers the top, daily headlines that Catholics need to know. We seek to present the news from the perspective of Catholics who want to know what’s happening in the Church, nation and world around them.”


The Vatican’s Youtube Channel


A blogging community of Catholic father


“Public Discourse: Ethics, Law, and the Common Good is an online publication of the Witherspoon Institute that seeks to enhance the public understanding of the moral foundations of free societies by making the scholarship of the fellows and affiliated scholars of the Institute available and accessible to a general audience.”


Slavishly accurate liturgical translations & frank commentary on Catholic issues – by Fr. John Zuhlsdorf
The New Liturgical Movement: http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/
Commentary on all things liturgical

“ZENIT is a non-profit international news agency comprising a team of professionals and volunteers who are convinced of the extraordinary richness of the Catholic Church’s message, particularly its social doctrine. The ZENIT team sees this message as a light for understanding today's world. At the same time, we are aware that this richness is little known in the information world. This motivates us to strive to bring this message to the Internet, in the greatest possible number of languages. Our objective is to inform about the "world seen from Rome," with professionalism and faithfulness to the truth. We aim to view the modern world through the messages of the Pope and the Holy See; tell about the happenings of the Church; and inform about the topics, debates and events that are especially interesting to Christians worldwide. ZENIT carries out this service independently.”

National Catholic Register (A Service of EWTN): http://www.ncregister.com/
“Our mission is to provide a perspective on the news of the day as seen through the eyes of the Magisterium. We assist Catholics in engaging the culture with confidence in the saving and sanctifying Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Whispers in the Loggia: http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/
“One of global Catholicism's most prominent chroniclers, Rocco Palmo has held court as the ‘Church Whisperer’ since 2004, when the pages you’re reading were launched with an audience of three, grown since by nothing but word of mouth, and kept alive throughout thanks solely to reader support. A former US correspondent for the London-based international Catholic weekly The Tablet, Palmo's served as a church analyst for The New York Times, Associated Press, BBC, NBC, National Public Radio, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and a host of other print and broadcast outlets worldwide.”
Bright Maidens: https://www.facebook.com/BrightMaidens?sk=info
   “We three are from the oft-mentioned, widely-speculated upon demographic of young, twenty-something Catholic women. We're here to dispel the myths and misconceptions- please join us for the discussion! The Bright Maidens post series was created before Lent 2011 by three bloggers turned friends. It continues on every first Tuesday of the month, bringing new apologetics to the young and older alike. We're here to answer 1 Timothy 4:12's call: ‘Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.’”
First Things: http://www.firstthings.com/
   “First Things is published by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society.”
Conversion Diary (blog): http://www.conversiondiary.com/
   “Jennifer Fulwiler was an atheist all [her] life until 2005. [She] researched my way into Christianity, and now [she] write[s] about what it's like to be part of an orthodox faith after a life of nonbelief.”
   A blogger on catholicvote.org
SQPN: http://sqpn.com/
   “SQPN (Star Quest Production Network) is a multimedia organization specializing in the production of audio and video programs faithful to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Its mission is to respond to the Church’s call to use the media for religious information, for evangelization and catechesis and for formation and education.”
Retreats, Etc.
Sometimes, you just need to get away to refocus. Here are some retreats and conferences W&M alumni have found:

Catholics on Call: [http://www.catholicsoncall.org/](http://www.catholicsoncall.org/)
- Young adult discernment conference. The focus is on any type of ministry, not just religious life.

- Student-oriented conferences, but alumni have tagged on with nearby campuses.

YAMs: Keep an eye on your local Young Adult Ministry’s calendar of events
- Richmond: [http://www.richmonddiocese.org/cyam/retreats.htm](http://www.richmonddiocese.org/cyam/retreats.htm)

In addition, just keep up to date with your parish bulletin and peruse your diocesan website for a list of retreat centers. Finally, don’t be afraid to ask your priest or another parish leader!
Alumni Resources
&
Keeping in Touch
“I think it’s incredibly helpful to keep in touch with CCM friends and make it back to WM & CCM every now and then. I always feel refreshed and reconnected after I go to CCM Mass.”
~Anne Holsinger, 2009

“William and Mary is everywhere. No matter where I have gone, though my travels have stayed on the east coast, I have been able to catch up with an old friend or meet a new one. An alumni family in the area checks up on me more often than some friends from undergraduate. I met this family at our local Yule Log celebration; I was the youngest by about a decade. And, you never know if the seminarian assigned to your parish will be a WM alumnus!”
~CCM Alum, 2009

“I was surprised how little unprompted contact I have experienced from old friends who I would have expected it from or even how many times I would not hear back from people when I contacted them. In many ways, college is a really weird and unrealistic place, where people all the same age are put together to see each other all the time. That doesn't happen many places outside and it means keeping up or extended friendships is harder.”
~CCM Alum

“It's also important to figure out with friends just how you will keep in touch if you won't be seeing them weekly. I skype with Angela, get coffee with Beth when one of us is in town, e-mail with Eric, etc.”
~Laura Buchanan, 2010
Be intentional about staying in touch with people post-graduation. It can be hard – you are separated by many miles, rather than living together and worshiping together.

- Be the one to make the effort – often a friend is waiting on a phone call, just as you are.
- Be regular in your communication with friends, but also be spontaneous.
- Ask for prayers and offer to pray for friends.

Don’t force things to be the same. They are not. But that doesn’t mean you can’t have beautiful friendships still. Be patient as they evolve into their post-college form.

Keep up to date with CCM on Facebook:
  [https://www.facebook.com/ccm1693](https://www.facebook.com/ccm1693)

Let us know how to contact you to receive newsletter and invites:
  [http://web.wm.edu/so/ccm/alum.php](http://web.wm.edu/so/ccm/alum.php)

Attend events such as Homecoming, Gaudete, and Alumni Retreats! Email us if you are not getting the alumni listserv:
  [wmccmalumni@gmail.com](mailto:wmccmalumni@gmail.com).
Emotional Balance
“In many ways, college is a really weird and unrealistic place, where people all the same age are put together to see each other all the time. That doesn't happen many places outside and it means keeping up or extended friendships is harder. As far as past friendships go, I think some people just wanted to move on and decide to focus on their new lives, which explains some of it.... Other people just are too busy to think about it, and for some it is just a matter of realizing the friendships were never too strong to begin with. But I also wish I had been told that it is ok for old friends to dwindle in size because it means you can focus on new friendships and you might do well focusing on the few friends you still have that you can trust and who are there for you.”

~CCM Alum

“Socially I have tended to gravitate toward Catholics, not because we share religion, but because socializing as a young adult in the real world can be even more scary than on campus. It took me a solid two years to discover the joy in spending time with my Catholic peers; now, I have to remind myself to step outside the comfort zone they provide.”

~CCM Alum, 2009
“Another thing that's hit me a lot recently is that I really don't see friends very often anymore - we're all spread out geographically - and even 10 or 25 miles is a lot when you factor in traffic! I spend a lot of time with my parents, with Paul, and with Paul's friends/family - and, of course, coworkers - but relatively little with my own friends. Having a scheduled weekly time - for me, it's quiz night at 4Ps - to see friends, has been very important to me.”
~Laura Buchanan, 2010

“Finally, I would advise people to try to have some stability in your life. Do not just abandon your favorite interests or passions if you get busier. In fact, that can be the most important thing. For instance, if you play a musical instrument, try to keep playing. If you play a sport, find a way to keep that up. Use time to exercise regularly. If you like to read, make a concerted effort to keep reading, etc.”
~CCM Alum
Advice from
Danny Cogut, 2007
1. Find a parish wherever you end up where you feel comfortable and where you think your faith life will be nurtured.

If you'll be remaining at home for the foreseeable future, go to church with your family, but try to find a young adult group or other groups with like-situated people (not necessarily at your home parish). Find a parish or group which will help you want to go to Mass and grow in your faith.
2. Create a daily prayer routine for yourself.

Even if you had a prayer routine throughout college, things will inevitably change once you start on the next stage of your life, whether it's work, grad school, lounging around, etc. This requires a lot of discipline and effort (the Catechism describes prayer as a "battle"), and it will take some tweaking and adjusting. There's no one "magic" routine, so be creative--Mass, reading scripture (lectio divina), Liturgy of the Hours, devotions, Ignatian meditations, spiritual reading, etc. One suggestion I would make would be to make time for prayer in the morning before your daily schedule starts, and in the evening after the bulk of your day is over. Offer the day to God in the morning, and review the day in the evening, thanking God for good deeds both given and received and asking forgiveness for failings.
3. Continue learning about the faith and stay engaged with what's going on in the Church and in the world.

If you're not a news junkie already, allow me to propose a news site that I browse every day: headlinebistro.com. It's run by the Knights, and every day it collects headlines from news sites all over the web about the Church, the US, and the world. It also has a good "selection" of Catholic columnists and opinion pages. The Church might become a bit "bigger" than your local experience of it, and you might feel just a bit more spiritually connected with the rest of the Church and the world. Also, even if you know the Catechism from cover to cover, there are always new questions for and challenges to the faith from every possible angle. If your supervisor, co-workers, new classmates, etc., know you're Catholic and ask you questions, be comfortable with talking with them. But remember, it's not about winning arguments; it's about real dialogue in common pursuit of the truth, in whatever form it may take. You might not have all the answers, and neither might the Church. Read, think, and pray.
4. Keep up with friends and cherish the past but embrace whatever path is in front of you.

This is probably the most difficult part of transitioning, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Some people can't wait to start the next stage of their lives, or they transition really smoothly, but chances are it's going to be hard at one point or another. There's always Facebook, phone calls, and visits, but if things get difficult, give yourself some time to "grieve" leaving college behind, and cherish your experiences and memories. Then gradually open yourself up to whatever lies ahead of you (and whatever surprises God might have in store for you). Don't be discouraged if you can't decide on your next step in life or job opportunities just aren't there, as long as you give yourself something to do each day (as simple as reading a book) and remain open to the possibilities. And if your next step doesn't turn out to be what you expected or hoped it would be, give yourself some time to think and pray about what to do, and talk about it with your old friends. Remember, you're still young enough that the decisions you make in the years after college are hardly irrevocable.
5. *Desiderata.*

I would propose these words of wisdom to any graduate about to head into the "real world" (not that college life is any less real): [http://marilee.us/desiderata.html](http://marilee.us/desiderata.html). With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it *is* still a beautiful world.
Prayers
Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, 
and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible, without surrender, 
be on good terms with all persons. 
Speak your truth quietly and clearly; 
and listen to others, 
even to the dull and the ignorant; 
they too have their story. 
Avoid loud and aggressive persons; 
they are vexatious to the spirit.

If you compare yourself with others, 
you may become vain or bitter, 
for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. 
Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. 
Keep interested in your own career, however humble; 
it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs, 
for the world is full of trickery. 
But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; 
many persons strive for high ideals, 
and everywhere life is full of heroism. 
Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. 
Neither be cynical about love, 
for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, 
it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, 
gracefully surrendering the things of youth. 
Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. 
But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. 
Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, 
be gentle with yourself. 
You are a child of the universe 
no less than the trees and the stars; 
you have a right to be here. 
And whether or not it is clear to you, 
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, 
whatever you conceive Him to be. 
And whatever your labors and aspirations, 
in the noisy confusion of life, 
keep peace in your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, 
it is still a beautiful world. 
Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

~ Max Ehrmann
Thomas Merton’s Prayer

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that, if I do this, You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust You always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

Prayer of Abandonment

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you:
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you
with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.

~Charles de Foucauld