

Revamped One Rock festival aims to inspire and equip young Catholics for leadership

Organizers are making big changes to One Rock, a major Alberta Catholic youth gathering, in the hope of strengthening young people in their faith.

“We want to empower them to go back into their communities, invigorated and inspired to help in the proclamation of the Gospel,” said Father Cristino Bouvette, vocations director for the Diocese of Calgary, which is hosting [One Rock 2.0](#) on Sept. 29 at St. Michael’s Parish.

“This is an entire generation of people who have been profoundly impacted, for good or bad, by the internet and social media. We need to learn to be good digital contributors to evangelization, (and) we’ve tried to address that with the speakers that we are bringing in, who are all very avid users of social media.”

One Rock 2.0 targets young adults between the ages of 18 and 35 – the same age range World Youth Day hosted between 1985 to 2006¹. Admission is free, although organizers welcome donations.

In 2017, more than 1,400 people attended each day in the former three-day festival format, which allowed for overnight camping. The event’s founder, Father Krystian Golisz of the Calgary Diocese, called it a “Catholic Woodstock.”



Father Cristino BouvetteSupplied

However, Bouvette said organizers noticed that the festival theme had lost its focus in recent years. The new one-day version of One Rock will feature keynote speakers who will “inspire, challenge and equip” young people to become good evangelists, especially in the online world, he said.

Among the featured speakers at One Rock 2.0 are podcaster and former *Catholic Answers* host [Patrick Coffin](#); YouTube personality [Lizzie Reezay](#), a recent convert to Catholicism, and [Brian Holdsworth](#) of Edmonton, who explores faith issues on his popular YouTube channel.

When it comes to young people, the Church needs to reach out, Holdsworth said.

“They are a key demographic that I think we should be focusing on with respect to evangelization, just because there are a lot of voices competing for their interest. A lot of those voices don’t have their best interest at heart, so I think the Church needs to really double down and make a concerted effort to offer what it has in the midst of those competing voices.”

Parishes and dioceses across Alberta and the Northwest Territories have been invited to send groups of young people to One Rock. After the number of youth delegates is confirmed, the remaining seats will be open to the public. Those interested [can currently pre-register](#) for available seats.



Brian HoldsworthSupplied

Some elements of the original One Rock remain. A house band of local musicians will entertain between presentations. And bishops from Alberta and the Northwest Territories will attend and celebrate Mass at the end of the day.

Developing One Rock 2.0 has had its challenges. The conference is operating on a shoestring budget, approximately half that of previous years. There was also

uncertainty over whether the delegation model will be understood and whether it might affect attendance.

“Change for anybody can be a challenge,” said Michael Chaisson, a frequent MC for One Rock since it began in 2010. “For me personally, I think the idea of the change was a courageous step. The response has been great, and I think it’s going to be a phenomenal event.”

Bouvette remains confident that One Rock 2.0 will be a success.

“I’m hoping it will be for young adults two things: not just an opportunity to come and learn and receive from the speakers, but also an opportunity to be inspired by each other.”

1: World Youth Day 2019 in Panama has updated its target age between 15-30 years of age. [Link](#)