

Giving Birth to Millennials

✖ Well, *that* took almost as long as a real pregnancy. Back on July 19, 2010, I sent a missive via email to the editorial staff of The Catholic Review. Think Jerry McGuire's Mission Statement without the goldfish. The subject was nebulous, but grand. "Millennials Multi-Story Idea." It sounded like I was either going to write about flowers or time travel in a DeLorean. In it, I explained how I wanted to chronicle the generation of teens and 20-somethings from the Archdiocese of Baltimore that were going to board flights and head to Madrid with their iPhones and Ipads (were Ipads even around then?) in August of 2011 and hang with a million other young Catholics and Pope Benedict XVI for World Youth Day. Basically, it would be a prep course for our readers and a mirror for young people, who admittedly don't read The Catholic Review in droves. They're the generation elusive to most newspapers. I wanted to capture them in a snapshot series and bring them into the Catholic discussion, even if some were coming kicking and screaming. Who are they? What do they do? What do they they believe in? What is their cause? How connected are they? What paradoxes exist and can you really just lump a whole generation of people together just based on studies? Not only that, but someone born in 1982 is not going to have too much in common with someone born in 1992. They're as different as He-Man and the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers. Everything would be peeled back over a span of months, leading up World Youth Day. I would talk to young people and experts to make it happen. I'd film interviews and have audio interviews in mp3 format. We met about the idea a day after the email opus. Everyone was excited. If there were Jerry McGuire fish around, I'm sure they would have been coming with me. The first trimester passed and outside of some conversations, there was little sign of life. Then, the story started kicking. I did some groundwork, attending a workshop with U.S. Catholic Bishops back in November and visited Mount St. Mary's campus in Emmitsburg in early December. I talked with four young people and Father Brian Nolan, chaplain there. Before we started, Father Brian prayed for me and my work. Hey, at least God's now in the loop, I thought. The students blew me away. They were smart, aware and so insightful it was almost shocking. In mid-January, I sat down with a Loyola University Maryland official and three students. Again, I was inspired to write and amazed how comfortable they were in front of cameras and how aware they were of the world's

issues. Our target date for publication was Feb. 10, 2011, but we hit some snags along the way in scheduling. It felt like the home stretch would never come. Finally, I settled in and cranked out the story two weeks ago, along with a timeline sidebar that would feature events that dot the landscape of a Millennial's life. After some rounds of editing with the staff here at The Review, it was finally released this past Thursday. It was surreal seeing it finally in print. I couldn't have done it without the support and hard work of co-workers April Hornbeck and Jenn Williams, who pushed and supported me. A Millennial page is being set up here at CatholicReview.org to stockpile the stories and multimedia featuring the young people interviewed for this series. I've got to get to work on the next installment in the series. The journey has only begun. Who's coming with me?