**Panel: Living the joy of the Gospel and Leading Mission in Parish Life  
Speech Notes from panelist Sophie Stewart.**(Please note; some of these notes are not written in full sentences, as the speaker used them to begin, and elaborated on certain points off cuff. No answers to questions asked at the panel are recorded here, they are simply speech prep notes)

***Pope Francis calls us to be a church that reaches out to the world. The New evangelization, guides us to be missionaries of Jesus to the modern world.  
Specifically, we’re called to be a Church with the Poor.  
The gospel interplays with a persons concrete life, both social and personal.* This is the call to faith in action Pope Francis sets for all of is.**But in this, we are missionaries evangelizing. Not just evangelizing TO the poor; But to all. Because a church for the poor, is a church centered on the Gospel, which is always an attractive message. Unlike some of the church’s doctrine (which is overwhelming, can be misunderstood out of context, especially for young people).  
In leading mission, most importantly we ourselves, both individually and as a Church must be living examples of Jesus CORE mission in living out the Joy of the Gospel, and in being a Church for the poor.  
I will specifically talk about how we can lead mission in parish life in regards to two groups, based upon my own experiences. **Experiences of faith in action in YCS.  
What is YCS?** Young Christian Students is a movement that aims to form active, life-long Christian leaders through the Review of Life. Cardijns See, Judge, Act method allows for both reflection, and faith in action to transform not just the world around us to resemble the Kingdo of Heaven, but to transform individual young people. **Experience stories:** Johanna YCS student on Q and A recently questioning Struggle St and making national news.,   
Logo YCS exec student buying food for the homeless man in the street without a word, when the rest of our group walked on by.   
Refugee actions; Free the Children cage in perth, and Detention for Detentions around the country **Youth.  
*“****It is not always easy to approach young people, progress has been made in two areas;  
awareness that the entire community is called to evangelize and educate the young, and the urgent need for the young to exercise greater leadership.****”***Young people are disconnected from the Church, Disenfranchised from community, They are Progressive, and the church seems ancient in its values. There is little to no hope for future in a world of climate change and technological warfare. Look at the fiction and fantasy currently played out on our screens and in books; contemporary dreams are of a post apocalyptic world, zombies and natural disasters and nuclear winter. And with an outlook on the future filled with despair, young people are searching for greater hope and meaning more than ever.  
  
**The message of love, serving the poor, and the dignity and worth of every human being, justice is never old.**  
Jesus was a radical, Jesus about love, the inherent dignity and worth of each human being as a reflection of God.  
Youth want to be part of that particular message. They IDENTIFY with that message. Young people are leaving the Church in droves, yet still people are joining Human Rights groups, still doing these things. Just go to a university and check out the booths on the oval at common lunch hours. I am surrounded by people doing these things; outside of the church. This is, or should be, the core work of the Church. But young people see the church as homophobic, sexist, antiquated, and associate them more with the spread of Aids, and child sex offenders.  
“Today our challenges is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many peoples thirst for God. Lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions, *or with a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others.”*   
I today don’t talk about flashy bands and lights- though these things can be attractive to youth, they do not retain them and hold them with our shared mission. Sometimes churches attempt to only teach young people to love themselves, and that God loves them. God does love us indeed, but we carry out his mission not by just loving God back through worship and praise, but by loving God by loving the piece of God in each of these, the least of our brothers and sisters.  
**Keep to the basic key message of the Gospel, and be “a poor church for the poor”. Otherwise the core message of CHURCH IS OVERWHELEMED BY OTHER THINGS.**   
Humbling ourselves, to the level of the sheep/flock.  
If you build it they will come.  
 **Never underestimating young people. A key part of what we teach in YCS.**   
They have a place for voice and power within the church. How many young people do you seriously have on your parish councils? How many times when young people suggest something at a Catholic school are their ideas shut down?   
Essential underestimation of young people. To teach doctrine and preach to them, without the core understanding of Jesus mission, and then allowing them to make those decisions themselves. Such a focus on sexuality, etc. So out of touch with young peoples lives. But if you teach young people the mission of love, and the mission of dignity of every human being, and to serve others particularly the poor; their life will be centred in the Mission of the Church. And their other choices will fall in line with this mission, if their core values are shared. Personally can tell the tales of students, whom through YCS were confronted with this mission, and radically changed the way they were living their lives. Several have proudly told me they now want to stay in parish youth groups after school, that instead of making money they want to now be a Human Rights lawyer, youg people that previously cared little for involvement in the church can now freely discuss how Jesus calls them to take action on the bullying they witnessed at recess.  
*“Stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast, he who has fallen away. Show them love, encourage faith in action, then bring them to the finer points.”***Women.**As the only woman on the panel today- I cannot help myself, and also feel it is my responsibility to also discuss women within these parameters.  
To lead mission in a Church for the Poor, we must incorporate all marginalized groups as leaders. *“The legitimate rights of women be respected, based on he firm conviction that men and women are equal in dignity, presents the Church with profound and challenging questions which cannot be lightly evaded.”*  
  
**In all brutal honesty as an outsider;** I cannot see why any woman, particularly any **young Australian woman, outside of the Church would ever choose to join it; a** patriarchal organization, where womens rights and abilities are structurally and integrally limited, and that seems to have taken “anti-women” stances on a number of high profile social issues.  
**As an insider**; **I am witness to the extraordinary joy of the Gospel lived out in the lives of those around me.** How faith in action transforms and changes the world around us to be a world more closely resembling my ideal, a world of justice, love, equality, and peace. The kingdom of heaven.  
**But from the outside; and even from where I’m standing, I still see a Chruch where women have comparatively little voice or power.** Where male dominated rulings and teachings are imposed upon women, who are consistently told that we have an important place and role within the Church, and that we have an equal worth to men according to our God given dignity; yet this is not carried out in Church structures or life. Women may not lead mass or worship. Women can never have sacramental powers. Women do not hold the majority of higher leadership positions within the Church, though seem to make up the vast majority of overlooked and undervalued volunteers and workers.

Love, and a church for others, is the key mission Jesus left us. Why live that mission with a church that gives me no power or voice?Surely I can take those ideas and lead my life by them elsewhere. In a contemporary world and holding progressive values, and a firm belief in the equality of all, I feel left out of my own Church. I regularly feel as though an injustice is being served to me. And it seems hypocritical.  
  
**Priesthood is reserved for men “*as a sign of Christ the spouse, who gives himself in the Eucharist”,* and can be divisive if sacramental power is too closely identified with power in general.  
I don’t understand this.** Perhaps one of my fellow panelists can answer for me- but it does not make sense to me. Surely the Church in a modern world, which has progressed many of its other values whilst never deviating from its core mission, would catch up to women getting equal rights. Surely they will understand that Jesus lived over 2000 years ago, in a time where gender relations were very different, so obviously then he wouldn’t have sent women to be leaders and priests, it wouldn’t have been effective as other men would not have listened, and was an exceedingly modern idea. **We have to read the Bible in the context of it’s time. And then apply those principles and core values to todays world**. **But now we understand that all humans are created equal. And women have equal capacities**. So surely the church like other principles would advance in this too?  
Perhaps this in itself is an issue- I am a 20 year old woman, who has been to Church every Sunday for most of my life, attended a Catholic School from Pre-Primary to Year 12, has worked for the AYCS for four years, and talked to countless Bishops, priests and people at conferences about this issue; and **I still do not satisfactorily understand the answers I receive about the place of women in the Church to any degree**. And I have a degree in Political Science and International Relations and Philosophy…. Trust me if you can decipher the meaning behind some of those texts you can almost decipher anything.   
  
**I think the two largest inhibitors to this are transparency and structure.**  
The transparency of answers on such issues; and uniform answers across Church leaders that are deeply founded in the core message of the Gospel are all that will suffice. But also a transparency of Church dealings and decision making processes, so women can be more informed and involved in final decision making.  
A true and holistic commitment to changing the structure of the church to incorporate different forms of power to sacramental power that are indeed key to influencing and decision making that women can hold must be established from parishes right up to the papacy. Priests need to be servers. Women should have the opportunity for legitimate sway.  
  
Women, as lay people, and Sisters, have been serving the Church for centuries. Often selflessly and without means to achieve material or power gains. **In a church that is called to be a Church that serves, a Church for the poor, surely as the most experienced servants as a body in the Church, we should have a place as real leaders, visionaries, and decision makers.**  
 **How we put these ideas and faith into action in parish life:  
Parish life that brings all too it. Churches as community resources and servers.**-The Church being seen by outsiders, at the crux, as a group of people who choose to serve the poor in our world, and treat each person as a truly equal brother or sister. To do this we must not only engage in acts of charity and service, but actively fight social injustices to lift people from the depths of poverty and allow them to live a life of dignity. We will be “the bruised, hurting and dirty church”  
We must also address the deep traditional and structural issues within our own Church that prevent us from living as equals. These are not questions to mull on for centuries, to remain relevant in a modern world, many of these need to be urgently addressed now.  
**A church that reaches out to the world. New evangelization. Missionaries of Jesus to the modern world.**In leading mission, most importantly we ourselves, both individually and as a Church must be living examples of Jesus CORE mission in living out the Joy of the Gospel, and in being a Church for the poor. THE CHURCH MUST BE A LIVING AND BREATHING EXAMPLE OF CHURCH THAT SERVES THE POOR< THE OPPORESSED< THE MARGINALISED. That is our mission as a whole. Other notions come second. **-What does this look like in parishes?**-Actively helping the poor in our church life and activities. This is literal, not simply preaching this message to parishioners, but bringing the homeless in the doors, inviting them to Church suppers to break bread and heal their lonely wounds. Church groups visiting refugees, captives imprisoned in immigration detention centres. Welcoming and loving Indigenous Australians. Assisting and sheltering victims of domestic violence.  
-Young people engaged first in these activities; and in Schools and parishes; not lectured on the finer points of Church doctrine, but taught the core messages of the Gospel, and not just encouraged, but shown and given the tools to live out Faith in Action, and see there is a place and relevance for Faith in their lives.  
- Priests to always reflect upon their role as servants. “a shepherd should smell like his flock.” Priests as missionaries with their people.  
- “The decentralization of the Church”, more emphasis to be placed upon not just individual diocese, but small Christian communities, as it was in Jesus day.   
-These communities can be hubs for wider community life; your church is a resource. Let the community use the grounds for events, lend the community group your hall, let young people use the grass for live music or outdoor movies. Remold our parishes as meeting grounds, as hubs for vibrant community life.  
“How can we fail to share that love with others” [The love of Christ in the joy of the Gospels]  
-In these decentralized communities; the importance of gendered power balance to be seen as critically important. And in the wider structure of the church, massive challenges and changes must be instilled to ensure women have a place of prominence and power equal to men in forging the new path of the Church. Pope Francis says sacramental power should not be identified with all power in general in the Church; in which case significant quotas, and positions must be made available for women to give influence at ALL levels of the church.