

## PROJECT OF LIFE AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Claudio Cartes A., SDB

### INTRODUCTION

It is constant throughout the history of Salvation that there are moments where God intervenes out of silence or anonymity to summon and call to a mission in the midst of various contexts. Sacred Scripture shows varied stories in this direction, but, in our little history, we know of several experiences of this type. God acts in a project, and people are a life project, a vocation. **We are a mission.**

In 2016, Pope Francis announced that a synod on youth, faith and vocational discernment would be held in the Church, putting youth at the center. And so, a series of milestones and processes followed one another, such as the preparatory document, the international seminar, the pre-synodal meeting, the Instrumentum Laboris, the synodal assembly and the final document, the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, even an international forum with young people from all over the world in 2019. That is, between 2016 and 2019 a process was developed to activate these paths that illuminate our pastoral educational experiences, and above all, vocational accompaniment and discernment.

Now, in the midst of this ecclesial process, we cannot ignore the context of uncertainty that humanity is going through, not only as a result of the COVID19 pandemic but also because of a serious cultural exhaustion manifested at various levels. In this context, it is inevitable to ask a series of questions that concern our human condition and the fundamental role that we are called to play at this crucial hour in history.

Although, as a result of the inevitable process of the historical forces deployed by the human being, where currently everything tends towards externality, production and techno-scientific progress, it is no less true that this requires a serious rethinking of the approaches proposed to date. of today referring to the interior life, the life project and vocational discernment. The human being, who has placed his priority on the exterior, is -somehow- forced to have to question himself in all his dimensions and listen to his own cry that arises from his interior and spiritual life, in order to balance and guide his authentic experience of human life, above all "projecting" his human life. A kind of unity center is required today. Which allows us to rethink these fundamental issues again, already encouraged by the path that culture has traveled and in it, the Church.

Although the modern path undertaken had already revealed deep cracks in its future, giving way to the consciousness of postmodernity, its impulse has not ceased to be valid in various consequences of human behavior, one of the most evident and ongoing is the individualism that threatens not only with the weakening of political, economic and religious relations, but also with the set of relations of the human being with himself and his environment, his surrounding world. For this reason, in the midst of this kind of diversified crisis or human mega crisis to which the COVID19 pandemic was added, the demand to seek the proper place of the human person, his authentic vocation in history, continues to intensify.

Both themes: life project and vocational discernment refer to two nuclear aspects of the human experience in the world, a projected life and a vocational orientation, being a mission in the world, which is part of our vital motivation for this meeting. Both aspects can be treated separately due to their specificity, however, we will address them as aspects of the human experience of inhabiting the world with a Christological and ecclesial sense.

## II. RETURNING TO THE HUMAN BEING AS A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

**The question about the human being remains a fundamental question.** We will approach the issues from an anthropological perspective, for which I will have to refer -albeit briefly- to its development from the perspective of the history of thought, an option that is consistent with the current context that moves us in this direction, given the contingency and emergencies ongoing, for which it is necessary to focus on some starting point that allows us to develop our topic without dispersing the reflections, and in turn, shed light on the urgency of the problem in question: the life project and vocational discernment.

Although the history of thought moved by the context has always dealt with the human being, reflecting on the subject who thinks and trying to reveal its fundamental structure, it should be noted that this concern has long been subordinated, conditioned and relativized to other interests. fundamental, either because of the relationship with the question oriented to being (metaphysics), or because of transcendental knowledge in modern thought.

The truth is that it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that the question of the human being himself (integral) as a fundamental question became a central interest, becoming, therefore, autonomous disciplines that think of the human being as such. In this direction, for example, and at the level of philosophical anthropology, we can locate the

famous text by Max Scheler (1874-1928): The position of man in the cosmos, as a milestone that marks the beginning of a contemporary anthropology, addressing the question about the meaning of human existence itself, at a time when "man has never been more problematic for himself" .

Scheler's affirmation continues to be valid today, whenever humanity crosses the arid valleys of fatigue and despair, of desolation or uncertainty. Now, for our understanding of the subject, we will not focus so much on the force of purely speculative thought, but rather we will delve into the loving mysteries of human experience that the Lord has wanted to go through with us, that is, seen from a point of view. view of the redeemed human being, to discover in him the traces of the Creator. Although this approach begins in the human being as redeemed, it does not fail to show the paths that the Lord travels to move and guide our lives.

-----

1. M. SCHELER, the place of man in the cosmos, Losada, Buenos Aires 1972, 19-24.

### **III. HISTORICAL REALISM**

It is necessary to be realistic. For example, saying that Christianity in the world is going from having -once- a dominant position to another of a marginal type, which should not, in any case, embitter the perspective but give it the fair value of its meaning. The historical context is relevant to understand the hermeneutic a priori, or different points of view to face the themes, thus, we can briefly frame our reading in the set of our subsequent reflections.

The twenties, in terms of the historical development of Europe, have meant a deep wound due to the First World War: "A wound of great pain". This was the first war conflict involving so many powers from around the world (1914-1918). In general, it was not expected that the most civilized countries of the West would incur a tragedy like the one exposed in the war, in which not only empires disappeared and nations were restructured but, in addition to the territorial and personal losses, Add the economic consequences and the new ideological discourses. Perhaps, this starting point seems distant to us, but it helps to explain very well the historical process that motivates both fundamental aspects of our theme and that gives us a strong clue of content.

This situation and many others have become a very deep historical trauma of self-awareness in the human community. Many ideas that thought about dignity, freedom, and equality had developed were suddenly clearly contradicted by concrete, bloody, and irreversible facts. The

violent shock of this progress, with the denial of the reality principle as it appeared, naturally produced a strong break.

If we add to this historical context the process of development of industrial society where human behavior belies all the ideas that had been generated about the human being (freedom, equality, rationality, fraternity), a sudden shock of conscience was generated that it has very deep roots, where this idea that ideals are strongly contrasted with reality is reinforced. The modern human being who proclaimed to bring with him so much progress and growth, did nothing but increase this crack of human despair. A kind of inevitable cultural exhaustion, which reaches our days in various modes of expression.

The deep social and cultural transformation promoted even by the new generations leads to living in many aspects an uprooted, deinstitutionalized, disillusioned life. Young people not only do not ask the Church for anything, for example, but they do not consider it a valid interlocutor, and others expressly ask that it leave them alone. There are many cases where it is sought to uproot any ecclesial tradition or glimpses of faith, in view of an increasingly diluted and diffuse plurality.

#### IV. INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

To the historical context of transformation, we must add the strength of the internal development of thought, which helps us to understand the type of subject that inhabits the world today and the very context in which we operate. These two historical and internal aspects of thought are essential to understand the core of the subject, and thus make a meaningful proposal.

In the internal development of thought, we must say that in the nineteenth century we find among its central features, the fact of being constituted through a very strong and radical criticism towards the modern, distanced, therefore, from the strong subject that they proposed to us, for example, the Cartesian cogito (1596-1650), the absolute spirit of Hegel (1770-1831), or the Copernican turn of Kant (1724-1804) with the transcendental subject, etc. Criticism from this perspective insists from the existentialism of Kierkegaard (1813-1855) in declaring that, for the understanding of reality, **the mere fact of focusing on the subject and its theoretical satisfaction, with the consecutive logical explanations of the theory, is insufficient.** reality, being these, a clear abstraction of it, but that do not include the human being as he is,

in his concrete experience of every day. In this block we also find a strong Christian philosophical thought.

The experience of the **abstractive process**, let us say, of what it means to be human, does not have a direct correlation with the sometimes painful, suffering and contingent experiences of each person -here and now-. For this reason, we who speak of projects and discernment cannot but begin with a profound awareness of the process of history and its internal development. It is in this scenario that one becomes aware of the radical difference between the defined subject and the real human being who lives his daily experience in the midst of uncertainties and small certainties. That is to say, not only can we define both thematic aspects, but they are realized in daily existence. It is the human being who lives in project, who lives his life project, and it is he who discerns. They are not theoretical or abstract aspects.

If we follow the logical order of our most anthropological reflections, we notice that the criticism in the development of thought already configured, is oriented to direct attention not so much to the cogito and the subject of knowledge, but to the real human being, who lives, dies and existence suffers in its own finitude and contingency, with human vicissitudes. This transit, which to us today, after the years that have passed, may seem like an expeditious path, has led to many disquisitions until today.

Thus, he has remained a naked subject of his epistemological armor, he has been exposed to the materiality of the flesh and the lightness of emotions. Coming face to face with this tear, has meant for many, having to separate from their own conceptions and embark on a new drifting course, assuming this contrasting situation, **to raise it to a mature consciousness**, where it can be understood by why attention is concentrated, at the beginning of the 20th century, on the thought of the human being himself as he is, on his own internal experience.

Proof of this entire process that we have just briefly revealed is the **concern for the existence and ethical implications of our actions, beliefs, projects and insights**. Everything that we develop in our life, not only at the external level, passes precisely through the encounter with the interiority. Although technological progress and positive science make us seem invincible, we inevitably have to deal with the most harrowing experiences of our human condition and ask ourselves today as yesterday, what is our place in the world? Why do we seek outside what really lives in us?

## V. TOWARDS A NEW CRITICAL ECCLESIAL REVISION OF THE LIFE PROJECT AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Given the historical development and the content of thought that we have seen synthetically, we have inevitably reached a growing individualization of the human being and a type of immanent development that is always incomplete. This is not saying little, because as technological progress advances, we realize that it is always little. We have arrived, therefore, at the dawn of a true rebirth and rethinking of the human question and its existence, which, first, had been forgotten by the pre-eminence of the subject of knowledge and, now, by the pre-eminence of individualism and its experience of knowing oneself, practically, master of oneself and of one's surroundings: What is a projected life? What is a vocation? And we ask again. What is our human-Christian vocation in the cosmos? Accordingly, we must critically rethink our perspectives. There is no other way out, other than to constitute a new paradigm.

This is precisely what Pope Francis wants us to see in various ways. Become. Personal and pastoral conversion, because according to the course of history, nothing is the same anymore. We must change. Hence, from the teaching of the youth synod, for example, we deduce that the topic of youth is not just a topic of "youth ministry" but of the entire Church as a whole. Young people have questioned the face of the Church, but we could say even more, it is not only her face, but the whole of her body (whose head is Christ, forever young).

In this context of continuous change, accompanying means more than ever "frequenting the future" of the Church and of young people, as the Pope says, and even more so, the future of society. For this reason, we assume the challenge of a personal and communitarian, ecclesial conversion, coming out of a kind of isolation to go out on mission. Since the CVII proposes a self-understanding of the Church as the People of God, it also changes our paradigm of understanding the relationship between the members of the church and the services that take place in it, however, it is an ongoing process. In our specific case, we refer to the context of accompaniment, an environment conducive to living life fully as consecrated men and women and lay people at the service of the Kingdom of God.

**The accompaniment of environments, processes, people**, is a service oriented towards integral growth, beginning with self-awareness of the reality of growth. The way to understand this relationship has become in terms of discernment and synodality. Which means paying special attention to the profound meaning of walking together, beyond the functional relationships that we can establish from our common projects.

Thus, the context of young people, their vital and existential situations are the first central experience to which every educational pastoral team is called to visualize, continuously to return to something that is proper to our human experience: **what gives us something to think about. life.** New cultural situations, political configurations, family realities, self-definitions, etc. they are the focus of permanent concern for faith leaders, since they are oriented towards offering pastoral proposals that are meaningful and well oriented in terms of objectives and processes.

Although globalization in general has blurred the deepening of reality, generating a kind of empty content, liquidity or fluidity of culture, "liquid society" or "weak society", this generates greater difficulty in developing an identity in various levels. However, this must still be a deep development experience in our educational and pastoral proposals to strengthen a project mentality and vocational discernment. Generate, strengthen, cultivate identity and meanings, for which it is necessary to live well located in the world, precisely to offer guidance. This is the greatest resistance or strength that can be offered in the midst of cultural weakness and liquidity. To do this, the Church offers us various paths, contents and methodologies that we can activate and develop. **One of the most important is to articulate that all ministry is vocational, that is, that the vocational** is not an appendix or one of the aspects of the ministry itself. She must be oriented with a sense of discovering, promoting and deploying the mission to which we are called.

## VI. RETHINKING BASED ON BIBLICAL SOURCES TO PROJECT AND DISCERN

The conversions, rethinking or new paradigms must be done from a biblical point of view, which gives way to a deepening in some aspects of a pastoral nature. We will necessarily have to go through many paths already advanced in the Church and others that, from there, we can continue proposing.

For this rethinking I want to reread with you two biblical texts. One from Matthew and one from Mark. It is not only about well-known texts, but about germinating from them a methodology that helps us to orient ourselves in this turbulent sea of life.

**I stop, first, in the well-known but significant episode of the Gospel of Matthew (14, 13-21).**

Jesus went away in a boat to a deserted place **to be alone.**

He hardly knew the people, he left the cities and followed him on foot. When he disembarked, Jesus saw a large crowd and, taking pity on them, healed the sick.

At sunset, **the disciples approached him** and said: This is a desert place and it is getting late; **send the crowd away to go to the cities to buy food.**

But Jesus said to them: You don't have to go away, **feed them yourselves.** They replied: Here we have only five loaves and two fish.

Bring them here to me, he told them. And after ordering the crowd to sit down on the grass, **he took the five loaves and the two fish, and raising his eyes to heaven, pronounced the blessing, broke the loaves, gave them to his disciples, and they distributed them among the crowd.**

They all ate their fill and twelve baskets were filled with the leftover pieces.

I made a few breaks in the text and a few underlines to draw attention to some important aspects of our theme.

In the first place, the awareness of a life project requires these spaces of interiority. Being alone for Jesus is not "dwelling in oblivion" but the intimate trinitarian communication, communion. We must put aside an old mentality of the life project, as "something that has to be done"; that is clearly imbued by a socio-cultural context that became according to the historical context. A projected life is related to the set of my orientations that develop as a vocation, that is, it involves my life as a way of being and living oriented, in mission, which necessarily requires a clear awareness of oneself, of the needs of the environment and the proposals to be carried out **in intimacy with the divine will.** A bit like Pope Francis mentions, recognize, interpret and choose in tune with the feelings of the Son. It is precisely from intimacy where feelings, motivations, choices arise.

If we follow this thread of Mark's story, **we see Jesus who, in private, sees the crowd and is moved by these people.** From communion there is a strong commotion. It is the attitude that we can assume and expect from Jesus in these times. He is moved. Suffering moves him and he continues on his mission (until the end of time).

In contrast to this intimacy and these feelings, the concerns of the disciples can be discovered in the dialogue they have with Jesus. They make a realistic and reasonable approach, "let the crowd go to the cities to find food." We are now facing another way of seeing reality. The disciples were not in intimacy, in the intimate relationship, and they arrive to say that "the place is deserted and it is getting late". It is what many disciples see today, the afternoon falls in the Church, it is deserted, nobody is interested, each one goes for his own.

Jesus doesn't believe it the same way. There are two different ways that the evangelist suggests. **The way of being of Jesus and the logic of his disciples.** We can say that it is a "logic of the Kingdom and another of the world". So, a life project and a vocation have other coordinates than the logic of this world. Therefore, we can look for a lot of technicality and methodology in this undertaking, but none of that will be truly significant without "the fire that burns" and without following what the Master tells us, as the Mother of Jesus had announced to us "do what Let him tell you." We also find this paradoxical situation in our days. how to walk in a life project and a vocational discernment? What is Jesus' way of living his project and his vocation? How does Jesus discern? how do the disciples discern? How do they live the vocation themselves?

For Jesus it is not a time of separation, but of unity. It is not time for exclusion, but for inclusion. It is not a time of distance, but of communion. It is not time to go looking for each one, but to share. The disciples, however, insist on showing how little they have, but that is no excuse. Little is enough when it is with generosity of the heart, a generosity that is not measured by quantity, but by quality, by the availability that Jesus has. And this is what Jesus hopes the disciples will finally understand. Jesus immediately repeats his content again, now in front of them. He does not begin by multiplying loaves and fishes, but "raising his eyes to heaven and pronouncing the blessing." That is, intimacy with the Father is not reserved or exclusive. The loaves and fishes are being broken and distributed. Now the disciples collaborate on it.

**Let us now take the example of another call, of a way of living a life project. According to the account of Mt 19, 16-22.** I will fundamentally follow the analysis of Fr. Juan José Bartolomé, Salesian.

One approached Jesus and asked him, "Teacher, what good must I do to obtain eternal life?" Jesus replied, "Why do you ask me what is good? One is only good. Look, if you want to enter life, he keeps the commandments ». He asked her, "Which ones?"

Jesus replied, "You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him: "All this I have fulfilled. What am I missing?"

Jesus answered him: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your goods, give the money to the poor - so you will have a treasure in heaven - and then come and follow me". Hearing this, the young man went away sad, because he was very rich.

The episode in general shows a dialogue with Jesus, who according to the evangelist had been engaged in a long catechesis with the disciples, addressing various topics. The initial question reveals to us our own search, the deep interest of the young man to obtain eternal life. Without much extrapolation or stretching the text too much, we can point in the direction of a deep search for life. Surely there is a theme behind it, such as riches, an obstacle, but, in a general sense, the search for the young man and the dialogue with Jesus place us at the core of our themes.

There is a first level of search that is related to compliance. That is to say, that life can be presented to us on that first floor of reality. We are alive, we exist and we can develop fulfilling what we are made for. This first level of life can be compared to the requirements of flesh and blood. Moreover, we must situate ourselves in the context, we cannot abstract from it.

There is also a question about the way to reach eternal life, that is, a way of life to reach it. Here it can be seen from two perspectives, comply more than necessary, and be available to something else, which in relation to the first element of compliance already positions it with a good availability. We are therefore on two levels of life, one that refers to what is strictly necessary to live and another that positions it in a will beyond. What am I missing? Says the young man.

This is precisely the level that places us in the deepest experience of life. A mission, a vocation, a project. The text says that the young man left sad because he was very rich, that is to say, that he was trapped in the two levels of our vital experience, without letting himself be carried away by the call of Jesus, without taking that step that put him in the spiritual experience and even more humanizing.

**Let's see a little the tone of the three ways of living life that this Gospel offers us.**

We have first of all a restless man, whose concern leads him to Jesus. It is seen that the young man had some orientations beyond living attached to his things, even to flesh and blood, as we have said. But we know that there are still people who guide his life in that direction. His way of life is still trapped in that standard of living, with no questions, no aspirations, no worries and nothing to be surprised about.

But, just like them, there are the young people who live with some situation that makes their hearts uneasy. That they realize that life does not stop there, but that it goes beyond, that it

has some meaning ahead. "Something more" than the seductions of the world. These people are the ones who mobilize (like this young man) who have desires and go after them. We also have many young people who live like this, but who don't go beyond that script. It is as the parable of the Sower says, the seed falls into the ground, germinates, but due to lack of root, finally the plant dries up without bearing fruit.

The third level of life is already in accordance with our way of presenting the theme. Abandon oneself. **Live a life in the spirit.** If we can call the first levels life according to the blood, life according to the inner search, we can call this life according to the spirit. It is at this level of life where our orientations of life as a vocation move. The expression of Jesus, "sell what you have, give it to the poor and then follow me" is like telling us, leave everything that traps you, your interests and place your full trust in "a new land". Here are the spiritual people, those who live according to the motions of the spirit, which necessarily implies a spiritual discernment and a life in mission, in project.

The exposed scene reflects the way we can understand our life and the various levels where we can develop, the most strictly specific of human life being the call to spiritual life, which certainly entails a pedagogical path an enormous task for **those who accompany.**

## VII. SIGNIFICANT OPTIONS FOR A PROJECTED LIFE AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

The logical starting point of our reflections followed until now, lead us to think not so much about how they are done or how to accompany them to make a project and vocational discernment, but to live it from the structures and conditions of possibility proper to the human being, it is in other words, it exists in its own ontological condition to be a project and to live in discernment for the continuous unfolding of the vocation. To strengthen such conditions of possibility is that I suggest some "fundamental options" that allow this repositioning and strengthening of them. Such options have already been discussed at length in various instances, meetings, books and talks, only now we assume them from this internal point of view in personal and community development. Only in this way, a companion will be a faithful testimony: disciple - missionary of the path that he is making in following him.

- **opt for a life that springs from a real encounter and in continuous relationship with Jesus Christ in the Church**

**Pedagogy of the encounter.** Living a projected life is continually rereading one's own growth in context and in community. Have a sharp and clear awareness of a process that develops internally and that reaches all dimensions of people. This process can be animated in a Christian way, which means, concretely, affirming that **an encounter is a vital relationship** that transforms life and gives meaning. We delve into reality and its historical processes in terms of growth from within, a path traced in the West since ancient times, but which, as a result of the changes described, has become a deep existential crisis. (To do this, retake the path taken by Saint Augustine)

-----

2 Remembering what Pope Benedict XVI has written in "Deus Caritas Est N° 1". "One does not begin to be a Christian through an ethical decision or a great idea, but through the encounter with an event, with a Person, which gives a new horizon to life and, with it, a decisive orientation".

Transmitting the faith, or educating by evangelizing and evangelizing by educating will always lead us to a very deep meaning of creating in each place and in each time the conditions for this encounter between men (young people) and Jesus to take place, and between people each. The objective of all evangelization will be the realization of this encounter, at the same time, intimate and personal, public and community.

It is then a great challenge for the community to communicate the joy and beauty that the believer experiences when letting himself be loved by God, so that he is understood in the words that express it and in the testimony that he offers. It is especially challenging if, in addition, in the interlocutors there is no interest, curiosity or desire to know, follow and surrender.

Both Benedict XVI and Pope Francis insist over and over again that the first thing is the Gospel, which always needs to be discovered, translated and inculturated so that it is understandable to those who listen to it in a certain context. We need to thoroughly scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel (GS 4). Nothing authentically human is alien to us. "There is nothing in youth cultures that does not resonate in our hearts." Precisely these youth subcultures require missionary disciples, especially young people, capable of entering, thoroughly knowing their dynamisms and "rewriting" the Gospel in a new and different way, so that it is accessible and valid for them.

God continues to speak to young people, who are not the object of our pastoral and social actions, but rather the sacrament of God's presence. The Church must not only illuminate

this youthful reality, but must also allow herself to be enlightened by it and discover and celebrate the presence of God in it. Young people are theological place and the Church wants to listen to them, because they are also the voice of God. If God speaks to us in young people, we recognize them as preferred interlocutors in this ecclesial hour. This is how Pope Francis expresses it when he prophetically affirms that the Church “desires to listen to the voice, to the sensitivity, to the faith of each one [of young people]; as well as doubts and criticisms. Make your cry heard by all, let it resonate in the communities and make it reach the pastors”. That cry sounds louder among those young people who suffer from poverty, segregation and the multiple inequalities that are the result of an economy that excludes and kills (EG 53-54). God incarnates, lowers himself, makes himself small and poor preferably with these young people. God is young.

-----

3 PASTORAL FORUM WITH YOUTH, FPJ Manifesto, in Youth Pastoral Magazine (RPJ) n° 449 (December 2008), ICCE, Madrid 2008, 34-36.

4 P. GAMBINI, Meeting street youth, CCS, Madrid 2005, 25.

5 J. J. BARTOLOME, God also speaks to young people. Three stories of vocation, CCS, Madrid 2018.

6 POPE FRANCIS, Letter from Pope Francis to young people on the occasion of the presentation of the Preparatory Document of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, in XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS, , Young people, faith and vocational discernment. Preparatory document, Claretian Publications 2017, 9.

### - A new starting point: The kerygma

The first, primordial and essential thing is the proclamation of the “kerygma”, as Pope Francis writes in the EG, every Christian must be invited, “in whatever place and situation they find themselves, to renew right now their personal encounter with Jesus Christ or, at least, to make the decision to be found by Him, to try every day without rest” (EG, 3).

This perspective should renew all our accompaniment pastoral from a pedagogical perspective.

If we put as testimony the reading of the Gospel of Saint Mark, shorter and older, formed by a captivating story, "a catechumenal itinerary", we see that the path that Jesus travels from Galilee to Jerusalem, is not a single geographical and chronological route, but essentially an itinerary of the soul, which moves towards following. This itinerary is an experience of the faith of the believer who goes through the various levels of life that we have traveled: flesh and blood; restlessness and intellect; spiritual life, where the authentic disciple is truly the Master: Jesus.

Mark has described the reason, the themes, the goal and a methodology of the "educational proposal" that Jesus presents to his disciples, but living it in the first person. It is not that Jesus

tells us how to do it, but that he himself lives it in a unique, original and original way. Following this proposal, the understanding of the life project, of vocational discernment must be in the dynamics expressed by the parable of the seed: the desire to grow and help growth, food, care, encouragement, faith in the seed itself, because it can and it must develop its germinative force, even more, although the sower sleeps, the seed will continue to develop. Thus, they educate themselves trying to be attentive to the contents and to the concrete, historical conditions, existential situations, dispositions, possibilities, fears, and degrees of maturity of the people.

#### **- Always opt for the community as a home to discern the vocation**

A fruit of the Synod was the method of being and working together, young, old, adults, from listening and discernment to arrive at pastoral options consistent with reality.

-----

7 C. M Martini, The spiritual itinerary of the twelve. Ignatian exercises in the light of the gospel of Mark, messenger, Bilbao 2012.

8 B. Forte, the transmission of faith, Sal Terrae, 2014.

9 J. José Bartolomé, SDB. Jesus of Nazareth educator of disciples, January 2017.

Young people dream of a different Church, more discipling, more evangelical, more inclusive, more feminine, poorer, freer and more authentic and with a decisive relational turn. Young people need to know Christian communities marked by the spirit of the Beatitudes. Only a community faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ has the authority and credibility to show the face of Jesus to today's youth. A community that privileges spaces where processes are honored, senses are rescued, mistakes are learned, differences are valued and an ethical horizon is forged; in short, that it passes from the paradigm of the clock to that of the compass. A community that shows ecumenical, interreligious dialogue with non-believers and with culture is attractive to young people.

#### **- Discern communally (slowly and without pause)**

As expressed by Fr. Koldo Gutiérrez, from whom I take these reflections that follow, discernment is not first of all a methodology, but above all **a believing attitude**. At another point, Fr. Rossano Sala, expresses that, in the synodal process, the need to help young people in their vocational discernment began and little by little "we realized that the Church itself was in a certain sense in **deficit of discernment**, not being able to discern, he does not have the possibility of helping young people to do so".

**Discernment situates itself in reality**, in culture, in the plurality of cultures and especially in the cultures of youthful reality: "Faith not only looks at Jesus, but looks from Jesus' point of view, with the eyes of the. It is a participation in his way of seeing" (LF, 18). **The Holy Father proposes three tasks to make a good discernment.** "As adults, it is difficult for us to **listen to them** (referring to young people) with patience, to **understand** their concerns or their claims, and to **learn to speak to them** in the language they understand" (EG 105).

The Pope proposes a ministry that listens to young people, that understands them, and proposes Christian life in understandable language. This is the scheme that the Pope has followed not only in his written interventions or verbal reflections, but also in the processes that he goes through with the Church: (EG 169-171), **listening, understanding and proposing**, are transformed into **recognizing, interpreting and choose**: "It is necessary to clarify what can be a fruit of the Kingdom and also what threatens God's plan. This implies not only recognizing and interpreting the motions of the good spirit and the bad, but - and here lies the decisive point - choosing those of the good spirit and rejecting those of the bad." (EG 51).

What methodology have we foreseen, to listen, understand and propose the Christian life to young people?

-----

10 GENERAL SECRETARY FOR THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Final Document of the pre-synodal meeting of young people, Rome 19-24 April 2018.

11 Interesting reflection in J. TOLENTINO MENDONCA, Little theology of slowness, Fragmenta Editorial, Barcelona 2017, 7-9.

#### **- In continuous Conversion and mission as structuring axes**

Discernment makes us see that we are still self-referential. A community that contemplates itself, enclosed in the immanence of its structures, concerned only with its interests, transforming us into redoubts without evangelizing force. It is not surprising that the Holy Father speaks of the temptations of pastoral agents and companions. What Pope Francis proposes is to **sharpen the sensitivity of the believer**. A discernment ministry must ask itself if **Jesus and the new generations are at the center of its proposals and programs**. What naturally implies an authentic personal and pastoral conversion?

There was recently an International Symposium on Catechetics, in Buenos Aires, Argentina (July 11–14, 2017) and Pope Francis has pointed out exactly the center of faith education: “The more Jesus takes the center of our life, all the more it makes us come out of ourselves, decentralizes us and makes us close to others”. In that same meeting, in the intervention of Monsignor Luis Ladaria, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he underlined that “Christ is the center of faith because he is the only and definitive mediator of salvation, being a “faithful witness” (Rev. 1, 5) of the love of God the Father.

-----  
12 Mons. Víctor Manuel Fernández, *Tracks from Francis for catechesis, international symposium on catechetics, Argentina July 2017.*

13 [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/messages/pontmessages/2017/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170705\\_messaggio-simposiocatechesi-argentina.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/messages/pontmessages/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170705_messaggio-simposiocatechesi-argentina.html)

14 Salesian Youth Ministry, *Reference Table*, third edition, Italy 2014.

15 XXIII General Chapter. *Acts of the General Council of the Salesian Society of Saint John Bosco. Educate young people in the faith.* No. 333, May 1990.

### – Do not lose the dynamism in permanent training

Anyone who knows the process of human maturation of the new generations, the culture and its values, realizes that the integration of faith, of life, of the socio-cultural experience, “demands great educational attention”, therefore constant preparation and training.

In adolescents and young people, it could be verified, in practice, a serious lack of knowledge of religious culture; Confusions are frequent, one could even discover a tendency to a certain syncretism that makes them reconcile belonging to the Church. In this and in many other aspects, we could ask ourselves how we educators in the faith are doing for our own formation of the contents of the faith, and its education in the new generations. What are we witnessing effectively?

Throughout this process, as well as the testimony, the interlocutors themselves and their vital processes of maturation, and the appropriate languages, are fundamental. **By forming (oneself) integrally** (human, spiritual dimension, formation of conscience, social dimension of charity) it requires that the path of evangelizing education pay

attention to the integral path. Any path is always defined by the point to which you want to reach, in this case we refer to intentionality, where do we want to go?

We must be clear about the type of person and believer that must be promoted in the concrete circumstances of our life and society, convinced that the Spirit of Jesus Christ is shaping it from a new creation. They could be indicated schematically as:

- a) Human growth towards a life that can be assumed as a religious experience with spaces where the deep meanings of the person are concentrated.
- b) **An encounter with Jesus Christ**, the perfect man;
- c) A **progressive insertion in the community** of believers;
- d) and **commitment to the Kingdom**, in line with the transformation of the world.

All these aspects or dimensions of Christian maturation have characteristic requirements at each stage, and certainly require the attention of formation, of the educators in the faith, for whom it is necessary to cultivate certain personal and community attitudes; select some progressive nuclei of knowledge with pertinent indicators and choose experiences capable of favoring this development in a serene and harmonious way.

#### – **The accompaniment of companions in vocational animation**

Perhaps someone could say: this should be the starting point, but according to the scheme, it is actually a point of arrival and a point from where we can continue.

The vocational path must be present throughout the process of evangelizing education as the ultimate horizon. It is identified with the full meeting and following of the Lord, who launches us to live in the world from Him, and in the search for justice and peace. The objective is to accompany the new generations in the concrete search for their vocation, in which path, personalization is key (EG 127). **What concept of vocation do we handle?** One of the values of the Council was to highlight the dignity of every baptized person. “All Christians, of whatever state or condition, are called to the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of love” (LG 40). In this text the baptismal condition of the vocation is underlined. The Second Vatican Council speaks of a single Christian vocation affirming that Jesus Christ is the fundamental form of the vocation, and distinguishes different forms of life in the following of Christ.

In this sense, the mission is part of the identity of every baptized person. It is in the entrails of the disciple. Our vocation is drawn in our deepest core. For this reason, it is preferable to say that I am a vocation than to have a vocation.

Just as discernment has been one of the keys to the Pontificate of Pope Francis, it is no less true that the theme of accompaniment occupies a large part of its development and momentum. The Pope speaks of the “art of accompaniment” (EG 169, 2),

16 Idem.

where vocational options are allowed to mature in a personalized way and try to reach each person according to their inner experience, the situation they live in and the just demands of the community. It is essential that each community concretely propose spaces and times for accompaniment, for meeting and personal dialogue for internalization and personalization. An increasingly mature adherence of faith opens up to sincere service for the benefit of others. In this line, **the social dimension of charity** belongs to the entire process of educating the person in a vocational key, which as such, commits itself in favor of justice, of the construction of a more just and humane society.

We need brothers and sisters who are experts in these paths of God, in order to be able to do what Jesus did with the disciples of Emmaus: accompany them on the path of life and in times of disorientation and rekindle faith and hope in them through the Word and the Eucharist (cf. Luke 24:13–35). This is the delicate and committed task of a companion, who, with love and special attention, takes care of the various aspects that are at stake, and collaborates with the unity of all the elements that we are mentioning.

---

17 Papa Francisco. Plenaria de los Institutos de Vida Religiosa. 28.01.2017.