

suitable for the integral education of the youth. The exercise of co-responsibility asks from us the patient and daily passage from “I” to “We”.

In a society of varying proposals, it is necessary to sustain a youth ministry that favours the methodology of “itinerary” and of the group, in the certainty that a systematic youth ministry opens up to ecclesial participation, offering the gift of the *Salesian Youth Spirituality* and the experience of the *Salesian Youth Movement* at the world level.

A *missionary, vocational and systematic youth ministry* will be a breath of hope for the Provinces and, accordingly, for the whole Institute.

5. Conclusion

We invite you to consider with your Team this proposal given to us by the Chapter, in harmony with the rhythm of the life of the young people, because “those who want to educate, and who observe history with eyes of wisdom, see these signs as a call, an encouragement to go ahead, like Don Bosco and Maria Domenica Mazzarello, and to offer attractive and valid proposals that involve the whole person whatever the environmental or cultural situation in which they find themselves.”²⁴

²⁴ *Guidelines*, n. 16.



RELAUNCHING A MISSIONARY, VOCATIONAL AND SYSTEMATIC YOUTH MINISTRY

Introduction

For this six-year period we have proposed to focus on the *formation of key figures*, particularly the Provincial Coordinators for Youth Ministry (YM) and other people involved in pastoral animation, FMA and lay people. This is in view of promoting an animation where there is sharing and which is attentive to the context, up to the point of creating an operative network. The proposal is expressed in the first objective of the Focuses of Attention for 2009-2014, that the YM Sector, keeping in mind the Six-year Plan of the General Council, has pointed out to the whole Institute: to give priority to formation in youth ministry at all levels, in order to promote growth in the passion for education and evangelisation, and co-responsibility in the educational mission. We have started with various initiatives along this line, which we have presented as: *Systematic itineraries for the formation of co-ordinators and other key persons of Youth Ministry (FMA – lay mission partners)*.

Subsequently, we will continue to propose reflections that would promote dialogue between the coordinators and the Provincial Youth Ministry Teams, and at the same time to the inculturation of these concepts, since we cannot

speak of a global culture, but of cultures that are inter-dependent. From here arises the need to share reflections in order understand how processes/initiatives that are valid in a certain cultural context may also enlighten or inspire other contexts.

In our latest documents, we speak of a youth ministry that is missionary, vocational and systematic. This expression does not undervalue the pastoral animation that the Institute has realized up until now. It simply means that, beginning from the GCXXII, we propose a reflection, and, consequently, a realization, that focuses the pastoral process on some concrete and, above all, essential proposals.

In the Report on the life of the Institute for the Six-year period 2002-2008, Mother Antonia underlined that, after having shared the processes undertaken in the animation of the Six-year period, some aspects still have to be further deepened, in relation to the General Council's animation and the Institute's response. Mother General called them *major themes* that open up for us today different pathways.

Of the seven major themes we will give attention to that which we consider "indispensable"¹: "to re-launch a *missionary* youth ministry which has, at its centre, the direct proclamation of Jesus; a *vocational* youth ministry that assures an experience of Christian life in all the environments, promotes response to God's call, generates

¹ INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, *Report on the Life of the Institute 2002-2008*, Roma 2008, n. 76 p. 97 (Italian text).

However we cannot close our eyes on its impact in the educational field, and we are challenged to have a change of mentality to be able to understand the resources they offer.

A systematic youth ministry necessitates co-ordination that tends to involve people in a circular manner, so as to encourage an exchange of resources and the expression of creativity in communion.²¹ In a Province, the educational mission is entrusted to all the Sectors of animation and it requires complementarity and convergence. The interventions are sought, experimented and verified in the context in which they are realized, so that they may give answers to concrete needs.²²

To arrive at co-ordination in a harmonic way guarantees the synergy of all the resources around a common project, be it international, provincial or local, over and above the varied structures.²³

In a context that is ever more globalised and multicultural, a systematic youth ministry is more easily attained if there is an Educating community that takes care of the convergence of the educational interventions. It is decisive in order to assure the educational frames of reference and in order to give concrete answers to the deepest needs of young people.

Working in teams is essential in the formulation of projects, in the organization of structures and of organisms

²¹ Cf. *Plan of Formation*, p. 151.

²² Cf. *Guidelines*, n. 16-20.

²³ Cf. *Plan of Formation*, p. 164.

of reasoning that *it has always been done so*, and strive towards higher quality of education.

To think and to work together in collaboration, is urgent in a context of great complexity. It is the presupposition of a model of coordination in line with the *Plan of Formation of the FMA* and the *Guidelines for the educational mission*. It is an option that goes beyond simple organization and shows more clearly the strengths and the elements of convergence.

To plan in a systematic way the evangelising educational mission means that the Educating communities and Provinces will choose to become “*open educational systems*”, with an *educative pastoral project* that sustains and guarantees the journey; “*open educational systems*” that accompany with care and respect well thought, organized, and gradual steps; that have matured, through networking, itineraries of education and of evangelisation that give security and hope both to the young people and to their adult educators. We would, therefore, go beyond routine and a ministry centred on events, incapable of taking into consideration our complex modern society.

In *a fluid society* in which we live, a systematic ministry is ever more urgent since it favours organization, constancy and harmony in the growth of the young who are already threatened by fragmentation. The Educating communities, as “*open educational systems*” are challenged by the *virtual world*, a phenomenon that is constantly growing and that demands a more consistent approach in our educational method. We haven't succeeded yet in foreseeing the impact of these novelties in the life of the new generations.

vocational culture in the Educating community, looks after the personal accompaniment of young people and its communitarian dimension; a *systematic* youth ministry, through experiences that are within educational itineraries suitable to the different ages and to the contexts of life.”²

We will try to understand what the expression *missionary, vocational and systematic* youth ministry means in order to re-launch it in every environment of ours, to acquire a clear understanding of the concept, and to assume the operative itinerary for youth ministry which the Institute proposes for this six-year period.

1. To animate youth ministry from an "open window"

In a time marked by challenges and disappointments, but also of strong motives for hope, a clear and passionate certainty emerges in the Institute: the educational charism of Don Bosco and of Mother Mazzarello can still give an answer to young people's search for meaning.

The Church, house and school of communion, urges us to live and to proclaim in a new way the Gospel of life and of hope. Together with those who share with us the educational mission, we desire to manifest the joy and the enthusiasm of proclaiming Jesus.

Faithful to the *da mihi animas cetera tolle*, we live our passion for Christ and for humanity, as a commitment to be

² *Ibid.* p. 100.

signs of the foreseeing love of God among young people, while promoting the human qualities of peace and justice.³

I refer to the document *Guidelines for the educational mission* because it is beginning from this document that we are called to evaluate our youth ministry, and to believe that change is possible: a ministry that is more responsive to the new generations in the whole arc of the evolutionary age, and especially to adolescents and youth. The *Guidelines* are meant to accompany the process of inculturation of the charism in the various contexts, acting as points that will guide the mission.

We have before us a vast horizon. This is what leads us to this renewal and to accept the fundamental considerations that the Guidelines propose us:

- *“The Gospel vision of life as gift and task* aims at emphasising the intrinsic vocational dimension of the educating mission, re-affirms the choice of being at the service of life, where a culture of death often prevails, and invites us insistently to become witnesses to the fullness of humanity that Jesus manifested in his life.
- *Our anthropological frame of reference* is rooted in the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation of Christ. He assumed human reality and brought it to fulfilment, making us all sons and daughters of God. Our mission finds its justification in this unified vision of the person

³ CONGREGATION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, *That they may have life and have it to the full. Guidelines for the educational mission of the FMA*, Torino, 2006, p. 4.

subsystems like the environment, culture, the formative agencies.

The Institute is progressively journeying in the acquisition of the project mentality in relation with its educational mission, and the Educating communities are expressing the richness of the Preventive System in the various contexts. “We now need to build on this by developing the logic of educational process. This requires a sequence of planned steps that are structured in harmony with the development of the person. This process is in keeping with human growth and requires critical interaction with the socio-cultural reality, and for this reason it is more suited to a complex and structured society.”¹⁹

The change that will lead the educating communities to cultivate a process mentality²⁰ will guarantee the systematic nature of a youth ministry that gives priority to *working together in convergence with other sectors* (“systems”), if it wants to realize with coherence and in all the environments, the project of an evangelising education inspired by the Salesian charism.

It also presupposes a context of permanent formation that allows apprenticeship and exchanges, favouring solid processes of auto-formation that help the person to be the protagonist in his/her growth. This activates the development and the expression of the individual’s potentialities and creativity, thus overcoming the tendency

¹⁹ *Guidelines*, p. 66.

²⁰ Cf. *Guidelines*, n. 101.

From this we can see the importance of an *integral youth ministry* that puts together all the energies of the young people and the Educating communities, valuing their specific contributions and, at the same time, making them converge in common projects, planned and realized together. This approach, typical of our saints and of the first FMA missionary communities, allows the Educating communities to go beyond their own sector and to prevent fragmentation (thinking of “my group... my class...”) in the pastoral ministry. We think of so many possibilities of collaboration in the educational mission between the family, school, territory and Christian communities.

Along this line we reflect on a model of youth ministry that is *open*, that can read and interpret reality, *attentive to the changes that happen in the ecclesial and social contexts*, and is *flexible and capable of continuous renewal as it encounters new elements and challenges*.

Further study of the *Guidelines for the educational mission of the FMA* is helping us to explore some anthropological lines, whose dominant interpretative category is that of a “system”. The person is seen as a “complex system”: a unity of different and manifold elements that work “as one”. Unity and plurality are the two qualities essential to understanding a system. Persons and cultures are considered as “open systems”, within which is in force the principle of liberty.

Youth ministry uses this systemic approach not only in understanding the dynamics of the human person, but also in understanding society in its complexity and its

and of their growth process even in multifaith and multicultural contexts.

- Wherever we work in a genuine Salesian spirit, education and evangelisation, pedagogy and pastoral work are harmonised within the Preventive System, in which the aspects of *culture, Gospel, society* and *communication* converge.
- The *Guidelines* identify some strategies that are priorities if we are to respond satisfactorily to the challenges of our times: formation of FMA and laity together, accompaniment of young people, the Salesian Youth Movement, volunteering and co-ordination for communion.
- *The educating community*, animated by the family spirit, is an effective way to educate when it mirrors the criteria that characterise a Salesian environment. Faithful to the charism of our Founders, the educating community is capable of discovering seeds of hope even in challenges and commits itself to a journey of self-formation.
- *The multicultural and multifaith context*, which was rare at the time of the publication of the *Unified Youth Pastoral Project (1985)*, is the cultural background against which these *guidelines* were written. It challenges our educational presence in various countries because it calls for a new kind of youth ministry.
- *The direct proclamation of Jesus*, a central reality of the text, emerges not as one experience among many to be proposed to the young people, but as the fundamental experience that gives meaning to human

life. The intended goal of every educational intervention is to facilitate meeting Christ in everyday life so that his presence may be a leaven that transforms society.

- Mary of Nazareth is seen as mother and educator who contributes to developing the image of Christ present in each person since creation. As mother of life and virgin of the *Magnificat*, she inspires our pastoral action and calls us to enter into solidarity with those who live in poverty and difficulty and are marginalised and without hope.
- The guidelines call us to revitalise the Salesian spirituality and educational style inspired by the Christian humanism of St. Francis of Sales.”⁴

It is not enough to renew the pastoral methods and the structural organization. It is necessary to be rooted in spirituality: a spirituality of joy, because the darkness of our world could be and has to be overcome by the light of the beauty of Christianity. Holiness is the first testimony.

We need to have the attitude of contemplation and of listening to the Risen Christ. He it is who has opened the 'great window' of the Truth. It is He that gives hope to the world and guides us to discover the importance of witnessing in the mission.

To speak of a *missionary, vocational and systematic youth ministry* is not something alternative to the pastoral journey we are undertaking. Rather, it presents a perspective that gives fervour to the evangelising educational mission. That which has been done until now

⁴ *Guidelines*, p. 5-6.

new Pentecost, the Church may know how to communicate the Gospel in a changing world and, in this world that changes, the Gospel may remain.¹⁸

It is possible that today many repeat the parable written by the atheist Dino Buzzati. One of his more beautiful poetry opens with the invocation: “*Please God that you may not exist ...*” and concludes with an expression of a certainty: “*If I call him, He will come.*”

4. A Systematic youth ministry

The educational mission demands that we have before our eyes the *young person in his “complexity”*, since today there is a greater risk, especially for young people, to live a fragmented identity and to be lost in the labyrinth of complexity. Therefore it is necessary to forge links and synergy with the different realities working in the territory in the educational field. We are, in fact, all aware that it is only in networking, in mutual, careful and respectful listening, that it is possible to elaborate an organic and systematic project of youth ministry that is able to transmit shared values. In this line, *coordination for communion*, as a circular interaction of the various sectors of animation of the educational and evangelising mission, is a privileged methodology that favours interactions, co-responsibility, exchange of resources, creativity in interpreting reality from different perspectives.

¹⁸ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Concluding Message at the IV Convention of the Italian Church in Verona, 16-20 October 2006.

every young person to discover and to realize his own vocation, whatever it is, in an attitude of deep gratitude. Hence, the importance of working for the promotion of all vocations in the Church.

In vocational animation, it is appropriate to present a complete vision of every vocation, rather than on only one possibility.

The Acts of the GCXXII points out as a path of conversion to “promote a vocational youth pastoral, educating the young to mature love, in interpersonal relationships and in social responsibility, also through volunteering; teaching them to open themselves to God, the source of an authentic love that enables them to give of themselves to others. (n. 39.6, p. 37). Besides, in the Six-year Plan of the General Council we have proposed to “offer guidelines to render more explicit the vocational dimension of the educational mission, and to make a more daring proposal to the consecrated life” (n. 3.2c, p. 18).

It is necessary to create spaces that give a particular attention to the young people who reveal signs of religious vocation. We are all responsible for this. We ask for it every day in prayer and by our own joyful fidelity. We shall promote them by making known to the girls the spirit of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, by letting them share in our apostolic work and by offering them opportune experience of community life (cf. *Constitutions FMA*, art. 73).

Christ makes himself present in this modern *areopagus*, to breathe His Spirit on the Church, so that, renewed by a

has given positive fruits. We recognise this. But we cannot close our eyes to the cultural change that we are witnessing.

Educating young people to the faith today is not automatic, perhaps because the educational processes are built on inadequate schemes; or because we have not yet fully overcome working according to sectors, nor fully acquired a project-mentality; or because of an inadequate knowledge of the new generations’ way of communicating, partly because of the inability to dialogue and to listen,⁵ or because of the fear of going there where the young people are, limiting ourselves to the places and ways we have been used to; or because we have not yet opened ourselves to the new frontiers of the mission, as the GC XXII letter of convocation pointed out to us: communication, emigration, youth at risk...

Another meaningful aspect that shows our inability to look at the new cultural situation is our weak commitment in proposing a catechesis that favours young people’s encounter with Jesus and His Gospel and educational itineraries that would help them to grow in the faith and in harmony with life, going against a culture of fragmentation.

Re-launching youth ministry presupposes a pastoral conversion in the light of the *Guidelines for the educational mission of the FMA* and the GCXXII which calls us to an exodus, departing from the experience of the Cenacle, where the Spirit launches forth and turns the disciples from fearful men into ardent missionaries who, filled courage,

⁵ Have in mind the third path of conversion to which GC XXII invites us.

carry the joyful news of the Risen Jesus into the world, because we cannot put aside the encounter between culture and faith. The Gospel is made flesh in the streets of the city and walks according to the rhythm of the people.⁶

2. A Missionary youth ministry

The *Guidelines for the educational mission* indicates the need for a “pastoral conversion”:

- “a strong commitment to communicate the Gospel to the younger generations. It has involved the educating communities with whom it shares its educating project in this commitment”;⁷
- “the aim is to keep alive the missionary drive, as well as confidence in being able to enter into communication, as a Salesian Family, with the younger generations in every context and situation. We want to give new enthusiasm to our educational mission and to our explicit proclamation of Jesus”;⁸
- give priority to the formation of educators, creating an environment of serious research, communication of intentions and educational passion;
- forming ourselves together, sharing faith and mission within the *educating community* in order to arrive at the creation of *Christian communities* where young people truly feel at home;

⁶ Cf. INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, *The Greatest of all is Love. Acts of General Chapter XXII*, Rome, 18/09-15/11 2008, n. 33.

⁷ *Guidelines*, n. 1.

⁸ *Guidelines*, n. 5.

In this light, youth ministry must propose:

- *an itinerary of education to the faith*, that is unified and progressive, with attention to the following elements that are inter-related with and reinforces each other: the special moments and everyday life, the person’s moments of growth, the presence of God, prayer and work;
- *reference to the community*. Vocation is at the service of the community. In this sense, all the experiences of the community must be valued: the family, the parish, the group, the religious community, the Educating community of the school, the oratory, etc.;
- a pastoral ministry that is a *missionary proclamation of the Gospel addressed to all*. Many young people who frequent our houses have not had the experience of encountering Jesus that will make their Christian life solid. For this we bring to them the message of the Gospel, inviting them to make the first steps in the journey of faith. Pope John Paul II in the apostolic exhortation *"Ecclesia in Europa"* insists on the necessity of the first proclamation or a renewed proclamation of the Gospel (cf. n. 46 and 47);
- *announce Jesus* to young people through accompanying them “to an encounter with Him personally, as they assume apostolic commitments, and as they discover God’s plan for their life” (Acts GCXXII, n. 39, p.37);
- *making proposals to young people, with attention to all the vocations*. It is the fundamental objective of an authentic vocational animation. It is important to help

people. To respond to the need for education, is to open a path to life.

“The Incarnation calls us, besides, to be mediations of the dignity and vocation of the person, admitted to the intimacy of the life of the Trinity,¹⁵ and redeemed from sin. Thus each one can freely accept his/her own vocation and develop it, bringing it to fullness through the fruitful action of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶

“This means a proclamation that is capable of helping people, especially the younger generations, to open themselves to experience the love of Christ, so that they can gradually get to know him as the meaning of life.”¹⁷

Founded on the centrality of the person, a youth ministry that wants to explicitly make a vocational proposal is called to give *priority to evangelisation*: that is, to make Christ known, to motivate and to animate the people to let themselves be enlightened by Him and to have a personal experience of God. Youth ministry must always keep present this final goal. Vocation is to follow Jesus Christ.

A youth ministry with vocational mentality, is open to every young person, not only to those who are open to the realization of his/her own project of life. To achieve this purpose, it is important to transform young people from being “producers-consumers” of experience to being responsible for their own lives, capable of asking themselves serious questions about the future.

¹⁵ Cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 23.

¹⁶ *Guidelines*, n. 38.

¹⁷ *Guidelines*, n. 47.

- to place ourselves within the broad ecclesial horizon of *new evangelisation*;
- to adopt *co-ordination for communion* as our style of animation. In this way we seek unity around charismatic choices, while we value pluralism in pastoral methods.⁹

The renewal of our Youth Ministry passes through a culture characterized by a deep anthropological crisis. This makes it difficult to propose a Christian quality of life, founded on encounter with Jesus, author of the life. An attitude of humble searching is needed, aware that the experience of human limitation can condition and at the same time stimulate every existential project, aimed at reaching happiness.¹⁰ In our context, the evangelisation of culture is not a geographical but a chronological phenomenon because many of our countries have already been evangelized. Today we speak of re-evangelisation through new evangelisation. The call is ever towards young people because they can be the subjects and principal protagonists of change, if adults allow them to be.

To strengthen this missionary passion is an authentic “pastoral conversion”. It gives convergence to pastoral action, creating a network of all the resources present in the context: to set the conditions for growth in the faith, in missionary awareness and in young people’s leadership. Missionary passion asks for a particular attention to the

⁹ Cf. *Guidelines*, n. 8-10.

¹⁰ Cf. *Guidelines*, n. 22.

person and to the family, giving a suitable space to listening and to inter-personal relationships.

The missionary dimension has its roots in the Christian life of an adult community or better in the Christian life of the Educating community in relation with the world of the youth. This is concretely expressed in:

- giving visibility, through an unconditional welcome, a coherent life, communicating joy and hope as one encounters Jesus in the experiences of life;
- knowing how to listen to those young people that have no reliable significant points of reference, adult-guides who will encourage them, who are willing to spend time with them, who are familiar with their expressions, all in view of a preventive way of education;
- giving real possibility that young people become protagonists in the life and activities of the Educating community;
- an animation with clear educational projects;
- assuring pastoral convergence that does away with working by sectors sustains the common project and the moments of sharing, research and dialogue.

Youth ministry with a missionary perspective is not so much concerned with reaching agreements in organizing energies and resources as in having a goal that goes beyond the Christian community. It means to elaborate well-intentioned proposals that will guide our mission in a context that is not characterized by faith.

The gift of oneself does not happen by chance. It is the fruit of a discipline throughout one's life. That is why it is necessary to concern ourselves with the education of the family.

It becomes all the more clear that it is necessary to reach the families, to work together in order to propose new lifestyles. In an authentically Christian family, the young generations have the right environment for a healthy human, affective and psychological education, and for a generous opening to the gift of self. The family, despite its limitations, continues to be the privileged environment to experience love. It is precisely in the family that we meet the first witnesses of a life lived in love, as response to a vocation. The step forward that we have to make consists in promoting a *vocational culture* in all our educational environments. We keep in mind what the *Guidelines for the educational mission* say in n.100 about this.

To give sense to one's own life means to discover one's own vocation. But when does a vocational proposal begin?

"Today, more than ever, one cannot think of an educational pathway without taking account of the context in which one is called to live. So it is only by starting from this reality, from these challenges, that together with the young people, we can formulate programmes that are adequate for their life plan."¹⁴ From the vocation they have received, Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello gave concrete answers to the deepest aspirations of the poorest young

¹⁴ *Guidelines*, n. 14.

To plan a vocational youth ministry means to give priority to the person in the community and to give precedence to *evangelisation*: it is to make Christ known, to motivate and to animate the people to let themselves be enlightened and challenged by Him. Vocation is to follow Jesus Christ. It is to be willing to participate in His mission in the Church.

It is necessary to affirm clearly that every life is vocation and that the whole life is vocation, commitment, responsibility. Therefore, it is important to help every young person to know and to realize one's own vocation, whatever it is, in an attitude of deep gratitude. The commitment of the Educating community to work for all vocations in the Church and in the Salesian Family comes from this conviction.

The vocational proposal is not given at the end of the journey, but as the element that qualifies every stage and every phase of the journey. It should, therefore, be present in all the educational projects, in the differentiated proposals of catechesis, of education to the faith and, with graduality and continuity, in the person's entire life.

To promote a more qualified youth ministry, it is necessary to *propose a vision of life as a gift received that, for its nature, has to be offered as a gift.*

Every true Christian experience should guide the child, the adolescent, the young person to seriously ask this question: "What can I do?", "What help can I give?", "With what concrete gestures can I express my commitment?", "What does God want from me?"

To give priority to formation with a new detail: attention to "*the after*". This has its roots in Valdocco and Mornese, where formation was in view of the future and of a pastoral praxis. An authentic formation cannot exist without a concrete a mission. We cannot help the young people to grow in the faith if we put Christian testimony to a secondary place.

We can have so many young people in our groups, but how many of them are really committed to witness to the Gospel in the world of work, of the university, of politics, in their communities? The centrality of the mission in youth ministry demands a new orientation for formation, one that is more attentive to the concrete life of each person. It is the call to a serious and delicate accompaniment of the young person. It is to put into practice one of the *priority strategies* in Chapter V of the *Guidelines for the educational mission*.

This missionary vision of Youth Ministry asks young people to dialogue with other groups and with other Christian communities. A missionary youth ministry opens doors to the ends of the world, not only for an experience of volunteering, but to be able to feel the great problems of the world: the social inequalities, hunger, violence and war, the life of so many children at risk, the necessity to defend the dignity of the person and the rights of all... In the life of young people, there must be a great concern for the future, for a better world and for peaceful relationship among nations.

A missionary youth ministry necessitates animators with a renewed formation, people with passion for education, so

that they may be able to introduce educational processes where young people will have the possibility of knowing and meeting Christ, His Gospel and His community. We need animators who are open to gratuitous service, who go against individualism and economic utilitarianism, and who reject models of society exclusively centred on “having” and on consumerism.

A missionary youth ministry leads one to give his/her own life. We remember the many young people who have given their lives for Christ. This requires that the young people become protagonists of the Christian animation of society. Missionary ministry is the gesture that allows oneself to be re-generated by the Risen Christ. The animator of this ministry has to possess strong spiritual armour. We are trying to teach young people to live with the essential, the Word of God, the liturgy and communion in order to direct the Christian community beyond its own concerns. This ministry asks us to look forward: a more missionary youth ministry that brings hope everywhere.

3. A Vocational youth ministry

In the elaboration of the document *Guidelines for the educational mission of the FMAs*, we have been led to the concept of *vocational youth ministry*, because vocational animation finds in youth ministry its vital space, and youth ministry is complete and effective only when it leads to a vocational proposal.

“In this sense, youth pastoral is *vocational by nature*. It guides young people towards the discernment of their life plan.”¹¹

For this we give priority attention to the accompaniment of young people; to the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) and to Volunteering as real venues of vocational growth and exercise of evangelical citizenship.

The necessity of keeping always present God’s plan in the life of every person brings us to the school of Mary who, as Mother, is called to illumine the Christian identity of each of her children.¹²

It is necessary to consider the missionary and vocational dimensions together, not in a separate way. Christ should be at the centre because in Him, God manifests Himself, is made flesh, and is present. There is no human dimension that is extraneous to Christ.¹³

When we speak of vocation we mean the call with which God makes known His project, through an inner voice and through different mediations (events, encounters...). The person responds by accepting this project. This dialogue certainly happens in special moments, but within the context of daily life, where the call and the response happen.

¹¹ Cf. INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, *Rooted in the Covenant. Plan of Formation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, Rome, 2000, p. 44.

¹² Cf. *Ibid.* p. 36.

¹³ Cf. BENEDICT XVI to the Italian bishops gathered in Rome for the LVI General Assembly, 18 May 2006.