



**YOUTH MINISTRY – A VITAL AREA
IN VOCATIONAL ANIMATION
CRITERIA AND STEPS IN THE PROCESS OF
VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT AND ACCOMPANIMENT**

**SUGGESTIONS
FOR THE PROVINCIAL CO-ORDINATORS OF YOUTH MINISTRY
to be shared with other provincial sectors/commissions**

The educational mission of the FMA is realised through an explicitly vocational youth ministry that aims at orientating and accompanying the young people towards an encounter with Jesus of Nazareth (See: *Guidelines for the educational mission of the FMA* 78, 100)

A. Some pastoral convictions that are the fruit of good practice and found in the Formation project and in the Guidelines for the Educational Mission of the FMA

- We must approach life and education with the absolute trust that God is present in this moment in history. He is at work in society and among the young and asks us to welcome young people by agreeing to change with them, *to convert ourselves to them. The search for spirituality* which is so prevalent among the young is an open door that can lead to an encounter with the God revealed in Jesus Christ.

- We have to become more aware *that consecrated life is possible in these post-modern times*, and that youth ministry is relevant, fruitful and touches lives even in our secular society.
- We have to:
 - * accompany the young people with loving-kindness and with firmness
 - * develop and educate their search for meaning
 - * lead them to mature their belief in the God of Jesus by offering them particular pathways of vocational youth ministry so as to reach out to them there where they are and to respond to the various situations they have experienced and in which they live.
- In today's world, creating conditions where they may experience God is indispensable. It means re-awakening questions on the meaning of life before talking about contents of faith. So, it is important to accompany the young people on their journey towards Christ. Using a language that is narrative and down-to-earth we present him in the reality of his life, in his way of relating to people and in his message, in such a way that they may personally experience him.
- The *Plan of formation (Rooted in the Covenant)* (pp. 99-104) and the *Guidelines for the educational mission of the FMA* (§§ 87-96) suggest some experiences and invite the communities to draw up those which, beginning with concrete situations, are considered essential for the holistic maturing of the young people.
 - *Growing in love* seen as a pathway to affective growth and capacity to love. The educating community is asked to create the family spirit and group life as a privileged place for education in love. It is a place where young people can be

helped to discover their sexuality as a call to love and the establishment of respectful and transparent relationships along with the formation of their moral conscience. We accompany them to understand the value of freedom and to make courageous, counter-cultural choices.

- *Service freely offered* is experienced as a disinterested gift to the poorest, thus showing one's own rootedness in Gospel values.
- *Education to living the inner life and prayer* in daily life seen as a concrete pathway to holiness. Young people ask us to show them through the life of our communities, what it means to live a life of faith with hope in the future, how one is happy to have encountered Christ, to follow Him and communicate his life. Proposing a constant meeting with Christ in the Word that has been listened to, shared and proclaimed, sets the young people off on a journey of conversion and missionary daring. Teaching them to pray is the best way of loving young people, so that they may find in prayer a source of joy and hope, of freedom and love.
- *Experiencing the paschal mystery*: youth ministry is challenged to develop pathways for genuine liturgical formation by accompanying the young generations to celebrate in spirit and in truth the Christian mystery of Reconciliation and Eucharist which are the bases of solid spiritual growth. This presupposes that the whole educating community is involved on a spiritual journey so that the young people can feel supported as they face the frustrations and toil of living, in understanding the fruitfulness of suffering in the light of the Cross and

resurrection of Jesus and in the realization that life is always worth living.

- *Meeting with Mary of Nazareth* who becomes part of one's life and who as a mother and teacher opens both young and adults to her help on their faith journey. She helps them to make their own the reality of the Gospels and to grow in friendship with God, in openness to communion and solidarity.

- *Promoting a vocational environment in a culture weakened by consumerism and centred on the here and now* requires paying attention to:
 - the question of meaning;
 - the relationship between faith and vocation
 - the strong influence of parents and adults
 - the new ways and forms of communicating the faith:
 - from group projects to individual processes of interiorizing the faith
 - from long-term journeys with strong catechetical formation to processes favouring religious experience;
 - reflection on new forms of conversion among young people in such a way that conversion comes about through a positive restructuring of the person and a change of attitudes and behaviour;
 - a new understanding and integration of feelings and the affective-sexual dynamics which are a decisive element in a vocational decision, paying attention to the various relationships: educator-young person-group; educator-young person-family, educator-young person-educational environment (school, oratory, volunteering, leisure time, etc.);

- formulation of a sound educational and vocational programme of *spiritual discernment* that leads to consistency in decision-making and helps to balance doubts and courage, enthusiasm and fears and shows both difficulties and risks, joys and hopes; a path of discernment that at the same time both encourages yet discourages, spurs forward yet recommends prudence;
- presentation of a Christianity which is genuine, accessible, welcoming, humble and in dialogue.

B. The Animation of Vocational Youth Ministry at provincial/interprovincial level:

- Encouraging all the members of the educating community to a gradual and progressive maturation of faith in God and living life as a vocation. Each one's choice of growing in their vocation creates a *vocational culture* both in communities and in the families.
- Encouraging consistency in the on-going gradual and progressive education in the faith at each stage of a person's development in the groups and associations, in all environments, in fact.
- Helping the educating communities in the schools, oratory-youth centres and in every Salesian environment to deepen their understanding of the vocational dimension inherent in the whole of youth ministry. This may be achieved by organising specific initiatives such as vocations weeks, community prayer for vocations and so forth, aimed at fostering all vocations in the Church.
- Committing ourselves as FMA to be women and communities that facilitate vocational maturation by purposely prioritising

the accompaniment of the young people towards an encounter with Christ, to apostolic commitment and to the discovery and choice of the divine project in their lives.

- Paying attention to the vocational aspect in the animation of youth ministry by bearing in mind that vocational orientation concerns every stage of human life and development and by offering specific moments and opportunities for definite vocational initiatives.
- Activating systematic proposals for accompaniment drawn up by the educating community (religious and lay people)- see *Guidelines for the educational mission of the FMA §110-123*:
 - to help the young people strengthen their faith by a deeper encounter with the Lord Jesus
 - to arouse within them the desire and the will to undertake a journey of maturation in their vocational choices
 - with means which can help them discover and respond to God's designs for them
 - by offering them a panorama of the various complementary vocations;
- Suggesting in the animation of youth ministry, both at local and provincial level, particular educational moments when the young people can reflect on their experiences in such a way as to render them meaningful in terms of consistent growth in faith (see *Guidelines § 97-99*)
- Strengthening the role of the educating community which reflects all the various vocations and becomes a place where life is discovered as gift, commitment and responsibility. It becomes an environment offering opportunities for service

and commitment to the point of orienting the young people in the direction of a specific vocation (see *Guidelines §144-156*)

- Developing a ministry imbued with the *missionary proclamation of the Gospel* that is everyone's responsibility and addressed to everyone in credible Christian communities where the faith is lived, shared and celebrated within the socio-cultural reality of the area, sharing in the life of the Church and taking an active part in the local society.

C. Vocational Youth Ministry – some formative proposals (see *Rooted in the Covenant pp.107-109*) for accompanying, with discernment, the young women beginning the period of assessment and guidance

Young women who

- have already begun a gradual experience of personal and community prayer
- have experienced service and animation in a Salesian pastoral environment (oratory-youth centre, school, homes for children at risk, ...)
- have already begun to integrate their emotional experiences and have begun a process of detachment from a consumer lifestyle in the service of the poor and needy
- have been part of a youth faith group and/or belonged to a Christian group within the local Church
- have been involved in experiences such as leadership camps, Campobosco, Confronto in Salesian centres for animation and /or Salesian spirituality

- have accepted and pursued a personal journey (of 1 or 2 years) of accompanied vocational discernment
- have taken part in systematic vocational encounters, vocation camps, the proposal of community, possibly with some experience of FMA community living
- have dialogued with the Provincial leading to the written request to begin the period of assessment and guidance.

YOUTH MINISTRY SECTOR
FORMATION SECTOR

7 January 2011