

Historical Profile

In the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters) the term youth ministry came into vogue as a result of the renewed reflection on the Church, born of Vatican II.

In the 1970s the FMA gradually moved from apostolic activity based on sectors (catechesis, mass-media, clubs, school) to a pastoral action centered on the person in his/her concrete reality. Then in the 80s came the model of youth ministry rooted in three criteria:

- The incarnation of Christ which throws open the doors on to the mystery of God
- The primacy of evangelization
- The educational aspect of youth ministry

At international level the organizational structures for animation also evolved. The 1960s International Catechetical Centre became the Department for Youth Ministry which in the 1990s, thanks to a more co-operative form of animation, was transformed into the Sector for Youth Ministry.

Today's challenges

The underlying concern of the Sector is that of re-awakening the necessity of **being with and among the young people to urge them on and to help them to think.**

In our current cultural situation life itself appears to be in a state of emergency, continually threatened by the shadow of death that seems to infiltrate every project.

In this context, helping young people to think means giving a name to the phenomena which are so much part of our present day culture and which have such an influence on the young even providing them with models. It means linking up the common elements and letting the youngsters look at future possibilities to try out; it means expressing the Preventive System in terms of today's culture.

In an era in which sound-bytes prevail, thinking is not fashionable. It is only by recovering the effort of thinking **together** and being with and **among the young**, that the novelty of their culture can be understood and the increasingly varied languages in which they express themselves. It means overcoming the usual boundaries of pastoral action to fit into the most unlikely places where young people live, hang out together, express their own creativity, talk of their expectations and dream their dreams.

The challenge is to re-think the evangelical quality of the whole educational process. Education is not something neutral nor is its outcome assured. It has to be reconsidered within evangelical parameters and placed within the mystery of God.

How do we go about re-thinking it?... the research is open-ended, it began by

committing the Sector to co-ordinate the process that aims at drawing up **the course of action for the educational mission of the FMA.**

Strengths

The real strengths of the sector lie in the coordinators of YM in the different continents with their love for young people, their passion for education and evangelization, their expertise, experience, organizational insights, life histories and ability to work as part of a team.

They are the indispensable knots in the worldwide network of the Institute. They are the strategic points which enable the Sector to understand in depth the world of the young in the different contexts and to place itself, as it were, alongside each community.

Networking with the coordinators from the various provinces, making the most of the wealth that emerges from many points of view, of educational and cultural approaches is a real priority and the key to effective international animation. For this reason, the Sector is committed to enhancing personal and online communication with the YM coordinators, keeping them informed of the processes, meetings and undertakings promoted at international level.