

WALKING TOGETHER TOWARDS THE WORLD CONFEDERATION ASSEMBLY 2015

Sixth Nucleus (November - December)

*“Words of Fr. Adriano Bregolin, Vicar Emeritus of the Rector Major,
to the Delegates and Past Pupils of the FMA”*

Dear readers we are now in the Sixth Nucleus of Formation in which, together or individually, we were able to reflect on the fundamental themes that strengthen our sense of belonging to the Association.

In these past months we had significant events in the Church and in our Institute. The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family was held last October. I am inviting everyone to read the final document and in particular the speech of Pope Francis for the Conclusion of the Third General Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (www.vatican.va).

The second important event was the XXIII General Chapter of the FMA and the election of our dear Mother General, Sr. Yvonne Reungoat and her Council (www.cgfmanet.org).

In this Sixth Nucleus I am proposing a theme on discernment that will be of great help for the election of the Council of the Union and the Council of Federation and for the proposal of the Confederation Council. To help you in sharing and in deepening the nucleus, I am proposing a personal or group work sheet and for which the responses will be emailed to maritzafma@yahoo.com or by postal mail in this address: Via dell’Ateneo Salesiano 81 00139 Roma. In the official website www.exallievfma.org you will find the Nucleus translated into five languages and all circular letters concerning the next World Elective Assembly 2015.

Now, let me share the words of Fr. Adriano Bregolin who already presented the topic on discernment in the 2009 Assembly!

Words of Fr. Adriano Bregolin: “Discernment in Preparation for the Elections”

Dear past pupils of the fma, I have been asked to propose you a moment of discernment in view of the new world presidency’s election. I thank you for the trust and, at the same time would like to tell you that I wish to offer this service in simplicity and humility, anyway conscious of the importance of this moment of high institutional value for your world confederation. The elections are always a delicate moment for any associative reality. A great attention to our way of listening, reacting, communicating, sharing, reflecting, choosing, is necessary. This is the reason why discernment is carried out. That is **a work of separation among what is worth and must therefore be kept** (the motivations true, objective, inspired to deeply humans and spiritual criterions; criterions that edify and therefore make us and the others grow) **and what must be abandoned** (these are the least true motivations, that do not take into account the common good and that focus more on personal affirmation, on the desire to be recognized, to have power, success, satisfaction of the own ego...).

I have thought about proposing you four stages for this discernment

- **A moment of lectio divina:** a reflection on the Gospel through which it is possible to understand how Jesus the Lord has intended the task of the authority for those people that inspire to His Word. I know that among you there are also people with other beliefs, but I think that many identify themselves in the values of the Gospel and that even people with other beliefs can get in the word of Jesus a reading of the life inspired to criterions of love and deep humanity.
- **Spiritual conditions and psychological conditions** to live well the discernment.
- **Institutional elements** that must taken into account in the choice of the persons.
- **Necessary specific elements** in order to interpret a determined role.

1. The first stage.

Lectio divina: authority in the thought of Jesus

I have thought about proposing you a well-known passage: Mark Chap. 10, 42-45. Jesus is approaching by now to his final Easter, in which he will completely give himself and the disciples instead, not understanding his true teaching yet, are quarrelling for gaining the most important places of the Kingdom. Two of them in particular, James and John, ask to be the most important persons next to Jesus. They ask him to have the places of honour, on his right and on his left. The reaction of the other apostles immediately occurs.

From the Gospel according to Mark. Chapter 10:

[41] And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. [42] But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them [43] But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister [44] And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. [45] For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many".

Jesus takes advantage of the accident to let understand which is the true way to be important in the Kingdom that He announces. Let us now well examine some expressions of the text.

“Called them to him”: as the expression “house” indicates a teaching particularly directed to the Church.

“They which are accounted to rule”.

The irony of Jesus in this expression is well evident. Even more explicit irony is in the parallel passage of Luke: “and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors” (Luke 22, 25). Almost to say: the power of man upon man can even seem a benefit; it can be taken as a lavished gift. Power often mantles with philanthropy, speaks the language of benevolence, appears as promotion of individual and collective good, loves to show its own merits. After all, what are human beings able to do in order to sell their own liberty to the power! Sometimes they desire it, invoke it and solicit it. Just to have some safety, an appearance of order, of some well-being. Power produces slavery and is produced by slavery, as sale of the own liberty and abdication of the own dignity.

In reality, these false benefactors “dominate”. The verb used by Jesus (in the Greek translation “archein”) is particularly strong; it means to practice a complete dominion on someone, to enslave, to crush. Here is the power: it oppresses and suppresses!

“But so shall it not be among you”.

Notice the verb at the present tense “is”: it does not say “it has to be” or “it will be”. It says “is”. We are in front of an extremely clear affirmation, almost categorical. As if it excluded even the slightest doubt that it has not to be this way, almost as it affirmed a well established, incontestable and inescapable fact! "Is" and it can only be this way.

Tones or different compositions are not admitted. The imperative would have denoted exhortation: the future would have denoted auspice. Jesus instead ascertains a fact that imposes as absolute. This is the reality for you! What is this reality? In few verses four times comes out the word “**service**”; twice in the form of noun and twice in the verbal form.

To “great” he does not oppose “small”, but servant; to “chiefest” he does not oppose “last”, but servant. Who is therefore that small, that last to which the Kingdom of heaven is given? Here is the answer: it is the servant. But what does this word mean?

The service of authority

The Word of Jesus brings us to a precise consideration. The service which we are called is the one to care for the salvation of the brothers, completely giving ourselves for their good. First of all inside the house and inside the Church, the community, the Association...

In such sense each of us is set in authority. In the sense that it exercises an influence on the other, so at the end we exercise authority one another.

May this not be power, Jesus warns, but authority!

And the word authority derives from the Latin “augere” which means “to make grow”

Each one serves the brother, the sister, if it makes them grow in faith and love, in their humanity, if it helps them to walk following the example of the Master, to be true in their own condition of men and women.

This is the Gospel and to refer to the thought and the Word of Jesus represents already a first step of purification of our ideas and our desires.

2. Second stage.

Spiritual conditions and psychological conditions to live well the discernment.

Here I list some attitudes that I consider particularly important:

- a) **To look after the climate of our Assembly.** It should be pervaded by the presence of God in the middle of us. It must be clear that it is a moment of great seriousness and serenity, in which a unique thing unites the hearts of all: the search of the will of God.
- b) **To purify our heart** from those passions that impede an authentic interpersonal relationship. These are for instance the non communicability towards the others, cultivated feelings of envy, of jealousy, of non participation to joy and other people's pain...etc.
- c) **To accept to be called into question by the others or by God through the others.** Availability reveals the truth of what we are and what we look for. It unmaskes our ambitions, our prejudices and resistances...We must allow our way of seeing and thinking to be compared with the views and the convictions of whom is close to us and shares our same experience.
- d) **To abandon the pretension to know on our own the will of God.** The will is always mediated by the testimony and the experience of the others...
- e) **To live this experience as a spiritual moment, not only of personal but also of community faith.** To have our mind in peace, in prayer! To cultivate a great sense of trust in the others who share our affiliation to the Association. A careful listening and the respect of them, certain that God can reveal in their word.

3. Third stage.

Institutional elements that must characterize the role of the persons that must be elected.

Particularly important in this phase is the attention to the Statute of your Confederation. In fact **who represents you must embody the spirit of this Statute and the spirituality** that is behind it.

At number 4, talking about the finalities, is written:

The Association:

- a) *Participates to the educational mission of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) and, in the environments in which it operates, inserts with the Salesian lay style that characterizes it;*
- b) *engages for the promotion and the education of woman, for the defence of life and family;*
- c) *supports the defence of human rights and peace;*
- d) *favours a constructive juvenile protagonism through the promotion of initiatives and activities for young people, particularly of those that live in difficult conditions;*
- e) *operates as movement of opinion in the dialogue with the socio-cultural reality, valorising the processes of social communication;*
- f) *is opened to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and favours it;*
- g) *keeps updated and takes care of the continuous formation of the associates, according to the values of the received education;*
- h) *lives, promotes and supports solidarity among the members, faithful to the origins;*
- i) *is present in the territory and, according to its own finalities, collaborates with the civil and ecclesiastical organizations;*
- j) *takes care of the relations with lay associations, in particular, with the Past Pupils of Don Bosco and with the Salesian Cooperators.*

And at number 5, talking about spirituality the text declaims:

- a) *The spirituality of the FMA Past Pupil bases on the Preventive System of Don Bosco that is expressed in the trinomial reason - religion - tenderness. Today it returns as a project of integral education that answers to the most authentic aspirations of the person: the seeking of the truth, the necessity of God, the openness to relations*
- b) *It enriches furthermore of some charismatic elements of the life and action style of Maria Mazzarello whom, with "female genius", has shared with Don Bosco the same educational project, inspired to Mary Help of Christians: "to take takes care of..."; to live with simplicity and joy the daily; to fill every small gesture with the experience of God; to insert in territory testifying and promoting the culture of life and solidarity.*

It is clear therefore that the person or the persons that we are going to elect must adequately represent the Association and must demonstrate to possess these fundamental requirements that are indicated as "pillars" of engagement and spirituality of the Association.

4. Fourth stage:

Specific elements necessary in order to interpret a determined role.

When we choose a person, it must obviously have some characteristics that can correspond to the peculiarities of the role. I point out some as example; you will be able to observe many others after an accurate reflection.

From the human point of view:

- Ability of leadership. The one that holds authority must have the qualities to rule the others, to rule the Association, the Presidency...
- Consequently it must have a good disposition to relations that facilitates him interpersonal relations.
- It must have the ability to work with others, avoiding dangerous tendencies of centralization, and at the same time the ability to coordinate the work of its closest collaborators
- It must have the sense of government, the ability to operate concrete and achievable choices...
- It must have time to dedicate in favour of the Association.

From an Institutional and charismatic point of view:

- It must know and be attached to the typical values of the Salesian spirituality
- It must feel tied up to the Institution from which originates the Association; in this particular case the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.
- It must cultivate a relation of a full and alive communion with the other branches of the Salesian Family.

Suggestions of methodology:

The times for the elections can be narrow at times. Probably our situation is of this kind. In spite of this, for a good discernment, we must keep in mind the necessary passages in order to carry out good choices. Such passages could be valorised by some questions that I propose to you. They can be object of a personal reflection or even of a comparison realized in small groups, holding well firm the spiritual and psychological conditions of what was previously said. Those questions are:

1. Am I conscious of my responsibility in this important moment of election? What are my personal feelings? Am I really free, striving for the search of the will of God? Am I really looking for what is right in front of God?

2. For what I know about the Association, what are the emergent necessities it manifests? What are the most relevant problems? What do we must improve mostly?
3. Who are the persons I estimate more qualified to serve the Association in its necessity of administration and animation? Choose some names. Compare with others if you want. Don't speak ill of anyone and do not put veto on anybody. But compare rather on the positive values noticed on the persons you have thought to and on those that others may have pointed out to you. Above all, don't be influenced by the others. Be free!
4. Among that small group of persons you have thought to, which one seems to You more appropriate to the charge of President or to other assignments concerning the Council of Presidency. Which one of them better interprets human, institutional and charismatic qualifications.
5. Make your choice. But above all be free and let also the others free and responsible. God expresses through all and with the help of all!

Dear Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, now it is your turn. The more you will be free, attentive to the will of God, respectful of the others, rich of esteem and affection for your associative reality, the more the result of these elections will be in accordance to the heart of God and in favour of your Association. May Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello remain close to you today and forever during all your life.

PERSONAL OR GROUP WORK SHEET

1. Read carefully the Sixth Nucleus: “ The words of Don Adriano Bregolin during the 2009 World Assembly.”
2. To those who know the Association, what are the emerging needs that it expresses? What are the most significant problems? Where do we need to grow more?
3. Before the election of the candidates we are proposing that the prayer to the Holy Spirit be recited.