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Nucleus 23°

## Listening to the Synod Our attention on the young

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In harmony with the Church, the Salesian Family and the FMA Institute in 2018 focus our reflection on the young, with them and for them we listen to the Synod event to learn to accompany their life and vocational journey.

Pope Francis in his letter to the young in view of the Synod, exhorts them to participate actively in the synod journey. “The Church also wishes to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith; even your doubts and your criticism. Make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls” (Letter of Pope Francis, January 13, 2017).

These words of Pope Francis become an invitation to every FMA Past Pupil to live what article 5.2 of our Statute expresses: “*In the spirit of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, the Past Pupils pay special attention...to the young, especially to those who are in conditions of poverty and of exclusion, to involve them and make the protagonists of their integral formation and of their vocational choice*”. Thus, the very mission of the FMA Past Pupil helps us to live the Synod with the young.

We begin our reflection with Mother Yvonne in order to understand the young people who are around us, what we must and can do with and for them. We gratefully welcome her magisterium and we willingly listen to her word, taken from the presentation made to the Sector collaborators in 2017.

### ***Which Young People?***

To have the opportunity of pausing to reflect together on Synod 2018, and even more on the vocational dimension understood as a culture, is a **charismatic gift!**

We ask ourselves, together with the whole Church, **who are the youth of our time; if they have a goal and what is it**; what perception do they have of the Church, if they are truly the first generation without religious affiliation...

Attention, above all, **not to extend to the whole world the experience of the secularized West** (...). Let us ask ourselves why young people who grew up in Countries of ancient Christian tradition know so little about the Gospel and consequently are not willing to commit their life according to its style ... and what is the situation in Countries where Christianity is a minority?

What are the most common paths of approach to faith that also produce the strength of martyrdom?

What are the paths of vocational discernment that make the youth world good ground where the seed of the Word, of which the Gospel spoke to us this morning, takes root and bears fruits of service, self-giving, commitment in the Church, and vocations of special consecration?

### ***The vocational culture of young people we know***

It seems to me that by studying these paths one can begin to look at a new dawn also for education to the faith, to facilitate the encounter with Jesus, to help all young people discover that being brought into existence is already a call; that the most important and exciting task of youth is to find out what this call is and to respond to it in order to experience true happiness.

I confess that I often ask myself about the **motivations** that lead masses of young people to participate in **WYD**. It is evident that these are young people who are not far from the faith and the Church, at least not the majority of them.

**What led them to a choice** that for many is translated also into a journey of vocational discernment that leads to the priesthood, religious life, matrimony lived as a sacrament? They are young people like all the others, but their journey was illumed by something different... Other young people to observe are those of the **SYM**.

It's true that often they are moved primarily by love for young people, by the desire to help the little ones grow... but this form of philanthropy would not be enough to motivate a path of years lived by many, the progressive journey of faith, leading many to the SS. CC. or to other branches of the SF or to groups somehow involved in Christian life.

It is good to focus with them on **what helped them to question themselves, to make a vocational choice**.

These are also indications for direction that can help us offer a contribution not limited to analysis, but of taking **proactive** paths, of creating environments, of relational styles.

(...) A phenomena that I invite you to pause on is the **enthusiasm** that **Pope Francis** arouses, and not only among the young. You remember that the previous generation, yours and ours, hung on the lips of **John Paul II**, whose death we mourned as one mourns for a beloved father ...

One and the other are people who know how to touch the most authentic cords of the human heart, its deepest desires, to re-awaken dreams and desires, who offer an image of the faith and of the Church that most responds to the real needs many carry within themselves...

But then, who are the people who allow us to change deeply? Who modify their judgment parameters, their behaviors?

The task of making enthusiasm become conviction, the strength of conversion, the motive for choices of life is entrusted to the educators, to us.

We are entrusted with this serious **responsibility** in fidelity to the gift of the **Salesian spirit** that was given to us, especially for this group, in fidelity to the **task** that we have received in the Institute and from the Institute.

### *A dual attitude*

**Listening to reality and looking toward the future** are part of our way of approaching the world of youth since the time of Don Bosco and of Mother Mazzarello.

**Listening** to understand the calls, the newness that touches this part of humanity, to know how to read their needs and expectations of which they are often unaware.

**Look toward the future** trusting that, as Don Bosco used to say, "in every young person, even the most unfortunate, there is a point that is accessible to the good", that we are asked to touch in order to re-awaken it and make it a lever for a beautiful and meaningful life.

**Look to the future** to open it even to generations that seem flattened on the present, without expectations and without hope, precociously aged due to disillusionment and experiences of marginalization at various levels.

It seems to me that at this time what we need to particularly cultivate as we observe reality, is trying to interpret the **potential** that often hides in them.

It happens for example that I often question myself about their love for risk, for a 'high' as young people define it.

I ask myself if they are not hiding the desire to give meaning to life and to death...it could even become a crack that opens toward vocational discernment, toward heroic choices!

However, the motivations must be very strong and touch the deepest fibers. Because in order to give life, it is necessary to leave the swamp of individualism.

Our Lady (...) takes you by the hand and suggests to you what she would do in today's youth reality in the various Countries, the one that can best vivify their energies and put them at the service of good!

(Mother Yvonne Reungoat)

WORK FORM FOR THE CONFEDERAL COUNCIL, FEDERATION, UNION, AND FOR ALL THE PAST PUPILS OF THE WORLD.

- Attentively read the words of Mother Yvonne
- Formulate a concrete practice to accomplish with the young people you know and are in contact with.
- Send a photo or video as evidence of the commitment taken with the young.
- Let us unite with the universal Church with the prayer **for Youth Synod 2018**

Lord Jesus  
in journeying towards the Synod, your Church  
turns her attention to all the young people of the world.  
We pray that they might boldly take charge of their lives,  
aim for the most beautiful and profound things of life  
and always keep their hearts unencumbered.

Accompanied by wise and generous guides, help them respond to  
the call you make to each of them,  
to realize a proper plan of life and achieve happiness.  
Keep their hearts open to dreaming great dreams  
and make them concerned for the good of others.

Like the Beloved Disciple, may they stand at the foot of the Cross,  
to receive your Mother as a gift from you.  
May they be witnesses to your Resurrection  
and be aware that you are at their side  
as they joyously proclaim you as Lord.

Amen.

Please send your personal or group response by email to:

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