

Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis

Youth

**Together
on the European
roads**

Series Youth – 1

by the Pontifical Council for the Laity

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

Together on the European Roads

Third European Meeting on Youth Ministry

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1999

PRESENTATION

In September 1998, the year in which the Holy Father prompted the whole Church to reflect on the mission of the Holy Spirit, at the initiative of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Youth Ministry Delegates of the Episcopal Conferences and of Movements and Associations in Europe gathered in Paderborn for their 3rd Meeting on the theme "What Type of Christians for the Year 2000? A Project for Living as Young People" In fact we are all aware that our young people, as adults, will hold in their hands the world of the new millennium. What inheritance will we leave them? What future are we opening before them?

The Meeting was held in a town where in the Middle Ages many European cultures converged: a town profoundly marked also by the destruction of war. This all helped to define the purpose of our gathering. The participants came from every country in Europe, each bringing the riches of his or her own culture, experience, history and, at the same time, common concerns, with the intent of offering the youth of every country an answer able to give meaning to human existence. This answer is Christ.

In recent years, the face of Europe has changed: the fall of the Berlin Wall, massive migration, serious political problems and conflicts, poverty of developing countries compared to our continent's culture of materialism, are transforming the great cities and putting us before new challenges in education and formation. Youth ministry cannot stand on the sideline, it cannot overlook the concrete situations in which young people live their life. Are we forming our young people so as to enable them to accept these differences, to be "lay confessors" of the faith in a new society? This is the "challenge" we face.

The experience of World Youth Days shows that many young people are sincerely searching for the meaning of life, for values which can serve as its basis, in short: they are in search of God. How can we fill this longing?

The fact that we spent the days of the Meeting reflecting together about youth ministry indicates that we are well aware of the importance of the task with which we are each entrusted. It is important to know the mindset of the individuals, or groups to whom our mission is directed: they are the ones to whom the Gospel must be offered today. We need to take into consideration the characteristics of our "post-modern" world and to propose, in relation to them, using also the good things they offer, valid alternatives in order to form authentic Christians, convinced that Christ is the only wealth.

We cannot remain indifferent or be uncertain what to do when we encounter the religious searching of young people, a tendency to live religion in a private and individual manner, problems which arise when religion is set against the freedom of the person, rejection of tradition and everything connected with the past, life-projects which take into account only the immediate future, fear of facing the real questions about the deepest meaning of things, disillusionment caused by failure to achieve what seemed a possible change, in a society in which inter-personal relationships develop in a climate of mistrust... Nevertheless, alongside all this, we must valorize and welcome new possibilities which are, undoubtedly, a way of drawing near to the Gospel: how can we fail to recognize human values, desire for solidarity, efforts to build peace, efforts to defend the rights of the person, to defend life?

In this world, with all its contradictions, the Church must help men and women of our times, particularly the young ones, to think deeply about the meaning of life, to search tirelessly for God, to discover His love revealed in Jesus Christ. This is the command left to us by the Master. This is the only power which can transform the world. Only by encountering Christ can a person be converted and become his witness, his "confessor".

Presentation

This volume, which is a collection of the texts of the papers given during the Paderborn Meeting, intends to make a modest contribution towards reflection and offer some helpful means to those who, urged on by love of Christ (cf 2 *Cor* 5:14), place their life at the service of the formation and evangelization of the young generations.

JAMES FRANCIS CARD. STAFFORD
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

INTRODUCTION

In September 1998 in Paderborn, Germany, we held the 3rd European Meeting on Youth Ministry, attended by representatives of Episcopal Conferences and international Movements, Associations and Communities operating in Europe, each of whom was accompanied by a young person.

The Pontifical Council for the Laity undertook this initiative, the idea of which was a consequence of meetings to prepare and evaluate World Youth Days, in order to promote communication and contact among the countries of Europe.

The first such Meeting (Rome 1994) consented above all an increase in awareness of the situation of youth ministry. A report was presented on what was being done and some of the main elements: after many years of being divided, Europe was beginning to come together again, to communicate, and this situation called urgently for specific occasions to examine and understand the realities of the "new Europe".

During the second Meeting, held immediately after the Youth Pilgrimage to Loreto (Italy) in September 1995, we focused on the Church's educational proposals to young people. The Pilgrimage we had just experienced gave the Meeting a special tone: many delegates had travelled to Loreto with their own young people and this experience had left them more acutely conscious of the serious problems troubling the continent at that time.

The first two Meetings helped us to identify the priorities of youth ministry in the Church and also the important and unexpected possibilities of co-operation between the different countries and different ecclesial situations.

In Paderborn we decided to start from certain questions which arise spontaneously in the minds of those who are anxious to offer a meaningful message to young people today: who are young people, how is their personality configured, what must be kept in mind when planning a programme of formation, how should we present Christ to them, educate them in the faith? We sought to formulate some elements in reply to these queries with the help of valid speakers and reports on initiatives already underway in various places as part of national, diocesan or group pastoral programmes... The very title of the Meeting: "What type of Christians for the year 2000? A project for living as young people" was chosen to express all this.

The Meeting focused on certain themes which provoked questions calling for further research, statements on the seriousness and urgency of youth ministry, certainties on which to base our proposals.

It is clear that a presentation is always in danger of being generic, but at the same time we know that the knowledge of certain facts and the effort to systemise what is lived in daily life can be of great help if we are to approach the persons with whom we wish to enter into dialogue and to whom we wish to put a concrete proposal, accepting them as they are.

Youth ministry is not something "to occupy our time", it is a commitment aimed at helping every young person to encounter Christ, so that knowing Him and His message he or she will choose to live in a certain manner, and realise what it means to believe and make faith the fundamental choice, the choice that affects one's whole existence. We are accompanied by so many reductionisms, confronted with difficulties in language, poverty of gestures and symbols which have lost all significance. This is why we did not limit ourselves to affirming that Christ is the centre: this we know. We were concerned with how to put into words all the riches of His mystery in such a way as to reach the young person directly. Because we all realise the urgent and unavoidable duty to

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educate in the faith, to provoke a religious experience, to identify criteria able to direct a life project.

In all these years there has been a time when we were all united, despite the differences and characteristics of each: World Youth Day, the fruit of a prophetic decision made by Pope John Paul II when he called youth to make a pilgrimage across the world in the shadow of the Cross of the Holy Year. This Day involves the whole Church in commitment for the young generations. "Young People and the Pope. Together" is the motto which characterises this initiative. A motto which indicates something which goes far beyond physical nearness: it indicates the Pope's relation with young people and at the same time the fact that both the Pope and the young people are walking together towards Christ. The Pope is their "guide" their "educator". With his Messages, which began with the Apostolic Letter in 1985, his numerous meetings and celebrations with them, Pope John Paul II puts forward quite clearly a demanding project, with great confidence and hope in their abilities, proposing a choice of life able to fill them with meaning and supply a genuine answer to the fundamental questions about our existence. His example and his teaching have been for us, also in Paderborn, a point of reference and inspiration.

A prevailing desire during our Meeting was to know what young people expect from formation... During a debate they were invited to tell us. With the same objective we visited Jugendhaus Hardehausen, Paderborn archdiocesan youth centre where, thanks to a report from the BDKJ (Bund der Katholischen Jugend – Federation of Germany young Catholics), we were informed about the different forms of youth ministry in Germany.

As we entrust these pages to the Congress participants and to all who share our "passion" for the education and formation of youth, we cannot fail to offer once again our sincere thanks to the German Bishops' Conference and to the Archdiocese of Paderborn for welcoming us, through Rev. Paul Hüster, Head of National

Renato Boccardo

Youth Ministry, and his co-workers, to the "Liborianum" and making possible this new chapter which we have written "together on the roads of Europe"

RENATO BOCCARDO

*Head of the Youth Section
Pontifical Council for the Laity*

Greetings to the Participants

Letter of Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Secretary of State

The Vatican 18th September 1998

Cardinal James Francis Stafford,
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

Your Eminence,

Under your presidency, from 21 to the 24 of September at the *Li-borianum* of Paderborn, the heads of Youth Ministry of the European Bishops' Conferences, representatives of international Associations, Movements, Communities, as well as delegates of the Council of the Churches in Europe will meet to reflect on the theme: What Type of Christians for the Year 2000?

Pope John Paul II, who sees in youth the future of the Church, accompanies this meeting with his prayers and, as a sign of profound union, he sends to all those gathered at Paderborn his warmest greetings. May the Holy Spirit, to whom this second year of preparation for the Great Jubilee is dedicated, strengthen the awareness of the participants so their steps may proceed in the direction desired by the Lord. In the world of today, so like a vast store stocked with all sorts of merchandise, there is more than ever need of men and women able to make the right choices. Not all the offers in fact, although presented with convincing publicity, are useful, some are only temptations leading to a road which is wrong or a road which is false. In order to cross the threshold of the third millennium avoiding obstacles and pitfalls, there must be expert guides able to indicate to young people the road which leads to the goal. This goal has a name: Jesus Christ.

Angelo Sodano

The Holy Father wishes to thank all those who, filled with this desire, devote themselves to youth ministry. He reminds them of what he said to Christians gathered at Heroes Place in Vienna, during a brief visit to Austria: "Orthodoxy requires ortho-practice [...]. The effectiveness of the message depends also on the credibility of the messengers. New evangelization begins in fact with ourselves, our style of life. What the Church needs today are not part-time Catholics, but full-time Christians" (Homily June 21st 1998).

With the wish that the theme of the Congress will be examined in this spirit, and that the Meeting will help to render a now united Europe aware of her Christian roots, the Holy Father cordially imparts to all the participants his Apostolic Blessing.

+ ANGELO Card. SODANO

*Greeting of Bishop Karl Lehmann
President of the German Bishops' Conference*

Your Eminence Cardinal Stafford,
venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,
dear Delegates of the European local Churches
and of Movements and Associations

Thanks to the Pontifical Council of the Laity, the heads of Youth Ministry of the local Churches of Europe and Delegates of the world of youth, have already met twice, in Rome 1994 and in Loreto 1995, to get to know each other better and above all exchange ideas on present-day questions and progress regarding youth ministry.

I am happy that this time, accepting the invitation of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Youth Ministry Office of the German Bishops' Conference, you are holding your meeting in Paderborn. This will also give you an opportunity to see the vitality of youth ministry in our parishes, youth movements and initiatives of youth social work, but also the limits and difficulties encountered in this activity.

Your meeting has as its theme "What Type of Christians for the Year 2000?" It is easy to see that young Europeans, despite differences due to the diversity of countries and local Churches, are becoming increasingly similar in their attitude towards life. This is why it is so important for you to face together the challenges of the present day so as to be able to take hold of the future.

It depends a great deal on you and the influence youth ministry is able to exert, if we are to succeed in preserving or restoring a Christian soul to the new Europe which is growing together.

In this regard I would call your attention to something said by Pope John Paul II in one of his homilies at Denver in 1993: "The Church needs your energies, your enthusiasm, your young ideals to

Karl Lehmann

make the Gospel of Life permeate the whole of society transforming people's hearts and society's structures and so create a civilization of authentic justice and love".

All the German Bishops invoke abundant blessings from the Lord on your search for the right path to achieve this task. Your meeting in Paderborn coincides with the Plenary Assembly of the German Bishops' Conference held every year in the Autumn. We greet you from the tomb of Saint Boniface and are profoundly united with you in your reflection on questions of youth ministry but above all in our celebrations of the Eucharist. We hope that through discussion and listening to the Spirit of God on the threshold of 2000 you may discover the power of Christian hope which is leading us into the third millennium with renewed vigour and spirit, giving us the courage and impulse necessary to bear missionary witness in our environment.

Wishing you the fulness of the Lord's blessings, I thank the Pontifical Council for the Laity and in a special way His Eminence Cardinal James Francis Stafford, to whom I am bound by a profound friendship, and I greet you all on behalf of the German Bishops.

+ KARL LEHMANN

I
BEING YOUNG TODAY

A Project for Living as Young People

JAMES FRANCIS Card. STAFFORD

President, Pontifical Council for the Laity

“ONLY LOVE IS CREDIBLE”

“**W**hen the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will declare to you all the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (*Jn* 16:13-14).

In this year, 1998, at the urging of Pope John Paul II, the Church has devoted herself to a long meditation upon the mission of the Holy Spirit in creation and redemption. We continue this meditation as we approach the Jubilee Year 2000 AD. More particularly we are here at Paderborn to reflect upon the mission of young people in the Church in the year 2000 and beyond. Our conference will be discussing the topic, “What Type of Christians for the year 2000?” under four different headings: Being young today; Forming youth today; Youth ministry: Working out a project; Youth ministry: Possible projects.

My own address is divided into five parts: Our geographical context; characteristics of man in democratic modernity; the Church pastoral ministry to young adults in the new millennium; the revival of the mission of the lay confessors in the Church today; conclusion.

1. OUR CONTEXT

Paderborn is an ancient and flourishing diocese. Founded in the year 800 by Charlemagne, it was and remains one of the great religious, cultural and historic centers of the North Rhine-Westphalia state. As a diocese it will be celebrating its 1200th anniversary in the year 2000.

Just a few years before its founding, a remarkable group of relatively young Anglo-Saxon Christians, both men and women, monks and nuns, came to Germany from England as missionaries. They came to proclaim Christ in the lands east of the Rhine River. Most were Benedictines who knew the beauty of God's Word through community life, the life of love inspired by the inward abiding of the Holy Spirit. They drew upon the wisdom of *The Rule of St. Benedict* in their deepening experience of the life of the Spirit of Jesus.

This movement of young Christian missionaries into Germany continued. In 1014, after his imperial coronation in St. Peter's in Rome, the Emperor Henry II encouraged Bishop Meinwerk of Paderborn to obtain from Abbot Odilio of Cluny in Burgundy, France, Benedictine monks in order to set up a monastery at Abdinghof, near Paderborn. Abbot Odilio sent 13, some of whom were young men. So this area was a center of Benedictine life in the German Imperial Church system for many centuries.

It's noteworthy how cosmopolitan the world-view was then among the people of Europe. I have already mentioned the influence and presence of the Anglo-Saxons here. Likewise at that time, we read of German pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land. There was close and continuing contact with the Holy See. The young people of that time, I suspect, would not feel out of place in a gathering like this, which includes persons from so many parts of Europe, both east and west.

During the Second World War Paderborn was nearly totally destroyed. That evil whirlwind left its impact upon the soul of the city. The war kindled the fire of despair and destruction. It fractured the social and spiritual life of the community and obscured the face of the living God for people of whatever age even to the present moment.

Paderborn is not Rome or Loreto, where our previous two meetings have been held. It is in northern Europe with its own special history of the Church and of the Christian experience. But for the people of Paderborn and for all Europeans the decisive question is our attitude toward Christ at the end of this violent century.

2. WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MAN IN DEMOCRATIC MODERNITY?

It is pastorally important to be acquainted with the self-identity and self-understanding of those to whom the Gospel is being addressed today.

Generally, man continues to be guided by the radical project of postmodernity. On the threshold of the new millennium man finds himself entering a post-religious age of human autonomy, democracy, science, and capitalism. He organizes his political, economic, and cultural life solely with the immanent future in mind.

More specific characteristics are the following:

1. Many inhabit a post-religious landscape. Others live with a thoroughly privatized religious faith with the dominant question being, What can religion do for me?

2. Religion and freedom are seen as opposing one another. Freedom is seen as man's power to innovate, to free himself from the weight of tradition and history, and to give himself his own moral law. Man's political history is seen as telling the long story of the coming into existence, mainly through Christianity, of a disenchanted, desacralized world, a world without meaning where man, exercising his own freedom, is the measure of all things.

An example of this modern hostility toward being and thus toward meaning in the world is the English author of this century, D. H. Lawrence. He turned against "depth", the freighting of things with meanings, and likened the liberation from the weight of this experience of obligatory significance to the escape from "a horrible enchanted castle, with wet walls of emotions and ponderous chains, of feelings and ghastly atmosphere".

3. Having freed himself from the power of heteronomous religious authority, man has become aware that the project of the Enlightenment, i.e., absolute human autonomy, has proven illusory. On the oth-

er side of religious faith, he now finds himself fractured, i.e., distanced and separated from himself, from his brothers, and from reality.

In politics and economics, man had hoped that his aspirations could find specific representation in the majority established by the democratic general will. Instead, he knows himself still controlled by the other, in the present instance, by the human unconscious, which renders his own search for autonomy obscure and his own identity opaque.

Man had hoped that the general democratic will would have represented his desires, wants, and principled beliefs. Instead he has found an explosion of individualist demands, which arise from newly-discovered personal rights. Consequently politics is dominated by chronic conflict, the necessity of which is seen as the only way of avoiding the totalitarian temptation. The role of the state will expand in guaranteeing these new "rights". The modern state will grow to guarantee the greater number of recognized "personal rights".

4. In his person modern man is torn and divided among his brothers. He is perpetually dissatisfied and always on the move. An anxious self-scrutiny establishes an ironic distancing from work. Experiencing the deadly routine of daily life, he takes refuge in jokes, self-mockery, and cynicism. By thereby refusing to take seriously the work routines he must perform he denies their capacity to injure himself.

5. Another effect of democratic modernity is "uncertainty in relationships... It is difficult to become certain about relationships, even within the family".¹ Pervasive mistrust, beginning among spouses and children, is like "the passing of a scythe which lays low grass and flowers together" to quote Alessandro Manzoni's description of the bubonic plague and its effects on Milanese families.²

¹ L. GIUSSANI, *The Religious Sense*, Montreal 1997, 19.

² Cf. *The Betrothed*, 34th chapter.

I recall reading about this explosion of mistrust in the USA. In an essay appearing in *The New York Times Magazine* on January 21, 1996, Meghan Daum, a New York based writer, revealed her disillusionment with the 1990's. Her upbringing and education had held out for her generation the pursuit of a sex life in which "women should feel free to ask men on dates and wear jeans and have orgasms".

She describes her discontent, "Two decades after 'The Joy of Sex' made sexual pleasure permissible for both sexes and three decades after the pill put a government approved stamp on premarital sex, we're still told not to trust each other. We've entered a period where mistrust equals responsibility, where fear signifies health".

For Ms. Daum the sexual revolution has led to the dead-end of a universal mistrust of others. She writes acutely, "trusting anyone is an irresponsible act, having faith in an intimate partner, particularly women in relation to men, is a symptom of such naivete that we're obviously not mature enough to be having sex anyway". And so distractions cover their fears and mistrusts: sports, body-building, work, acquisition of goods, consumerism, violence, drugs, war, and sexual activity.

3. WHAT IS THE CHURCH'S MISSION TO YOUNG ADULTS ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM?

The Church's mission is the vision of the II Vatican Council: She "strongly desires to enlighten all peoples with [the] brightness [of Christ] which gleams over the face of the Church, by preaching the Gospel to every creature" (LG 1).

Specifically, it means the following two pastoral initiatives:

1. To reverse the tendency toward the forgetfulness of being and the denial of meaning in the world. This requires the Church to challenge young adults to ask the universal question, What is the meaning

of everything? Or, Why is there anything at all, and not simply nothing? It is a question known to all men, but avoided by most today. The 'universal question' engages all the capacities of man - emotional, physical, and spiritual. I will elaborate on the importance of urging young people to ask this ultimate question with the help of Msgr. Luigi Giussani.

Msgr. Luigi Giussani's book, *The Religious Sense*, speaks of the importance of every young person confronting himself with the ultimate question. Msgr. Giussani's pastoral insights have grown out of his post-World War II experience of priestly work as an instructor of young people and adults in Italian Superior Schools and the Sacred Heart University in Milan. His vision was conceived and born within a century not dissimilar to that time several hundred years ago when Italy's civilization was so desolated that Alessandro Manzoni compared it to a cultivated vineyard gone wild. After the II World War Giussani initiated what has become one of the most significant lay movements in the Catholic Church, *Comunione e Liberazione*. The method and content of his teaching have had an incredible impact upon the lives of people of all ages in thirty countries.

In the fourteenth chapter of *The Religious Sense* Msgr. Giussani recalls the change of Jacob's name to Israel at Penuel. His reflections on the young Patriarch's story point up the incommensurability of man's infinite desires with his finite capabilities. Its usefulness in understanding Giussani's *apologia* for the religious experience will become apparent.

Giussani highlights the need for engaging every bit of man's strength in the search for God. Here is his account. "Jacob returns home from exile, that is to say, from the dispersion or a foreign reality. He reaches the river at twilight, and darkness is rapidly descending. Already the herds, servants, and women have passed by. By the time it is his turn to wade the ford, it is completely dark, but Jacob wants to continue on. But before he sets foot in the water, he senses an obstacle in front of him. A person confronts him and tries to prevent him from crossing. Jacob cannot see this person's face but, with

all of his strength, he starts to wrestle with him in a match that will last the entire night. Finally at the first rays of dawn, the strange person manages to inflict such a blow on Jacob's hip that from then on, for the rest of his life, Jacob will be lame. But at the moment, the strange individual says to Jacob, 'You are indeed great. You shall no longer be spoken of as Jacob, but as Israel which means «I have wrestled with God»'. This is the stature of the human being in Judeo-Christian revelation. Life, the human being is a struggle, that is to say a tension, a relation 'in darkness' with the beyond; a struggle without seeing the face of the other. He who realizes this about himself goes among others as lame, singled out. He is no longer like the others. He is marked".³

Jacob is the young, ambitious "trickster", the one who cannot be trusted. He is an exile, fearful of his brother, Esau, whom he wronged, yet hoping to heal their disrupted relationship through gifts of appeasement. The drama included the crucial scene of the all-night wrestling with the mysterious, unnamed person. The contest took place while Jacob was still an exile. It required the total engagement of Jacob's energy - physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual. A dramatic tension arises between an unpredictable fraternal reconciliation and an all-encompassing, personal struggle which precedes it.

The stranger even seems to assume the distant features of Esau. Jacob finds the dawn and a new name; he is now linked not only to the nemesis of the night but with the promise keeper of the day. But he now has a limp for all the world to see and for himself to bear. Paradoxically, he is more confident that he can move from the condition of exile to being reconciled with his brother.

We have here Israel's most sophisticated theology. On the one hand, Jacob/Israel soars to heights of a Promethean kind. He challenges the divine visitor for a blessing and the revelation of his name. He is corrected by being afflicted with a limp; only God is God. On

³ Cf. L. GIUSSANI, *op. cit.*, 134.

the other hand, Jacob becomes a cripple with a unique blessing. Israel must ponder now how it is that blessings are given and at what cost.

Weakness in power and power in weakness turn this text toward the New Testament and the threshold on which Giussani's book ends, the gospel of the cross. The same elliptical existence stands behind Jesus's encounter with his disciples. They want thrones, which is equivalent to demanding to know the name of God. Jesus counters by asking them about cups, and baptisms, and crosses. Like Jacob, they are invited to be persons of energy who prevail, but they walk into their future with a limp. Jacob's energetic struggle anticipates the Crucified One. Giussani's description of man's all-encompassing search and encounter with God is extremely important for our pastoral approach to young people in democratic modernity.

The great challenge to the Church is to keep the spirit of trust and hope alive. This means to revivify the Christian hope in the human capacity to overcome the dehumanizing characteristics of modern society. I remain optimistic in man's capacity to reassert his dignity by assisting young adults in asking the universal question, "Why is there anything at all, and not simply nothing?"

2. This leads me to my second, extended pastoral recommendation: to help young adults see again the gleam of glory in the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. And in that observation there is an inseparability between the force fields of doctrine and ethics, between the bond of unity within the Church, the Holy Spirit, and the command to love one another as Christ has loved us.

God's love for us is really thought to be impossible today. Love, even among Christians, has lost all gleam of glory. The word 'love' is used to express the personal pleasure in sexually exploiting the other. It is done subtly, with mutual consent and with agreement not to harm the other. Like much of modern life, it is profoundly manipulative. The redemptive love commanded by Christ is a scarce commodity. Among many segments of our young adults it is non-existent; at best it is judged to be utopian.

Yet it is precisely here that we find what is unique in Christianity. The revolution of the New Testament is its new understanding of God. "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16). And the proof of the presence of God's love is the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of love, the bond of personal identity of the personal distinction in the Trinitarian Godhead.

The key to Christian discernment today as always is to assess the quality of the obedience to the new commandment of love in oneself and in the community of disciples. Is the proof of love's fruitfulness present within the Church, within Christian marriage, within the community of Catholic University students, within the Christian family, etc.? Does the love of the disciples for one another measure up to the love of the new commandment of Christ, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35)?

Like all Christians, young people have been commanded to love one another as Christ has loved. It means to ask the question: "Is there anything worth giving one's life for?". An affirmative response implies that one has had the experience of a passionate, self-emptying, unstuck, indifferent love. Such a person has even been to the precipice of expressing the willingness of giving one's life for the loved one, one's goods for the loved one, one's future, one's talents, one's ambitions for the loved one. Nothing can substitute for the good of the beloved, who is the Church of Christ. Concretely this is expressed especially in the love of spouses for one another, and to parents for their children, born and within the womb.

The challenge today is the recovery of the proof of his love, of the love which Christ taught and prayed for in Jn 13-17. Only the Holy Spirit of Jesus can guarantee the presence of such love among the community of disciples.

Today there is an immense pastoral challenge to recover the Christian experience of the Holy Spirit. And that can only be done by ask-

ing the Father to show us the proof of his love for us by giving us the Spirit of his Son who will teach us all things, especially how to obey the new commandment of love which is the power of Christ present in the community of the Church, especially in the sacrament of marriage; for the love of man and woman is the primordial sign of the love of Christ for his Church.

4. THE VOCATION OF THE LAY CONFESSOR TODAY

I am calling for new "lay confessors" in the Church. They must seek to revive this ancient title in democratic modernity. They search for that sanctity which would inform the inner life of the university, of politics, of economics, of marriage and family. For they know that "[t]he form of sanctity... has become the form of the layman in the world" (von Balthasar).

For the lay confessor, the Gospel becomes a reality that informs everything from within - laws, customs, efforts, even pleasures. Man's self-interpretation in Jesus Christ is central in a lay confessor's anthropology. "All things were made through the Word" (*Jn* 1:3).

In the early and medieval Church a lay confessor was one who suffered for confessing his or her faith, but not to the point of martyrdom. The term was applied to markedly holy persons. St. Edward, the king of England, obviously a layman, is known in history as Edward the Confessor. His reputation for holiness endured after his death; he was canonized in 1161 by Pope Alexander III.

On the threshold of the new millennium, a confessor is one who has been cast forth, handed over by God. Where has he been cast forth? On the road he has chosen, on the road he has hurled himself on. According to Georges Bernanos, whom I am following here, the lay confessor has cast himself forth into the heart of danger like a lamb among wolves. The road, not the altar or the cloister, is his vocation. And at every curve and bend of the road he will find challenges and suffering. St. Paul would describe it as warfare. His walk is

an heroic one. He will be alone as a Christian in a secular society, most definitely alone.

Such a lay confessor will become acutely aware of the fundamental law of post-Christian world history: the more Christ is proclaimed as the light of the world, as the bread of life, as the resurrection and the life, as the way, the truth and the life, as the good shepherd, the more he will meet determined opposition and the more extensive the satanic counterstruggle will prove. The more the love of Jesus for US is manifested, the more it stiffens resistance. Then the lay confessor discovers that persecution constitutes the normal condition of the Church in her relation to the world.

That is why we need to say to young adults that they are cast forth in hope. Hope springs from the eternal love that radiates from the union of the Cross and Resurrection. That is the key. And that is the only thing that matters. The Christian vocation on the road is the same as that of the Good Samaritan: to love one another, even the stranger and foreigner, as Christ loves the Church.

Our medieval ancestors caught this insight in the beautiful window in the right side of the nave of Chartres Cathedral. The Christian on the road is to be a "co-sufferer"; this opens the person to the depths of Christian understanding and love.

The lay confessor now understands within the context of a nuptial *communio* the worldly implications of a *communio* ecclesiology. The whole world, in and through the Church, is destined for a transfiguring espousal with Jesus Christ. The lay confessor sees this logic of love for the first time in Mary of Nazareth, especially in the mystery of the Annunciation and her *fiat*. He sees it above all in the eternal Son's ineffable receptive relation to the Father within the Holy Trinity.

These mysteries undergird the pattern of the Christian's response to the gift of creation and redemption: a contemplative receptivity to all of reality and to all relations. These texts, rooted in the great tradition of the Church, have immense implications for those who seek to revive the role of the lay confessor in the Church. Confessors live in

the heart of the world from the center of the Church, a lapidary phrase of David Schindler.

The Trinitarian mystery in its inexhaustible relational process of reciprocal self-surrender of the Father, Son, and Spirit is the original model for the great mysteries of the *kenosis* of Christ in Incarnation and Redemption, of Mary's *fiat*, and of the Eucharist. This ineffable relational process is the foundation of creation. The response of the Christian can be nothing other than to receive what is bestowed by God "who in his essence is love and surrender" (von Balthasar and Medard Kehl, S. J.). Creative receptivity is characteristic of all reality formed in the image and likeness of the Eternal Word of God made flesh.

5. CONCLUSION

Only the one who is "the lay confessor", the one who loves the "road", is capable of moving beyond the model of modern man as being torn, dissatisfied and ironic. The great temptation of the children of democratic modernity is the temptation to absolute human autonomy, which is at the core of original sin. Precisely here is the enormous danger of postmodernity. Only the lay confessor can keep alive the sense of man and make the world of the third millennium a place where love is gently at work.

Youth in Today's World

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The subject given to me, "Youth in today's world", put me before a difficult task. First of all, I would explain that I am not one who has travelled extensively and therefore have no firsthand experience of the situation of young people in the world today. Nor am I a researcher who collects information and evaluates the situation of the young people in the world today. I am simply a man of our times who, thanks to my work as head of the Salesian Institute for Youth Ministry, is in a position to draw a picture of youth through what he reads and observes in the field.

But when I converse at table with my two children (aged respectively 17 and 13) I often hear them say: "What you say is interesting, but it is not for us or for our friends, we are different". And then I always recall what young Berliners used to say: "Don't try to understand us. You can analyze us, interview us, question us, but you will never understand us. We are different from you. We are so different, so divided, so changeable, so contradictory... so there may exist a great global 'us'... we are incomprehensible, and this is our secret".¹

Therefore I must make some reservation before I speak. My presentation on the situation of the young people of today will necessarily be general and as such dangerous. In fact in a society so complex and differentiated, global statements can only be justified and/or confuted by individual phenomena, just as there are points which risk being overlooked. Having clarified these deficiencies I will attempt to present a theoretical picture to enable you to comprehend the situation of young people in Europe and to identify the consequent challenges for

¹ P. KÖNIG, "Wir Vodookindrer", in *Kursbuch* 113, Berlin 1993, 1.4.

youth ministry. Due to the process of modernization present in different ways in the individual countries which presents enormous potential but also great dangers, I see four challenges facing youth and the Church's youth ministry.²

1. THE CHALLENGE OF "UNEMPLOYMENT"

The crisis in labour markets in Asia has for some time now occupied the front pages of newspapers and is the cause of concern in Europe and the United States. In fact the crisis is not merely a local question, it effects world economy and finances, and is also a seismographic register of a global crisis of the employed society. This crisis is provoked by a growing rationalization of the production of goods and services, which renders human work either superfluous or too expensive. In a global society there will be work opportunities only where labour-force is less costly, where ecological rules are few or non-existent and where conditions for profitable investment prevail.

This means that despite ever more lively economic growth and increase of profit for multinational companies, a large portion of the world's population is excluded from active working life or reduced to working under extremely unfavourable conditions. In Europe there is a growing opinion that full-time work is no longer proposable, and that the work which does exist must be diversely distributed.

This situation of unemployment affects young people in particular. In several countries of the so-called "Third World", millions of children and young people work under inhuman conditions to support the whole family, whereas in other countries young people find no work or only temporary work without social assistance.

Also in European countries the work question is the main problem for young people. A survey by Shell in 1997, shows that 45% of young

² I reached this conclusion after reading an article by H. Lessing, "Jugendarbeit als Wi(e)deraneignung von Arbeit. Umwelt und Kultur", in *Deutsche Jugend* 32 (1984), 450-459.

people in Germany put unemployment at the top of the list of their problems. In other countries this percentage can be even higher. Four aspects of the problem must therefore be kept in mind:

- Although with diverse modalities and consequences, unemployment of youth is a problem in every European country.
- In almost every European country youth is seriously affected by unemployment. This means that young people, despite their youth and abilities, are the weakest group in the labour market.
- The work crisis depreciates school formation. When young people fail to find a job they seek further scholastic qualification. “Being a student” becomes the qualifying aspect of being a young person, schools become left luggage deposits, waiting rooms, in ghost stations from which no trains, except a few crowded ones, lead to the labour market. The problems with which the school of today is faced, discipline, violence and crime, can be explained in the light of the frustration arising from a “lack of institutionally produced opportunities”.³
- Unemployment is the origin of the fact that today in Europe poverty is no longer mainly a condition of old people, it has taken on a more “youthful face”.⁴ The group of experts which drafted a recent report on children and young people for the federal German government, underlines this phenomena, confirmed by statistics regarding the beneficiaries of poverty subsidies.

Passing from Germany to the other countries in Europe, the situation is the same. An *Eurostat* inquiry in 1990, confirms the hypothesis of the disadvantaged position of children and young people in the sharing of resources among the generations. It follows that “old people

³ Cfr E. BISLER in *Jahrbuch der Jugendsozialarbeit* 1998.

⁴ M. LECHNER – W. VOGGESER, *Die neue Armut hat ein junges Gesicht. Die wachsende Verarmung junger Menschen – ein Herausforderung für christliche motivierte Sozialarbeit eine gemeindliche Pastoral*, Munchen 1996 (= Dokumentation published by Don Bosco Youth Ministry Booklet 5).

have reached a position they would never have dreamed of in the past, thanks mainly to pensions, but also to a demographic question”.⁵

Conclusion n. 1: the problem of unemployment, of the passage from school to work (scarcity of apprenticeship places and therefore of consequent work opportunities) and that of guaranteed daily bread, are the main challenges for the future of a large portion of young people in Europe as in the rest of the world.

2. THE CHALLENGE OF “VITAL SPACE”

I will start from an example regarding Bad Tolz, the town where I live, which has a population of about 15,000. When asked what they didn't like about the town, young people replied: “Where can we meet up during the lunch break if shop keepers send us away with the excuse that the shops are not for us?” When asked what changes they would like to see, they said: “We would like to have our own meeting place”. My town prides itself on having parking space for 1,500 cars near the town centre, to which will soon be added space for another 200. But in this spa-town, generally well off, young people had to struggle for three years to have a place in which to create their own meeting point, termed a “youth coffee-bar”.

I am sure you could also offer many similar examples, signs of a second problem concerning children and young people the world over, that which I would call the “expropriation of space”. This problem is global although in different forms. Firstly we find ourselves faced with the unforgivable sin of an unjust distribution of land between large landowners and small farmers. This problem causes many young people to migrate to urban centres in the hope of finding better living conditions, a hope which is, however, too often disappointed. The

⁵ J. OVORTUP, “Kinder in der intergenerationellen Resourceverteilung. Gerechtigkeit und Berechtigung” in J. Mansel – G. Neubauer, *Armut und soziale Ungleichheit bei Kindern*, Opladen 1998.

problem of "expropriation of space" results also in the migratory waves involving about 12 million people, including many children and young people, who flee from war or leave their country for religious, racial or economic reasons. The question of space also leads us to the numerous children and young people forced to live in the streets. "Street children" exist not only in the sprawling cities of the Third World, they are found also in European cities.

We return lastly to the problem mentioned in the beginning, the scarcity of places in which young people and children may play and meet. Particularly in the European context there is a gradual reduction of space, not only for plants and animals but also for people, and this is a threat to the lives of children and young people. In our societies adults are the ones who decide how space should be used. So we build roads, car-parks, airports, motorways, industrial zones, residential areas, sports centres etc., while on the contrary we fail to see the need for vital space for children and young people who instead of roads and car-parks, need places in which to play and meet each other where they are not obliged to buy something, or be directed, alienated or programmed by adults. This need has grown enormously everywhere, but above all in urban areas, and can be seen in their demands for "youth coffee-bars", play-grounds, in other words in their search to occupy spaces or use them for their own aims (see for example skaters in city centres, street-ball etc.).

The lack of vital space is a source of problems mainly because children and young people are naturally disposed to social inter-action. In fact by playing together and being together they learn important rules and basic elements of social behaviour. Play-grounds are also places of socialization among peers: to reduce or eliminate them means to eliminate the opportunity of personal meeting and development.

The present-day process of the elimination and limitation of space is then a social as well as an ecological danger.⁶

Conclusion n. 2: At the turning of the millennium the question of vital space is an epochal problem for children and young people. The problem of land and space, although in diverse forms, exists everywhere, also in Europe and in rural areas, not only in cities.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF "THE TRANSMISSION CRISIS"

Modernity is inevitably accompanied by a process of weakening of the homogeneity of culture and thought, a process which advances in every country although at varying speed and intensity. Sociologists speak of "a weakening of transmission" to define the fact that a growing number of people drift away from "traditional social environments and from the social control of the Church", and end up planning their life according to their own patterns. From existential situations and cases determined or imposed (!) by society life-styles are even realized and proposed. This is true of the school, work, marriage, and the family and also for religion.

The more rapid social changes become and the more complex and therefore confused the economic, ecological and social situation becomes, the less adults are able to give advice to the younger generation, to transmit to them their values and their religion and supply clear guidance in these matters. Instead it is the adults who learn from the young, since the young people are the "natives" of the global society, in which they are soon at ease, and where adults are "immigrants" who need help to find their way around. The revolution in the field of knowledge is seen clearly if we take for example the generalized use of the computer and the virtual world of the Internet.

⁶ Cfr L. BÖHNISCH – R. MÜNCHMEIER, *Wozu Jugendarbeit? Orientierung für Ausbildung, Fortbildung und Praxis*, Wein-München 1987, 111.

In a situation like this, the transmission of religious and cultural heritage becomes very difficult. We can truly speak of a global crisis in transmission, which strikes culture and above all religion. On the European continent we note particularly religious and cultural institutions' diminishing capacity to influence. In a study on values at the European level, P. Zulehner – H. Denz confirm this statement when they say that Europe is by no means a secularized or atheist land, but that "a tendency towards an invisible and personal religious feeling" is "characteristic" of today's ecclesial-religious situation.⁷

Within this general crisis of cultural and religious transmission there is however a process of cultural homologation of young people thanks to the strategies of a market ever more global. A 1996 study by *Brainwaves*, a Washington based institute for market research, discovered among middle-class young people the world over, that the common denominator has become a "global culture" of American behaviour and customs. One of the "most important results" according to *Brainwaves*, is the fact that "the present-day culture of middle class adolescents is ever more conditioned by global culture made in U.S.A." Young people listen to the same (US) music, watch the same films and the same videos, wear the same clothes and shoes, they eat and drink the same things. "80% of teenagers, have a pair of jeans: Italy is top of the list" (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 1996).

Conclusion n.3: The epochal challenge of modernization means young people are left to find out for themselves the meaning of their existence, norms and reference values, and how to live their life. In this search for orientation they can only partly refer to adults and to cultural and religious institutions. There exists the danger of manipulation on the part of a market-dominated homologizing culture.

⁷ P. M. ZULEHNER – H. DENZ, *Wie Europa lebt und glaubt, Europäische Wertstudie*, Düsseldorf 1993, 234.

4. THE CHALLENGE OF "SOLIDARITY BETWEEN GENERATIONS"

Whereas in so-called Third World countries children and young people are the majority of the population, industrialized countries in Europe and North America are faced with a dramatic drop in the birth rate. This phenomenon produces a double challenge:

- on the one hand there must be, on the international level, a just sharing of resources between countries with more children and those with less. The greater part of the children and young people in the Third World live in absolute poverty, whereas the relatively few children in industrialized countries enjoy good opportunities for education, finding employment, receiving medical care and social insurance. Social injustice is now grave and demands serious commitment for children's rights, as they are laid down in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- on the other hand, we are faced with the need to establish a correct relation between generations in those countries in which adults and old people are the majority of the population, as in Europe and the U.S.A. In the study carried out by Shell in Germany in 1997, almost all the young people interviewed spoke of the relationship between generations, stressing that adults are a burden ("they do not let us speak, they will not listen to us"). Moreover young people feel neglected by adults ("young people's problems are never discussed in politics"). But above all they denounce a policy which inevitably leaves the new generations to pay for its mistakes and delays.

This criticism was passionately expressed by Jörg Tremmel, a representative of the young generation, in his book "Generationenbetrug"⁸ ("generation swindle" our translation), in which he reproves the over-forties for living above their possibilities, leaving the next generation a heavy burden which may have negative repercussions in the future. This life-style

⁸ Cfr J. TREMMEL, *Der Generationenbetrug Plädoyer für das Recht der Jugend auf Zukunft*, Frankfurt-Main 1996.

at the expense of the young generation is seen above all in the public debt, the crisis of the social state, the drastic drop in the birth rate denoting fear of the future, massive unemployment, the destruction and growing exploitation of natural resources and so forth. Tremmel hopes for a new type of generation relationship, suggesting a solution based on the principle of "lasting", a principle which he explains as follows: every generation must satisfy its needs only to the extent that it does not damage the life opportunities of the new generations. Otherwise the next generation will be condemned to carry a heavy burden, to restore and put in order what others have ruined, victim, all told, of the reckless life-style of a single generation.

Conclusion n. 4: A fourth epochal challenge concerns security for the future of the new generations. It consists on the one hand in reaching a just sharing of resources between countries which are "rich" and "poor" in children and on the other, commitment to eliminating a life style at the expense of the next generation.

5. WHAT TYPE OF CHRISTIANS IN THE YEAR 2000? WHAT TASKS FOR YOUTH MINISTRY?

Recently in a Catholic newspaper I read an article on the 15th anniversary of "children's pastoral" (Pastoral da Criança) in Brazil, in which it was said to be the pastoral initiative with the most success. This programme involves 115,000 volunteers in 27,000 basic communities and 3,000 public structures. Among the most important results mentioned, extraordinary success in fighting malnutrition and infant mortality, monthly assistance given to 60,000 expectant mothers and about 1,200,000 children.

If we take this type of pastoral – which represents a Christian-ecclesial answer to the living conditions of children and their parents – as a parameter to project youth ministry along the same lines, the following tasks emerge:

- First: commitment on the part of the Church to improve the situation in the field of work and for a just sharing of work itself. Here maxi-

mum attention must be given to those young people who, due to a personal handicap or social delay, have less opportunities in the work market.

- Second: commitment on the part of the Church to guarantee young people adequate vital space. The Churches must first of all ask themselves if they are ready to make their own land and premises available to serve as “neutral” meeting places for young people (the pedagogical concept of the playing field as practiced by the Salesians in their houses, could serve as an excellent model). There is then a political task, that of intervening in public discussions concerning the use of available land and space. Christians must be promoters of vital space for children and young people at the national and international level.
- Third: help in communicating culture and religion. Today the task is not so much the transmission of a baggage of knowledge, as the sensitization of young people and children about religion. More than formation programmes, today we need people who believe, convincing communities and ecclesial behaviour in keeping with the Gospel. Witness of life, “witness without words” triggers in fact basic questions and begins a process of evangelization. This is the only way to fill the present-day gap between youth culture and the culture of the Gospel.
- Fourth: concern for the future of the new generations shown by a “lasting” life style of individuals and Christian communities. The ecclesial communities already have good structural premises to allow an encounter between generations and to work together for a culture of solidarity.

To conclude, three questions:

Are we ready to listen to the prophetic voice of young people?

Are we ready to live an authentic life?

Are we ready to commit ourselves for young people to guarantee them a future of solidarity and justice?

Youth in Today's World ...in Western Europe

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I – THE TRANSFORMATION OF YOUTH IN EUROPE

1. WHAT IS YOUTH

The period of youth, to a decidedly greater extent compared to the other periods in which the life of the person is articulated along the passing of time, is a social and cultural construction.

This is because “it is placed within the mobile margins between infantile dependence and the autonomy of adulthood, in that period of pure change and unrest in which the promises of adolescence are realized, between sexual immaturity and maturity, between formation and total unfurling of mental faculties, between the lack and the acquisition of authority and power. In this sense, no physiological limit suffices to identify analytically a life-phase which can be directed to the cultural determination of human societies, to the way in which they seek to identify, give order and meaning to something which appears typically transitory, in other words chaotic and disordered”.

It is enough to observe how in the present-day, all over western Europe, the period of youth is extending and how, therefore, the transition to adulthood takes place progressively later.

Besides becoming more extended, the time of youth is becoming clearly different from that of adolescence. In this regard we should recall that adolescence was invented at the beginning of this century, due to social transformations and the development of psychological and human science in general, which brought about a conceptual revolution

of the consideration of human growth. In fact in the first half of the century adolescence coincided almost entirely with the period of youth.

Studies of the subject note the extension of youth in the significant margins which have appeared in the boundary between the end of youth and entry into adulthood. In fact in almost every European country there are margins, for example between the end of studies and the beginning of professional life and also between leaving home and marriage. Because of these margins there is no longer any connection between these four thresholds and the traditional moment of the end of adolescence/youth is followed no longer immediately by entry into adulthood, but by a period of ambiguity, ascribed, nevertheless, to youth.

It should be said that this disconnection in which is hidden part of the extension of youth is not the same in every western European country. Galland, for example, to describe the extension of youth in Europe, identifies three models: Mediterranean, Nordic and British.

The *Mediterranean model* is characterized by four aspects: the extension of school-age; a long phase of professional precariousness at the end of studies; late permanence of co-habitation with parents, even after economic stabilization, associated with a marked autonomy of young people; the contraction of marriage immediately after leaving home. There are relatively few young people living alone or as unmarried couples.

The *Nordic model* of extended youth, which includes also France, is characterized by a relatively precocious detachment from home and yet a significant delay in contracting marriage and having children. In this model too there is an extension of studies and quite a long phase of professional precariousness at the end of these studies.

The *British model*, which is different from that of the rest of the European countries, sees a precocious entry of young people to work and the extension of living as couples without children.

The consequence produced by these models, which have in common the deferring of starting a family, has obvious effects on the composition of the European population regarding age. In fact Europe is

living a demographic transformation characterized by a progressive and, at the moment, scarcely reversible aging of the population in a considerable part of the territory. This phenomenon constitutes another problem although, actually, it is not common to all E.U. countries, in that, from a point of view of demography, Europe seems to be moving at two different speeds. In fact demographic projections to 2020 point to a contraction of the population in Germany, Italy, Belgium and Denmark, whereas in the remaining countries the population will, on the contrary, increase. Nevertheless the overall total of countries with a decrease in population and those with a rise, is slightly negative, equal to -0.06%.

It should be noted that by 2020 in Germany the forecast indicates a 31.7% drop in population between the ages of 0 to 14 years, of 15.18% between 15 and 64 and an increase of 34.86% of those over 65. In Italy these figures are still more accentuated with an expected drop of 40.84% of the population 0-14 years, 12.66% between 15 and 64 and a 46.11% increase of those over 65. France has yet another pattern. It is estimated that there will be a 2.78% increase of 15-65 year olds and a 16.45% drop in the 0-14 year olds, with as much as a 64.11% in those over 65. The United Kingdom maintains the trend in which the increase of the elderly population does not correspond to the drop in the other population levels, since the generation changeover is assured by an adequate birth rate. In fact the population of 0-14 years remains almost stable dropping only by 0.06%, the 15-64 years increase by 2.78% and those over 65 increase by 25.39%. These four countries alone account for 71% of the entire population of the European Community.

2. EXTENSION OR DISAPPEARANCE OF YOUTH?

One of the questions which arise observing this transformation from the anthropological rather than the sociological point of view, is whether this is a real extension of youth or a dis-articulation of the

borders marking the different life-periods, a prelude to the disappearance of the cycle of human life founded on a different socialization of people according to age and, therefore, on the presence of behaviour-models and life styles, connected with the various periods which in the past marked the human journey from birth to death.

The question comes spontaneously because at this point in the history of the countries of Europe and North America people tend increasingly to behave according to models which fail to reflect their age. This is particularly visible in infancy and old age, so much so that in many parts there is a growing impression that infancy is destined to disappear.

To understand the meaning of this affirmation, keeping in mind that infancy was only invented between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, we should consider that in recent social history one of the principles of socialization was the progressive access of individuals to information and, hence, to the symbols of the social world based on age. For example the child came gradually into contact with the information, attitudes and behaviour of its world and for this to happen in an ordered manner, there was an authentic segregation of the ages. School-order is an example of this segregation finalized to permit children of various ages to come into contact with information and behaviour judged by adults to be appropriate for that age. This led to an accurate selection of information and behaviour to which the child was exposed according to its age.

This segregation was guaranteed not only by adult behaviour, but also by that fact that reading was the child's only means of access to indirect information. We know that to acquire mature reading skills demands years of apprenticeship. Therefore it was sufficient for a text to be written in too complex a language for the average comprehension of a child of a certain age, for the contents of that text to be, in actual fact, inaccessible to that same child. What is more, adults sought to hide, or keep in the background, behaviour judged unsuit-

able or such as to diminish the image of adults and institutions in the eyes of the child.

Television has interrupted this segregation since children who watch it, irrespective of their age, are given the same information as adults and at the same time come into contact with that background behaviour earlier carefully hidden. This means children are forced into individual and solitary cognitive, affective, and social evolution, totally different from the evolution which continues to be contemplated by traditional educational institutions which continue to proceed as if the child did not watch television.

This fact that socialization is no longer connected with age, regards not only children but also adults and the elderly.

It is in fact a common observation that the chronological age is becoming ever less indicative of people's lifestyle and because of this the person's inner clock is no longer as powerful or restrictive as before. This means it is possible to be infantile adults or mature children in the dynamics of social life.

The infantile adult and the mature child

In the first half of the 20th century infancy was seen as the period of innocence and as such to be protected from the distasteful realities of life. For example subjects such as death, sex, and money matters were not discussed in front of the children.

The diversity of infancy was also indicated by the fact that children were dressed differently to adults and used a particular language. Clearly the segregation of ages, mentioned earlier, favoured this situation.

In the last fifty years, on the other hand, the image and role of children has changed considerably and consequently infancy, understood as a protected period of life, has almost disappeared. Children seem in fact today less infantile both in their way of dress and in their behaviour.

At the same time, many who have become adults in these last thirty years, behave and speak and dress like children who never grew up.

It is quite normal today to see adults wearing tennis shoes, jeans and a Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck T-shirt, hand in hand with children wearing designer clothes. With what is often defined as informal behaviour adults continue to use gestures typical of childhood.

Regarding language, not only do we note a more infantile adult language and a more adult infantile language but we also see the loss of responsibility towards children in many adults' use of language. It is no longer rare to hear adults use jargon or swear words in the presence of children.

In this Babel of ages the child is treated increasingly like a small adult and consequently the protection which separated it from the world's rude ways disappears.

The result is ever more precocious emancipation, where social-economic conditions permit: in more than twenty states of the United States of America minors are allowed to emancipate themselves from their parents and leave home. This leads to the assumption, ever earlier, of behaviour, such as sexual behaviour, formerly reserved for a later age. A concerning result is a lowering of the age of even very serious criminal behaviour. News-reports of recent years dramatically confirm this tendency.

In the same period of time, as we have already said, adults have been protagonists of complementary behaviour. The behaviour of adults belonging to the so-called "I generation" is increasingly characterized by less availability towards their children, the new generations in particular.

Parents' willingness to make sacrifices for their children is fast declining, as is their readiness to plan their future taking into account their children's demands and aspirations. There would seem to be in adults a trend towards infantile egocentrism, in the form of a sort of generation egoism.

It is precisely the existence of this picture which gives rise to the suspicion that rather than an extension of youth we have its disappearance into a magmatic whole in which the behaviour of the person is

no longer produced by his or her belonging to an age of life, but solely and exclusively by his or her individual subjectivity.

3. THE INDIVIDUALIZATION OF EUROPEAN YOUTH

Besides this extension of youth and the parallel process of the disappearance of ages, in Europe there is a process of *individualization* of youth. This process comes from the fact that young people in transition towards adulthood follow ever more personal and subjective paths, only partly connected with their registered age.

This is not all: as Heinz says, "Life's flow is no longer rooted in social class, rules of age or gender or in expected normality. We see in our societies a de-standardization of the life of men and women and a diversification of life choices. This means that life becomes a complex succession of transitory situations which individuals themselves are called to select, organize and control. We must see ourselves as a planning agency for life's decisions. People are responsible for their life, which assumes more individualized but also more selective forms. The new challenge is how to best exploit the opportunities of the market, the institutional regulations, the web of social relationships in order to orient the trajectory of one's life in a calculated manner".

Therefore in some countries scholars speak of the end of the condition of youth since, as we know, the term "condition" supposes the existence in young people "of a strongly collective identity, of just as consistent capacity to produce autonomous culture (that is, alternative projects and models of persons and societies) and a strong leaning towards social mobilization".

At the end of the 1970s, coinciding with the extenuation of the collective movements of the 1968 and their supportive ideologies, we witnessed a slow but progressive evaporation of the condition of youth, of young people as a unitary universe, distinct from the rest of society.

The evaporation of the condition of youth throughout Europe seems today to have left a collection of dispersed, fragmentary crystals, each representing a subjective and private life-style. In other words, this means that since roughly the last two decades, young Europeans no longer form a social under-system, strongly protagonist and socially important, they are simply a unit of individuals dispersed in the ocean of a social system, unable to assume a leading role in society.

As a consequence, even the problems lived by some young people are no longer caused by their belonging to a particular "social class", they are the result of personal history, or, the existential journey through which they grew up.

Although individualisation, on the one hand, liberates – at least apparently – young people from being conditioned by their original social state, on the other, it renders them weaker and more fragile in the management of their project of transition to adulthood and, in the end, penalises the more disadvantaged.

II – THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF YOUNG EUROPEANS

The interpreting category of religious experience which in this past decade has shown to be most useful is without a doubt that of *complexity* which, we know, characterises the more economically developed societies and is also one of the faces of *modernity*, if not its most characteristic feature.

Social complexity has deeply influenced the way of living the Christian religious experience, introducing the trends of subjectivism and privatisation, of apparent de-sacralisation, spacialisation of time, with its threats of syncretism and disincarnation of the Christian experience, of moral relativism.

Western European societies are all complex, although to different degrees, and therefore they belong to the area of modernity.

Some are already fully inserted into that ulterior transformation defined super-modernity or, earlier, post-modernity.

Examining the relationship between young people and religion in Europe, we note that in every country – although with quite different percentages – the majority of young people believe in God and in some of the doctrinal aspects characteristic of Christianity. If we pass from the level of belief to that of religious devotion and practice, we note instead much more radical changes compared to the recent past. Nevertheless we must say that belief in God, apart from its quantitative extension – which shows that from post-war times to the present day there has not been an excessive reduction of its diffusion – has changed considerably.

However, while belief in God is present in the life of the majority of young people, religious practice on the level of church, except for the rites of initiation and passage followed by the majority, regards only a small minority of young people, and again to varying degrees according to country.

The characters of these changes in the way of living religion emerge from the analysis of the phenomena indicated before as the trends produced by complexity in the religious experience.

1. SUBJECTIVISM AND PRIVATISATION

Subjectivism, according to a contemporary philosophy dictionary, is actually “synonymous to relativism, and indicates all those positions which deny the existence of criteria of truth and of values in some way independent from the thinking subject and which might condition him”, typical of those who follow “a position which reduces reality or being, to the thinking subject”.

This meaning is but a modest evolution of that which Rosmini once defined as follows: “Subjectivism, or subjectivist system, is necessarily sceptic in its consequence, although those who profess it are unaware of this. It is said of those who derive all their ideas and cognition solely from the thinking subject [...]. From subjectivity of ideas

one passes to the subjectivity of the universe world; and the dreamer makes himself creator”.

But why do we say today, when speaking of the religious experience and in particular of its expression in the world of youth, that it tends towards subjectivism?

The answer to this question must be sought in the combination of certain cultural, social and psychological phenomena, at the origin of this particular phase of modernity, which some call super-modernity.

The first of these phenomena is, as we have already said, social complexity which through its multi-centrism of values, ideas, conceptions of the world and of life, besides powers, through its relativism and fragile position towards what is “real”, has produced the fragmentation of social culture in an archipelago in which there is place for neither truth nor objectivity.

The second phenomenon is that of the crisis of great narrations, or systems of ideologies or thought through which people interpreted themselves, their life and the world referring to a point of view outside of themselves.

The third phenomenon is the loss of people’s ability to interpret the passing of time along the lines of history and, therefore, to give their life the coherence and unitary nature of a project, thanks to which the fragment of time, whose limits are birth and death, can assume meaning within the greater fragment of time whose borders are, instead, the beginning and the end of human history.

The combination of these three cultural phenomena in the life of persons and in particular in that of young persons has led widely to the trend of subjectivism and consequent closing of the individual in a horizon of meaning consisting mainly of personal needs, reasoning of desire, sentiments, expressed and not, or interiorised symbolic systems.

This closing is mitigated by micro-openings created by primary relationships with those persons with whom is shared, in a climate of affective solidarity, the little world of daily life. Although often, in these

cases, more than an opening it is a case of reciprocal acceptance on the part of persons in relation to their own subjectivity.

This tendency to subjectivism, present in today's social culture, is seen clearly in the religious experience of young people.

In fact, both quantitative research and research based on life-stories indicate that for most young people who declare their belief in God, this faith remains restricted to the personal or private sphere, and does not lead to forms of religious practice shared with others.

The personal relationship, not shared with others, creates a religious feeling totally centred on the perception of one's life as the only foundation of truth for one's religious experience.

Coherently with this religious concept, these young people express the image of God perceived as a friend who understands and is near in times of difficulty. In fact for many young people the divine presence is lived as an answer to one's interior needs for security and self-esteem.

This leads to the suspicion that God in some cases is confused by some young people with their own psychic processes. This hypothesis is, by the way, in continuity with the difficulty experienced by many young people to perceive the otherness of God.

This image indicates therefore, besides confidence and trust in the goodness of God on the part of many young people, also the presence in them of a sort of subjectivism of the image of God produced by their need for reassurance and the attenuation, in the conscience of the majority, of the perception of the consequences of the freedom God gives to the human person. Freedom which calls the person to assume responsibility for the consequences of his or her actions.

If on the one hand therefore, this image is more than positive, reassuring and close at hand, on the other it reveals, as we have said, the difficulty these young people have in perceiving God as *Totally Other* and, on the contrary, their tendency to shape an image of God according to the very human aspects of their needs and desires. Among these needs, those of protection and forgiveness seem to pre-

vail. Perhaps we could connect this image of God on the part of young people with the experience of maternalisation of education.

Not by chance the prevailing relationship with God, conceived in this manner, is a personal relationship, a dialogue which takes place in one's own room, or other places which guarantee the dual character of the relationship.

Another confirmation of the strongly subjective dimension of religious experience is the fact that for many young people God's presence is felt as the answer to their invocation. Nevertheless very often this response is lived solely within their own subjectivity with all the deformations often produced by this perception, including, as we have said, confusion between God and one's psychic processes or at least His superposing with them.

There is then the concerning fact that a consistent number of young people fails to place, at least explicitly, Jesus within their experience of God. In fact in some cases we find only the God of Jesus, while in others we note an abstract or reassuring God more similar to a god of philosophers and psychoanalysts than the God of Christians and Jews.

The tendency to subjectivise the presence of God is also confirmed by young people's relationship with the Word revealed through Scripture. It is not accidental that only a small minority of practising youth are familiar with the Scriptures.

2. DE-SACRALISATION OR RE-SACRALISATION?

The word "sacred" is commonly used without any difficulty by its users to whom its meaning is also quite clear. Nevertheless this word has in common with others, including the word "time", that ineffability which led Saint Augustine to say: "What then is time? If no one asks me, I know. But if I were to explain it to someone who asks me, then I would not know".

In fact, although we all know what sacred means, if we have to define it – and particularly if we must use a highly scientific language – we are only able to do so indirectly, indicating the experiences which belong to its dominion.

This is why Eliade began, in his description of the word, with the fact that the sacred “manifests itself, shows itself as something quite different from the profane”.

For primitive man or anyway for people of pre-modern societies, the sacred was equivalent to a power and was considered to be reality, par excellence, while the profane was considered unreal. The sacred in fact, was perceived as charged, filled with being, whereas the profane appeared illusory and essentially inconsistent.

According to Otto, the sacred is that special element which totally withholds itself from reason and presents itself as ineffable. This element is in Hebrew *qadosh*, *hagios* in Greek and *sacer* in Latin and is discovered by man through a symbolic and mystical journey in four stages.

The first stage is reached when man realises he is a creature and feels before God that sentiment which causes Abraham to be “nothing but dust and ashes” (Gn 18:27). The second stage, for which the Greeks use the word *sebastos*, is the experience of mystical fear, of *tremendum*, before the majesty of the numinous, the transcendent. The third stage is that of *mysterium*, in which the person experiences the numinous as radically other, as a mystery. The fourth stage corresponds to the *fascinans* and it is when the person is seduced by the numinous, in which he or she experiences grace and enters into a condition of beatification, ecstasy.

It should be stressed that as for Otto “the sacred is first of all a category of interpretation and valuation which only exists, as such, in the field of the religious” and that therefore it is linked with the experience of the religious person and cannot be objectivized outside of this experience.

Manifestations of the sacred – hierophanes – in the experience of the religious person vary from primitive, more simple ones linked with a stone, a tree, to the supreme manifestation which for a Christian is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

A hierophane is always “the manifestation of something entirely different, of a reality which does not belong to our world, to objects which are part of our world ‘natural and profane’”.

The sacred therefore shows itself in the experience of the pre-modern religious person in an object of the profane world, which however, at the very moment in which it shows something different is no longer itself but something sacred, totally other, *ganz andere*.

Although ineffable, the sacred is the concept used by historians and phenomenologists of religions to describe, precisely, the religious experience.

It must be said however that in the modern world, because of the process of secularisation, the dichotomic experience of the sacred/profane has become increasingly rare and indeed, we tend to see as a fruit of Christianity the overcoming of the opposition between these two ontological realities, in the sense that there are no longer “sacred” places, times and persons, because all time, space and the whole human condition have become the place of salvation and, therefore, of religious experience.

Religious experience for modern man happens not in places or times set apart “sacred”, but in his “profane” daily life.

Nevertheless experience of the sacred still exists in many contemporary forms and manifestations. Indeed, in present-day social culture there appears to be a sort of longing for the sacred.

Signs of the Sacred among Young Europeans

This is why we have dealt explicitly with the presence or absence of the sacred in the religious experience of young people.

This research for the presence of the sacred was carried out in two existential dimensions. The first is that of the perception on the

part of young people of the existence or non-existence of discontinuity in their perception of space. The second regards their way of living time.

Space and the Sacred

One of the forms of experiencing the sacred is related to attributing to places, things or persons, certain characteristics which could be defined magical-superstitious.

These are experiences connected with particular objects, places or phenomena which happen with certain persons, at certain times, in certain places and which originate from a magical type of rite.

Spiritualistic sessions are one of these phenomena. Objects and places can be those which refer to superstitions of which there are many in popular culture, such as for example a black cat crossing the road, or a broken mirror, and so forth. Other magical/sacral forms are those relating to belief in the existence of people possessing hidden powers or those relating to the existence of parallel worlds.

It is clear however that the most genuine and classical experience of the sacred regards manifestations of hierophanes in nature, in churches and shrines and in powerful esthetical-contemplative experiences.

It should be said that the belief that the world of the spirits and the world of the living are "parallel" and therefore communicating, although present to minor degree, is not irrelevant in the world of youth.

A less traditional trait, compared to spiritualism and superstition, which reveals the presence of the sacred, is undoubtedly lined with forms, more modern, para-scientific, or simply science fiction: it identifies in some individuals the revelation of hidden powers, with which everyone however is gifted; or it affirms the existence of worlds of other living beings, parallel to the world of human beings, and the possibility for more evolved worlds, of the future, to enter into contact with the human world of our times.

The success obtained by the television series X-Files is a sign of the widespread existence of this type of the sacred. This is however a

question of perceiving human space as a space filled with mystery in which, besides daily reality, there exists another reality, hidden but accessible to certain persons and conditions.

If experiences of the magical/sacred type of space usually involve a small minority of European youth, much more widespread are those relative to manifestations of the presence of God in certain places. For some this presence is revealed in places of nature, of particular beauty or attraction; for others in places of miraculous apparitions of the Transcendent or sacred cities; for others this presence is revealed in particular shrines or churches.

Nature (forests, mountains, the sea) shows itself to be a place which favours hierophanes. In some cases it is simply the dimension of the silence, beauty and harmony of nature which reveals the presence of God, in other cases it is mountain-climbing with its symbolism which is the place of the revelation of the Divine presence.

Despite the differences, behind these experiences there is the conviction that some spaces are of a sacred nature, and that in any case God does not reveal himself in the same way in all spaces.

A minority of young people discover a strong sense of the sacred in special places, such as Lourdes for example, in which there have been Marian apparitions, or in towns such as Assisi.

Besides these experiences of the sacred, which are classical, there are other interesting cases, authentically Christian, in which the presence of the sacred is felt where there are poor or suffering people. In these cases, rather than the actual physical places themselves, it is human life in that place which manifests the sacred.

This evolution of the conception of the sacred has undoubtedly ancient roots, but its modern expression is the most genuine. However, churches and shrines are the places in which the sacred is revealed most. This experience is sometimes linked with churches known for their beauty, or their position, at other times it happens in every church, with the only particularity that the sacred is often most felt when the church is empty. This means that the church, despite secu-

larisation and de-sacralisation of space, retains for many young people the typical characteristic of a sacred space.

It is clear that there are also young people who, more or less rigorously, reject the sacredness of places, in keeping with the evangelical teaching, because for them God's presence is revealed wherever two or three gather in his name.

There are, lastly, young people whose esthetical experience produced above all by music, but also by the contemplation of nature, or by literature or art in general, is at times so intense from the emotional and existential point of view as to cause authentic openings enabling them at that moment to perceive the presence of the numinous. These are rather particular experiences of space-time, which any way show how underlying a profane structure such as music, there is a profound unconscious, sacred structure.

As we can see from these experiences, the sacred, although it is often not recognised as such, is present in part of the world of youth's experience of space.

It is clear that the perception and conception of the sacred are no longer those of pre-modern cultures. Nevertheless, they seem to retain some characteristics which render it recognisable and which above all show that the experience of youth is not as homogenous as is commonly thought but, on the contrary, maintains the research of discontinuities which manifest the mystery and enrich the sense of life rendering their world more fascinating.

Time and Experience of the Sacred

If space reveals traces of the presence of the sacred in the existential experience of youth, time reveals far more consistent signs of this presence. Consequently the existential time of youth does not appear totally homogenous and continuous since it presents certain fractures which produce some discontinuities. The majority of these discontinuities is found in their confrontation with the experience of death, thought to

be an event removed from their existential horizon but which, against all expectations, appears significantly present.

Less marked, instead, in the life of young people, are certain classical discontinuities such as those between ordinary time and festive time, time of preparation and time of fulfilment and then, lastly, those relative to the existence of authentic sacred time.

The fact that only a small minority of youth perceives today a discontinuity between festive time and ordinary time, makes it evident that this is no longer a central element of their experience of time and therefore can no longer structure their counting of days in an existential sense as, instead, happened in the traditional horizon of the Jewish-Christian experience.

This fact is undoubtedly ascribable to the transformation of the sense and the experience of social time which, as we will see shortly, characterises all the countries living in the cultural enclave of modernity and complexity.

This transformation tends to render calendars colourless, in the sense that it homogenises the flow of social time through the outmoding of discontinuities such as festive/working, day/night.

Present-day attempts, now increasingly successful, to render “working” festive days, turning them into mobile days connected to work hours rather than any religious or social celebration, are indications of the present-day cultural transformation of temporality, like the expansion of social life to night-time, which affects in particular the younger age-groups.

While this expansion and homogenisation of “social time” is taking place, a crisis is arising in the dimension of time defined by scholars as “noetic time” which refers to the capacity, typically human, to live the present in relation to the past, even remote, and to the future, even distant. In other words noetic time represents the capacity to perceive and live one’s life as a story which has meaning or, at least, unitarity within a collective history. The crisis of noetic time is mani-

fested in the weakening of the "cultural memory" and of the ability to project both individual and social.

Other temporal discontinuities are perceived by young people within the experience of the discovery of a personal project, a vocation which marks their life, together with the perception – for some of them – that in their existence the time of preparation is interwoven with that of fulfilment. This discovery, very often, produces a significant, personal change.

It would seem that many young people perceive that discontinuous flow of time which allows meaning to flash into their life. In many cases this conception is confused, present only in a germinal state, but it indicates nevertheless the possibility of educating these young people to an experience of time different from the homogenising sort, present in today's social culture, which obscures the meaning of life.

A minor but quite consistent part of young people, made up of those unable to perceive this discontinuity in everyday life, thirsts for this experience so much so as to search for it at the limits of life through forms of risk, at times mortal, of which Saturday evening news reports are sadly full. Risk is lived by these young people as a narrow door through which must pass that meaning and joy of life which the homogenous time of everyday routine too often hides and imprisons.

3. SPACIALISATION OF TIME SYNCRETISTIC TRENDS AND DIS-INCARNATION OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

One of the effects of this radical transformation of temporality in the process of young people's human and personal development, is particularly visible in their uncertainty, at times anxiety, about the future; in their weakened roots of cultural memory; in the weak manner in which most of them live the inter-generation relation with adults; in the experience, widespread, of the absence of the father from the function of transmitting values and norms which make up the cultural

rule; and in how, on the contrary, they live very significantly the relationship with their peers in the process of personal growth.

This transformation of temporality is produced by the weakening of the vertical axis of time – also called the axis of historical time – and by the contemporary extraordinary reinforcement of the horizontal axis – also called of social time. The latter, on which is declined the co-ordination of the social activity of individuals in the present, is expressed by means of communicative relations which connect individuals and form what are commonly called, social networks.

Modern communications' technology (computer, satellite TV, fax, modem, cordless telephones etc) are creating networks of communication which enable people to communicate ever more rapidly, even if they are physically very distant one from the other. The Internet and e-mail are good examples of this network. At the same time satellite TV, and soon cable TV, enable people to be real-time spectators of events taking part in remote places.

While this technological and cultural revolution brings people more and more together within an ever vaster social space, these same people tend to lose or at least diminish their communicative relations with other human beings who lived before and will live afterwards in their space and time. In other words, people tend to lose their "memory" understood as the capacity to perceive their life as child and mother of a history, or as a bond of responsibility which links them to preceding generations and those of the future.

But this is not all. In this transformation of temporality, generations tend ever more to isolate themselves within their temporal segment, weakening the bond of inter-generation solidarity in the present. The contemporary indifference of the adult world for those of the elderly and of youth is only one sign of this transformation. A transformation which besides affecting people's temporal relations with the other generations which preceded and will follow, affects also their own life-time and is manifested in the inability to perceive one's existence as a history with meaning. This existence, in which only the pre-

sent seems to have value and meaning, appears more like a series of present times, rather than a story with a beginning and an end, linked with a design which reveals its significance.

Feeble or fragmented identity, the inability to think of one's life as a project albeit open, incoherence with its corollaries of pragmatism and opportunism, anguish vested in depression or escape in the search for gratification through obsessive consumerism which seems to mark the life of many young people, have their roots in this crisis of the time of history which, as we have seen, scholars of human temporality term "noetic time".

According to some authors this phenomenon is produced by "spacialisation of time": this is said to be none other than the result of supremacy, in present-day social life, of spacial co-ordinates over temporal ones which, in fact, anaesthetises the idea of time and history, of diachronic living favouring spacialising synchronicity.

Immersed in this spacialised time, individuals lose awareness of their belonging to history and, therefore, also of their ability to produce history, and become on-lookers with neither memory nor dreams for the future.

This means that only that which is immediate or simultaneous is lived as real. The dimensions of the past and future are expelled from consciousness, memory and dreams are exiled. The instant becomes a point in space, on which there is no duration but only non-temporal belonging to a spacial whole.

At the origin of this transformation of temporality, besides those already mentioned, there are complex social phenomena: urbanisation; expansion of technology and the presence of universalistic technical-scientific foundations in local cultures; the predominant optical sense, or the prevailing of image over written and spoken word; and lastly, the influence of the cultural industry which, to prevent the rapid succession of its proposals from having a destructive effect on its own production, is forced to flatten the experience of time and favour simultaneity.

Nevertheless this transformation is not yet complete. Some small openings indicate that the new time of life can be different from the one suggested by the signs given by this cultural society.

One of these small openings is young people's relation with the event of death, a constitutive element of noetic time. In fact, as Fraser, one of the greatest thinkers of our times, affirms, the time of human beings is characterised by the fact that they are "able to understand the world in terms of a future and a distant past, and not only in the sensorial impressions of the present" and that their actions in the present are influenced by the awareness of death, which appears to be "an essential ingredient of the time of the mature human person, whose horizons extend unlimited in the future and in the past".

Now many life stories of adolescents and young people, collected in Europe in recent years, show, as we have just said, that they have not removed the event of death from their existential horizon, as adults often have. Reflection on death and its meaning for human life is in fact present in the existential horizon of many young Europeans. Besides the images which accompany the thought of death – ranging from the most traditional to those produced by literature on experiences of "pre-death", passing by way of the absence of any picture of what lies beyond – there is the expression of the perception of the existence, after death, of another time in which it is possible to reach fulness of life.

The existence of this temporal discontinuity exists both in young people and in adolescents, although it often suffers the crisis of images, symbols and myths of the present day collective imaginary.

The Spacialisation of Time and Syncretistic Contamination

The process of social homogenisation, produced by the spacialisation of time and the contemporary crisis of noetic time, favours also other forms of syncretistic contamination of young people's religious experience. Contamination of which the commercial phenomena the *new age* and *next age* are the most obvious examples.

It is in fact quite common today to see young and not so young Christians use for meditation and prayer, patterns derived from oriental religious traditions, or see others, perhaps non-practising – divine the future through the *King*.

Other young people, baptised and occasionally practising, say they are Christians only because they were born in Europe, but that if they had been born elsewhere they would be Buddhists, Hindus, animists etc., and that this would not be a problem for them since, as they hold, the God adored by the different religions is the same.

The most concerning sign of syncretism, latent or emerging in the cultures of European countries is that Jesus has disappeared from the centre of the subjective religious experience of many young people, who turn simply to God, often lacking any characteristic features of the Christian God and more similar to the abstract impersonal god of philosophers, as we mentioned earlier.

These examples indicate the variety of forms through which are manifested the effects of syncretism in the religious life of young Western Europeans.

The Dis-incarnation of Christianity

The crisis of noetic time, besides favouring the syncretistic trend of many forms of religious experience of the young and not so young, tends to dis-incarnate Christianity from history, to put salvation in a non-temporal dimension only accessible through the interior spiritual dimension and not through man's action in the world.

The prospect of the Kingdom loses its historically concreteness and becomes exclusively a metaphor of an ultra-earthly paradise which, furthermore, does not require waiting for the end of time.

It is sufficient to note the increasing evaporation of original belief in the resurrection of the dead which, although shaken by the neo-platonic trends of some theologies of the past, had survived quite significantly.

In the same way the idea of Christian salvation carried out through the activity of mankind in history, made efficacious through the leaven of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, tends to lose itself in that disengagement of which the privatisation/subjectivisation, described earlier, is only the more evident effect.

Escape from the world, the affirmation of the uselessness of commitment to change cultural social and political realities, tend to transform Christian salvation into a salvation much more similar to that proposed, for example, by Buddhism and by religions in general which are based on the illusory nature of time and pose salvation in exiting from time.

Confrontation with death can be the process capable of re-opening young people's existential horizon to love for life, expressed in the fatigue of commitment in history.

4. ETHICAL RELATIVISM

Although diffused at the level of public opinion, the idea that on average young people have no values, is mistaken. In fact if we investigate the presence of values in the world of youth we are surprised to find that the majority of young people share many of those values seen by the adult world to be important for the realisation of an evolved and mature human condition.

The problems inherent to the values of young people should not therefore be sought in their absence but in the prevalence of the personal and subjective dimension in their scaling.

In fact the value systems interiorised by young people, have at the centre functional values for personal realisation and relational ability within the everyday world in which they live.

The relational is undoubtedly the central existential dimension in the horizon of meaning for the majority of young people as, almost certainly, also in the majority of adults.

The closure of the existential horizon of many young Europeans in the dimension of primary relationships is also underlined by the importance, quite extraordinary, of the peer group for their daily life.

Unfortunately this importance can also be negative, since in some cases the primary group stimulates and facilitates transgression and deviant behaviour.

However the peer group assumes particular importance not so much for the activities it offers or the discussions it allows, but for the relations, the purpose of which is to reassure each member of the fact that they exist and are accepted and recognised by the other members. The peer group appears as the place of relating for the sake of relationship.

The importance of the relational dimension is demonstrated also by the fact that in the loving relationship of couples, most important for young people are respect, understanding, loyalty and ability to communicate. It should be noted that among the youth of some European countries sexual harmony is considered less important than these immaterial relational aspects.

This centrality of values linked with the everyday life of the young is normally also expressed in a way of living ethical responsibility which, in fact, corresponds to the negation of the existence of norms of a universal character or in any case external to the feelings of the subject. In fact only a small minority of young people accept as the basis of their behaviour a moral, religious or secular code, external to their own personal experience.

A great many young people, particularly in the period of adolescence, tend instead to place as a basis of ethical behaviour either their own desires or needs, or the claim to the centrality of their own conscience. This claim to subjective liberty in ethical behaviour is manifested above all in the area of sexuality.

Lastly, another portion of young people, particularly among those who have left adolescence, recognise as a basis for ethical behaviour a dialogical relation between the discovery of one's finitude

and personal limits and that of responsibility towards the other with whom one has a primary relationship, for their dignity, their freedom and their rights.

This part of young people reveals the maturation of a conception of otherness which, although always of a restricted relational scope, can lead to the discovery of an ethical basis, more solid but still unable to lead out of the golden cage of everyday life and away from the spiral of relativism.

Relativism which is one of the products of the present-day social culture of complexity and in particular of its polycentrism, and which makes it impossible for many people, young people in particular, to acquire the certainty that values proposed to them or which they have chosen as a basis for their behaviour are authentic, important and right, forming only one of the many value systems present with equal dignity in social life.

The relativism produced by polycentrism does not stop at this effect, it goes far beyond, fragmenting society's social tissue in an insane *puzzle*, in which each piece claims to contain the whole picture. In a less hermeneutic manner we can say that the young person, living his or her life, experiences different places which often offer values, life-styles, norms and rules all very diverse, if not antagonists.

The young person's moving from the family to school, to work, to the peer group, to associations, sports-centres and mass media is the experience of a journey in a non homogenous and fragmented social reality, inviting him or her to live pragmatically and without a project and to avoid coherent decisions, if he/she wants to be able to take advantage of the promises offered by each place. he/she touches.

The centralising of ethical choices in the sphere of one's conscience and of vital world relations in this social picture, is not only congruent to the ethical relativism present in social culture, it also allows the young person to enjoy the opportunities to fulfil his or her desires and needs that he she is offered by social realities.

Youth in Today's World... in Western Europe

This means that many young believers live their life as a sort of ethical *puzzle*, refusing, consequently, to follow the teaching and moral doctrine of the Church for some aspects of their life.

The ambit in which there is less harmony with the Church is that of sexual morality, especially regarding pre-marital relations and, with less intensity, contraception and abortion.

Youth in Today's World ...in Eastern and Central Europe

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THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE YOUNG IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT OF SOCIAL MODERNIZATION

INTRODUCTION

You all know how difficult and differential it is to summarize the religious situation of young people in a particular country. It is even more difficult to identify the contents and structures of the religious experience of young people in a number of countries, particularly when they are as diverse as the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore I will not attempt to reduce complexity to unity, but will limit myself to classifying the countries in question, and then seek to examine similar phenomena and tendencies.

The contents and the structures of the religious experience of the young are related to the duties to which they are called in life. In turn, the principal existential duties are closely connected with present-day economic, social and cultural situations. Following political earthquakes in the 1980s and the early 1990s, the economy, market and mass-media have attempted to make the societies of Eastern Europe develop along the lines of the nations of the European Union and North America. Sociologists call this phenomenon "recuperation of modernization". It follows that religious experiences are structured in a similar way although their diffusion or cultural configuration among the young are different.

According to the degree of economic, cultural and social modernization, we may classify the countries as follows:

- a first group comprising the countries of Western and Central Europe in which the modernization of society is now consolidated (e.g. Germany, Austria, Holland, Belgium, Denmark)
- whereas the countries of the former Warsaw pact must be divided into two categories.¹
 - Those countries in which a combination of modernization and communism demolished the traditional structures of society (e.g. former East Germany DDR, Czech Republic, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia).
 - Those countries which were able, under communist regime, to maintain models of life linked with the rural society, the extended family, and cultural and moral traditions and which now, under market pressure, are subjected to the whole weight of modernization (e.g. Poland, Slovakia, Rumania).

I will base my presentation on precise facts regarding Germany, Hungary and Poland. Taking therefore, as an example, one country from each of the three groups mentioned.

The impact of modernization on society, culture and social relations brings with it ultimately a similar structuring of life and of religious experiences: religion becomes increasingly an individual matter, the Church and religious practice are followed less and less, while confessional belonging, attitude to religion and its practice, finish by going each their own way. The point of departure of this process is totally different according to the type of country of origin. For example young Poles make a precise reference to the Church in their religious practice, something not found in Hungary or Germany. But at the

¹ Cf. M. TOMKA, "Ich bin religiös auf meine Weise. Die religiöse Situation und die Wertorientierungen der Jugend in Ungarn", in *askb-inform* special edition 1 (1998) 34.

same time we note one tendency which would seem to go in the same direction everywhere, as the following examples demonstrate.

Janusz Marianski, professor at Lublin, deduces the following from various studies on young people and religion in Poland:

“The findings of a sociological survey on attitudes to religious problems and practices would indicate a change in the general position of the young generations regarding religion. A diminution of continuity in the faith and clear signs of discontinuity reveal a tendency to make individual choices in religious matters to the detriment of a ‘heritage of faith’”.²

Miklos Tomka, professor of sociology at Budapest University and director of the Pastoral Institute of the same city, summarizes the question of the faith contents of young Hungarians as follows:

“The traditional religious conception of the immanent and the transcendent and of the sacred and profane has been replaced with a sort of monism [...]. Many young men and women think this interpretation may be applied also to Christians and Christian tradition”.³

These two statements demonstrate that, in the context of the modernization of society, there is a change in both the structure of the transmission of the faith and its contents. Precisely in connection with the matter in question, that is, how will young Christians enter the new millennium, I think it is important to observe closely how young people live their faith in the context of a modernized society. It is useful to look at this phenomenon keeping in mind the Western model, all the more since the diagnosis of the experts of the Polish Academy of Sciences says that in 2010 the religious situation in Poland will be similar to that in France in the 1990s. And Janusz Marianski, already quoted, affirms:

² J. MARIANSKI, “Religiösität der polnischen Jugend zwischen Tradition und Post-moderne”, in Nembach, Ulrich (ed.), *Jugend – 2000 Jahre nach Jesus. Jugend und Religion in Europa II*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, 193.

³ M. TOMKA, *o.c.*, 44-45.

"Young people (in Poland) in the mid-nineties elaborate their aspirations, life-goals and recognized religious values in the ambit of a transformation of the social order, orienting themselves openly towards examples of the Western civilization and culture".⁴

I find it easier to refer to the example of Germany to demonstrate the present-day tendency.

1. THE SEARCH FOR "PERSONAL RELIGION"

"For a long time now in the Western part of the world there is no desire more diffused than to live life one's own way. If today [...] we take the trouble to ask what others think, what they want, what they struggle for, what they are afraid of losing, we certainly find money, work, power, love, God and so forth, but always and increasingly the aspiration to a life made to measure. Money means my money, space means my space, precisely in the elementary sense of being able to live each in his own way. Even love, marriage, parenthood, increasingly seen with a sense of uncertainty for the future, are subject to the condition of binding and keeping together individual or centrifuge biographies. Exaggerating only slightly one could say the daily struggle to live life one's own way has become a collective practice in the Western world".⁵

This is how famous German sociologist Ulrich Beck describes the decisive condition and the principal existential task facing modern society. According to various studies made in Germany, there is a growing desire among young people to live life one's own way in search of autonomy. Autonomy, own life-style, self-realization, personality develop-

⁴ J. MARIANSKI, *o.c.*, 188.

⁵ H.-J. HÖHN, "Solidarische Individualität? Zur Dialektik gesellschaftlicher Individualisierung", in A. FRITSCHÉ – M. KWIRAN (ed.), *Der Mensch*, München 1998, 89 (with reference to U. Beck, "Eigenes Leben. Skizzen zu einer biographischen Gesellschaftsanalyse", in Id. (ed.), *Eigenes Leben. Ausflüge in die unbekannte Gesellschaft in der wir leben*, München 1997, 9).

ment – one concept is as good as another to describe the same phenomenon – are all structural challenges which modern society puts before individuals. It is important to keep this in mind. Paradoxically it could be said that modern man has a choice in every field except as far as choice itself is concerned. In present-day circumstances, life is a constant choosing this and rejecting that, putting pieces together starting with a detail. One's "own life-style" is not however one's own in the sense of a life lived in freedom, self-determination, according to one's own *I* and preferences. More precisely it is the contrary expression of an almost paradoxical form of socialization. People are forced to live life their own way under conditions which escape their control, subject to influences which can manipulate them in a subtle and pregnant way so much so that in the end, the individual can refer only to himself. The individual becomes the central point of his own story, of his belonging and not least of his own search for meaning and religion itself.

If life must be lived "one's own way", consequently it only has meaning if the search for autonomy and development of the personality is crowned by success! This search for realization presents various dimensions and takes different paths:

- "prefabricated" models of meaning lose significance: the statement "life only has meaning if you give it meaning" is widely endorsed at all levels of society, age group and religious convictions;
- it follows that meaning is expressed more strongly in "do it yourself" methods (lemma: patchwork, craft-work);
- "prefabricated" models are combined with the desire for autonomy;
- meaning's transcendent reference is declining to mere immanence.

A study of young people, carried out in 1997 in Germany, by research on cosmological representations (theories on the global framework, universal structures and norms of the world) and the model of interpreting existence (the meaning of the destiny of the individual and of humanity) reached the following conclusions:

"Autonomy, giving and creating meaning of one's self, is for almost all young people and young adults an obvious form of interpreting one's self and the world. More than 50% of those questioned was firmly convinced that life only has meaning if it is given meaning".⁶

This conviction does not exclude some metaphysical and religious reference – and this is important for us. Furthermore over 30% of the young people who recognized their Christian background shared the same conviction affirming as well that life for them has meaning only (!) if they themselves give it meaning.

This fact is confirmed and endorsed by the results of a survey by Gerhard Schmidtchen in the same year, 1997. To the question of where for young people lies the meaning of life, he replies: "Religious feelings today have taken the path of the immanence of the world".⁷ The search for meaning as "guarantee of God" is a concluded but little diffused variant. "In every reflection on the meaning of life, the main factor is the development of the personality, precisely in the sense of autonomy".⁸

We can see that the person takes central place in all reflection on the manner of living a life which has meaning. Of course we must not automatically and mistakenly liken this basing of life on the individual to egoism or self-complacency. In fact, closely connected with the development of the personality, we find commitment for others and for society, as shown by the survey in question. So it would appear that

⁶ WIPPERMANN, "Religiöse Weltanschauungen. Zwischen individuellem Design und traditionellem Schema", in K.-R. SILBEREISEN, – L.-A. VASKOVICS – J. ZINNECHER (edd.), *Jungsein in Deutschland. Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene 1991 und 1996*, Opladen 1997, 116. The survey was carried out among 3275 young people between the ages of 13 and 29 in the period February 8 – May 11, 1996. The questionnaire is very similar to the one used by Shell in its 1992 survey.

⁷ G. SCHMIDTCHEN, *Wie weit ist der Weg nach Deutschland. Sozialpsychologie der Jugend in der postsozialistischen Welt*, Opladen 1997, 162.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 364.

activity in the social field has absorbed all religious reflection, seeing that the individual becomes its theme.⁹

If we look at the results of a World Value Survey of 1990,¹⁰ we see that for the young people of every country in the world, it is important to give life person-oriented meaning. Fundamental for young Europeans' concept of meaning is the so-called "pragmatic dimension", found in an average 76% of the answers. Typical of this dimension is the statement: "The meaning of life is to try and take the best of it". This is said by 79% of young people. Comparing the different countries, the various social-religious situations appear more evident. For example Poland, compared to the others, has the highest number of young people for whom the search for meaning has a religious dimension (e.g. "life has only the meaning that God gives to it"). Of course in Poland too, the conception of pragmatic meaning is much more significant than the empiric meaning.

2. "PERSONAL RELIGIOUS FEELING" AND ECCLESIAL RELIGION

The search for "one's own life-style" for a "personal religion" modifies the attitude towards "objective religion", or a religion with ecclesial reference. Usually we see that church-going diminishes with independence, for example with growing up or starting an activity.

Nevertheless we can speak neither of a total rejection of the religious aspect, nor of a lack of religious feeling among the young, but rather of less influence and a reduced practice of this religious feeling. What is certain is that individual religious feeling is drawing ever further away from institutional and confessional religions. There is in fact a tendency towards religiosity beyond institutional and confessional religions. This is certainly not the same as a total rejection of institutional

⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁰ C. FRIESEL – M. RICHTER – P. ZULEHNER, *Werthaltungen und Lebensstile junger Menschen in Europa*, Wien 1993, 15-17.

religion, it is instead an indication that the latter no longer has any influence on individuals and has lost its monopoly in the field of religion and religious feeling.

We observe two phenomena:

1. Conflict between attitude to religion and religious practice connected with a church, conflict aptly described by the discrepancy between "being a believer" and "going to church". The Youth Survey by the European Commission concludes by saying that young people believe but do not practice. In Europe an average 29.5% of young Catholics say they practice their faith, compared to the 56.1 who say "I believe but do not practice".¹¹

A 1994 survey among young Poles under 15 gave the following results: 30% said they believed but did not practice regularly, only 10% said they believed but never practiced. But there exists also the opposite, those who practice without believing. A 5.6% average in Europe is hardly noticeable, but it is in concrete cases, such as 18% in Austria and 13.8% in West Germany.

Here we come across a characteristic typical of modern society, in which models of life and faith are pluralistic and differentiated, ranging from the traditional to the post-modern, the latter having much greater impact than the former.

2. The appearance of new forms of religious feeling while new places are born in which it is lived, no longer connectable with the traditional concept of religion. This can be seen in rock-concerts, on football fields, in opening ceremonies of sports-events, in films and so forth. Being a fan of a football team, a pop star or television serial provides social integration, identity, it produces rituals, it also influences ethical-normative behaviour and helps above all to bear daily

¹¹ INRA (Europe) European Coordination Office, *Eurobarometer 47.2, Junge Europäer, für die Generaldirektion XXII "Allgemeine und Berufliche Bildung und Jugend"*, Report July 29th1997, 33-36.

routine. Parallelism between the new forms of religion and Christianity is often surprising.

The desire for enchantment has not disappeared from the world, even though we see it rising up in secular ambients, far from any institutionalized church reality.

3. "PERSONAL RELIGION", COMMITMENT AND LIFE-STYLE

For our theme I think it is important to consider the influence which "personal religion" exerts on the search for identity, on the life-style and commitment of the individual.

From the information at hand we note two contexts, diverse but connected: the Christian viewpoint has a much greater impact on identity and life-style, whereas explicit church membership has a positive influence on openness to others. To the question regarding the impact one's world vision has on one's identity and life-style,¹² a survey of young Germans says: "Christians, more than others, make their religious convictions a *conditio sine qua non* for the way they define themselves and from which they derive their rules of conduct".¹³ Regarding identity and life-style only two thirds of the young people questioned, who admit their Christian roots, confirm this influence. This puts them far above average and far from any other ideological construction.

We can in practice say that unselfish orientation in young people and young adults is more frequently found among the practicing than the non practicing.¹⁴

¹² Regarding identity: "My religious convictions are most important for my identity, my self-understanding, my personality. Without them I would not be what I am." Regarding life-style: "My faith guides my behaviour".

¹³ WIPPERMANN: *o. c.*, 123.

¹⁴ G. SCHMIDTCHEN, GERHARD, *Ethik und Protest: Moralbilder und Wertkonflikte junger Menschen. Supplement, tables and methods*, Opladen 1993, 145. G. SCHMIDTCHEN, *Wie weit*, 62-66, 171.

This means we can say that, also in the present-day conditions of a modernized society, the Christian faith can influence individual and social living. But for this, in my opinion, the following commitments are necessary:

- We must regard young people and their search for faith with proper respect and help them to find whatever they have yet to discover and to know. We must be interested in what they are doing and encourage them.
- We must realize that the aspiration to live “one’s own life-style” is a structural challenge of life today which young people, like it or not, must face. Our task is to make it clear that we can be fully ourselves only in relation to others and to God.
- In present-day conditions, this is only possible through communication and dialogue, consisting not so much of words as example of a life lived according to a convincing project. Therefore the question of a project of Christian life for young people in view of the next millennium is above all a question of the project of Christian life of us adults today.

II
“FORMING” YOUTH TODAY
Basic Criteria

The Formation of Young People Anthropological-religious Aspect

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I have been asked to speak from a theological standpoint. It seems evident that the fundamental dimensions of Christian anthropology should at all times be present in education, although it will be for specialists in pedagogy to say concretely how this can or should be done. Some of the essential coordinates of the Christian vision of humankind are brought together in Chapters 1 and 2 of the first part of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council, chapters devoted respectively to the dignity of the human person and to the human community. A detailed commentary on these chapters would probably be out of place here. But, with them as background, we can sketch in broad outline the central truths about humankind deriving from Christian revelation.

Without attempting a strict demarcation, we can divide our exposition into two parts: The essential structures of the human being in the light of Christ in whom humankind was created; The historical fulfilment of the human vocation, immersed in the mystery of sin and of salvation by Christ. This distinction has no purpose other than to help us in our exposition. It is clear that these "essential structures" are only to be found in the concrete, historical human being that we know; and, on the other hand, that the human person, with his or her concrete vicissitudes, is the being called from the beginning in Christ to be a child of God. This reference to Christ gives a profound unity to the two aspects we want briefly to present.

1. THE FUNDAMENTAL COORDINATES OF THE HUMAN BEING IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

If we want to be faithful to the New Testament, any reference to the creation of the world and of humankind has to start from a fundamental fact: creation is oriented towards Christ; "all things were created in him and for him" (*Col* 1:16, cf. the context, 1:15-20). Christ is the mediator of creation (cf. *1 Cor* 8:6; *Jn* 1:3; *Heb* 1:2). In him we have been chosen before the creation of the world and God's original plan is to unite in Christ all things in heaven and on earth (cf. *Eph* 1:3-10). According to *GS* 10, the Church "believes that the key, the centre and purpose of all human history is to be found in her Lord and Master [...] that beneath all change there are many things unchanging which have their ultimate foundation in Christ who is the same yesterday and today and forever". Again, in *GS* 45: "Our Lord is the end of human history, the point on which the aspirations of history and civilization converge; the centre of humanity, the joy of all hearts, the fulfilment of all longings".

In the light of this fulfilment of vocation in Christ we can turn our gaze to the basic coordinates of the human being as they are shown in the first chapters of Genesis. This is not the time to go into fine points about the differences between the two accounts: the Yahvist and Elohist. It is clear that the human being has a fundamental reference to God, being created in the image of God, whose command must be obeyed. This all embracing relationship to God has to be reflected in relation to others (man and woman he created them [*Gen* 1:27]); it is not good for man to be alone (*Gen* 2:18), with the world (have dominion over the world [*Gen* 1:28]); God placed the human being in paradise to cultivate it and care for it (*Gen* 2:15), and in a correct relation to oneself (then they knew that they were naked (*Gen* 3:7): we must not see in this only a sexual question; nakedness is, above all, humiliation, loss of dignity). Biblical anthropology is also "relational". Not all aspects are on the same level. The relation to

God is the fundamental dimension that, besides being expressed in worship, in prayer, etc., necessarily finds expressions in the other dimensions.

The relation with God is also reflected in the network of human relations. This is what we have to illustrate through the notion of image of God that is central to an understanding of the mystery of humankind. We know that in the course of history very many interpretations have been given of this fundamental truth that is expressed in *Gen* 1:26 ff (cf also *Gen* 5:1;9:6). It is clear in any case that this condition gives the human being a special dignity that is not shared by any other creature. The human being is the summit of creation. The Yahvist has expressed this with the metaphor of God forming man with his own hands and breathing into man the breath of life. GS 12 stresses the importance of the condition of image of God that belongs to the human being. After entitling Chap.1 of the first Part "the dignity of the human person", it begins, in the first number of the chapter, n. 12, by dealing precisely with the image of God. It first notes a consensus between believers and non-believers (something that today it would at times be more difficult to note) about the position of man as centre and apex of all things on earth, while there are different and contrary opinions about man himself. In the midst of this diversity of opinion, the Bible teaches that the human being was created in the image of God. It is remarkable that this is the first characteristic to be stressed. To my knowledge, this is the first time that an ecumenical council has dealt with this question and has attributed to this fact the importance given to it in the Bible.

But what does the condition of image that is proper to man actually mean? In the first place that man is "capable of knowing and loving his Creator". Apart from the fact that we have here an almost literal quotation from St. Thomas (cf. *STb* I 93,4), although in a rather different context, what is stressed is that the image of God implies a personal relationship to God the Creator. There is a consistent line of

Old Testament exegesis that stresses this point.¹ Being “in the image of God” implies being capable of a relation with God, man is God’s interlocutor. This is not something added to an already constituted being, but an essential dimension. There is an acute observation of K. Westermann that is relevant here: the primary statement of Genesis is not that man is God’s image (which is also said), but that God created man in his image. It is God’s action, before the effect of that action, that is asserted here. God creates in God’s image, creates in such a way as to produce an interlocutor.

GS 12 refers to a second aspect of the human being related to creation in God’s image: man’s dominion over earthly creatures. The relation of this dominion to the image is given already in *Gen* 1:26-28 (cf. *Gen* 2:15). GS also quotes *Ps* 8:5-7. The dominion is not absolute; the Council makes this very clear: it is “for God’s glory”. There is no need to stress the relevance of this remark at the present time (problems of ecology, respect for creation, etc.). A third element stressed in this number devoted to God’s image is the social dimension of the human being. “Male and female he created them” (*Gen* 1:27). This is the first form of the communion of human persons; obviously, its range is much wider. The Council does not set exact limits to the social dimension of the human being in relation to God’s image. It is certainly not easy to do so. But it is noteworthy that, in the whole of this n. 12 of GS, there is no reference to the New Testament nor to the relation of this image of God to Christ. The truth is that the New Testament does not put the themes of creation and of the image in direct relation to one another. In the New Testament the theme of the image undergoes a transformation and a profound development of which the Constitution GS could not fail to be aware.

This emerges in GS 22. Here the Christological dimension of the image is clearly shown. For the New Testament, in fact, the image of God is Christ, the incarnate Son (*Col* 1:15; *2 Cor* 4:4), in whose face

¹ K. WESTERMANN, *Genesis I*, Neukirchen 1974, 205-214.

shines forth the glory of God (cf. 2 Cor 4:6). The human being becomes "image" insofar as there is configuration with Christ, above all in final participation in the glory of the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29). Some of these texts are quoted in GS 22. There it is pointed out also that Christ, the new man is at the same time the "perfect man", the one who, "revealing the mystery of the Father and his love, makes man fully clear to himself, makes clear his high vocation". Some aspects call for a brief commentary: the revelation of the mystery of man, which "becomes clear only in the mystery of the incarnate Word", takes place in the revelation of the mystery of the Father. This means that man's sublime vocation is sonship, participation in the sonship of Jesus, as will be said at the end of this n. 22; "as sons united in the Son we can cry out in the Spirit 'Abba, Father!'" This is the sublime vocation of man to which our text refers. The same number tells us that the human vocation is one, that is, divine, and that it applies to all the human beings for whom Christ died. It is not difficult to combine and interpret all the various statements of GS 22. There is only one vocation, the divine vocation, for every human being; it is made concrete in a call to the divine sonship as participation in that of Jesus. That is why the Council will also say a little further on that "whoever follows Christ, the perfect man, himself becomes more of a man" (GS 41).

If this is the definitive human vocation, there cannot fail to be in some way, in its creatural structures, this reference to Jesus. GS 22 quotes in a note a text of Tertullian, *De carnis resurrectione* "Whatever was the form and expression which was then given to the clay (by the Creator) Christ was in his thoughts as one day to become man". The passage that follows almost immediately could also have been quoted.² These patristic texts stress the protological

² "Id utique quod finxit, ad imaginem dei fecit illum, scilicet, Christi [...]. Ita limus ille, iam tunc imaginem induens Christi futuri in carne, non tantum Dei opus erat, sed et pignus" and *Adv. Prax* XII, 4-5: "Erat autem ad cuius imaginem faciebat, ad filii scilicet,

aspect of the Christic dimension of the image. But the question does not emerge as clearly in the conciliar texts as a whole. I think that the opinion expressed by H. U. von Balthasar is valid: "all things could be made with reference to their consummation in the second Adam [...]. Once again, as author of the consummation, no one other than the creator could have established them in this role; otherwise the consummation could not have been carried out from within, but the final seal would have had to be placed from outside on the things that would have been created with another different origin".³ This is especially true for man. The call of each human being to the divine vocation is the ultimate reason for the personal irrepeatability of each one of us and the ultimate foundation of the dignity and sacredness of human life. The dialogue with God reaches its perfection when inserted in Christ, the Father's original Thou. This concerns the whole man, since the definitive human destiny is resurrection, implying all the personal, social and cosmic aspects of the human being. In this unity of destiny we can see the unity already of the human being in the duality of component parts that are irreducible to one another: "corpore et anima unus". This is the happy formulation of GS 14, reproducing the title of the corresponding section of the *Catechism* (nn. 362-368). Returning to an ancient tradition, forgotten in certain periods, the *Catechism* points out that the human body "shares in the dignity of the image of God" (364). It is indeed the human being, not the soul, that has been created in God's image. And in relation to this Christological

qui homo futurus certior et verior, imaginem suam dici hominem qui tunc de limo formam habebat, imago veri et similitudo". Also a text of Irenaeus, that appeared in the first drafts of GS and then disappeared, one does not know why: *Adv. Haer.* III 23, 1 (the whole context is interesting, especially III 23,3): "Necesse ergo fuit Dominum ad perditam ovem venientem et tantae dispositionis recapitulationem facientem et suum plasma requirentem, illum ipsum hominem salvare, qui factus fuerat secundum imaginem et similitudinem eius".

³ H.-U. VON BALTHASAR, *Teodramatica* 3, Madrid 1993, 237-238.

dimension of the image of which the New Testament and tradition give us a glimpse, we can think that the dominion over all creation is a sharing in the dominion of Christ, under whose feet the Father has placed all things (*Eph* 1:22).

God does not call us to communion with Christ as isolated individuals, but wants us to be members of the Body of his Son. The social dimension of the human person, necessarily expressed in the relation with God, is no less primary than personal irrepeatability. Both the man and the woman are in the image of God. The equal dignity, with recognition of diversity, is based on this shared condition. The sexual distinction is of capital importance in the mutual complementarity (which does not mean that the man and the woman are not each a whole human person) and in the irreplaceable function of procreation. This point gives us the widest opening to human society, which has to be based on respect for the person, while overcoming individualism. God has not willed that man should live alone, nor be sanctified alone. *Gaudium et Spes* 32 speaks of the perfection and completion in Jesus Christ of the "community pattern" for humankind. Not only did Jesus share the conditions of the social life of his time; he also charged his apostles to preach in such a way that the human race might become God's family. And, "the first-born of many brethren, following his death and resurrection, he sets up among all who receive him in faith and charity a new fraternal communion, in his own body, which is the Church".

The human being is a person, a person in society, a person in the world. *GS* also dealt with human activity in the universe (*GS* 33 ff). With his work man continues the work of the Creator, makes himself useful for his brothers and sisters, and contributes to the fulfilment of God's plan in history (*GS* 34). As John Paul II brings out in his Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, "work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures". It is a particular mark related to the very nature of the human person (cf. n. 1). In this activity man reflects the very action of the Creator of the universe (n. 4). The

right and duty of work are therefore closely related to the dignity of the human being created in the image and likeness of God. This is an aspect that should not be forgotten in the formation of young people. Work is not only a means of subsistence, nor is it a punishment.

The different aspects mentioned so far, those we have called essential structures of the human being, find in Christ their ultimate meaning.

The Father has made all things subject to him. Temporal realities have, of course, their own field of autonomy. This is given them by the dignity of creation itself. The creation of humankind in Christ does not mean that the condition of the human being as creature can only be known in the light of Christ. No one can fail to see the error of such a position (cf. the carefully worded statements of GS 36 about the autonomy of temporal realities). The order of salvation is the basis for that of creation, but knowing the former does not give us concrete knowledge of the latter. We must, however, avoid thinking of an order of creation that has nothing to do with Christ, a human being devised by God independently of Christ. Christian anthropology will always have to maintain the difficult balance between these two poles.

2. THE HUMAN BEING IN THE CONCRETE HISTORICAL CONDITIONS OF SIN AND GRACE

The essential structures of the human being are not something static. The human person is an historical being, in the process of fulfilment. So also is humankind as a whole. Moreover, some of the texts of Vatican II that we have recalled speak to us of the human "vocation", to which, clearly, the human person must respond. On the one hand, Christ is the definitive Adam, the first fruits of the new creation, the one who brings to completion and to ultimate fulfilment the first Adam created at the beginning of history (1 Cor 15:45-49). But he is also the one who overcomes the sin of this first Adam by his obedience (cf. Rom 5:12-21). We will not understand what Christ signifies for humankind if we do not take this aspect into account. The two di-

mensions, Christ as head and Christ as redeemer who frees us from sin, are given, as an indissoluble unity, in the concrete figure of Jesus. Man has been unfaithful from the beginning to the vocation to which God called humanity in Christ, and this fact still weighs upon humankind. On the other hand, this humanity, created in Christ, has also been redeemed by him, and this too has its consequences. We can take inspiration from St. Augustine by expressing this fact in the formula (not literally exact): "Every human being is Adam, every human being is Christ".⁴

We again take our starting-point from the Second Vatican Council. The Council speaks of how the human person experiences being divided when looking into the depths of his or her own being. "Man looking into his heart finds himself prone to evil and sunk in many evils which cannot come from his good Creator. Often he refuses to acknowledge God as his first beginning and disrupts the harmony which should govern his relations with God, with himself, with others and with all created things [...]. Human life, personal or collective, seems a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness" (GS 13). It is precisely this experience upon which light is thrown by Christian teaching about sin, and concretely about original sin. Here again the Council is synthetic and clear: "Made just by God, man nevertheless from the outset of his history was persuaded by the Evil One to abuse his freedom, setting himself up in opposition to God and seeking his fulfilment elsewhere" (*ibid.*). To deal, even in summary fashion, with so complex a question would, clearly, not be possible here. In this context, it is enough to point out that sin presupposes man's divine vocation to communion with God. It is saying no to God and to God's love. It is not the mere transgression of an external precept.

The sin committed at the beginning of history has been of universal effect. It supposed breaking the mediation of the grace that man

⁴ Cf. En. in Ps 70, II 1 (CCL 39, 960).

was called from the outset to mediate for future generations. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 404-405), in accordance with the traditional teaching, stresses that original sin, while proper to each one of us, is not a personal fault; it is called sin in an analogical sense (which does not mean improperly). It is defined as "deprivation of the original holiness and justice" in which God created man. From the beginning human nature was transmitted without this original holiness and justice which should have been given, in a certain way, with generation. Man, called at the beginning of history, to be "mediator" of grace for others, because of sin did not fulfil this function. According to Catholic teaching, through sin human nature was not left corrupted, but was wounded in its natural powers, subject to ignorance and to the dominion of death and with an inclination to evil (*ibid.*, 405). Man lost the harmony within himself, with others and with creation (*ibid.*, 400; cf. *Gen* 3), expressions of the fundamental harmony with God.

Since the first sin, the world is the object of an authentic invasion of the power of sin. Reflecting a trend that is very noticeable in more recent Catholic theology, the CCC also points out (n. 408) that the consequences of original sin and of all other personal sins put the world as a whole in the sinful condition that, with John the Evangelist, we can call the "sin of the world". This expression indicates the negative influence exerted on people by communal conditions and social structures that are the fruit of sin, and that not infrequently cause them to sin again. No doubt we find here an echo of what Pope John Paul II has called "structures of sin". The sin of others weighs upon us, just as the sin we commit weighs negatively upon others. Our sins contribute also to this "sin of the world". Certainly, where sin abounded grace has been superabundant, and the teaching about sin has its rightful place only in the perspective of the redemption. But it is no less certain that the consequences of original sin remain in many ways, and that, in this situation, human life on earth, and Christian life in particular, is a struggle. Overlooking this negative aspect of human history, which continues to have a negative effect on all hu-

mankind, can give rise to serious errors in the fields of education, politics and social action (cf. CCC 407). That is why, in addition to the intrinsic importance of this teaching, we need to mention this question here. Christian faith is not pessimistic with regard to humankind, which it knows to be redeemed by Christ; but it is realistic, knowing human fragility and inclination to evil. This chapter of Christian theology is certainly not based on human experience but on the sources of revelation; it is not, however, foreign to human experience.

However, if every human being is Adam, every human being is Christ; and if all human beings are involved in Adam's sin, all are also implicated in the justice of Christ (CCC 404). The relation between sin and grace is very complex, more than was thought at certain times in history; and if all human beings are involved in Adam's sin, all are also involved in the justice and salvation brought by Christ. Christ died for all, and in Christ the Father has reconciled the world to himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:19 ff). In Baptism we are incorporated into Christ and original sin is effaced, even if some of its effects remain.

The Church's recent magisterium (cf. GS 22; *Redemptoris Missio*, 10, etc.) teaches that Christ's saving action can reach all human beings, even though they may not know him, so that, in principle, no one remains outside the scope of his redeeming grace (through him all have been created). It is, of course, more difficult to determine how that actually takes place. It is clear that we cannot enter into this question here.

However, the relationship we have already seen between Christ and the whole of creation, and in particular with the human being from the first moment of existence (divine vocation), makes us think that the maximum fulfilment of the human person is attained in receiving divine sonship through the action of the Spirit. The condition of being child of God in Christ should be the most glorious "title" for the human person living in grace. As the title "Son of God" is that which indicated most profoundly Christ's ultimate identity, so is "child of God in Jesus Christ" the title that shows in greatest depth our vo-

cation and the highest fulfilment of the human person. Jesus opens for us this relationship. This is clearly indicated in the prayer that Christ teaches us (cf. *Mt* 6:9; *Lk* 11:2). Paul, in two passages of fundamental importance, also shows us the decisive action of the Spirit, as Spirit of the Son, in our lives as children of God: "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (*Gal* 4:4-6); "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (*Rom* 8:14-17).

The Holy Spirit, significantly called, in *Gal* 4:6, Spirit of the Son, is the Spirit who, according to *Rom* 9:15, creates in us a spirit of sonship, that is, an attitude in relation to God characterized by the same features that were characteristic of Jesus' life. And so, in the Spirit we can cry out "Abba, Father", that is, invoke God as Jesus did. In this way we are shown that in divine sonship we come into a relationship with the three divine Persons, to participate in the very life of the Trinity. Through the Spirit we can share in the relationship that Jesus, the only Son (cf. *Jn* 1:18) has with the Father. The only Son, without ceasing to be such, without his unique character as Son of God being in the slightest way affected, becomes in this way, through his resurrection and the gift of his Spirit, "the first-born among many brethren" (*Rom* 8:29). Being children inevitably implies fraternal relations with other human beings. The Church, as Body of Christ, is the place where this fraternity has to find its maximum expression. What we are saying about the human social condition also finds here its perfection and ultimate meaning (cf. *LG* 1). Already during our present

lifetime, our condition as children is a reality, but its fullness is reserved for the final consummation: "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2).

It is only through God's gift that we can reach God, but the need for our cooperation is not thereby eliminated, but rather given its foundation. The decree of the Council of Trent on Justification gives us the criteria to enlighten (but not to understand) the mystery of the relation between God and man. Only through God's action is man's salvation possible. This is true for the redemption in Christ that was carried out once and for all, and also for our personal "appropriation" of this redemption through the action of the Spirit. The initiative is always divine. But this grace of God creates in the human being the capacity to respond. In this way man is an authentic interlocutor of God, who does not want to save us by force. Freedom is a great gift of the Spirit ("Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17)), freeing us from the sin that enslaves us. Only through God's gift can we respond affirmatively to the divine invitation, and in this is our freedom. It is not only the capacity to choose, which is certainly an indispensable condition for finite human freedom, but above all, the capacity for good, the capacity to respond positively to God. The misuse of freedom destroys it, sin makes us slaves. Only God frees us. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1). Education must not overlook the fact that it has to be directed towards forming with a view to freedom, not letting each one do what he or she likes, but for an ever more spontaneous acceptance of the good that God places before us. This good is our salvation through the participation in his life, which is freely and gratuitously offered to us.

The Formation of Young People Psychological Aspect

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INTRODUCTION

I would like to examine with you some of the principal stakes in question in youth psychology today. There are others with which I will not have time to deal, but on which you may focus during your discussion and reflection. I wish simply to give a modest contribution to your research so you may continue to find others to aid you in your analysis. Starting from these few aspects and certain difficulties regarding the psychic life of young people we will see better where we must operate and invent a pedagogy suited to the needs of young personalities.

My presentation will address four questions: The maturation of the personality, taking charge of the inner self, elaboration of sexuality and parental images.

1. THE MATURATION OF THE PERSONALITY

The maturation of the psychology of young people is without a doubt longer than in the past. However it must be underlined that the questions posed in relation to the development of the young personality remain relatively the same from one generation to the next. Adults should remember this in order to know better how to communicate with young people.

How can we explain that maturation takes longer? Without being completely exhaustive on the subject we can give some reasons.

The Formation of Young People. Psychological Aspect

1. *The fact that life is longer* makes us suppose that the individual has time to prepare and to commit himself in life. Some therefore delay deadlines and live in the temporary not knowing if they will be able to continue what they have begun in most areas of their life.

2. *The social milieu has become less a carrier* for children and adolescents. The educative relation has often been discarded leaving the young persons to find out relatively on their own how to discover the great realities of life. The juvenile violence which develops is the symptom of an educative failure of adults. They have not always acted as educators thinking that the children would develop without their interference. They were afraid of constricting their freedom when on the contrary it was necessary to awaken them, starting from a framework of references. This lack of the educative support of society renders young personalities fragile. Hence they tend to search for relations of support, that is to say of dependence, through precocious couple relationships and pathologies of interiority such as bulimia and anorexia and drug addiction. These young people also manifest a relative ability to adapt for the worse and for the best. They know how to be open to find that which the previous generation was unable to transmit to them. But they can also be relativist and depend on manners of thought and behaviour with no critical spirit.

3. *Young people enter adolescence ever earlier and leave it later.* Society identifies itself with young people and takes youth's behaviour as the norm. This is why I have created the concept of an adolescent-centric society¹ to describe this phenomenon. Society even valorizes immaturity inciting people to remain adolescents as long as possible. Some adults continue to live this way, thinking, behaving, dressing like adolescents. I wrote in one of my books that one may define them as "adulescents".² Children themselves are thrown into attitudes of ado-

¹ T. ANATRELLA, *Interminables Adolescences - Psychologie des 12/30 ans*, Cerf/Cujas, Paris.

² T. ANATRELLA, *Entre adultes et adolescents*, Cerf, Paris.

lescents before they have the necessary psychological competence. They develop a precocity which is not a source of maturity, pilfering away the psychic tasks of infancy, and this will handicap them later on. Once they are young adults they may, for example, seek to live the imaginary they failed to live in their infancy.

4. *Difficulty in reaching temporal maturity is lived by numerous young people.* This temporal maturity is one of the psychic duties of post-adolescence between 24/30 years. Sometimes, instead of conjugating their existence associating the past, the present and the future, they live it in an on-going immediate. They pass this way from moment to moment seeking no link of coherence. The future can worry these people, not because of economic uncertainty, but because psychologically they are unable to anticipate it and evaluate the consequence of their actions and gestures, lived in the present, on the future. When young people have not yet reached this temporal maturity, they have difficulty in developing a historic conscience. They are incapable of, or they dread, inscribing their existence in duration and therefore having a sense of commitment. For example, I receive in consultation numerous young adults who would like to marry, but are paralyzed by the idea of committing themselves in this way. Very often this inhibition masks conflicts linked to parental images (as if they do not give themselves the right to have the same status or fear they will encounter the same problems as their parents), conflicts also depending on sexuality, that is to say the anguish of freeing one's self from endogamy and socializing their affective life, and lastly to conflicts in relation to the capacity or not, to have a sense of the institutional, that is of time and of duration. Everything happens as if the relationship must be lived without limits, in a non choice in which everything is possible, and in the immediate, that is according to the notion of the time of adolescence when one cannot bear the least constriction of reality. This is why pedagogy must take care to mark progressive stages in the development of the personality. It is important to ritualize these stages in a































world in which we have forgotten the meaning of initiation and the festive rite. The de-symbolization of the great human realities and the abandoning of rites under the false pretext of simplicity, has disastrous effects on the psychological level. Certain pastoral practices have been influenced by this custom to the detriment of catechesis and the social ecclesial bond. They have, in turn, reinforced ambient immaturity and the contemporary interiority crisis.

This delay in maturation does not favour apprenticeship of reality. Social representations incite us to live in the arrested age of youth as if personality were already complete. But, at 18 years other developments of psychic structures must still intervene. It is a question then of inscribing from infancy the subject in a historical perspective. The adult must help the young person understand that he or she is not to live immediately that which will come about for him or her later: otherwise some want to live at 15 as if they were 25. In this way young people are invited to prepare themselves and to take charge of their own development while having an open future; this gives them a desire to grow.

2. TAKING CHARGE OF THE INTERIOR SELF

Very many young people find it hard to take hold of their psychological life and their interior space. They may feel uncomfortable when experiencing different sensations within themselves which they are unable to identify. This phenomenon is inherent to adolescence since it depends on the rearrangement of the representation of self at puberty. But what is more, contemporary society does not help young people to take hold of their interior functioning. They are often incited to express themselves spontaneously without seeking to elaborate first reactions and urges.

1. *A similar attitude produces impulsive personalities*, always in action before the action has been taken up and mediated by reflection.

They are not equipped with any real mental functioning. This is why they often complain of a lack of concentration and find it difficult to work intellectually for a long period. They manifest a poverty in their interior self and intra-psychic exchanges. They use repeatedly the passage of action, not searching for some type of pleasure, but to relieve all interior tension and return to the level zero, so as not to feel their interior tension. They evacuate, in this way, not only that which happens within themselves but also their interior functioning itself. The passage to action, that is conduct of reaction, is here a mode of defense to prevent the personality from sinking into psychosis. This is a way of protecting oneself from a disorganization of one's *I* which remains precarious.

2. *Young people have few trustworthy and valid objects of identification* for obtaining psychic material from which to build themselves interiorly. Here we come up against the contemporary world's problem of transmission. A lack of interiority favours psychologies more ready to respond to the first states of urge rather than engage in interior elaboration. The weakness of interiorization processes produces psychologies more on the surface, more fragmented and which manifest difficulty in resorting to rationality. Regarding the language used, its poverty does not favour the mastering of reality. The repeated formulas, like slogans, indicate panic and suffering at the idea of reflection. Hence the expression: "It's a headache!" implying that thinking could provoke migraine.

3. *The failure to take hold of the psychic apparatus and the lack of rational language* handicap the relation to realities which remains the domain of the sensorial and sometimes the fusional. It is difficult to establish a distance which rightly allows communication and action. It is the body which is put forward privileging a de-liaison in the interior self and adopting purely operative practices. Often the refusal of the adolescent to accept his sexual body, linked to the apparition of the sexual characteristics, projects him outside himself in conduct of defiance, derision and denial of reali-

ties. If the environment echoes this, proposing nothing but immaturity and valorization of partial urges, the adolescent finds justification for his behaviour instead of encountering relations and ideals which lead him to undertake an operation of interiorization.

4. *Numerous young people have real psychological difficulty in integrating their bodily space.* Drug addiction is one of the symptoms of this problem just as moreover contemporary dancing, particularly techno music, in which the body is lived as a tribal not a personal body. It entails experiencing states of trance as if to escape from one's bodily condition. Another symptomatic aspect is the fashion of tattoos, marking the body with a red hot iron, piercing (piercing certain places of the body in order to insert jewels), sweat shirts or jeans torn or worn out which are the expression of unease about taking possession of one's body. This is also to signify the suffering of living this real body, through the stigmata of a lacerated second skin. Not knowing how to integrate it, the subject moves his body in all senses as if to suppress and eliminate it. They must live elsewhere, outside themselves. This explains the difficulty in having a sense of limits.

In contemporary education there is insufficient preparation to resist excitation and frustration. In secular and university medicine one sees the difficulty numerous young people have in facing the stress of their life. They pass through all states of consciousness which they are unable to control: sadness, tears, unhappiness which leads them to consultation. This behaviour can be explained more by the lack of internal structures to integrate all their emotions and affections, rather than an overloading of school programmes as one might too hastily deduct. Hence their acting with the body prepares itself very early and becomes very quickly an acting against the body and against psychic functioning. It testifies scorn for the body which also appears, in social models, through the idealization of a body which does not exist.

The inability to interiorise one's bodily image is a source of violence betrayed by a whole range of behaviour of appropriation. One takes,

steals, attacks, destroys and does with one's body in the exterior world that which one is not able to do in one's interior. Stealing and attacking is a way of attempting to take possession of one's body by experiencing it through the intermediary of other people and objects approached in this way. But this attitude only prolongs the failure. There is also, in some, a preference for dangerous conduct in a search for deep sensations and on whom, due to their irrational character, prevention has little or no impact.

Catechesis, education to the meaning of prayer, liturgy, but also Christian rites, symbols and signs have a role to play to help young people take possession of their interiority, their psychic space and their bodily space. Pastoral removal of Christian symbols and signs has contributed to this contemporary rejection of the function of the psychological and the symbolic, since paradoxically we tend to *psychologise* everything in education. In many cases psychological explanation, to the child and adolescent, has replaced the pedagogical relation. Some adults, not knowing how to teach young people to live, finish by explaining to them what goes on in their own head. Some young people are in this way overburdened with psychological interpretations which do nothing to teach them the art of living. We must rediscover the meaning of education which passes by numerous mediations such as the word, signs and significant rites.

3. THE ELABORATION OF SEXUALITY

Juvenile sexuality is dependent on both transformations linked with this stage of life and sexual models which circulate in the social discourse.

On the Psychological Level

1. *Juvenile sexuality is engaged in a work of re-arranging* in which different questions will appear. It is first of all experienced with deep uncertainty. This is often hidden by defiance or inhibitions. The stake is to be able to recognize oneself in one's sexual gender and to accept the difference in sexes which allows us moreover to grasp the meaning

of the difference in sexes and of reality. The problem of the difference in sexes and sexual identity has today become important because we see precisely the denial of this fundamental difference which permits us, however, to recognize all the other differences. We see equally the valorization of the homosexual question. This social discourse renders psychic work within personalities difficult. When one tackles the question of sexual identity,³ it is necessary to take into account three realities which structure sexuality:

a) Sexual identity, that is, the belonging to a sex which makes one a man or a woman. There are only two identities but there are a multitude of sexual tendencies which must be given a scale and put, in the best case, under the primate of sexual identity.

b) Sexual identity, that is, the way in which the person perceives and lives his or her sexual identity and which, sometimes, may be contradictory.

c) The choice of a sexual object, that is the tendency, the preference which orients the affective life. What results usually from maturation and completion of the process of development of sexuality, is finalized by heterosexuality. There is then coherence between sexual identity and the choice of object, that is the tendency to live in the interiorization and attraction of the opposite sex.

At times this process will be inflected, for different psychological reasons, and will maintain sexuality as a simple game of tenderness. In this way homosexuality, attraction for people of the same sex, will be privileged and wrongly confused with a sexual identity. For that matter, most heterosexuals define themselves as man or woman and not on the basis of a tendency, while homosexuals present themselves as such. They manifest in this way the intra-psychic conflict in which they are engaged.

2. *Sexuality must free itself of its infantile representations* or it will often be lived as *aggressive* (taking possession of the other with vio-

³ T. ANATRELLA, *La différence interdite*, Flammarion, Paris.

lence), with *no other object* than the subject himself and narcissistic in the measure in which he takes himself as the source of his pleasure. This is why masturbation finishes by creating unease in the subject and poses him a psychological problem when he has the feeling of closed in himself and unable to reach the other sexually.

3. *Sexuality must also free itself of oedipal implications* when the child and the adolescent become conscious of being a privileged partner of one parent or the other. He must renounce these first impossible attachments expressed often through visceral aggressiveness against his parents. Sometimes he does not want to be touched, show affection and even less speak to them because it increases complicity which poses the anguishing problem of incest. To renounce infantile sexuality, to resign oneself to its loss, is a way of renouncing one's primitive attacks on parental figures and discovering that the source of pleasure is not in oneself but in the relation to another person. Otherwise the personality risks organizing its affective life in a complex and conflicting manner with others or orienting itself towards homosexuality, pederasty, trans-sexuality etc.

On the Social Level

The social discourse on the subject of sexuality presents above all incoherent aspects which incite more to regress than to receive symbolic material from which personalities can organize themselves.

1. *There is a confusion of sexes.* Societies have often found it hard to accept the duality of the two sexes. At present this fundamental difference is denied in the name of a representation which says: "there are neither men nor women, only human beings who are not defined by their sex". We may even be both at the same time. This is a myth because psychic bisexuality, as understood by psychoanalysis, consist in putting both sexes in dialogue with the interior self and not to be in

possession of both sexes. In brief, the human being outside the sexed condition does not exist. But the present social discourse completes itself in the in-differentiated: the child would be like the adult, the man like the woman and vice versa, sexual tendency could be confused with identity etc. The person can only form itself and the society can only organize itself starting from the two images of man and woman who open to the meaning of the 'other' and are one of the bases of the social bond. It is the man/woman relation which opens us to the meaning of history as is shown in the overture of the Bible by the book of Genesis.

2. *Contemporary sexuality defines itself more in terms of practices and tendencies than in terms of relational quality.*⁴ I will not go into detail on this aspect but it must be taken into account, in the education of young people. In fact this attitude prevents one from socializing affective-sexual life. Because if all sexual tendencies are retained for themselves they will prevent precisely the socialization of sexuality and the integration of the two sexual identities. Strangely enough we are in a society which rejects sexuality by de-socializing and exhibiting it. The most perverse example is the exploitation of the private life of the President of the United States. At the same time, we see claims from minorities, engaged in styles of affective-sexual life, demanding social and legal recognition. This demand is the sign of a need to socialize sexuality; but it is still necessary to evaluate it since society should not legitimate all unions.

3. *Contemporary sexuality models itself on the quest for the semblance and hampers the psychic work of interiorization of the sexual identity.* This is why homosexuality finds itself valorized. It is carrier of both the search for identity and the liberation of the duality of sexes. It is presented as another form of sexuality having the same psychological significance and the same social value as that shared between man and

⁴ T. ANATRELLA, *L'amour et le préservatif*, Flammarion, Paris.

woman. To present this tendency in such a way, is intellectual dupery. It is not possible to treat homosexuality on the individual as on the social level. It belongs to the intra-subjective debate of the individual, but it cannot become a social reference to the point of being inscribed in the law. Homosexuality is not a matter of law. In fact homosexuality cannot be considered alternative or equivalent to heterosexuality. The question is important now that several European countries are trying to institute homosexuality and to inscribe for the first time in history a sexual tendency in the law.

The notion of homosexual "couple" seems to me incorrect since it implies the difference of sexes, filiation and family which homosexuality cannot represent. It symbolizes nothing on the social level, if not the search for the identical and the semblance.

Homosexuality poses a psychic problem which concerns the individual. It manifests an incomplete human sexuality which can be traced to the non solution of intra-psychic conflicts linked to oedipal and incestuous problems of sexual identification. The relation with the other is not the same as in heterosexuality. This explains why these relations are more unstable and tend less towards fidelity. It is not a question of reprimanding people with this tendency. But it is not pertinent to recognize it socially to the point of inscribing it in the law.

Homosexuality⁵ cannot be a social model. Must we create new problems when numerous children already live the problems of filiation in cases of divorce, recomposed families or one-parent relations? Must we create identity problems? To invent a model which inscribes the negation of the differences of the sexes in the law, will only confuse even more signs and symbolic representations.

It would be unreasonable for society to recognize and legislate on sexual tendencies outside the man/woman couple. To create a particu-

⁵ T. ANATRELLA, *Peut-on légitimer homosexualité*, Documents Episcopat (Decembre 1996), Conférence des évêques de France. Cf. aussi *Le Pacs – concubinage et homosexualité*, Documents Episcopat (Septembre 1998).

lar status for a situation of exception would not be sound. I repeat, let us not confuse the individual fact of homosexuals who live in this way, and who must be respected, and the fact of obtaining a law which validates something these individuals have sometimes difficulty in accepting themselves. The law can be built only on objective and universal realities, not on subjective intrigues. Homosexuality is only a very minority phenomenon and not socially significant.

Along with the period of so called "sexual liberation", which liberated mainly infantile sexuality as far as to deny sexual genders for the benefit of homosexuality, another period opened. The period of *fear* which resulted in the need to demand from society a law in order to recognize one of the sexual tendencies, to legislate to obtain a statute since these tendencies have no social values. The need to appeal to the law manifested confusion to which it is impossible to respond on the same register. Since homosexuality, which is failure to admit oedipal relations, renders the integration of the sense of the difference in sexes difficult, it leads some to manipulate the spirit of laws. This perversion of thought must be unmasked because a sexual tendency can never be a social bond and provokes on the contrary separation.

The contemporary world is in the throes of rediscovering pagan suspicion regarding sexuality as it was expressed by the Stoics by means of a certain degree of fear, while the Epicureans sought to suppress it through endless pleasure. We are also re-discovering Puritanism, born of the tradition of individualistic thought of the sixteenth century, which denounced even desire and of which the most typical example is visible in the United States.

Christianity de-sacralised sexuality making it a modality of human relationship and integrating it into the sense of love. Saint Augustine showed well that Christian thought invites us to learn to face and assume our desires in relation to the love of God rather than evacuate them (like the Epicureans), or flee them (like the Stoics), or attempt to deny them (like the Puritans). The Church has in this way helped to humanize sexuality recognizing the equality of man and woman,

rendering them responsible for their union, the choice of which depends on their personal decision and not that of their parents (this permits them to free themselves from endogamy and the clan), privileging their reciprocal election in the name of love's freedom. This anthropological perspective allows one to work out one's sexual representations and give them finality. This is realized by a relation to the sense of the 'other' which represents a commitment towards the other person.

There is much confusion in the minds of our contemporaries on all these matters. It is important to clarify and above all to understand that what we term "new life-styles", "forms of sexual life", or "new couples" are no novelty. They re-emerge whenever the important sexual bonds of human psychology are not considered or elaborated. Social representations install us in this way in primitive and immature sexuality.

Parental Images

Contemporary juvenile psychologies often suffer from the absence of the father image and from frequent ruptures in the couple.

We have been for some years in a *society without fathers*.⁶ This phenomenon can be observed through an imposing educative matriarchy. Children are surrounded only by women. Recently a young man of nineteen, arrested by the police for a crime, told them: "This is the first time I have spoken to a man". At home, at school, in social centres, in medicine and even in the parish, most young people meet women because there are no men. This absence of the male figure is not foreign to the constitution of a homosexuality of reaction (which can lead psychologically to remodeling to other forms of homosexuality). We also see that this paternal lack is expressed when some say norms are not needed. If this is the case then, as His Holiness Pope John Paul II recalled in the *Gospel of Life*, there would no longer be a

⁶ T. ANATRELLA, *La différence interdite*, Flammarion, Paris.

need for universal values and communication between individuals and societies would no longer be possible. We risk cutting ourselves up into tribes closing ourselves in a matriarchy, always a source of violence. Juvenile violence can be explained also and partly because of the absence of male and father images.

If the *father image* has been rendered absent this does not mean that fathers, dads, do not do their work but in social representations everything is done as if the father did not exist. He should be considered as a second mother. Procreation is moreover situated essentially on the side of the mother. Now, if maternity is the unique experience of the woman, in return procreation is shared between man and woman. Undoubtedly today fathers have had to invent another type of relation with their children, more individualized than before. This is why they have tended to identify themselves with the mother instead of maintaining their role.

In fact the father, by his presence, will *differentiate*, separate the child from its mother so it may individualize itself. He is also the *foreigner* in the mother/child relation, he therefore symbolizes the exterior world and reality. He exists *independently* from the mother, he must represent that psychic autonomy which the child must reach. He is engaged in a relation with the mother of the infant, he must symbolize *the law* to show the child he cannot possess her. This law prohibiting incest will open the child to other laws which rightly permit life. The prohibition is therefore constructive. Now, faced with a crisis of authority, numerous adults dare not pronounce these limits, these prohibitions, thus favouring a degree of laxity there where young people discover, moreover, the need for authority which gives security and cohesion.

Fréquent ruptures in couples are often the origin of insecurity and lack of confidence in themselves and in the life of some young people. Affective instability of couples, the difficulty they find in dealing with their respective affective problems, of communicating or facing the stages in the life of a couple, which are solved by separation, the only

solution adopted, renders the family insecure. These are couples struggling with the many problems which de-stabilize the family. This is why preparation for married life must be given much attention by priests and by all pastoral workers.

Separations are a high cost and sometimes render personalities fragile: adult as well as young. They have grave consequences on the social side, more than one would think. Young people coming out of these situations are often torn between a desire to succeed where their parents failed or anguish at the idea of repeating the same schemes they encountered in their initial family.

CONCLUSION

1. Relationships between young people and adults are better than in the sixties. We can therefore envisage the inter-generation co-operation expected of both parties. Young people need adults in order to grow and adults in order to age well, must exist in their presence.
2. The present generation has often been the victim of non transmission from the previous generation. It did not always transmit to them reasons for believing and hoping, the rites and values of society. The young generations, at least the most conscious, search nevertheless to renew themselves with history and with religious and cultural heritage. Catechesis must pay attention to this.
3. The crisis of interiority and the subjective wandering of numerous young people must also hold our attention so we may strive to help them to find themselves, to take possession of their existence and to better know themselves.

The Formation of Young People Pedagogical Aspect

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Pedagogue, Madrid

Before entering into the substance of this reflection, I have to say that what is intended, rather than an elaborate discourse, is to offer elements from a pedagogy that has been learned in contact with many young people throughout the world over the last years.

To set basic criteria for the pedagogical aspect of the formation of young people means confronting the educational task today with great challenges. One of these is the *complexity of the social fabric* within which the young people and the educators themselves are living. This complexity is present in the various expressions of the cultural reality, in the social reality, in the field of values, etc. We are living at a moment in history when the main challenges do not consist so much, or primarily, in adapting pedagogical means and methods, but rather in trying to find and to reformulate objectives and aims for education.

Some of the “convulsions” of this century’s end are becoming opportunities for education in the 21st century: for instance, the phenomenon of globalization, which is so intensely present today in our perception and analysis of the present moment, calls for a liberating energy at the service of the human person and of the dignity of peoples and cultures.

This means that a certain force and courage, a “daring”, is necessary today in order to undertake and to pursue the work of education. Daring to educate in the environments of daily life, daring to educate in the public institutions created for the purpose. The future of society and of solidarity between peoples, races and cultures depend, to a great extent, on the education we are disposed to offer.

At a time like this, the formation of young people calls, above all, for a *pedagogy of meaning*, of the meaning of life.¹

I will first stay for a while on this point. I will then look at four pedagogical directions deriving from it. Then there will be a brief conclusion.

1. A PEDAGOGY OF THE MEANING OF LIFE

It has been acutely remarked that at the heart of every pedagogy there is anthropology as support and foundation. The reason is that education refers basically to the person. Therefore, before thinking about the educational process, we need to reflect about the personal being: the person's destiny, the reason for being in the world, his or her basic material and also spiritual needs, his or her moral, religious, aesthetic and social situation. All these questions are prior to education and are keys to open up the process of education.

A fruitful pedagogy must develop the capacity to ask questions about everything concerning the human being. It must also generate uneasiness, a search in depth. It is in this uneasiness that meaning is sought. This seeking, combined with intersubjectivity and freedom, is the place for the transcendent dimension. Educating this dimension means making it possible to ask the fundamental questions about life. If the young person is not to remain only on the surface of things, he or she must be brought to ask the real questions. An integral education cannot neglect the question of meaning; and the question of ultimate meaning is intimately related to religious sensitivity.

There is a search for meaning that is limited to what is immediate and useful. But the questions that are fundamental for the human being cannot receive light from a logic that is purely utilitarian. It can happen that at times even persons are valued for their usefulness. A

¹ Some examples of this approach are taken from F. TORRALBA, *Pedagogía del sentido*, Madrid 1997.

pedagogy of meaning has to bring young people, as they are growing up, to a wider and more complete view of meaning, but this is only possible if the educators and formators themselves share such a view.

The question about meaning has a direct incidence on *personal history*. This fact has important consequences for concrete activity. What is the meaning of my history? My past experiences? Where are they taking me? It is a matter of biography.

Educational activity needs to be rooted in the history of the boy and the girl, and that in two directions. On the one hand, it must facilitate the personal rereading of one's own history. This is necessary for the discovery and understanding of oneself. It must also help to give this history a future direction. Remembering the past and building the future are two indispensable elements. The educator must be a companion along this way. An education to be truly human must see the persons within their historical itinerary, helping them to understand where they are and where they want to go. Helping means keeping close to the person and pointing out the paths that can be taken.

However, in this question about meaning there is also a reference to the overall history of a people, and ultimately to the history of humanity. The person also belongs to a collective history, whose influence needs to be rightly understood.

Whenever we refer to the pedagogical keys to meaning, we find that there are different dimensions involved. We refer now to the *interpersonal* dimension, the *social and cultural* dimension and the *ethical* dimension.

Education is an interpersonal experience. It can only take place in interaction between persons. An interaction producing a human richness that is called to have a positive effect in the process of personal growth towards maturity.

Formation also tries to improve the social and cultural situation of the one to be educated; to understand this situation and to act for the betterment of the conditions in which human development and the

formative process are taking place; while aiming at letting the fruit of this process in turn, affect and transform the reality in a positive sense.

It is also a matter of forming the person's moral conscience through a process of liberty and participation, enabling it to become more open and to develop a capacity for reflection and moral judgement on human actions. This takes the form of a conscious transmission of certain moral values and principles for action, of an ethical approach; in the long run, of a model for a life of constructive solidarity.

The perspective for a pedagogy having these characteristics is that of *human dignity*, and likewise, its context and spirit are those of *human rights*.

To quote V. Frankl: "Today more than ever, education must be an education for responsibility [...]. We must learn to distinguish between what has meaning, and what has none, what has a claim on our responsibility and what is not worth the trouble" (*El hombre doliente*).

In the light of a pedagogy of meaning, the educator becomes a symbolic witness. Meaning can be communicated, not through impersonal abstractions, but through gestures and actions that have a deeply personal content. In this way the educator feels that he or she is a human being whose great vocation of service is directed, above all, towards the construction of meaning.

When Mounier raised the question of the aim of education, he referred to the capacity to awaken persons. If that is the case, if the task of education is above all the process of awakening the person, it must include the question about meaning. This – it has been acutely remarked – is of all questions the most challenging and most stimulating for the human condition. An education that is not capable of communicating meaning is not, properly speaking, a human education. Finding the resources needed for this fascinating task is a whole challenge. Some that are of interest to us are: the force of symbols and the contemplation of nature, the experience of silence and of prolonged dialogue, the analysis of reality and attention to the processes of social development, perception of the human condition of persons and groups as to their vulnerability and their possibilities.

Human beings achieve maturity as persons when they situate themselves and they identify in their inmost depths the question concerning the ultimate meaning of their existence.

2. FOUR DIRECTIONS TO FOLLOW

From what we have called the pedagogy of meaning there emerge certain directions that can be favourable for education in this time of so many challenges. These are dimensions that are rich in suggestions and possibilities for us as formators, and above all, for the growth of young men and young women.

A Pedagogy of Values

This implies in the first place listening with profound attention for the values that have a mobilizing effect in the experience of young people: the capacity to make gestures of solidarity, sensitivity to the ecological factor and protection of the environment and of nature, pacifism, a sense for the gratuitous. A pedagogy of values leads to discovery of painful features in the experience of many young people: indifference, lack of interest, escape. One or another of these experiences can make calls upon us that are important.

On the basis of values as a point of reference we can speak of a *personal consistency*, that is a help towards living serenely in the midst of instability, unemployment, psychological weakness, etc.

This is a pedagogy that calls at one and the same time for listening and for the capacity to make *proposals*.

A Pedagogy of Communication

Here there is much that is stimulating for the task of education and many educational gestures of great importance. You have to look into the face of the individuals to be educated, listen to life in many human experi-

ences, provoke the liberating word. Education itself is communication, and there is no task of formation that does not involve authentic communication. Respect and love are basic factors in this process of community. The function confronting us is one of mediating, of facilitating, of a dialogue that never ends. It is a communication that becomes a sharing of life and conviviality. From the viewpoint of faith, it becomes communion, prayer, a personal relationship with the God who saves us.

A Pedagogy of Commitment

This means an education to take charge of one's own life. Guardini used to say that it is not enough to take children and young people along paths corresponding to their own scale of values; you have to prepare them to take the reins of their own life with a capacity for discernment and decision. To take their life into their own hands and to discover the greatness of being able to decide about their own existence, taking also the consequences of a life that is autonomous and committed. This means helping them to enter into a culture of service; educating them to live a life of commitment, knowing how to love and to maintain stable relationships. To live according to a choice of life, as John Paul II has so often repeated when speaking to young people: "Youth is a time of an especially intensive discovery of a 'self' and a 'choice of life'" (*Christifideles laici* 46).

For young people growing up in our environments marked by Christian faith and for those to whom our evangelizing mission is directed, it is a matter of helping them gradually to discover the fascination and the consequences of following Jesus, the call of the Gospel as vocation and life-style.

An Inclusive Pedagogy

Just as we speak today of an inclusive language, we can speak also of a corresponding pedagogy, although the term is not yet used

very frequently. It is a matter of promoting styles and structures of formation that reject any form of exclusion: from that which refers to persons to that arising in relation to entire groups of human beings. Today there are many forms of exclusion and marginalization. Promoting an inclusive pedagogy, a pedagogy of inclusion, means accepting the whole person and every person. It supposes patient compassion and sensitivity for the encounter with those young people who most need the presence of an educator. This suggests a path along which to go forward in our work of formation.

These four points or reflections can join the experience that we have all shared. This can be a fruitful encounter, making very meaningful our approaches to the formation of young people.

These four directions speak of an educational *presence*, as opposed to what can be seen as an absence of adult accompaniment for the younger generations. Of what presence are we speaking?

Certainly not an omnipotent presence. A discreet presence, capable of acknowledging its limits with *humility*. A presence free from self-sufficiency, and therefore, an attentive and serene attitude, trusting in the Presence of Someone able to give inspiration and light.

It is a presence that is *sustained*, supported, facilitated by an activity shared with others, not experienced as individual, but in dialogue with the various contributions of educators, of the family and of society.

It is a presence that brings *motivation*. The great problem for our educational proposals consists, perhaps, in the difficulty we encounter with regard to the lack of motivation. In this motivating presence there is an art that is born from listening and dialogue in depth.

It is an animating presence that is able to create a *group*, giving room for inclusion, where each youth can feel that he or she is a person; where each one can be met and accepted where he or she is, at the concrete point of their growth to maturity as human beings, to then be led, in freedom, towards new levels of fulfilment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I want to pay homage to one who so repeatedly journeyed together with the youth, as an educator who was close to them and in dialogue with them: Cardinal Eduardo Pironio. From his dialogues and encounters with the youth I want to take some strong words to which we can refer as criteria for a pedagogy and a pastoral activity appropriate for this time. They are very attractive words because they point to deep realities, which all those concerned with formation should take into account and make their own:

encounter,
interior path,
sharing the gift,
living, communicating life, building the culture of life.

All these words speak to us of a programme of embracing elements that are indispensable for our task of formation. *Encounter*, which is always an experience of community in faith. *Interior path*, bringing us into contact with the Master and into the centre of our own life, in prayer and constant search for an authentic interior life. *Sharing the gift*, as the deepest level of faith communication. *Living, communicating life, building the culture of life*, with a fruitful impact on the reality of our world, as ripe fruit of an evangelizing mission among the youth.

III
YOUTH MINISTRY
Working out a Project

The Centrality of the Person and of the Message of Christ

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I. THE HEART OF CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST

A Striking Story by Vladimir Soloviev

It is 1900, the same year of his death, when the great Russian thinker published his short story on the Anti-Christ.¹ The author, Orthodox, but of ecumenical spirit and near to the Catholic Church, imagines what the spiritual situation of Europe will be like at the end of the twentieth century. He thinks that by that time Europe, having overcome terrible peril in the middle of the century, will have established its political and economical unity and will have become the "United States of Europe". Socially there will remain the problem of unemployment. Philosophically, one will have gone beyond the materialism and flat scientism of the 19th century but, spiritually, Europeans will have become anemic. Religious indifference will have become general, so that united Europe will count no more than a few million authentic Christians, still divided as Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, the Anglicans having rejoined recently the Catholic Church. This small remnant will have in the meantime engaged in self-examination: Catholicism will have discarded much of its exterior appearance, the papacy will have become more spiritual and the Pope himself, although still of Italian origin, will have a Slav culture and will have

¹ V. SOLOVIEV, *Trois entretiens sur la guerre, la morale et la religion*, Paris, OEIL 1984, pages 185-224.

been forced to take refuge in Russia. As far as the Orthodox are concerned, they will have been spiritually fortified by their resistance to sects, while the Protestants, free of their negative extremism, will have renewed acquaintance with the primitive Church.

The Anti-Christ

It happens that towards the end of the 20th century, a President of the United States of Europe must be elected. Under the secret but active influence of the Free-Masonry, a man who had become famous in earlier years was pushed forward. Aged thirty-three, deeply spiritual, ascetic in his behaviour, he was gifted with super intelligence. He believed in God, but above all in himself. He respected Christ, but considered him simply a precursor of the new order, which he, European superman, had come to establish. One tragic night he was filled with doubt: "This Jesus of Nazareth could he possibly be the Messiah, the Son of God himself, as the Christians say?". It was then that the Adversary came to him and said in a sweet voice: "No, he is not the one, you are... the other, the one whom you mistake for God demanded the sacrifice of the cross; I ask nothing of you, I give you everything, receive my spirit...". And the superman consents.

Christianity without Christ

From that moment, his success is fulminating. The Anti-Christ publishes a work which, unlike his earlier books, is successful all over the world: *The Path to Peace and Universal Prosperity*. The book is well received all over the world. He proposes an attractive ideal which imposes no self-renunciation. He aspires towards summits which each can reach, without correcting their faults. All through this astonishing book Christian or evangelical values are recognized and honoured, but in such a way that each person can recognize themselves in them, since they are strictly universal and correspond to the ideals of human reasoning. Certainly, some Christians will

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protest, pointing out that in this book which confirms Christian values, the name of Christ is never mentioned. But more enlightened Christians silence them: "So far too much has been said about Christ! Today we must avoid excessive zeal. Is not the essential thing that Christian values are presented in the work?"

It is the author of this exceptional work that the Free Mason lobby pushes without difficulty to the presidency of the United States of Europe. Having been made Emperor and taken up residence in Rome, for three years the President carries out his political programme: he completes the political unification of Europe, reaches full employment and social peace and oversees the ecological protection of all life on the planet. He even amuses satiated humanity, providing it with games, using to this effect the mystifications of a fallen bishop, titular of a diocese *in partibus infidelium*, a sort of charlatan whose sortileges enchant the crowds.

A Council to Unite Christianity

There remains the religious problem of divisions among Christians. The Emperor is anxious to eliminate this last obstacle to a fully united Europe. Having moved his capital to Jerusalem he builds there a great Temple of Unity for all cults, and convokes an ecumenical council to which he invites Pope Peter II, with a crowd of cardinals and bishops, priests, religious and lay people; Staretz Jean with an impressive number of Orthodox bishops, priests, monks and lay people; and Professor Pauli with the same number of pastors, exegetes and theologians representing the Protestant world. In all more than three thousand delegates, supported by half a million pilgrims who have arrived in Jerusalem.

Guaranteed Promotion of Christian Values

On an immense platform facing the three delegations, the Emperor greets the Christians and tells them about his plan for a united Christianity ful-

filling the desires of each confession present. He addresses first of all the Catholics, telling them that he wishes to honour Christianity in a way that meets the values they hold most dear. The Pope will even be re-established in Rome with all the privileges granted him by the emperor's predecessor, Constantine the Great. But "in exchange, dear Catholic brothers, you must recognize me as your only defender and protector and come to me". Most of the cardinals and bishops and the majority of the monks and lay people joined the Emperor on the platform. Except for Pope Peter II and some immovable monks and laymen who murmured: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her".

The same address to the Orthodox to whom the Emperor promises the opening of a world museum of Christian archaeology in Constantinople, to promote knowledge of icons and the holy liturgy in order to rediscover the contemporary morals of healthy orthodox tradition. And the majority of the hierarchy and half the monks and laymen clamber up onto the platform, except for Staretz Jean who, with a group of reluctant ones, leaves his chair at the base of the platform and goes to sit next to Pope Peter II and his circle of Catholics.

The Emperor, surprised at this double resistance and collusion between Catholic and Orthodox, addresses apparently his Protestant brothers, promising them in united Christianity a colossal promotion of biblical studies since he has assigned a million and a half marks for the establishment of a world institute for research on Sacred Scripture. At this, more than half the scholars step up onto the platform except for Professor Pauli and a small number of theologians who, despite the entreaties of their brothers, solemnly cross the empty benches and join the rebel Catholics and Orthodox, so that Peter, Jean and Pauli find themselves elbow to elbow.

"What is Most Dear to You in Christianity?"

Astonished by this unusual resistance and unexpected unity of Christians hitherto separated, the Emperor addresses the crowd of retro-

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grade Christians who have refused to join him on the platform of the new Christianity: "What more can I do for you? You strange people! What do you expect me to do? I have no idea. Tell me, then, you who have been abandoned by the majority of your brothers and leaders and condemned by popular feeling: what is most dear to you in Christianity?". Obviously the Emperor is willing to promote some Christian value which he may have failed to mention...

"It is Christ Himself!"

It is then that, white as chalk, Staretz Jean stands up and says gently: "Sire! That which we hold most dear in Christianity is Christ himself, from whom come all things, because we know in him lives all the fullness of Divinity. But from you too, Sire, we are ready to accept all good things, on the sole condition that we recognize in your generous hand the sacred hand of Christ. Regarding what you can do for us we respond frankly: proclaim here and now before us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God made man that he is Risen and will come again, proclaim this and we will accept you with love as the authentic precursor of his second coming in glory".

The Christianity of the Anti-Christ is Unmasked

At these words the Emperor turns pale. He has been put out of countenance, like on that tragic night of old. Then Staretz Jean cries in a strangled voice: "My little children, the anti-Christ!". At that moment a flash of fire throws Jean to the ground and the Emperor, who regains his composure thanks to an inner voice which reassures him, declares that, thus enlightened the Council recognizes unanimously the sovereign authority of the Emperor of Rome. But Pope Peter stands up, brandishes his cross in the direction of the Emperor proclaiming his "anathema" and then falls, he too, lifeless. The two witnesses of the Apocalypse... At this moment Prof. Pauli

steps onto the platform and, in the name of the ecumenical council, confirms his faith in Jesus Christ, only Saviour and he excommunicates the Emperor, while the crowd cries out with joy: "Yes, Come Lord Jesus!".

The Urgency of Christ-centered Ministry

I am unable to tell in detail the rest of the story which concludes with the final persecution of the Christians, a revolt of the Jews and the coming of Jesus in glory. Presenting the first part of this "Brief story about the anti-Christ" my intention is to underline the present-day urgency, in youth ministry, not to substitute Christianity for Christ, not to replace Jesus, the only Saviour, with a discoloured set of "values" said to be Christian, but which in the end only lead to the rediscovery of humanity's spontaneous ideals.

In my experience as a priest, university professor and bishop, I have been able to see how the hearts of young people can vibrate for the person of Christ if they have the good fortune to encounter him. Hence the desire to succeed in presenting to young people, in a living and moving way, that which is so absolutely unique about Jesus. This can be done if we concentrate on the three characteristic traits of Jesus in the religious history of humanity. Jesus is the only one who claimed to be equal to God, the only Son of the Father. And yet he died in the silence and absence of God, at the level of sinners. Lastly he is the only man in history of whom, at the cost of their life, witnesses state that God has raised him from the dead: he is the gloried Son.

Examining one by one these three traits, we will discover that Jesus is the heart of Christianity and we will see that he is truly the only Saviour of the world and, in particular, of young people today.²

² I refer here to my book *Jésus, le même hier, aujourd'hui et à jamais*, Paris, Editions de l'Emmanuel, 1996.

2. THE ONLY SON OF GOD

The Claim to Equality with God

The first characteristic of Jesus is the claim he makes, in his words and in his actions, to being divine. This is absolutely unique in the history of humanity. Jesus is the only man who, in his right senses, has claimed equality with God. We must look at this again, with different eyes.

Unequivocal Words

Jesus' claim appears first of all in his words, as they are echoed in the Gospels. They are most numerous and most formal in the Gospel of John. For example: "The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30); or: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:10); or again: "Truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58). These last words are all the more solemn since they conclude with the divine Name (I am), the one which, according to the Book of Exodus (3:14), God attributes to himself when he reveals himself to Moses. Moreover, his listeners were not mistaken. Indeed, after noting Jesus' words: "My Father goes on working and so do I" (Jn 5:17), John adds: "But that only made the Jews even more intent on killing him, because, not content with breaking the Sabbath, he spoke of God as his Father, and so made himself God's equal" (Jn 5:18). The same reaction follows the words quoted above in John 10:30: "We are not stoning you for doing a good work but for blasphemy: you are only a man and you claim to be God" (Jn 10:33).

We could give many examples in the Gospel, probably written last, of John who meditated most deeply the mystery of the divinity of Jesus. But, for this reason, it is perhaps even more convincing to quote the Synoptics, more faithful to the historical Jesus. It is in these books that we find Jesus' clearest and most majestic statements regarding awareness of his absolutely unique filial relationship with God his Fa-

ther. I think immediately of Matthew 11:25-27 (the parallel formulation in Lk 10:21-22 is almost identical): "I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes Father for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him".³ The exceptional gravity of tone announces the decisive importance of this word. "No one knows the Father except the Son..." The mutual intimacy of God and Jesus is such that Jesus claims that no one knows him except God himself. He is "the" Son in an absolutely unique manner, and God is "his" Father in an incomparable way.⁴

The Condemnation for Blasphemy

The most decisive text is found undoubtedly in Mark on the occasion of Jesus' trial. Here is the essential passage:

"The High-priest put a second question to him, 'Are you the Christ', he said 'the Son of the Blessed one?' 'I am', said Jesus 'and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven'. The high priest tore his robes, 'What need of witnesses have we now?' he said. 'You heard the blasphemy. What is your finding?' And they all gave their verdict: he deserved to die" (Mk 14:61-64).

What is determinant at this hour when Jesus' destiny is at stake is not that he affirms to be the Messiah, because the claim to this title was not in itself a blasphemy. Neither is it the claim to be the "Son

³ Most exegetes agree that the structure and vocabulary of these verses guarantee their authenticity. This is hardly ever contested except by ideologically biased exegetes who, daunted by the weight of the contents, prefer to rid themselves of it at all costs.

⁴ As can be also seen: Mt 21:37; 24:36; Mk 14:36; Lk 2:49; Jn 20:17.

of God", an expression which, for Judaism, was only another way of expressing the royal dignity of the Messiah, although, of course, in the spirit of Jesus and under the pen of Mark it goes much further and affirms a truly divine sonship. What is decisive, is the manner in which Jesus voices his response. He solemnly identifies himself as this mysterious "Son of Man" whom the Prophet Daniel (7:13-14) contemplates in a vision and to whom God entrusts an everlasting kingdom, and he underlines forcefully the divine character of this title, explaining that he, Jesus, the Son of Man prophesied by Daniel, will sit at the *right hand* of the All-Powerful (or at the same rank as God) and he will come on the *clouds* of heaven (a sign of God's presence in the Old Testament). He could not have been more clear. Moreover, the High Priest and the Sanhedrin make no mistake and they immediately condemn Jesus for *blasphemy*. The other motives, social and political, will be added to this religious reason.

Truly Divine Actions

However the unique claim of Jesus is seen also in his *actions and attitudes*, at times accompanied by words which underline their importance. What immediately surprises and delights the crowds in Jesus is the authority with which he speaks (see *Mk* 1:21-28). At times Jesus distinguishes clearly himself from all human authority, even the highest, that of Moses, and he speaks with the same authority of God in the Law or the Prophets, referring to no one else but himself: "It has been said... And I tell you..." (*Mt* 5:21-44 *passim*). Through his miracles, he commands sickness and death, and even the wind and the sea with the authority and power of the Creator: "Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him?" (*Mk* 4:41). He assumes the right to forgive people their sins, which is surely a divine privilege. Jesus' adversaries are moreover shocked by this exorbitant claim and, hearing him address the paralytic, they already murmur the accusation which

will lead to his death: "How can this man talk like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God?" (cf. *Mk* 2:5-7).

There is the same unheard of claim when Jesus demands the sacrifice of everything in order to follow him and says that salvation depends on the attitude adopted in his regard: "Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who prefers a son or daughter to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it" (*Mt* 10:37-39; also *Mk* 8:34-28). Jesus claims such importance, truly divine, as to say that he is personally behind every individual in history, he welcomes them all and must save them all: "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (*Mt* 25:40); "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest" (*Mt* 11:28); "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and give his life for the ransom of many" (*Mt* 20:28) Yes, the one who speaks and acts this way claims to be higher than everything, on the same level as God, and he recognizes this unequivocally: "Here is something greater than the Temple (*Mt* 12:6); "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (*Mt* 24:35); "You are from below, I am from above" (*Jn* 8:23).

Anyone else speaking and acting in this manner would be a dangerous guru or a delirious paranoid. Jesus, if he is truly the one he claims to be – and he is – can and must speak and act in this manner.

An Extraordinary Claim and Perfect Humility

And yet this man who, in history, wielded the "I" with the most unspeakable audacity and pretension, is at the same time a man of perfect humility. This is explained by the fact that, within his incomparable claim, Jesus is aware of being sent, that he has received everything from another, God his Father, and he seeks nothing but the glory of

the Father, in perfect obedience and filial transparency. This is clearly seen in the Synoptics, but even more so in St. John.⁵

A Unique Event in the Entire History of the World

This humble claim to divinity is unique in the history of humanity and it colours the very essence of Christianity. Everywhere else – whether we think of Buddha, Confucius or Mahomet – founders of religion launch a spiritual movement which, once begun, strictly speaking, can develop independently from them. Whereas Jesus himself is the object of Christianity. Jesus does not merely indicate a path, like Lao-Tseu, he says he is this way; he is not only the bearer of truth, as any other prophet, he presents himself as this truth; he does not simply open a path leading to life, after the fashion of philosophers, he claims to be in his actual person, the fulness of divine life. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (*Jn* 14:6). And elsewhere in the same sense: “I am the door; if anyone enters through me he will be saved” (*Jn* 10:9); and again: “I am the resurrection; if anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (*Jn* 11:25-26).

This is unique in history. And the question Jesus poses is the only one that matters: “Do you believe this?” Authentic Christian faith begins when “Christianity” gives way to “Christ”, when a believer or a sympathizer, is no longer only interested in “Christian ideas” or “Christian values”, taken abstractly, and at last encounters Jesus as Someone, the one he claims to be, both true man and true God. One among billions of individuals, as man. And Unique, as eternal Son of God, who came into the world.

Already this first trait of Jesus is disconcerting. What can we say of the two which follow?

⁵ As examples we can read: *Mt* 11:27; *Mk* 10:18; *Jn* 4:34; 5:19; 5:30; 6:38; 7:16; 8:28-29.42; 8:54.

3. THE ABANDONED SON

The Hour of Darkness

The second characteristic trait of the figure of Jesus is in complete contrast to his claim to divinity. It is the extreme humiliation of Jesus during his Passion. We touch here on the absolute paradox of the disfigured figure of Christ. In fact the one who put forward the unheard of claim to be the Son of God, dies amidst the silence of God, to all appearances abandoned by "his" Father.

The solitude of the Son begins immediately after the Supper. On reaching Gethsemani "a sudden fear came over him and great distress. And he said to them 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death'" (Mk 14:33-34). And throwing himself on the ground he prays: "Abba (= literally Daddy), if it is possible for you, let this cup pass by me. Nevertheless let it be as you, not I, would have it" (Mt 26:39). But he receives no answer except, according to Luke (Lk 22:43), that of an angel who comes to comfort him. The Father is distant and silent. And a little way off, the disciples are asleep. Blaise Pascal immortalized this staggering scene in his "Mystery of Jesus": Jesus is vexed. Mark, for his part, speaks of "fear" and "distress" (Mk 14:33).

What is this abyss? What is this pit into which he descends? It is first of all the pit of derision and shame. "It is all over, the hour has come. Now the Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Mk 14:41). We must remember here that, in the Old Testament, the one, just or unjust, who is delivered to his enemies, is given over in some way by God himself. Being given into the hands of sinners, the betrayal by Judas, is above all then, since Jesus gives himself freely to those who have come to arrest him, the hour in which the Father demands of him blind obedience abandoning him to the power of darkness. Jesus is well aware of this and he says this openly to those who have come to arrest him: "Am I a brigand that you had to set out with swords and clubs? When I was among you in the Temple

day after day you never moved to lay hands on me. But this is your hour; this is the reign of darkness" (*Lk* 22:52-53).

Death on a Level with Sinners

But the abyss into which Jesus descends is even more profound than that of the derision and shame of the just man given over to his enemies. It is, ultimately, the abyss of the Son abandoned by the Father, on the cross: "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" (*Mk* 15:34). This cry is imprinted in Psalm 22, of which Jesus cried out in a loud voice only the first verse; it impressed his listeners so much that Mark, like Matthew, wrote it in the original language: "Eloi, Eloi lama sabachtani?". No one will ever be able to measure the depth of this abandonment. Because for the human person it is natural, in some way, to be distant from God: we are used to sin, to God being at a distance and we have never known the proximity of his glory. But that God's only Son himself should be abandoned by God and lost in anguish far from him, this is beyond understanding and there is distress that only Jesus could experience, since only one who is God can truly experience what it means to be abandoned by God. Here then we have the Innocent one on a level with sinners, crucified between two thieves, experiencing in his inner-self the solitude of sinners cut off from God. This is what Saint Paul speaks of with one of those powerful formulas he knows how to use: "For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God" (*2 Cor* 5:21). Such is the incomparable abyss in which the abandoned Son descends.

The Absolute Paradox

Let us dwell on the depth of this paradox, because we will then meditate how within it is contained our salvation and the healing of the whole world. The one who gathered crowds and collected disciples

dies alone, deserted and even denied by his own: "and, deserting him, they all ran away" (Mk 14:50). The Living One *par excellence* ("I am the life"), is counted among the dead. The Holy One of God who dared to say: "Can one of you convict me of sin?" (Jn 8:46), dies God-forsaken, in the solitude and distress of sinners. In fact, the Scripture says: "cursed is the one who hangs from the gallows" (Ga 3:13; cf Dt 21:23). The one who claimed to be the very Expression of the Father ("He who sees me sees the Father") and whom John calls the Verb or Word of God, here he is reduced to the silence of death. The All-powerful whose works amazed the crowds can do nothing now, he is reduced to impotence and does not even reply to those who accuse and question him (cf. Mk 15:4-5) or to those who, out of derision, urge him to save himself by coming down from the cross (cf. Mk 15:29-32). The one who said he was a source of living water giving eternal life (cf. Jn 7:37-39 and 4:13-14) murmurs, in agony "I thirst" (Jn 19:28). Who can ever measure the extreme opposition, the absolute contrast of such a paradox?

The Only Humiliated God in History

The humiliation of the abandoned Son is just as unique in history as his claim to divinity. Greek myths had conceived the idea of a suffering and even dying god. But, besides the fact that this was precisely a mythological conception rather than an affirmation about an historical man, suffering was seen as a marginal test masking, superficially and temporarily, the beauty of the immortal god. Whereas Jesus goes to death as to the heart of his mission and the Gospel sees in the cross the very place in which there shines the glory of divine love.⁶ He walks towards his Hour, towards the dreadful baptism of his Passion, as if going towards the decisive trial when everything is at stake: "There is a baptism I must still receive and how great is my distress

⁶ Cf. Jn 1:14 with Jn 3:14-15; 8:28; 12:32-33; 19:37.

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until it is over" (*Lk* 12:50). He goes there so resolutely and with such amazing lucidity that his disciples are astounded. We should read again *Mark* 10:32-34 and compare the text with *Mark* 14:53-65; 15:15-20.

The Fulfillment of the Prophecies of Israel

Not even Judaism which, alone among all pre-Christian religions, was aware of God's action in history, foresaw the reality of a humiliated God. Certainly, all the traits of Jesus are present in the Old Testament but they form a series of discontinued, broken lines, not yet a unique and all-encompassing trail. The Jewish Bible spoke of a triumphant *Messiah*, associated with the image of a *King, the son of David*. The Psalms are filled with this messianic, royal figure (cf. for example *Ps* 2). It is in this way that the blind Bartimaeus addresses Jesus in the Gospel of Mark: "Son of David, Jesus have pity on me!" (cf. *Mk* 10:46-52 compared with *Mk* 12:35-37). Furthermore, the Old Covenant waits for the arrival of a new *Prophet* similar to Moses (cf. *Dt* 18:15-22) and Elijah (cf. *Ml* 4:4-5, the last verses of the Old Testament). It also speaks of the *priesthood* of the sons of Levi (cf. *Ex* 32:25-29 and *Dt* 33:8-11). In the visions of Daniel (*Dn* 7:13-14) it foresees the transcendent dignity of the *Son of Man* coming on the clouds of heaven. And in the songs of Yaweh's Servant, in the book of Isaiah (*Is* 52:13 – 53:12) it paints an enigmatic picture of a Just One *bowed down with suffering* and justifying the multitude after bearing the sins of the guilty.

But all these traits, which Jesus brings together in his unique person by means of an unforeseeable synthesis, remain incongruous and even disjointed for the Old Testament, which distributes them to various figures incompatible among themselves and does not yet imagine how the *one* person could be, at one and the same time, Messiah, King, Prophet, Priest, transcendent Son of man and suffering Servant, as Jesus will be. The Gospels will tell us, moreover, of the difficulty

Jesus had, even with his disciples, to make his contemporaries accept the idea of a spiritual messianic reign to be brought about not by political triumph, but by an abyss of suffering leading to the rising of a new world, that of the Resurrection. Mark, in particular, stresses this, underlining the disciples' lack of understanding⁷ and Jesus' extreme caution regarding the serious ambiguity of contemporary messianic titles.⁸

As Saint Paul was to say (2 Cor 3:14-16), the Old Testament remains an enigma until one is converted to Christ who is its meaning, purpose and unity and who, alone, lifts the veil which, otherwise, masks its truth. This is why a correct reading of the Bible demands reference to both Testaments.

The Suffering Servant

This explains the paradox that it is in the Old and not in the New Testament that we find the most astonishing description of the humiliation of the abandoned Son. It is worth re-reading the page where the prophet describes the Suffering servant and foresees the fruit of his passion, although the veil which covers this mysterious face and is only lifted when we contemplate in Jesus this "face covered in sweat and blood" celebrated by Bach with his "Passion according to Matthew".

"See my servant will prosper, he shall be lifted up, exalted, rise to great heights. As the crowds were appalled on seeing him – so disfigured did he look that he seemed no longer human – so will the crowds be astonished at him and kings stand speechless before him; for they shall see something as never told and witness something never heard before: 'Who could believe what we have heard, and to whom has the power of Yahweh been revealed?'. Like a sapling he grew up in front of us, like a root in arid ground. Without beauty, without

⁷ Cf Mk 8:14-21.31-33; 9:30-32 and 10:35-45 compared with Mk 9:33-37.

⁸ Cf For example, Mk 1:34.44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36 and 8:26. This strategy of secrecy concerning the ambiguity of a messianic reign misunderstood constitutes that which is often called "the messianic secret" of Jesus.

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majesty (we saw him), no looks to attract our eyes; a thing despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering, a man to make people screen their faces; he was despised and we took no account of him. And yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried. But we, we thought of him as someone punished, struck by God, and brought low. Yet he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each taking his own way, and Yahweh burdened him with the sins of all of us. Harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep that is dumb before its sharers never opening its mouth. By force and by law he was taken; would anyone plead his cause? Yes, he was torn away from the land of the living; for our faults struck down in death. They gave him a grave with the wicked, a tomb with the rich, though he had done no wrong and there had been no perjury in his mouth. Yahweh has been pleased to crush him with suffering. If he offers his life in atonement, he shall see his heirs, he shall have a long life and through him what Yahweh wishes will be done. His soul's anguish over, he shall see the light and be content. By his sufferings shall my servant justify many, taking their faults on himself. Hence I will grant whole hordes for his tribute, he shall divide the spoil with the mighty, for surrendering himself to death and letting himself be taken for a sinner, while he was bearing the faults of many and praying all the time for sinners" (Is 52:13 – 53:12).

There remains now to contemplate the third characteristic trait of Jesus, namely, the testimony of his glorious resurrection.

4. THE GLORIFIED SON

The Unique and Copious Testimony in the New Testament

The picture of the figure of Jesus is completed with an absolutely unique trait, namely, the witness of his Resurrection from the dead. Of no other man in history has such a thing been seriously affirmed.

The witness of the New Testament on this decisive point is copious and universal. The four gospels, we know, were written in the light of the paschal faith and can only be understood in this light. We may only grasp them properly by reading them in terms of the final chapters. Now, not only do they each speak of the Resurrection of Jesus in their conclusion, their very concept, that of being "eu-angelion" (in Greek) that is "Good News", would be unthinkable and contradictory if the bearer and the object of this "joyous announcement" had only met with the defeat of death on the cross, if God had definitively abandoned the one who claimed to be his Son, if the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus had evaporated with his ignominious death. As for the Acts of the Apostles, it is entirely dedicated to the announcement of the death and Resurrection of Jesus, from Jerusalem as far as Rome, passing through Palestine, Greece and Asia Minor. The same is true of Saint Paul whose letters are all based on faith in the Resurrection, as is seen in this well known passage, where he chides heretics (already!) who deny the resurrection of the dead:

"Now if Christ raised from the dead is what has been preached, how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ himself cannot have been raised, and if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing is useless; indeed, we are shown up as witnesses who have committed perjury before God, because we swore in evidence before God that he had raised Christ to life. For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised and if Christ has not been raised you are still in your sins. And what is more serious, all who have died in Christ have perished. If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people. But Christ has in fact been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:12-20).

Also the Letter to the Hebrews is entirely suspended from paschal faith since it celebrates the eternal priesthood of Christ who, through his Resurrection, has become "the supreme high priest who has gone

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through to the highest heaven" (*Heb* 4:14). The role of the Resurrection is equally central in the Catholic letters (of James, Peter, John and Jude) and above all in Revelation, which opens with a vision of Christ in glory (*Rev* 1:9-20) and focuses on the contemplation of the paschal Lamb, sacrificed and risen (cf. *Rev* 5).

The Reality of the Resurrection

New Testament faith in the Resurrection of Christ stems not from a construction of logic ("life must conquer death") or psychology ("Jesus was so vivifying that he must still be alive"); it was drawn from the disciples by the astonishing experience, hardly describable (by definition), but how compelling, of Jesus' apparitions after his death. Without faith in the Resurrection of Jesus, we have said, the New Testament would be unthinkable and impossible. But without the authentic experience of the apparitions of the Risen One, faith in the Resurrection would itself be unthinkable and impossible. How would the disciples have dared to announce such an enormity, so full of risks (the return to life of a Master one has betrayed!), so dangerous (the rehabilitation of the Messiah condemned by the authorities!), and this with such audacity and hope, at this point contagious, if everything had indeed ended with the absolute defeat of the cross and if, above all, the body of the dead person, unless it had been removed (which in the end would have been known and would not justify Easter hope) was still lying in the tomb? The glorious Resurrection of one crucified is certainly a great mystery for our natural reasoning but the reality of Christianity and the birth of the Church without this Resurrection would be an even greater mystery. Or rather, the Resurrection is a great mystery, unfathomable but radiating meaning and deeply enlightening, so much so that the phenomenon of Christianity without the Resurrection would be an incomprehensible and unexplainable enigma.

ma.⁹ Let us examine then the significance and importance of the Resurrection of Jesus in the eyes of the New Testament.

The Crucified One Rehabilitated by God

The essence of the contents of the paschal faith is given to us in the first Christian preaching as it is reported by Saint Luke in the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Here is how Peter, standing with the eleven, delivers the very first Easter announcement on the day of Pentecost

“Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say: Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked through him when he was among you, as you all know. This man, who was put into your power by the deliberate intention and foreknowledge of God, you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed him, but God raised him to life, freeing him from the pangs of Hades [...]. For this reason the whole House of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ” (*Acts* 2:22-24.36).

⁹ Saint Jean Chrysostom wrote, in a homily on the first Letter to the Corinthians (PG 61:34-36), about a development on the folly of the cross, these lines which render impossible the hypothesis that Jesus did not rise from the dead; they appear to us irrefutable: “The twelve were fearful, timid men, the evangelist makes clear; he did not reject the fact or try to hide their weaknesses. Indeed he turned these into a proof of the truth. What did he say of them? That when Christ was arrested, the others fled, despite all the miracles they had seen, while he who was leader of the others denied him! How then account for the fact that these men, who in Christ’s lifetime did not stand up to the attacks by the Jews, set forth to do battle with the whole world once Christ was dead – if, as you claim, Christ did not rise and speak to them and rouse their courage? Did they perhaps say to themselves: ‘What is this? He could not save himself but he will protect us? He did not help himself when he was alive, but now that he is dead he will extend a helping hand to us? In his lifetime he brought no nation under his banner, but by uttering his name will win over the whole world?’ Would it not be wholly irrational even to think such thoughts, much less to act upon them? It is evident, then, that if they had not seen him risen and had proof of his power, they would not have risked so much.”

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We see, the one subject of this speech by Peter, as also the others recorded in the Acts,¹⁰ can be summed up in a phrase: "this Jesus whom you crucified for blasphemy, God has raised him from the dead." The three essential traits of the figure of Jesus are thus admirably connected: *Jesus' divine claim* leads men to decide his *humiliating death on the cross*, and the *resurrection from the dead* appears then as God's answer to Jesus' condemnation by men.

Consequently, the third trait of the figure of Jesus justifies the first by means of the second. In more explicit terms: by raising Jesus, the Father endorses his claim to being equal to God, he confirms it and thus justifies Jesus condemned for blasphemy. In this regard the Resurrection is certainly a rehabilitation of the Crucified One.

The Definitive Glorification of Jesus

But the Resurrection is more than a rehabilitation. Easter confers still more on Jesus his authentic and definitive figure, his figure of glory, transfiguring his face disfigured by men. In fact, although being divine and affirming this, Jesus did not demand to be treated as such, he accepted entirely not only the humility of the earthly, human condition, but even the humiliation of the passion. But now, through the Resurrection, God exalts the one we have humiliated and manifests in his transfigured humanity the glory hitherto hidden and unknown of his divinity, setting him above all as Christ and Lord. It is this paschal exaltation of the humiliated Son that Saint Paul celebrates in the splendid hymn which he inserts in his Letter to the Philippians:

"His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the

¹⁰ Cf. Acts 3:13-15; 4:10-11; 5:30-32.

underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acclaim Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Ph 2:6-11).

The Inauguration of a New World

Lastly, by raising Jesus, delivered into the power of death and put on the level of sinners, God inaugurates in him a new humanity and a new world which have gone through the double abyss of death and sin.

In fact, for the New Testament, the Resurrection of Jesus does not signify simply a return to the present life, in the same way as some "resurrections" reported in the Gospels. These are more "re-animations" signs of hope, but ephemeral. Jaire's daughter, the son of the widow of Naim, Lazarus came back to this life for a time, after which they were to die again, if I dare to say, (with a second definitive burial...). This is not so for Christ. His Resurrection is a definitive passing to a new and glorious condition of life. Paul says clearly: "Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead, will never die again. Death has no power over him any more" (Rom 6:9). Easter is in this way, for the Christian faith, the beginning of what the Scriptures call "new heavens and new earth"¹¹ and Christ rises as "first-born of all creation", the "first to be born from the dead" (Col 1:15-18), "the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20).

As we conclude this section, let us contemplate the Risen Lord in one of his apparitions:

"They were still talking about all this when he himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!' In a state of alarm and fright, they thought they were seeing a ghost. But he said, 'Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have'. And as

¹¹ Cf 2P 3:13 and Rev 21:1 recalling Is 65:17 and 66:22.

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he said this he showed them his hands and feet. Their joy was so great they still could not believe it and they stood there dumbfounded; so he said to them, 'Have you anything to eat?' And they offered him a piece of grilled fish, which he took and ate before their eyes. Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled'. He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said the them, 'So you see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached for all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this'" (Lk 24:36-48).

All that remains now is to discover how the incomparable reality of God's only Son, humiliated and glorified, contains our salvation and that of the whole world.

5. JESUS, THE ONLY SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

The Paschal Mystery, the Last Word of Revelation

God reveals himself to us both in events and words which explain each other. God "speaks" to us through the "words" of the New Testament, but this is the resonance-drum of a more fundamental "word" expressed in the "event" of the Son of God made man, humiliated and glorified. "It is here that God "tells" us of his love bringing about our salvation. "Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world but so that through him the world might be saved" (Jn 3:16-17). Or as Paul says: "With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything he can give" (Rom 8:31-32).

What God "Says" to Us in Jesus

Through the *first trait of the figure of Jesus*, through this man who claimed to be equal to God, through Jesus, true God and true man, God "announces" to us – and brings about – the everlasting Covenant between God and mankind, God's indissoluble marriage with humanity. It is as if he were "saying" to us: "I, your God, have become like you, a human being, so that you, a mere human creature, may share in God's very life. I became man so that you may become God. My love opens to you a wild hope. Because you are part of me for eternity. I cannot be happy without you. Trust me: mankind has everything to gain, because you and I are one in Jesus". Is not this the same hope that inspires Paul when he writes: "For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord" (*Rom 8:38-39*).

Through the *second trait of the figure of Jesus*, through the Son humiliated and abandoned, through Jesus' death on the level of sinners, God "says" to us: "Be not afraid. I have experienced the hell of your life and your death. Even in the depth of your distress, I am with you. If you walk in a valley of darkness, the cross of Jesus is there to reassure you. As far as you fall, you will always fall in him now, since he descended lower than you into the abyss. As weighty as your sin is, as unpardonable it may appear, my Son carried it for you, the Lamb of God who carries the sins of the world, he who did not sin was identified on the cross with sin, when he died far from God and cried out to me: 'My God, my God why have you forsaken me?' Be not afraid. Even in the narrow path of death, even at the heart of the most absurd death, he is with you and leads the way. It was for you that he was torn with anguish and fear. It was for you that he descended into hell, totally alone. Be not afraid".

And through the *third trait of the figure of Christ*, through the Son lost and found, through the Son rehabilitated and glorified, God “says” to us: “Be filled with hope. My Son has borne everything and experienced everything. He endured everything and opened a breach in every dilemma. He leapt over the wall of innumerable faults. The sullied ocean of sin flooded his innocent heart, submerging him with grief and repugnance. And now it is for me that he lives in the light. With him you will overcome your sin. Open your heart to him and from his heart, wounded by the sin of the whole world, re-generating water and blood will pour over you (cf *Jn* 19:34). Be filled with hope. He has already tasted the bitterness of your death and he offers you, today, from beyond death, life everlasting. It is he who cries out to you: ‘Do not be afraid; it is I, the First and the Last; I am the Living One, I was dead and now I am to live forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and of the underworld’ (*Rev* 1:17-18). With him, if you will, you may overcome everything. Put your hand in his. It is a human, brotherly hand which will still the slightest trembling of your being. Put your hand in his. It is the royal hand of God, able to protect you when all else fails. Put your hand in his. It is the pierced hand of your crucified God, able to take each wound in your life. Put your hand in his. It is the glorious hand of your risen Saviour, the only one who is able to lead you to the light of the Kingdom. Even in the midst of the troubles of this life, may your joy be already that of the first disciples when, Risen from the dead, He showed them his hands and his side”.

“In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, ‘Peace be with you’ and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father sent me so I am sending you.’ After this he breathed on them and said: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. For those

whose sins you forgive they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain they are retained” (Jn 20:19-23).

The Heart of Jesus Beats for the Heart of the Young

All that we have meditated on is a treasure which the Father gives in particular to the young. And the young realize this when they have the good fortune to discover it. In youth ministry, one rarely has the opportunity to tell and live explicitly all the infinite riches of this treasure of Christ. But those who address and accompany young people will benefit greatly if they have in their heart the riches of Christ. They will go towards the young with Christ in their heart. Jesus will come, as he desires, by means of their humble witness of life. And sometimes, they will have the joy of being able to foster a moment of grace in which the living reality of Christ can explicitly reach the heart of the young. If only for these moments of grace, for animators, it is worth being always present to Jesus and to the young in total openness of heart.

Educating Young People in the Faith at a Time of Complexities

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1. THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN A COMPLEX SOCIETY

We were accustomed to address problems and seek solutions, above all by focusing on sure facts and needs, valid for all times.

In this way, to give only a few examples, those called to programme interventions of education in the faith were concerned first of all about the things to be communicated, that they were correct and systematically arranged. Also in the analysis of problems, what counted most were the more stable references: scarce readiness for commitment and responsibility were seen to derive fundamentally from egoism which threatens the heart of every person. Youthful fragility and intemperance were seen as fruits of youth itself: a sickness which cures itself, one must only have patience and wait.

Undoubtedly all this retains its value. But a new way of thinking, interpreting and planning, which I share, is becoming consolidated. It reaffirms the same concerns from a very different perspective: focus is directed away from the "thing in itself" to the complexity of relations in which we live and the influences which the present cultural and social context exerts on the process of maturing. Studies of today's cultural and youth situation indicate, consequently, facts to be taken realistically into account and, above all, the theological place in which to collect, with careful discernment, precious suggestions in view of a new plan.

Confrontation and Conflict on Life and Hope

In this logic, my own attention also runs towards the characteristics of the complex society in which we live. Among the many things recalled, I underline one, particularly disquieting for people, like us, engaged in educating young people in the faith, with a plan which comes to us from afar.

Our proposal regards the meaning of our existence and is charged, consequently, with demanding commitments regarding the quality of life and its foundation.

Past generations received the meaning of life through a relatively tranquil process of transmission, of which the possible conflictual nature was only circumstantial. Whereas today we are witnessing a profound crisis of cultural transmission. Those who have the responsibility to entrust to others reasons for believing in life and hope, are no longer sure what to transmit or how to transmit it. On the other hand, there is also little interest in receiving something from others, if the subject is not seen to belong to one's own restricted group. The environments traditionally entrusted with this responsibility (school, family, church...) are also in crisis. As it is evident from recent surveys, they recuperate credibility and consensus only when they succeed in presenting themselves as places of satisfactory primary relationships. In the end they only function when, renouncing their specificity, they delegate to others the transmission of the "contents", and then re-appropriate for themselves that of ensuring interaction.

Reflection on Lived Religion

This situation depends on the manner in which above all the young live the religious dimension of their life.

The most visible aspect is the one characterized by indifference. There are people to whom the life of the Church and its significance really say nothing serious or interesting, regarding life and its meaning.

In these cases we are passing from the times of polemic and protest to insignificance: the paths have now separated and the journeys continue marked by other concerns.

At a level less visible than indifference, there is confrontation and conflict about something which concerns not religion, at first sight, but its prejudicial condition: the quality of life. In a situation of complexity, the first reality to enter crisis is, in fact, the significance of life, its direction, the consistence of its foundation.

In many cases conflict remains submerged, almost filigree. What does appear in the existential picture of people is the construction of a difficult balance between demands no longer lived as contradictory. The dominant cultural models (even those very far from evangelical logic) succeed in co-existing with resigned tranquility, with religious expressions, even committed.

In other cases, however, conflict explodes in all its violence. The dominant attitude is reaction: one excludes oneself, in reflected terms, from the dominant logic, reaffirming all the prophetic force of the Gospel, to the point of proclaiming with passion its intolerance regarding worldly logic.

There are also signs of hope. They are offered by young people who succeed in combining very maturely the most radical demands of the Christian faith with the most significant and authentic traits of present day culture. They demonstrate, with facts, that confrontation is possible and may, if carried out within the maternal womb of the ecclesial community, become enriching for all. Attention for culture, relaunched by many ecclesial communities together with efforts to imagine new models of spirituality, are eloquent signs of this tendency.

In reaction to the unease felt by many, there emerges a search for something new. Many young people, in fact, realize they can no longer base meaning and hope on what they have been offered and they are in search of something new, something more. This is that diffused, "religious demand" much spoken about. This "religious demand" is above all a demand for a meaning to life and for hope, rooted in the

disillusion of many present-day proposals of meaning; even the possible demand for religious "things" is a sign above all of a search for something which gives meaning and hope. We should not forget, however, that this religious demand is deeply marked by dominant cultural traits (subjectivism, experientialism, search for immediate verifiability...): and therefore often distant from the cultural models in which the ecclesial proposal is incarnated.

2. CRITERIA FOR ORGANIZING SOLUTIONS

The influence of complexity is felt also on the level of the pastoral work of our ecclesial communities. It is easy in fact to identify the presence of a broad pluralism of models. These depend not only on the need to respond to diversified situations. Often pluralism has its roots in diverse interpretations of the same contents of the faith and a different manner of conceiving the human person and the processes finalized to his or her education.

We cannot consider this situation as a conquest of which to be proud, nor can we assume the dominant logic which makes sensitivity and personal experience the unquestioned criteria for every decision. On the other hand, the homogeneity of past times would entail a disproportionate relation between cost and benefit.

One who wishes to live in complexity, without being overwhelmed, asks oneself with growing concern: is there a way of elaborating pluralism, while respecting difference and unity?

In recent years we have witnessed a model of elaboration of pluralism and of complexity: operative convergence around some criteria of valuation.

These criteria come not from outside, nor do they represent a sort of authoritative platform over and above the parties. They indicate, in poorer terms, a suggestion of convergence, able to ensure unity (not only formal), also with respect for plurality of operative models, because they are expression of a common and shared heritage, fruit of

maturation which now marks ecclesial communities engaged in pastoral service.

I recall three of them.

Hermeneutic Conscience

Education and education in the faith is called to measure itself with the demands of truth, since a search for new paths can never be conducted to the detriment of the truth. These demands however never present themselves as they are. If they are to be told to people marked by the culture in which they live, they must necessarily assume expressions of a cultural type. This is so for Jesus of Nazareth, image and word of God in the grace of his humanity. This is so for the word of God who becomes word for man becoming word of man. It cannot fail to be so also for educational values and the contents of the faith. The ones we possess and to which we are called to witness, are, at the same time, expressions of cultural models present and dominant during a certain period of history and indications of normative events, to be assumed with total availability and from which to let ourselves be judged and provoked.

I call “hermeneutic conscience” the practical attitude that derives from this theoretical conviction. The one who seeks to re-actualize that which is proposed, activating discernment between that which is permanent (a sort of “core” which poses never ending demands) and that which instead is linked to particular cultural situations, works in a hermeneutic conscience.

As a consequence, immediate and demanding, there remains the task of re-thinking the Christian project from the contribution (positive or negative) of the present culture, in order to render our proposal “significant” and “salvific”: significant means able to assume the dominant categories, salvific means able to challenge these categories and lead them towards authenticity.

The Missionary Conscience

The second element of convergence regards the subjects of pastoral action: which young people are we thinking of and will confront ourselves with when analyzing the responsibility of the ecclesial community?

There is no need to spend many words to recall that young people are a very fragmented universe, difficult to fit into one image.

The missionary conscience, progressively consolidated in the ecclesial community, urges us to think, first of all, of "all young people"... and not only those who are ready for any proposal and live with intensity their Christian experience. It is not right, certainly, to close our eyes to these young people, who have reconstructed a satisfactory relationship with the ecclesial community. But neither can we look only at these happy situations. These, at the most, show with facts that things can change and indicate the conditions to be travelled to obtain satisfactory results.

The missionary conscience becomes a criteria for the hermeneutic conscience just mentioned. It is not possible to re-express the proposals with the sole preoccupation of formal correctness. The discriminating "true – false" in evangelization is measured by the more demanding "significant for all – significant only for some". It is on this variable that proposals, initiatives, interventions should be verified to restore to the Gospel of Jesus its power as "good news" for the young as a social whole, and among them above all the poor and the excluded.

Educative Conscience

The third question too, faces a major theoretical and practical problem.

The ecclesial community has always been concerned with education. If the terms are not only an empty play on words, to define youth ministry as "education in the faith" (or "to the faith" as some prefer), is certainly no indifferent choice. Unfortunately however, the awareness of the autonomy of sciences and also the salvific significance

of educative processes... consisted more of words than facts in ecclesial life of the past.

Problems of evangelization, also on the operative level, were faced, in fact, from the point of view of reflections of a mainly theological nature and prospects for action were based on the needs of having to be. The contribution requested of the science of education was chiefly functional. In carrying out pastoral projects, also when speaking of "education", the reference to the science of education was, consequently, only analogical.

A change of mentality has thrown open youth ministry to a way of acting, the precious reflections of which are visible to all.

Education touches the cultural environment, that which regards precisely the style of our existence, its reasons, its prospects. It is necessary to restore to each person the ability to recognize and realize his or herself as an autonomous subject, responsible for his or her own history and for that of others. People to whom this style of existence is restored can influence the different levels at which the structural processes are at stake.

Recognizing the need to rebuild the fabric of the processes of cultural transmission, there is a new need for adults and young people willing to share their own reasons for living. In this exchange, the adult finds again his constitutive educative function and the young person discovers interest for proposals born in the culture and the history in which he or she lives and which have right of proposition not only over the attraction with which they are charged.

3. TO ORGANIZE CRITERIA IN A PROJECT

Young people who live their daily existence in the melting pot of dominant cultural models, are bombarded by projects and proposals, truly distant compared with those in which the traditional religious experience was expressed. In a similar situation, a person seeking to take seriously one of two proposals – the religious one

or the one which pervades us through dominant cultural models – has the impression of being faced with a dramatic alternative: either to renounce being people of the times in order to consolidate one's religious experience or to renounce the religious dimension of life, to stay with the times.

I am aware that often confrontation is not lived in the radical terms in which I have described it. The typology of outcome, recalled above, documents however something which is threatening, even if not often reflected.

This awareness brings me to recognize that the present challenge seems to be of an anthropological more than a religious nature. What is in question, in other words, is not directly the alternative between being or not being religious. Before this decision and as its possibility there is confrontation on the type of man or woman of whom we dream and whom we want to (or can) become.

In a cultural situation such as the present, the service of education to the faith involves, with the same intensity, responsibility for the reconstruction of a quality of life and the offering, explicit and thematic, of the Gospel of life and hope within these challenges. It is a question, in other words, of verifying if in the model of existence pursued there is space for the life-style to reach towards the transcendent dimension of life and if an eventual experience of transcendence is placed adequately in that balance of liberty and responsibility which must characterize every life.

For those engaged in the service of educating the young to the faith it is not enough to go, in the name of the Gospel, against dominant cultural models. We must elaborate efficacious alternatives and render them credible and practicable. Nor can we be content to proclaim with energy the truth of the faith: we must rethink it, with fidelity and fantasy, to render it ready to listen to the cry rising up from life and return the cry to its protagonist in the sweet company of the Crucified Lord who is Risen.

We can no longer ask ourselves whether one task or the other must be tackled first. Both weigh urgently on the shoulders of the disciples of the One who presented himself with a passion for the life and the hope of all.

For methodological reasons I shall proceed in successive steps. I begin with the first question (that of the quality of life), and I entrust the second (the explicit proposal of the Gospel) to the next paragraph. In the first question I will however draw inspiration from the truth of the second and re-formulate the second from the provocation of the first.

At the Service of the Quality of Life

I begin with the first question: toward which “quality of life” should we orient the educative service in the process of education in the faith?

I consider man a researcher and a producer of meaning. He grows in humanity when he lives his daily life as a tending, constant and progressive, towards that mystery in which is set his existence. The answers he succeeds in building in the personal fatigue of confrontation and listening and those he encounters through the contribution of those sharing his own passion, saturate his expectations only partially and temporarily. The question is re-opened, at the very moment in which he tastes the joy of discovery and experience.

I like to define this anthropological model with an expression: the invocation. Man is mature and lives his existence in an authentic manner when he becomes capable of invocation. The Christian experience is lived as good news, foundation of life and hope, only if it resounds within invocation.

1. Invocation

The expression “invocation” is not the only one we can use. It needs a little explanation to become eloquent. I use it because around this

formula, in recent years, a certain movement has been created, although I am convinced that no formula can be considered perfect.

I call "invocation" the existential attitude of one who lives the fragment of existence of which he is protagonist, tending, with operative hope, towards a reason of meaning which he knows he does not possess.

The one who lives in invocation, finds himself in a strange situation. He trusts life and entrusts himself to a foundation so high as to justify his hope. Aware however, of not possessing this foundation: he can only wait for it and seek it, since it is much beyond what he is living and building.

He has an intense desire for life and happiness. In no way is he ready to renounce his life, which he lives as the place of his happiness. He realizes how hope is further than possession, in a "beyond" to be searched for, hoped for, dreamed of.

To explain concretely this experience, I like to refer to a figure familiar to us: those exercises on the trapeze, which we have seen, so many times, in circus rings.

In this exercise the athlete detaches himself from the security cord and throws himself into the void. At a given moment he puts out his arms towards those strong and robust of his friend who is swinging in rhythm with him ready to catch hold of him.

The game of the trapeze is very similar to our daily existence. The experience of invocation is the solemn moment of waiting: after the jump, the arms reach out towards someone able to catch them, restoring life. In the trapeze exercise nothing happens by chance. Everything takes place in an experience of calculated and programmed risk. But suspension between death and life remains: life tends towards research, charged with hope, hope of support capable of leading out of death.

Invocation is a risk, an adventure with an unpredictable outcome, an anxious search for something irreplaceable if we are to continue to live and hope. At the same time it is certainty about

the arms ready to catch us. We trust life and we entrust to this impenetrable mystery that which we have most at heart: happiness in life itself.

The present is open wide to the future. The past gives new impulse, encourages, just as the athlete is encouraged and continues his exercises in confidence motivated in the competence of his companion. The certainty of being restored to life lies only in the expectation that what we have so often experienced will continue to be reproduced in our existence.

This is invocation: a gesture of life which searches for reasons of life, because the one who poses it feels immersed in the risk of death.

2. Reuniting Existence around Invocation

Invocation cannot be reduced to one of the many experiences which fill the life of a person and be compared for example with the search for a job or a hobby to which to devote one's energies at leisure time... It is instead, of its own nature, the connecting tissue of all life's experiences: almost a new, radical experience which interprets and integrates daily experiences, in something new, made of something other, conscious and challenging.

The capacity for reunification lies in the search for a significance to one's life sufficiently harmonious, able to give consistence to meaning and hope.

At the initial level invocation is above all tension towards something other, able to give reason and foundation to individual existence. Every fragment of life and every personal experience, throws out and saturates a few of the many questions for meaning and hope which rise from our day-to-day existence. These different questions join with one more intense, which touches the profound threshold of our existence: at this level, the question involves directly the one who asks and, normally, remains a question thrown open towards something oth-

er, even after the necessary confrontation with the answers we build ourselves or receive as gifts from others.

On a higher and more mature level, when the question itself is lost in the abyss of the mystery encountered and lived, invocation is entrusted to a "presence" who is the life-source of the one who questions. In abandonment to a "thou" discovered and lived, the "I" finds again peace, interior harmony, the root of one's hope.

As it can be noted, reunification lies not in "possession" but in "searching for": it is not reliable information which founds unity, but rather tension, suffered and uncertain, towards something other and the giving over of one's whole existence to this "event" felt and encountered, although never definitively possessed.

3. WAGERING RESOURCES TO EDUCATE TO INVOCATION

There are educative and pastoral models which consider daily life an obstacle to be controlled and others wholly committed to efforts to escaping it, or at least reducing its conditioning to the minimum. My hypothesis is however different. I recognize that growth in the Christian experience runs parallel to accepting one's life, as a committing and challenging mystery. I recognize, consequently, that this same life offers in a germinal manner the most important contributions for its fullness and authenticity. I consider it, in other words, the great resource, which gives meaning and prospects to all other educative and pastoral resources.

The recognition of life as a great resource is realized always in explicit and intense educative concern. This is why I think of life as a complex fabric of questions and answers.

All the questions concern, at least implicitly, life and its meaning, because this is the one, chief problem. They are however connected at different levels of existential profundity.

Many questions refer to concrete, daily problems of life: they are

about life in its technical and pragmatic dimension. At this level the sciences of man work in their relative proper autonomy.

In the profundity of these questions emerge queries concerning, in a thematic and reflected manner, the ultimate reasons of our existence. These are "questions of meaning". Also these questions of meaning encounter many answers in the wisdom of man. Many others remain open and burning even after confrontation with all the replies available to man. Indeed these answers open the question even wider. In this case the questions are "invocation" for more meaning: they are arrows projected towards something ulterior, able to give saturation to this disquieting search.

Open wide to the experience of vocation, young persons reach a higher level of maturation. They are no longer able to dream their future in the measure of things possessed or the power with which they can arm themselves, instead they open themselves wide towards the adventure of solidarity and entrustment to the mystery which embraces their whole existence.

Rediscovering the quality of evangelization

The person who invokes has a right to an answer. To those arms opened to mortal risk in that trapeze exercise which in day-to-day living is always done without a safety-net, there must correspond the robust arms ready for the catch. This is why the ecclesial community is aware of the joy and the responsibility of evangelizing for a more effective service to life and hope.

Maturation of the Christian experience involves, in other words, also the time of proposing a project of existence, concrete and practicable, able to manifest the gift of a life in the Spirit. This must be affirmed with force, to redeem the responsibility of the ecclesial community, after times of resigned silence and long, unjustified waiting.

As we know, commitment to evangelization, renewed with courage, passion and competence, regards the ambit of the contents and, no

less serious, that of models and communicative criteria. To remain faithful to the methodological task entrusted to me, I will concentrate my attention on these second aspects. I will, therefore, recall some educative priorities for restoring to the Gospel the power of salvation “within” and “for” daily life.

1. *The Centrality of Jesus Christ and Its Verification*

The point of reference of Christian life and consequently, the centre of the religious proposal, is personal encounter with Jesus, confessed by the ecclesial community as Lord. The whole journey tends towards this objective and upon this goal is verified and consolidated.

The encounter with Jesus remains mysterious: it is an adventure of faith. To be certain the direction of the journey is correct, we need criteria of validation. Ecclesial tradition suggests a few, which I consider particularly urgent for the present-day situation of culture and youth and this is why I present them here.

The person who has encountered Christ does not measure his or her faith first of all on his or her ecclesial belonging, but on passion for the kingdom: on commitment to making life spring up where there is death, in the name of God and for His glory. Ecclesial belonging, certainly urgent and to be reformulated at a time in which all belongings have become weak and selective, functions like the “maternal womb” in which to live and express the dedication of one’s life to the Lord and to his project.

Personal and ecclesial encounter with Jesus and the sharing of his passion for the cause of the life of all, immediately becomes a project of existence oriented by the new quality of life, which he demands of his disciples. At a time of subjectivism, often unleashed, the faith experience is immediately conjugated in an ethic experience. The urgency cannot be renounced... the directions of development must be progressively elaborated, in that hermeneutic fidelity, mentioned among criteria for renewal.

The encounter with Jesus the Lord and the handing over of one's whole existence to his project become a fascinating vocational adventure, which takes hold of the entire existence: love for life, founded on its ultimate root which is entrustment to Jesus of Nazareth in faith, becomes "compassion" for the life of others.

2. An Adequate Communicative Model

The courageous proposal of Jesus Christ, in order to be significant and incisive, requires a search for adequate communicative models.

Thinking of young people in these times of complexity, I put forward a proposal which gives voice to a diffused and consolidated pastoral experience. It takes up that view of "communication" which *Dei Verbum* 13 also recalls as central to the event itself of revelation.

The word of the evangelizer is always a story: a story of life, told to help others to live, in joy, in hope, in the freedom of finding one's self protagonist once again.

In his narration there are three stories: the story told, the story of the narrator and that of the listeners.

He tells about the texts of his ecclesial faith: the pages of Scripture, the stories of great believers, the documents of the life of the Church, the present conscience of the ecclesial community regarding fundamental problems of daily existence. In this first element, he proposes, with courage and firmness, the objective demands of life, recompressed on the part of given truth. To believe in life, to serve it so it may be born against every situation of death, certainly does not mean to dissolve the most radical needs or to make room for research without horizons and purely subjective.

To repeat this story does not mean, however, to reproduce an event always with the same words. It means being able to express the story told within one's own experience and faith.

In view of this, the evangelizer finds in his experience and his passion the words and contents to give vitality and modernity to his story.

His experience is an integral part of the story he tells: he cannot speak correctly about life and the Lord of life, without saying all this in the words, poor and concrete of his own life.

This need also reconstructs a fragment of the truth of the story narrated. It withdraws it from the cold silence of principles and emerges it in the warm passion of salvation.

On the part of salvation, the receivers themselves become protagonists of the story. Their existence adds to the tale: it supplies the third of the three stories of which the one story is woven.

Because of personal involvement the evangelizer does not make resigned proposals. One who narrates for life, wants a choice of life. This is why indifference always torments the religious educator. He anticipates in a way the wondrous things of which he speaks, so as to challenge more radically and involve more intensely.

3. *The Result of the Process: Who is the Christian*

By means of evangelization the ecclesial community puts before young people a global project of existence.

In this proposal it is important to verify the communicative model used, as I recalled earlier. But it is just as necessary to verify the object of the proposal.

Who is the Christian? In which dimensions is his existence expressed?

Only a figure of Christian essence, faithful to the plan of God, revealed in Jesus and inserted, in a welcoming and critical manner, into the fabric of present-day cultures, is able to represent that project of existence worth accepting in our life, for which to commit ourselves with the radical courage of the martyrs.

There emerges again the delicate question of spirituality, a frontier on which much work remains to be done, in the impulse of the present renewal. This was recalled with courage by Cardinal Ruini in the final intervention during the Convention of the Italian Church held in Palermo: "The Second Vatican Council, in the *Gaudium et Spes* docu-

ment (n. 37), speaking of human activity corrupted by sin and redeemed only by Christ, offers us an indication which, with regard to spirituality, appears to me to be of value. Having become a new creature in the Holy Spirit, the human being can and must love the things created by God, receive them from Him, look at them and honour them as if they come from the hand of God at that very moment. Thus, 'using and enjoying' creatures in freedom and poverty of spirit, is introduced in the true possession in the world, almost nothing he has and everything possesses (cf. 2 Cor 6:16). That new little word 'enjoy', added to the other classic 'use', opens towards a new Christian spirituality which we could say to be specifically modern, no longer characterized chiefly by flight from and rejection of the world but of commitment in the world and love of the world, as the path of sanctification, that is to say, the acceptance of God's love for us and the exercising of love for God and for our neighbour.

4. BEYOND SILENCE

The culture in which we live is reducing truth to simply a matter of subjectivities which meet and clash, searching space for compromise. Maturation of life and its explosion in the Christian experience demands, on the contrary, an encounter, available and disquieting, with truth which places itself beyond our subjectivities.

Subjectivity and objectivity appear to be two irreconcilable prospects. Nevertheless, in recent years, happy and industrious, we have experienced the first fragments of an alternative. Put into practice, it consigns to the educator a task of the highest prestige: he is the witness, trembling and suffering, of life's demands which cannot be renounced.

Life, everyday life woven in the fabric of the adventure of each day and shared in a solidarity which embraces all men, is the most subjective event there is. It is totally mine: mine is the project, the dream, I betray it, I realize it. Yet it measures me inexorably. It

carries within it demands and dimensions which push subjectivity into the sanctuary of given things. I live it happily when I live it according to the codes in which it was designed. It explodes in my hands if I seek to go beyond them, like a child, irritable and spoilt.

Life, furthermore, is full and realized only when it is for all. Solidarity proposes frontiers and demands, now so visible as we continue to take apart and put together again the fragments of our history.

In this objectivity consigned to our subjectivity we recognize the sign of God the creator and the disquieting mark of the cross of the Risen One.

The educator bears witness to life and its demands: that it may be full for each and abundant for all. To fulfil this demanding task the experience of recent years suggests some valuable educative paths. I recall three.

Confrontation with Death

I think it is important to re-propose, first of all, a demand which has travelled our educative tradition, modifying however radically the point of prospective: disquieting confrontation with death, to consolidate and authenticate that component so underlined by present day culture, love of life.

Meditation of the Gospel leads us to speak of death starting from love for life and with the explicit pretext of consolidating it and restoring it to the personal adventure of every person. The Gospel records constantly, in fact, Jesus' great passion for life. He is not looking for death. He desires life, although he recalls, with the same caring passion, that death is the condition for possessing life. He struggles against death every time it crosses his path. He restores dignity to all who have been robbed of it by fear.

Death questions daily life and calls for a verification of its meaning and quality. Death restores the quality and authenticity of our life. It

is not an accident with which we can avoid confrontation, as if it were statistically irrelevant compared to the central problem.

Certainly, in fact, there are many "limits" in the life of every person. Often they depend on causes which are known and can be controlled, although not easily overcome. Others, such as pain and suffering, depend on the physical structure of our existence. Against the first we learn to rebel, eliminating them at the roots, within ourselves and outside. With the second we learn to live, for love of the truth. There is however a situation of limit, which pervades us all and inexorably crosses our existence: death hangs over us precisely because we are alive. We are not saddened by this sentence. The most wonderful experience, that of being alive, carries within it the indelible trace of its limit.

On the borderline of finitude, the human person finds he or she is "different" from things and other living beings. He or she enters the fascinating and mysterious world of an unrepeatable life.

Love which is Able to Receive

The second way to provoke is to offer an experience of unconditioned and receptive love: that hospitality which, according to the style of the Gospel, is a disquieting invitation to radical conversion.

We have all experienced it, daily. There are people who, when they speak, seem to embrace their listener in a passionate embrace which has the joyous taste of unconditioned welcome; and then there are others who, perhaps saying the same things, judge with the words pronounced and condemn without pity.

Two typical figures of this attitude so different are two characters of the story of reception told by Jesus: the father and the elder brother in the parable called the "prodigal son" (Lk 15:11-32). When the boy who ran away from home returns, the father welcomes him with a loving embrace of peace and reconciliation. He does not reprove him; he does not allow the boy to say even a word of repentance. He acts

this way not out of resignation or indifference and certainly not because he fears he will ruin everything, now that things are normal again. The sin is grave. It produced deep suffering in all. The father cannot ignore it, as if nothing had happened. Is this not God's attitude towards the sin of man, revealed to us by Jesus? To the one who caused so much pain, the father responds to the betrayal with a word, the sweetest and most disquieting possible: an embrace of joy and celebration.

The elder brother opposes this behaviour, remembering the bad deeds of his brother. He recalls his brother's disobedience and emphasizes his betrayal. His words are hard: a sentence of condemnation without appeal. The father, on the other hand, "receives" the son, at last returned to his embrace. He does not put a stone on the past, but neither does he dig it up again with the bitterness of one seeking revenge. Certainly, he cannot forget what has happened or resign himself to leaving the son to his old style of life.

He wants him to be different, transformed within and new in his behaviour. To remind the son of his unjust behaviour he chooses an unusual path: he neither accuses nor condemns, he welcomes him. His pain and the joy of finding again become embracing and celebration.

This is the style of communication which the expression "hospitality" intends to evoke.

Confrontation with the Other Person

The third way which the educator in the faith is called to travel to become again able to make proposals, is that of confrontation with the other person and with the provocation launched by his or her need.

We can no longer be content to welcome only those who correspond to our dreams and our projects. To grow towards a mature quality of life and to open ourselves to the mystery of God, we need something capable of destroying our security and breaking down the arrogance of our experience.

The other person who needs us and calls us to become the neighbour of his or her existence represents, in these times of shouted proposals and programmed silences, one of the few voices which force us to take heed and to listen. The story of many young people confirms this.

It falls to the wise educator to make this voice resound in due time.

5. THE PLACES OF THE ENCOUNTER

The pastoral activity of the ecclesial community was carried out, for a long time, in a precise territory whose confines were well marked. Everyone knew well to which structures they could refer: the Church was a reliable and visible presence. Now things have changed radically.

Concrete life takes place in fact in spaces which no longer correspond to those habitually used to delimit the confines of belonging. Much of the day and many of the days of the year are lived "outside" traditional institutions of reference. This question is not purely physical... nor does it give rise to that "homesickness" typical of a world which has disappeared, at least on the youth level. Interests, projects, the most relevant experiences of existence are lived in places very different from the traditional ones. Even the important religious experiences are, often, dislocated compared to traditional ambits.

If this statement is correct, it becomes urgent to think of the ecclesial community's service for young people as a sort of "exodus": it is a question of abandoning the consolidated and reassuring places and going towards the places where young people live their life. Progressive moving towards the places of real life of young people is not merely a question of "physical" dislocation; it does not entail, in other words, wider attention to and presence in the spaces in which they live. It, first of all, proposes a basic attitude: educative sharing of their world and their expectations.

The suggestion immediately opens wide a disquieting question: what to do with the traditional places of pastoral activity? Groups and movements, places for meetings and recreation, educative structures,

run directly by the ecclesial communities... have they lost their significance? Should they be restructured, like industries which produce something which is no longer useful or marketable?

My answer is negative, with no hesitation. Moving towards life does not render useless the significance of traditional places of the ecclesial community. On the contrary, it re-launches them in a new and very necessary manner.

They cannot function as alternatives to those of daily life and even less as supplements. They must, instead, become places where young people can experience the quality of the fascinating encounter with the Lord of life as well as the new quality of life arising from this encounter. They can be places of silence, of interior quiet, of that intense and loving relationship with significant adults which restores meaning and hope to an existence thrown here and there by threats and uncertainties. They have, in final analysis, the irreplaceable function of invention, verification and re-launching between the present of daily living and the past and the future of experience and dream.

I say this concretely, thinking of the celebration of the Eucharist, the central event of ecclesial life, a sort of great sign of moments which are alternative to the normal rhythm of day-to-day living. Without alternative spaces of ecclesial experience, young people cannot live an existence as disciples of Jesus in the life and company of everyone, just as without the Eucharist, we cannot grow in faith and hope.

The Eucharist immerses in the future our full sharing of time: in that fragment of our time which is all on the side of gift, unhopd for and unexpected gift. On the part of the future, the present finds again its truth, subjective protagonism welcomes an objective principle of verification.

In the Eucharist the past returns as memory, effective and solemn, of the wondrous things God has worked for us, first of all, Jesus' triumphant victory over death, for the life of all. In this descent towards

his truth, we are encouraged to remain people of liberty and rejoicing, even if marked by suffering, struggling and the cross.

As we sing the songs of the Lord in a foreign land, we discover it is our land, temporary and precarious, but one land for all. As we sing the songs of the Lord, this “foreign land” becomes our land, precisely as we dream and sing of the Father’s house.

Young People and the Pope. Together. A Project for Youth Ministry

Bishop STANISŁAW RYLKO
Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

1. A SPECIAL CHARISMA

The pontificate of Pope John Paul II has reached its twentieth year. It is the longest of the century and a pontificate with a wealth of magisterium and initiatives which has often assumed a deeply prophetic value. These twenty years have seen the figure of Karol Wojtyła grow into a spiritual leader at the global level, not only for Catholics but for the entire world. To mark the twentieth anniversary of this Slav Pope many have taken stock, seeking to identify the most significant lines of his pontificate. All agree in underlining his extraordinary charisma for communicating with the young, all agree in placing pastoral concern for young people among the unquestionable priorities of his pontificate.

Pope John Paul II's charisma in dialogue with young people is remarkable. He loves the young, he understands them and is extremely aware of their problems. Indeed to be with them is a deep necessity of his heart. He says: "I would like to reach out to each of you, embrace you..." (3.6.1979). To be with young people, speak with them – even today at the age of seventy eight – seems to restore his energies. This Pope is a great communicator. He speaks with young people not only with words, but with his whole person, with himself. He speaks with his smile, his gestures, even with his walking cane...

From where does this spiritual affinity between Pope John Paul II and young people come? His ability to be with young people is deeply

rooted in his pastoral experience in Poland as a young priest. Those who have known him since those days, know how much time he devoted to young people, first as a priest and teacher and then as Archbishop of Krakow. Later, when he was already Pope, he said to young Poles: "If I had not learned to be with you, if I had not learned what it means to be young, how wonderful it is but how difficult too, I would probably not have been able to do it today, and they would not have 'pulled at my cloak' trying to keep me from going away... I learned it here in Poland, I learned it from you..." (10.6.1979).

In the programmes for his apostolic visits or parish visits in Rome there is always a space reserved for young people, a meeting, even brief, between Pope John Paul II and youth. For them, the Pope is father and master, but first of all a friend – a "demanding friend", as he once described himself. He comes as a witness of Christ and speaks to the young about the mystery of man which finds complete fulfillment only in Jesus Christ who died and is risen. Christ is the answer, total and final, to the longings of the human heart. This is why Pope John Paul II repeats again and again: "Open the doors to the Redeemer!" The Pope transmits to young people ideals for life, not hesitating to put before them goals which are difficult, arduous. He helps them to discover their proper vocation: to the priesthood, the religious life, marriage. To young people in difficult situations, who are discouraged and afraid, he seeks to give courage, reminding them that "every young person must be stronger than the exterior conditioning" (10.6.1987). Extremely aware of the moral and social problems which torment young people wherever they are in the world, the Pope speaks with them about unemployment, the danger of drugs, about AIDS and pornography, of crime and violence. He tries to sensitize them about the value and the beauty of their youth. At the beginning of his pontificate he said to young people: "You do not realize how beautiful you are when you are near Christ the Master, and you try to live in his sanctifying grace" (6.6.1979). And in 1985, in his Letter to the Youth of the World, he wrote: "Youth is in itself (independently

of any material goods) a special treasure of man, of a young man or woman..." (n. 3). These are profound and direct messages which, even when pronounced often in front of vast crowds, touch each one personally.

2. WHO ARE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR POPE JOHN PAUL II?

Who are young people for Pope John Paul II? How does he see them in the Church and in the world? What role does he give them in history? "You are the hope of the Church! You are my hope!" (22.10.1978) he told them on the day he inaugurated his pontificate and began also his dialogue with youth as Pope. Today we can see that he was not being rhetorical. In those words there already appeared quite plainly the "Pastoral project" which Pope John Paul II has carried forward with extraordinary impulse and love. To youth, whom he sees as a special "way of the Church", he wrote: "You are the youth of the nations and of societies, the youth of every family and of all humanity; you are also the youth of the Church... So your youth is not just your own property, your personal property or the property of a generation: [...] at the same time it is a special possession belonging to everyone. It is a possession of humanity itself" (*Letter* 1985, 1). Hence the great responsibility not to waste this treasure. The Pope underlines this relationship between young people and the Church when he writes: "The Church looks to the young; or rather the Church in a special way sees herself in the young – in you as a group and in each of you as individuals" (*ibid.*, 15). It is in fact in youth that the Church finds her ability to wonder at the Mystery and the enthusiasm which leads to ever new horizons. "We need the enthusiasm of the young" he says. "We need their joy of life. In it is reflected something of the original joy God had in creating man. This is the joy experienced by young people. It is the same everywhere, but it is also ever new and original" (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 125).

Almost as if to challenge the results of sociological research and surveys which paint a dark picture of contemporary youth, Pope John Paul II writes: "In youth [...] there is an enormous potential for good and creative ability" (*ibid*, 150). He has confidence in the youth of today and young people feel this confidence. In them he sees a great prophetic force. The age of youth is always marked by tension towards great ideals: truth, goodness and beauty, justice and solidarity. It is the age which proceeds and prepares the years of decisions, of choices. The Pope says: "I reaffirm my conviction: young people have the difficult but exciting task of transforming those fundamental 'mechanisms' which, in relationships between individuals and nations, promote egoism and oppression, to foster the birth of new structures inspired by truth, solidarity and peace" (7.4.1985).

The Pope wants to involve young people with their prophetic dynamism first of all in the great work of new evangelization in the world today, a mission in which he considers them singular agents. Not by chance in 1984 he consigned to youth the Cross of the Holy Year which had just come to conclusion, saying: "Dear young people, [...] I entrust to you the sign of this Jubilee Year: the Cross of Christ! Carry it into the world as a sign of Jesus Christ's love for humanity and tell everyone that only in Christ who died and is risen is there salvation and redemption" (22.4.1984). With the passing years the significance of that gesture has become more and more evident. That Cross entrusted to youth – which is kept in the "Youth Church" at the St Lorenzo International Youth Centre in Rome – accompanies them during World Youth Days, as an irreplaceable point of reference and constant reminder of the task entrusted to them by the Pope.

This, briefly, is the horizon upon which Pope John Paul II sets his dialogue with youth. This is the vision of one who looks into the depths of the hearts of young people today and is able to go beyond appearances, even when these are negative. Two are the main lines of this dialogue: the divine plan for salvation and the mystery of mankind which is only revealed in the light of Christ.

3. A PROPHETIC DECISION

I think it is opportune now to focus on a decision which proved decisive for the relationship between the Pope and youth, or better, between the Church and youth. I am thinking of World Youth Days. Among the events which prepared the way for their institution in the Church we must recall the Youth Jubilee with the theme: "Open the doors to the Redeemer". It was 1984. At the invitation of Pope John Paul II young people came to Rome from all over the world. Those who recalled the protests of the Sixties and Seventies were amazed by this sign: something new was happening among young people if so many of them were demonstrating their return to the faith and the Church. The International Youth Year called by the United Nations in 1985, was the occasion of another great meeting between the Pope and youth from every country and the publication of an unprecedented document: The *Letter to the Youth of the World* with which Pope John Paul II speaks directly and intimately to each of them, as a father and a friend, about the value and meaning of youth. It is an extraordinary text which should be basic-reading for all young people and everyone involved in youth ministry. For the Pope, attentive as he is to the signs of the times, these two events challenged the Church to prove her ability to take a providential opportunity. When instituting World Youth Days, he explained the reason for his decision: "Every young person must feel accompanied by the Church: this is why the whole Church, united with the Successor of Peter, must feel more deeply committed, at the global level, to youth, their anxieties and concerns, openings and hopes, to meet with their expectations, communicating the certainty which is Christ, the Truth which is Christ, the Love which is Christ, through appropriate formation – which is a necessary and updated form of evangelization" (20.12.1985). A few years after that decision he said: "No one invented World Days for Youth: they themselves invented them. These Days, these meetings, have since become something desired by youth everywhere in the world. Nearly

always the Days have been a great surprise for the clergy and even for the bishops. They were much more than anyone expected" (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 150). At the same time a Youth Section was set up in the Pontifical Council for the Laity, to promote youth ministry at the level of the universal Church and co-ordinate the celebration of World Youth Days.

So the Pope and young people began a journey across the continents. A journey which has continued now for thirteen years, marked by a series of meetings: Rome (1984 and 1985), Buenos Aires (1987), Santiago de Compostela (1989), Czestochowa (1991), Denver (1993), Manila (1995), Paris (1997). Each Day has had its unique story and has been a gift of special grace, a milestone on the spiritual journey of the youth of our times. In this sense, an eloquent example was the most recent World Youth Day held in Paris attended by more than one million young people. An event which amazed journalists and observers as well as priests and bishops. Such a response in a secularized country like France was truly unpredictable. The element of surprise, now part of World Youth Day, is an evident sign that too often we give way to the temptation to undervalue the potential for good which is in young people today. Commenting on the World Youth Day in Paris, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, wrote: "In this event we are surprised not by the number of young people, which surpasses all forecasts, but by our "little faith" that the Lord is working in our midst". And he added: "The spiritual thirst of this generation is immense: these young people are searching for something they do not know but which they feel" (*Osservatore Romano*, 1.10.1997). One year later, recalling the event which left such a deep mark on public opinion in France (and not only in France), and also on the present-day self-awareness of the Church in that country, he wrote: "Sometimes there are events which appear suddenly, giving rise to great wonder. Yet in actual fact, they express a fundamental movement which we could not or did not wish to see, a movement before which we were blind. This is the case of the World Youth Day in Paris thanks to the coming of

Pope John Paul II. We were surprised that a generation – made up mainly not of adolescents but of young men and women – was able, instead of making noise, to participate with joy in moments of intense silence, attentive listening, discussion and prayer”. Regarding the relationship between youth and the Pope he said: “Saying they love him is also their way of taking their place in the Church; this cry establishes a relationship with the institution which is very different from the one they show to their parents or in surveys... by loving the Pope the young people love, in him and through him, the Church which they deeply desire and which Pope John Paul II gives them the chance to experience and live. His presence is of this the catalyzer and guarantee” (*Osservatore Romano*, 21.8.1998).

The Pope’s diagnosis of contemporary youth is clear: “Young people are in search of God, of a meaning to life, they search for a definitive answer: ‘What must I do to inherit eternal life?’ (Lk 10:25). In their search, they cannot help but encounter the Church. And the Church cannot help but encounter youth” (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 124). World Youth Days are providential for this encounter, a means of powerful evangelization of the youth world. But on one condition: they must be organically incorporated into plans of youth ministry. Because, taken alone and isolated, they easily remain mere “flashes in the pan” or simply “religious tourism”. They must be seen as major events in a project – already underway and more comprehensive – of youth ministry, intense pastoral concern which proceeds and accompanies them, helping the growth of the seed that has been planted. It is this profound conviction which fires the activity of the Pontifical Council for the Laity in the field of youth ministry. And it must be said that in these thirteen years the situation has changed in many countries. Numerous dioceses have set up structures for youth ministry and many priests have resumed youth ministry with new enthusiasm. World Youth Days foster new pastoral awareness in this vitally important field for the Church of today and of tomorrow.

4. THE RESPONSE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

To complete this picture we must ask: how do young people respond to the Pope? How do they see him? Who is the Pope for them – a man of 78? At the beginning of the pontificate, the media spoke about a Pope Wojtyla “super-star”, but today? How can we explain the fact that still today with the same enthusiasm and love as before, young people continue to cry out in every language: “John Paul II we love you!”. This happens not only during vast meetings as in Paris but also on ordinary Sunday Angelus meetings, when youth is always present.

The quantitative dimension of youth’s response to the Pope’s invitation to World Youth Days is astonishing. Anyone who has had the good fortune to take part in one of these will never forget the sight of the young Church gathered around the Pope – full of the enthusiasm and the joy of faith. Although they are numerous (a million or more, 4 million in Manila), they are never only a crowd, an amorphous crowd, they are always Church. And they show this by their extraordinary ability to listen to the Pope and keep prayerful silence.

This quantitative dimension is therefore important and significant. It speaks of new emerging tendencies. It is obvious that youth of today – living immersed in a secularized world, often living the faith in situations of diaspora, anonymity and solitude restricting this experience to the sphere of their private life – need to come together to find again the community dimension of the faith and the courage of Christian witness.

Still more important however, is the qualitative dimension of the participation of the young people, the dimension of their spiritual experience. A few years ago the Youth Section of our Council carried out a survey among young people who had taken part in the World Youth Day held in Santiago de Compostela (*What do you seek, young pilgrims?* – Documentation Service of the Pontifical Council for the Laity 22, 1991). Here are some interesting statistics.

Why do young people take part in Youth Days? For 54.8% it is a desire to answer the call of the Pope; for 38.7% the need to deepen

their faith; for 36.7% the desire to meet other young people. And this is what these young people have to say: "I came because I wanted as many young people as possible to respond to the Pope's call, knowing that every individual is important" (Austrian boy aged 18); "I wanted to show the Pope by my presence that he can count on me. He has confidence in us as builders of a new civilization of love" (Spanish girl aged 17); "I came to Santiago above all to pray and reflect more on subjects that can strengthen my faith" (Italian girl aged 16). In what, according to youth, lies the importance of meetings like Youth Day? For 42.3% in the power of the Pope's message and his charisma; for 37.9% in the encouragement to witness; for 12.8% in the experience of the universal Church. Here are some remarks: "I think young people like a challenge; to meet the Pope and accept his message is a challenge to lead our life along new roads" (Italian youth aged 24); "The Pope speaks openly and courageously about subjects which many priests are afraid to address" (Australian youth aged 25); "Every meeting with the Pope fills us with special joy. The Holy Father is for me a master and a model of coherence" (a Polish boy aged 19); "We young people feel that the Church and the Pope take us seriously, that we mean something to the Church. We are the Church..." (German girl aged 22); "My faith is not very deep, but the Pope is so full of faith that the sight of him changes us" (French girl aged 17); "I experienced a real inward conversion, I put on the light in my heart. Now I find it easier to speak about my faith at school, especially during philosophy classes" (French girl aged 17).

These excerpts of witness help us to some degree to perceive the depth of the spiritual experience lived by young people when they meet the Successor of Peter. Once again it is the Pope who grasps and indicates the proper significance of these words when he writes: "Wherever the Pope goes, he looks for youth and youth looks for him. Rather, in actual fact he is not the one they are searching for. Christ is the one. He knows 'that which is in every man' (Jn 2:25)" (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 124). Today we see a process of pro-

found change in the world of youth. The rebel generations of the sixties and seventies have been replaced by a different generation. Some call it the “John Paul II generation”.

5. WHAT DOES THIS POPE TEACH?

So far we have sought to trace the lines of Pope John Paul II's special charisma expressed in his extraordinary ability to communicate with youth of all countries and cultures and the profound formative impact of this charisma. But what is the secret of this unique relationship between the Pope and youth? What are the main elements of the pastoral project upon which it is based? What does this Pope teach us priests and laity involved in youth ministry? The Pope himself helps us to find the answer. On various occasions, in fact, he has spoken of his journey and his experience in this field as a young priest, then as a bishop and lastly as Pope.

I will try to summarize the answer under four headings:

1. At the centre of the Pope's pastoral project for youth there is the person of Jesus Christ. In *Redemptor Hominis* we read: “The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly – and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial and even illusory standards and measures of his being – must, with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must so to speak, enter into him with all his own self...” (n. 10). The task of every pastoral worker is to proclaim Jesus Christ to youth. This in fact is what young people expect. It is a fundamental right which every youth-leader must recognize. In the depth of their heart they long for Christ. They do not want moralism, human pseudo-wisdom, nor do they want to hear social-cultural speeches with which our newspapers are filled. Therefore the main task of a youth-leader is to help every young person to discover Christ the Redeemer “Good master”, Guide, Friend, and to start a personal dia-

logue with him: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (*Lk* 10:25). This dialogue – directed with correct moral conscience – must foster a desire to follow Christ along the road of his commandments, evangelical counsels and beatitudes. This "following" also involves mission in the world: "Go... you will be my witnesses...", courageous proclamation of the Word, authentic generous commitment to transform the world. In Denver the Pope cried out: "Do not be afraid to go into the streets and public places, like the first Apostles who preached Christ and the Good News of salvation in the city squares, in the towns and villages. This is not the time to be ashamed of the Gospel (cf. *Rom* 1:16). This is the time to preach from the roof tops (cf. *Mt* 10:27). Do not be afraid to break with the comfortable and customary ways of life and to take up the challenge to make Christ known in the modern metropolis" (15.8.1993).

The Pope stresses that in their search young people "cannot help but encounter the Church. And the Church cannot help but encounter the young. But this means that the Church must have a profound understanding of what it means to be young, of the importance that youth has for every person" (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 126). Therefore the discovery of the living person of Jesus Christ goes hand in hand with the discovery of his Church as a mystery of missionary communion. This means that the youth-leader himself must have an intimate relationship with the Master and a profound sense of the Church. Because the contemporary man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers he does so because they are witnesses (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41).

2. The second principle of Pope John Paul II's pastoral work with young people is the discovery of life as a vocation. In this context the project [of life] acquires the significance of a "vocation of life", of something entrusted to man by God as a task. "Young people, entering into themselves and at the same time entering into conversation with Christ in prayer, desire, as it were, to read the eternal thought

which God the Creator and Father has in their regard” (*Letter* 1985, 9). Living life as a vocation – the Pope says – means to live it in the vision of a gift. Life in itself is a gift. It must therefore be lived with responsibility before the One from whom this gift comes. This leads to the discovery of the value of one’s own life and of every human life, from conception to its natural end. The Pope sees young people as the chief builders and defenders of “the culture of life” instead of the “culture of death”.

To view life as a gift means also to make of one’s life a gift to others. One of the Council texts most often quoted by Pope John Paul II is this: “man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 24). How important it is in the world of today, suffocated by the spiral of consumerism and the search for pleasure, to introduce young people to this “logic of gift”! The Pope prays: “Teach these young people the proper use of their freedom. Teach them that the greatest freedom is the total gift of self. Teach them the meaning of the words of the Gospel: ‘Anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it’ (*Mt* 10:39)” (14.8.1993).

Youth ministry is always vocational pastoral. It is in fact a question of helping young people to recognize before God their own vocation: whether to the priesthood, the religious life or marriage. Pope John Paul II stresses in particular the need to prepare young people for marriage. This preparation – first indirect and at the proper time, specific – is, he says, a focal point of pastoral work. He writes in this regard: “It is necessary to prepare young people for marriage. It is also necessary to teach them love. Love is not something that is learned and yet nothing else is as important to learn! As a young priest I learned to love human love. This has been one of the fundamental themes of my priesthood, my ministry in the pulpit, in the confessional and also in my writing” (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 123).

3. Another mainstay of the Pope’s pastoral project for youth is the principle of affirmation for every young person. This signifies pastoral

charity, hope and trust. As the Prophet Isaiah says: "[My Servant] does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame" (Is 42:3). Without this characteristic there can be no authentic dialogue with young people. And as we have seen the Pope trusts the young of today and they know this. He is aware of the problems that worry them, but he is not deterred or conditioned by catastrophic forecasts or surveys. He believes firmly in the potential for goodness, truth and beauty that lies in the heart of every young person. He is not an ingenuous optimist, his optimism is based on grace which is always stronger than human frailty.

Pope John Paul II says: "If at every stage of his life man desires to be his own person, to find love, during his youth he desires it even more strongly. The desire to be one's own person, however, must not be understood as a license to do anything, without exception. The young do not want that at all. They are willing to be corrected, they want to be told yes or no. They need guides and they want them close at hand" (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 121). Therefore the principle of affirmation for the young person must always take place in the truth. The educator, the priest, is not the master of the truth revealed, he is simply its faithful servant. Therefore he can neither censure nor dilute the demands of the Gospel, adapting it to passing phases or old or new ideologies, thinking mistakenly to render the message more inviting. It is the Truth which saves. Therefore we must not be afraid to propose the truth to young people, the whole Truth, without ambiguity. It is "after all" the Truth which young people want and expect. This is why we must transmit to them not doubts but the certainty of the Church's faith. In this too, the Pope is a master. He proposes to the young difficult paths, specific goals to those who have the courage to choose Christ: "Do not be afraid to be holy!" (Santiago de Compostela, 1989), "Fly high" (Czestochowa, 1992). And yet the young do not walk away. After the World Youth Day at Santiago de Compostela a French journalist made this pertinent remark: "The formula which has been repeated since the times of the first youth

gatherings around Pope John Paul II: 'they love the singer but not the song' has suddenly grown old... these young people love not only the singer but also his song. They come not only to see a charismatic leader, to live with him a few vibrant moments of friendship and emotion, they come to listen to his message. And the more, as years pass, his words appear radical and demanding – when he touches for example on sexual morality, affective and conjugal fidelity – the more he is applauded" (H. Tincq, *Le Monde*). The Days which have followed through the years fully confirm this diagnosis, which our pastoral should take into careful consideration.

4. Lastly, people engaged in youth ministry must discover for themselves the essence and importance of youth in the life of every human person. The Pope writes: "What is youth? It is not only a period of life corresponding to a certain number of years, it is also a time given by Providence to every person and given to him as a responsibility. During that time he searches, like the young man in the Gospel, for answers to basic question; he searches not only for the meaning of life but also for a concrete way to go about living his life. This is the most fundamental characteristic of youth. Every mentor, beginning with parents, as well as every priest, must be aware of this characteristic and must know how to find it in every boy and girl. I will say more: He must love this fundamental aspect of youth" (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 121). Here, I believe, is the focal point for the formation of a person who is to engage in youth ministry. Only who has made this discovery will dedicate himself wholeheartedly, not sparing himself, putting all his energy at the disposal of the young. He will search them out with every means possible, be near them as a friend and master, and he will know how to listen to them. The Pope is a unique example in this sense.

The thread of Pope John Paul's pastoral project and of his numerous meetings with young people all over the world is a synthesis of these essential elements, which form the nucleus of his youth pastoral.

These elements were conceived when he was a young priest, and he has remained faithful to them in these 78 years of life, 40 of episcopate. Still today he approaches young people with the same enthusiasm, the same love, the same basic-programme, and they listen to him and follow him, as we saw once again in Paris.

The Great Jubilee of the Redemption, now fast approaching, calls the whole Church and all youth ministry workers to revive their sense of responsibility regarding the new generations, about which in the *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* the Pope writes: "Young people in every situation in every region of the world, do not cease to put questions to Christ: they meet him and they keep searching for him in order to question him further. If they succeed in following the road which he points out to them, they will have the joy of making their own contribution to his presence in the next century and in the centuries to come, until the end of time: 'Jesus is the same yesterday, today and for ever'" (n. 58).

IV
YOUTH MINISTRY
Some Instruments

Timeliness of a National Project for Youth Ministry

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PREMISE

When we speak of a project for youth ministry we generally think of a pamphlet, a leaflet or perhaps a book in which to write down everything we know about youth ministry, or list the essential elements on which to agree for educating young people to the faith. Then perhaps much effort is made to write it and finally, after solemn presentation, attractive printing, circulation, even capillary to communities, it is put in a drawer.

An authentic project consists of common mentality, concord availability, communion expressed by the whole Christian community regarding the world of youth and its growth in the faith. This means that all have in their mind, their heart and their activity something which unites them despite all difficulties, something which all seek to pursue with creativity starting from the responsibilities and the roles one has in life and which become criteria of fidelity to one's own life of faith.

In the past in our Christian communities we worked according to a project shared by many even though nothing was formally written down.

A young priest, having completed his studies and inserted into the parish, would not ask himself what should be done for the young people, what should be invented, he knew well what was expected of him by the Church and by the young people. The project was incarnated

in the Christian community's faith tradition, in the parents' sharing of a figure of a believing son or daughter formed with patience by means of various educational activities, in the univocal way of comprehending words and gestures, in a sole theology, in a concept of a sufficiently homogeneous reality, which distinguished itself for contra-position between good and evil and did not shatter into a myriad of interpretations and subjective references.

We are not called to reconstruct those times, nor do we regret them. In that context it was enough. The new challenges of today's realities demand we apply ourselves diversely, but still in order to construct the substance of a project.

If the premise is valid then it is important to spend a few words to emphasize the need to work with young people in this dimension of planning, even before the drafting of a text or Great Charter.

An apodictical statement: today with young people, we either work with a project or we destroy the little that exists. Why?

Because to project means:

- *To esteem individuals and to offer them the possibility of making an objective confrontation for their growth.*

How high is your esteem for a person or a community if you consider them incapable of measuring themselves with a goal? How can they defend themselves or make up their minds, if you never flash before them explicitly the beauty of a finishing point? How can persons grow if they have no goal before them? A journey advances if we know where we are going: a path is populated with persons if its signposts are clear. In general in the Church, collaborators are taken on and dropped on the basis of immediate need which only one decides is important and how it should be filled: they are not considered capable of offering with creativity their energy, their professional qualities for a goal which once perceived, unleashes in each the best they can

give. Young people themselves, placed before a clear objective, at a time in which their life is fragmented and hovers attracted by so many market stalls which gradually absorb all their available energies, are stimulated to take a position. I believe that one of the main difficulties young people find in making decisions in life is also the lack of proposals, of a definitive goal. On the national level, a project increases esteem in diocesan realities, because it measures them with a goal, offers them the possibility to orient themselves towards an objective and to have shared prospects.

- *To offer a means of overcoming individualism and fragmentation, by leading the whole community to walk together sharing values and directions.*

In a community it often happens that each group goes its own way, isolated in its own world, absorbed by its concerns, chained to the immediate question-answer mechanism of its components. Energies, initiatives are multiplied, there arises at times contra-position, but above all one's own path becomes absolute and faith is adapted to one's own views. The only sharing is often the notice board, the chart on which each group informs about its activities, hoping that the next will not engage in an overshadowing activity. A small project, a shared goal, on the other hand, would increase reciprocal esteem and help the search for profound understanding in the many and varied styles and rhythms of each one's path. A project helps to develop an authentic civil culture of collaboration. The vocation of the laity becomes more clear when faced with a project than with recommendations to be generous.

- *To offer society or the local community a clear image of a desire to educate which is able to take into account the culture in which we live.*

Society is not in the least valorized in correct terms, or touched, or transformed unless there is a global and articulated vision and a programmed and accurate action, which takes into account all the components of the life of a young person. We are tempted by educational

omnipotence; the warm maternal breast of the group might contrast or substitute the culture in which the young people are immersed. Hence the temptation of Manichaeism (the good is the group, the evil is the whole of society), of voluntarism (we can manage on our own, it is enough to want to contrast and change the path of history!). The world of youth can no longer be closed within our ecclesiastical belonging. The interlacing of their paths, globalization itself makes them citizens of the world; they cannot therefore remain sacristan Christians.

Often people, who from outside see us committed to the community, have the impression that we live on attempts, chances; that, all told, what is at stake is survival, and that therefore basically education is not taken seriously and that is: the question and its progressive clarification, the proposal and its convincing unfurling, attitudes which constantly inspire daily decisions (this is a minimum outline of a project).

- *To sustain the fragility of the experiences of youth and keep in mind the natural "slowness" or gradualness of every educational journey above all with adolescents.*

Christian initiation for young people can never be considered a fact acquired once and for all. At every important stage (school, work, university...) with consequent changes of environment, young people must not only "update" their decision of faith, but they must express it in forms which are radically new, almost as if at the first experience, the first proclamation, the first involvement. That which made them belong with joy to the Christian community at 16, no longer sustains them at 17; what gave them a degree of stability at 18 can no longer motivate them at 23, at their first impact with a job or profession. This demands a style of education which, precisely because it is aware of this need to keep on making a fresh start, keeps in mind constant growth. Even the life of formative groups suffers great discontinuity, one always seems to be starting from the beginning; to keep hold of the logic of a subject is no easy task; young people are constantly pitching their tent in many different prairies. There follows an exag-

gerated slowness in growing in maturity and responsibility. It is difficult to maintain not only an historical memory, but also a path of educational-formative logical sequence. To plan is not to stop to respond to desires, but to wager. What is the difference between an answer and a wager? An answer quenches desires while the wager goes deep unearthing new possibilities and energies for growth.

– *To respond to a demand for more clarity about belonging and rigour in education.*

Today unfortunately it is thought that to be more effective in education we must return to the methods of firmness, punishment, expulsion, to a clear code of behaviour which says objectively who is in and who is out, whether in the group, or community, or in the Church itself. The pivot of resolution in education, in “discipline”, is not above all a code of behaviour to be identified, it is a common goal, shared by everyone and to be reached. It is the effort of tending towards a goal, even on different paths, which is a criteria of belonging.

– *A common goal leads to maturity.*

The world of youth today seems to exasperate and definitely to extend the adolescent period because there is nothing before it as a goal to be reached at all cost. Instead of forming a procession which measures itself with a goal and provokes healthy competition or at least comparison and imitation in what is good, it spends its time among the stalls of a market, buying things, mistaking happiness for things which can be bought. The evil of our day is that young people live a lost crossing of history not knowing what they must grow towards; this causes them to stop at their own little coasting vessel. To grow, one must have goals. A project is made above all of goals, clear and shared.

Today in societies in which people are sharing continuous efforts towards a prospect, adolescence is shortened and youth comes more into the open, and responsibilities are shouldered.

- *For those who work in Christian communities, to project is to realize that God has a plan and to welcome and serve this plan with intelligence; the project becomes a sign of that obedience and listening characteristic of all Christian life.*

There is a history of salvation springing up from the heart of God, “programmed” in the life of the Trinity; there is a passion of God to educate his people and every human being; a series of interventions which take man from where he had landed far away from God and slowly lead him along the way back. There is a Father who waits and “organises” a fabulous welcome for the son who went off on his own business... and we enter a group, with a couple of jokes we get a smile and make friends and end up in an ice-cream parlour!? Or otherwise we work in a pastoral office and look forward to organizing a nice event to say we exist? God has a plan of salvation and you mistake it for table of fax, e-mail and letters of information?

I began with these simple observations because a project consists first of all of education able to project itself inside the continued experience of Christian life. Now we can reflect with more decision on a national project.

1. WHY A NATIONAL PROJECT?

In Italy it does not exist yet, it consists simply of a few pastoral observations which however have kept alive experiences already present and orient new ones to a wider horizon. It does not exist because the office is only five years old and because there is an educational and projective tradition in the dioceses, either sustained by Catholic Action which has always worked with a plan, or constructed by the bishops with their programmed and repeated interventions on the world of youth, or as a fruit of some vivid experience such as World Youth Days, the Pope’s visit to the diocese, a pilgrimage...

At first in Italy we were concerned with promoting youth work in every reality, diocese, association, movement, to make it grow, to ex-

periment with projects creating above all a common mentality, shared paths, simple but attractive goals. World Youth Days helped to orient all youth ministry towards some common goals. When our newspapers speak of "the young people of Paris" they are referring not only to an experience which was shared, but of a mentality born of that experience and which must be maintained and helped to grow. These mass meetings have shown how important it is for young people to have common goals, with which to measure oneself each with one's own originality. To be able to live the joy of a convocation which goes beyond one's own sociological belonging, is a necessary experience for the Church. We can all see how universal planning helps the Church in her preparation for the Jubilee.

Today certain lines must be not only alive in everyone's tradition, they must be set in the believing memory of the Christian communities, also because direct democracy is declining, so as not to die of meetings. This means that some one or some thing, fruit of the convergence of all, must express and reinforce spontaneous adhesion to a path which is realized. Hence the need also to put on paper, not so much things which are new, but things to be shared and which are shared.

Another motive which renders quite urgent a national project is that solely diocesan attention does not reach the majority of our young people who spend much of their life in a territory certainly wider than their own diocese. In Italy it is said we must go where the young people are, but I would add, with one same educational passion, one same goal, one same experience absolutely perceptible in all the spaces which young people frequent. Something which unites all. Not by chance, are we working to build up a place of spirituality through which all young Italians may pass: Loreto.

Today we feel the need to work more together, also on the European level.

In this work of constructing a national project we must keep in mind that:

1. A national project does not take the place of those of the particular Churches, on the contrary it needs these in order to be concrete, but the projects of the particular Churches cannot fail to find a minimum of convergence towards common goals.

2. A national project must always tend towards great ideas or decisions, it should indicate not activities but high goals: the figure of the young believer for whom we are ready to commit all our energies, the goal which every community offers the young person, the centrality of Jesus able to resound as salvation for the young of this country, the place of the Word, of prayer in every day life, the attitude of an adult community, the fundamental experience of the Church... It must be very broad, so that the different ecclesial subjects can contribute various originalities of concrete implementation. In educating the young in the faith, not everything and what is contrary to everything must be allowed, some choices must be made, with respect for the vocations of all, but able to create communion of life.

3. The strength of projects lies in the programming of their implementation. This demands people with a passion, able to rewrite the project faithfully and with originality in every situation, with patience it must be made to become a tool of comparison, the object of study, reference point and criteria for every initiative.

4. The most important thing is consciousness of the project, the awareness that we are carrying out a plan greater than us, within fidelity to the Word and to the Spirit, in the Church, the search for a substantial communion, a sharing of effective and daily journeying, a common mentality.

The Contribution of Movements, Associations and Communities

Dr. DAVIDE PROSPERI

Communion and Liberation

It may seem strange that a young person such as myself has something to say about education. However, what I am about to say does not intend to be an exhaustive presentation of the theme. In this intervention I refer to my personal experience, what I have lived already and what I am living now, how I myself have been educated.

I would like to start from a consideration which may appear obvious, but which is fundamental. It is through the education of young people that a society can be rebuilt. This means that the most important problem of society today is first of all to educate young people. Hence the principal theme of our reflection: education. In particular, in what education consists and how it is achieved.

Authentic education cannot propose essentially an ideological doctrine. Today ideologies no longer convince anybody, and then Christianity is certainly not an ideological doctrine. Pasolini, an expert on ideologies, wrote that young people are educated with being, not with speeches. What does it mean to educate? As we see from the etymology of the word (*ex ducere*) to educate means to bring out, to help emerge that which lies within us, that which the Bible calls the heart of the human person. It is here in fact that we find the imprint, the origin of human freedom, which becomes clear when the person becomes aware of his or her relation with the infinite who creates this freedom. To educate therefore, is to educate to liberty, to reveal the *I* in its authenticity – that is a demand for total exhaustive meaning to reality, which requests freedom.

How does this come about? Experience shows that the *I* awakens only and always when faced with a clear proposal, strong enough to be persuasive for the mind, convincing for the whole person. The simplest and most authentic experience, which best exemplifies this dynamic, is that of the child who only grows and matures in the relation lived with his own parents. The first words Jesus said to the two men who were following him, recorded in the Gospel of Saint John, are: "What do you want?" and then, when they reply: "Come and see!" (cf. *Jn* 1:38-39). The entire Christian method – which we have been taught – is here. Peguy says in a passage from *Veronique*: "This modern world is not only a world of bad Christianity, which would be nothing, it is a de-Christianized world. What is worse, even our miseries are no longer Christian. Times were bad in the Roman era too. But Jesus came. He wasted no time complaining or criticizing the evil of his day. He took action, very simply. He brought Christianity. He did not blame or accuse anyone. He saved. He did not accuse the world. He saved it".

Education therefore cannot be founded on critical indoctrination or on systematic doubts: to educate means, on the part of the educator first of all, to accept the challenge proposed by one's own experience of the truth, so it may be verified by the freedom of the other person.

1. If education is introduction to total reality, what can evoke in man this original capacity to enter reality and affirm its meaning? I will come to our point of interest: Christianity according to its original nature, presented as an event in space and time, that is, in history. Men and women of today, gifted with operative possibilities as never before in history, have obvious difficulty in recognizing Christ as a clear and certain answer to the significance of their own ingenuity. What is lacking in fact is not verbal or cultural repetition of the announcement. People today are waiting, perhaps unknowingly, to experience an encounter with people for whom the fact of Christ is a reality so present, as to have changed their lives. Only a human impact

can move men and women of today: an event which echoes the initial event, when Jesus looked up and said "Zacchaeus come down, hurry, because I must stay at your house today" (Lk 19:5).

The capacity of movements to educate stems from the fact that they propose Christianity in its original form. The Mystery of the Church, communicated in two thousand years of history, must always take place as an event, as a moving presence, as movement: movement which, by its nature, renders more human the way of life of the environment in which it happens. This is indicated powerfully by the phenomenon of movements. This means to say, to use the words of the Pope himself in St Peter's Square on May 30th of this year, (World Congress of Church Movements 1998), the Church herself is movement.

2. What is the method of this proposal? Three main factors must be described: authority, liberty, verification.

Authority: What is the most important fact in the reality of a people to which we are called? What is the authentic place to communicate an ideal suitable for life, for the journey towards truth? The most important factor in the reality of a people is authority, understood as a subject who proposes: a human presence which helps us to grow, augment, which dilates our *I*, which renders timely and persuasive the ideal contents of an experience and a tradition. In this sense the authority, the guide, is the contrary to power, and is not even remotely related to the concept of power. What then is authority? It is the place (and a person too can be a place) in which there is a struggle to affirm – and the verification to confirm – the answer which the proposal of Christ represents for the longings of the heart; it is the person who shows by his or her example that what is said about Christ corresponds to what is believed in the heart. The problem becomes then, following Christ.

Liberty: Freedom, as a capacity to adhere to the being, the destiny, the good, is expressed in following. When Jesus challenged them

"Come and see" (Jn 1:39) they followed him. Today to speak of following may seem particularly obscure. And it is paradoxical, but comprehensible, that precisely in an era when man allows himself to be led to behaviour ever more standardized and massified, that, at least in words, he manifests the need to possess an authentic personality, not to blindly conform himself to the crowd. To follow is not a passive attitude, it must first of all be a sincere attempt to assimilate with profound motivation what is proposed; an intelligent comprehension of the values implicated in the suggestions offered. What we follow then, is not a speech, it is a presence.

Verification: The freedom of the individual is therefore invited to undertake an experience. What is Christianity if not God who renders himself experience of man within a situation? This is John's message: "Something which has existed since the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have touched with our hands: the Word who is life [...] we are telling you" (1 Jn 1:1-3).

The experience is the place in which to verify the proposal to verify a call. To verify a call means first of all to follow it with all the consciousness, reasoning, critical powers of which we are capable as living persons. Verification is therefore also an act charged with two factors of our humanity: intelligence and freedom. To verify authentically, means committing our whole person with attention and openness to the proposal made.

3. What is the aim of education? To develop the authentically human dimensions of life. Which are the fundamental, most synthetic dimensions, the horizons to which everything is directed?

Culture: Culture responds to the need for exhaustive significance of action. Participation in the life of the Christian community leads to a new awareness of life and reality – new, not meaning different, but in the forceful meaning of the term, definitive: *Vetera transient, omnia facta sunt nova*. Christian culture indicates, therefore, the definitive point

of view regarding the vicissitudes of our existence and the realities of the cosmos. Jesus Christ is the meaning of the entire reality: therefore before every page at school, every news from the world and every experience of life, young people usually attempt to make a critical judgement comparing the contingent event with the reality of Christ, the reality that is of the experience of community life.

Only assimilation profound and conscious of the community's criteria and an integral dependence on the objective of those criteria, that is authority, lead to the realization of an authentic Christian culture.

Charity: Charity, in its true meaning, responds to the need to share and communicate one's being. Charity is the immanent dimension of every gesture intended to be entirely human. Charity is sharing before giving. With various initiatives we call young people to deepen their sensitivity and charity, in order to render permanent the concept of life as sharing without limits or boundaries, avoiding the risk of the idea that charity is purely volunteer activity.

Mission: Mission responds to the need that horizons of action are unlimited. Christ's coming has made us all one, as Saint Paul recalls in his Letter to the Galatians (cf. *Gal* 3:28). But in history this truth is not yet fully realized. This is why whoever shares in the communion of the Church also shares in the mission of Christ.

The word "mission" expresses most completely the human attraction of Christianity. This word expresses the cultural unity realized through total commitment of the individual, charity, sharing applied to the ends of the earth, to the whole of humanity. Young people are suffocated if we demand from them enthusiasm for limited things.

4. I would conclude, therefore, by saying that the life of movements does not serve to nourish an organization. On the contrary its aim is the maturity of the individual, that is the maturing of faith. The person is the final goal of education. The problem of the existence of the world is the happiness of every individual. "What is man that you

should spare a thought for him, the son of man that you should care for him?" (*Ps* 8). No energy, no paternal or maternal tenderness have ever moved the human heart more than Christ's passionate words about the life of man: "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" (*Mt* 16:26). To listen to these ultimate questions put by Jesus, is the first obedience to our nature. If we are deaf to them, we are cut off from the most significant human experiences. We will be incapable of loving ourselves and incapable of loving anyone else. In fact, the ultimate motive which urges us to love ourselves and others is the mystery of *I*; any other reason is to this introductory.

Youth Ministry for Different Environments

Dr. LILIANA STEFANI

International Forum of Catholic Action

If someone were to ask you, as it happened to me a few years ago, to write down in a space the size of a postage stamp, the heart of our faith and consequently the message we must carry to young people, probably after the address given by Mgr Leonard yesterday morning, without thinking too much, the right answer would be: the message is the Risen Jesus.

But if we are called to transmit this and only this, what need is there to speak about youth ministry for different environments? Why multiply occasions for meeting and formation in view of a more mature and conscious Christian life? What importance have the school, university, factory and office when already in the parish community considerable energy is spent, in many different groups, for the education of young people?

The answers could be many and as diverse as the environments of the youth world, here are only a few.

- Because it is important to respect the point of departure of each young person, to go and "find" each one where one lives and grows, in the social and cultural context with which one is most familiar, since we must valorize each one's conditions of life, help each one see that one's daily life is inhabited by the Lord.
- Because Jesus goes to find Peter at the lakeside and Matthew at the tax table.

- Because young people must live their lay condition as a positive value, even in difficult moments, and not seek refuge in ecclesial groups and religious activity in order to forget problems and failures of study, work, family life.

It is therefore fundamental to introduce the concept and viewpoint of differentiated itineraries. This does not mean to push youth ministry to extreme specialization, to the point of inventing, if it were ever possible, personalized paths for each young person.

Providing support for a personal faith journey and vocation discernment cannot be the task of a pastoral office as such, or any association or body on its own, it falls instead to that unfailing accompaniment which every educator puts into practice when he installs an authentic educative relationship.

The ecclesial community, the various groups, associations, movements and communities have, for their part, the duty to study and plan so the educative approach is not concretized in a “globality” which signifies uniformity, which becomes routine, because a proposal, although significant and rich, cannot not be addressed to young people without taking into account their different experiences and their diverse stories. It must speak to Marco who studies, to Anna who works, to Mario who spends his days at the coffee-bar.

If globality in pastoral projects means attention for all the dimensions of the person, if it means investing energy to help the growth of men and women adults in the faith, this means we are not to consider those places in which young people pass the greater part of their day, “other”, distant, different, compared to the faith itself.

The dimensions of work, school etc., must then be valorized and become fields of youth ministry, for two motives, among others, which I wish to mention.

The first motive tells us we must help young people who already follow the path of an ecclesial group to live an experience of faith which is not “disassociated”, not fragmented, so they may be led to

give witness which knows no difference between Sunday and Monday, and are not ashamed to tell their school companions or friends in the park or at the coffee-bar, about their experience at Summer Camp organized by their group or parish.

We must in second place consider the environments already mentioned on the one hand as precious soil for the work of first proclamation, for approaching, for re-approaching the Lord and his Word, on the other, as places in which young people can concretely practice charity and sharing.

A few weeks ago the Catholic Action newspaper received three letters telling significant stories.

- Sara, who lives in a small town in Southern Italy, has come out of a difficult time thanks to school companions and teachers, whom she found to be friends, after having ignored them for three years.
- Gabriella, who lives in the North, was about to be made redundant: her work mates, without her knowledge, succeeded in convincing the owner of the factory to reduce their hours so Gabriella could stay on.
- Angelo, lastly, tells of the death of a dear friend. At the funeral a group of young people chose to remain on the stairs outside the parish centre: they showed no willingness to enter but no one came out to speak to them either.

These episodes tell us there must be, within what we call environments, a presence which helps read events in a Christian key, and stimulates those questions for meaning mentioned so often in these past few days during our meeting.

But God - says Bonhoeffer - can and will bring good from everything, however he needs people who will put themselves at the service of everything so as to orient it towards good.

Therefore we must invest as many people as possible with pastoral responsibility, from the family to the parish, from the school to those who organize leisure time. We must create awareness in all adults in

contact with young people so that each of the latter may be offered the maximum possibility of growth in life and in faith, starting with their daily commitments and environments.

This is why we must sustain all the talents which the different lay groups, movements, communities are able to express in different fields of ecclesial life. They offer people, opportunities and tools able to reach young people right where they are and where, perhaps, the parish or diocesan community fails.

In all this however, we must be constantly aware of two things. The first regards the fact that the proposal of education or encounter, is never addressed to a "role" but to a person and therefore not only to the student, the worker, the sportsman, but to the young person who carries the burden of problems connected with his or her social or family conditions, with his or her journey of Christian maturation.

The objective is not in fact to "capture" young people for some initiative or another, for some association or another, but to offer them, beginning with their life in a specific environment, a journey of human and Christian growth able to foster a desire for a close relationship with the Lord and with the life of the Church. No group can be an end in itself, the Christian community must remain the constant reference for all pastoral action, the experience of Church to which we tend.

Secondly, attention must be given to the constant need to verify the proposals made. If pastoral proposals make no impression on the world of youth, if they come nowhere near young people living in the school world or the working world, or those who travel hundreds of kilometers to go dancing on a Saturday night, or young people with physical, psychological or economic problems, we must honestly ask ourselves if we started from a question, a need which corresponds to their reality, coming from them, if we are really familiar with their daily experience, if the models of approach applied are on their level, if, to put it simply, we speak the same language.

Youth Ministry for Different Environments

A happy and courageous Church must have the honesty to recognize mistakes and to decide to invest its energies in new projects and environments. Because, as one dear friend says, only plastic flowers last forever.

APPENDIX

What Type of Christians for the Year 2000? A Project for Living as Young People

Monday 21 September
Being Young Today

Morning

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Opening Prayer
Greetings

Introduction – James Francis Card. Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

Youth in today's world – Dr. Martin Lechner, Director of the Salesian Study Centre on Youth, Germany

Afternoon

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Youth in today's world - Regional panorama

- Western Europe: Prof. Mario Pollo, Pontifical Salesian University, Rome
- Eastern and Central Europe: Mr. Hans Hobelsberger, German Youth Ministry, Düsseldorf

MEETING ACCORDING TO GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

Tuesday 22 September
“Forming” Youth Today

Morning

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

The “formation” of young people: basic criteria

- Anthropological-religious aspect: Fr. Luis F. Ladaria, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome
- Psychological aspect: Fr. Tony Anatrella, Psycho-analyst, Paris
- Pedagogical aspect: Dr. Aránzazu Aguado, Pedagogue, Madrid

Dialogue with the speakers

Afternoon

WORKSHOPS

CELEBRATION OF THE EVENING PRAYER AND OF THE
EUCARIST

Evening

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Panel: Formation as “seen” by young people - Necessities and expectations

Appendix

Wednesday 23 September
Youth Ministry: Working out a Project

Morning

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

The centrality of the person and of the message of Christ – Most Rev. André-Mutien Léonard, Bishop of Namur (Belgium)

Educating young people in the faith at a time of complexities – Fr. Riccardo Tonelli, Pontifical Salesian University, Rome

Young people and the Pope. Together – Most Rev. Stanislaw Rylko, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

Dialogue with the speakers

Afternoon

WORKSHOPS

VISIT OF THE JUGENDHAUS HARDEHAUSEN

Celebration of the Evening Prayer and of the Eucharist

Meeting with the youth federations of the BDKJ

Appendix

Thursday 24 September
Youth Ministry: Some Instruments

Morning

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Timeliness of a National Project for Youth Ministry – Msgr.
Domenico Sigalini, Italian Bishops' Conference

The contribution of Movements, Associations and Communities –
Dr. Davide Prosperi, Communion and Liberation

Youth Ministry for different "environments" – Dr. Liliana Stefani,
International Forum of Catholic Action

CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Afternoon

"Stands" on Youth Ministry

National Plan for Youth Ministry

Youth Ministry in the diocese

Youth Ministry at parish level

Pastoral action among students

Pastoral action among young workers

Pastoral action among marginalized youth

School of evangelization

Hospitality centres: *The diocesan House for Youth in the Czech
Republic*

The House for Youth in Germany

The Youth Village in Lourdes

Appendix

PLENARY ASSEMBLY

Closing Intervention – James Francis Card. Stafford, President of
the Pontifical Council for the Laity

Closing Prayer

List of Participants

Bro. Jean-Marie
Leon Alexandrov Stamboliyski
Ivana Andric
Maria de Fatima Antunes Pires
Loreto Ballester
Sr. Sabine Banaschewitz
Monika Baumjohann

Rev. Ignacije Belak
Rt. Rev. Virgil Bercea
Mara Borsi
Dragan Bošković
Claire Bréant
Cathy Brenti
Luca Brunoni
Rt. Rev. Pierre Bürcher
F. Edgars Cakuls
Rev. Philippe Christory
Silvia Cichon
Margaret Connolly
Victor Cortizo
Rt. Rev. Anton Coşa
Claire Dauphin

Rev. Sauro De Luca
Anna Dębska
Rev. Paul Destable
Christian Deszczyński-z-Leforest
Rosa Deulofeu
Rev. Peter Dörrenbächer
Jean Duranton

Taizé Community
Bulgaria
Bosnia Herzegovina
Apostolate of the Teresian Movement
Teresian Association
Beatitudes Community
International Catholic Federation of
Parish Youth Communities
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Rumania
Youth of Mary Auxiliatrix
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Eucharistic Youth Movement
Beatitudes Community
Switzerland
Switzerland
Latvia
Emmanuel Community
Germany
England & Wales
Spain
Moldova
International Union of Guides and Scouts
of Europe
Eucharistic Youth Movement
Poland
France
Faith and Light
Spain
International Catholic Federation of
Parish Youth Communities
Youth of Our Lady

Appendice

Jorg Eickelpasch	<i>Regnum Christi</i>
Rev. Cliff Ermatinger	<i>Regnum Christi</i>
Rev. Jozef Fekete	<i>Slovakia</i>
Thierry Ferreira	<i>France</i>
Philippe Francoual	<i>Faith and Light</i>
Archim. Sergio Gajek	<i>Byelorussia</i>
Marlene Galea	<i>Malta</i>
Joseph Galea-Curmi	<i>Malta</i>
Andrea Geiger	<i>Austria</i>
Rev. Silvano Ghilardi	<i>International Forum of Catholic Action</i>
Isabelle Godet	<i>Claire Amitié</i>
Rev. Augusto Gomes Gonçalves	<i>Portugal</i>
Patricia Carla Gonçalves	<i>Portugal</i>
Rev. Ludwig Güthlein	<i>Schönstatt</i>
Sr. Hanna Habighorst	<i>Germany</i>
Anna Hallonsten	<i>Sweden</i>
Elisabeth Helmich	<i>Schönstatt</i>
Sr. Johanna-Maria Helmich	<i>Schönstatt</i>
Franz Herz	<i>Austria</i>
Rev. Tomáš Hoffman	<i>Czech Republic</i>
Rev. Patrick Hoogmartens	<i>Belgium</i>
Rev. Paul Hüster	<i>Germany</i>
Rt. Rev. Paul Iby	<i>Austria</i>
Rosanna Iebole	<i>International Alumni Association - Salesian Sisters</i>
Andrea Janiv	<i>Ukraine</i>
Nathalie Jaquet	<i>Switzerland</i>
Károly Joós	<i>Hungary</i>
Gerard Kearns	<i>Ireland</i>
Linn Maria Kierulf	<i>Norway</i>
Gerardine Koffi	<i>Claire Amitié</i>
Csilla Kovács	<i>Chemin Neuf Community</i>
Dr. Gerhard Kruip	<i>Germany - Kath. Akademie Altenberg</i>
Štefan Kržišnik	<i>Slovenia</i>
Dominika Kurex	<i>Pax Christi International Youth Forum</i>
Krzysztof Kurowski	<i>Ukraine</i>
Alessandro Lizambri	<i>Italy</i>

Appendice

Catherine Loyer	<i>Emmanuel Community</i>
Rev. Izidor Lukic	<i>Albania</i>
David Lunn	<i>England & Wales</i>
Rev. Rolandas Makrickas	<i>Lithuania</i>
Helen McCoy	<i>Ireland</i>
Kieran McQuaid	<i>Scotland</i>
Sue Midolo	<i>Christian Life Communities</i>
Rev. Josyf-Ivan Miljan	<i>Ukraine</i>
Francesco Montero	<i>Youth of Our Lady</i>
Torsten Moritz	<i>Conference of European Churches</i>
Sarah Numico	<i>Conference of European Churches</i>
Rt. Rev. Keith Patrick O'Brien	<i>Scotland</i>
Nikolaj Ottosen-Stott	<i>Denmark</i>
Eliza Oudshoorn	<i>Netberlands</i>
Rev. István Pákozdi	<i>Hungary</i>
Alexia Paolino	<i>St. Egidio Community</i>
Aurimas Pautienius	<i>Lithuania</i>
Rev. Marinko Perković	<i>Bosnia Herzegovina</i>
Sylvie Pierre	<i>International Coordination of Young Christian Workers</i>
Riccardo Piol	<i>Communion and Liberation</i>
Anna Pizzinat	<i>International Alumni Association - Sale- sian Sisters</i>
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Rev. Joseph Printezis	<i>Greece</i>
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Italy

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Apostolate of the Teresian Movement

Youth of Mary Auxiliatrix

International Forum of Catholic Action

*Focolare Movement - Youth for a United
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Latvia

Ukraine

Omaaeec - Youth

Poland

Albania

Conference of European Churches

Slovakia

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Chemin Neuf Community

Slovenia

Salesian Youth Movement

Christian Life Communities

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*International Catholic Conference on
Scouting*

*International Young Catholic Students
(IYCS)*

Netherlands

St. Egidio Community

Czech Republic

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