



Reflections on the vocation of young people today Synod on Youth: Faith, Discernment, and Vocation

The period of youth has always been associated with a time of crisis; but today we find a new phenomenon: the man without a vocation.

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Pope Francis, in his encyclical, "Evangelii Gaudium," has focused his pontificate on the identity and mission of the Church, which is the joy of announcing the Gospel. It is not something new, because his predecessors had already made a strong call to the new Evangelization. Especially St. John Paul II that, before the celebration of the beginning of the third millennium, opened our eyes to the reality that two thirds of the world's population have not yet received the announcement that will allow them a vital encounter with the person of Jesus Christ resurrected, which is the beginning of the Christian event.

The Christian is a person, who has been conquered by the love of Christ and, moved by this love, opens to the service of his brothers, where he discovers the face and touches the flesh of Christ himself. The most urgent challenges that Pope Francis has posed to us, mobilizing the whole church in the synods convened for this new evangelization, are the family and the young.

Already the same term "synod" is very eloquent in this respect because in its Greek etymology it points to a "road that is made together". Since he first peered into the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis said: "We begin this path of the Church of Rome, bishop, and people, together, in brotherhood, love and reciprocal trust. Let's pray for each other, all over the world, so that there is a great brotherhood. This path must give fruit for the new evangelization. "

And the first path he invited us to travel together is family. During two years the whole church was praying and reflecting on God's project for our families in the third millennium. Beyond the reductionist visions of some media, the posited exhortation "Amoris Letitia" presents a Christian panorama of love in the family, in the face of the everyday realities in which many specific families live. Why do

young people do not want to get married? What are the most serious threats against the family and the most pressing challenges it faces every day? How to educate children today? What is the project of love to which God calls each family, with its "circumstances"?

Only in this pastoral context can we understand the so trite eighth chapter and resolve the dead-end that would raise the discussion at a purely speculative level. While it is true that there is no better praxis than a good and straight theory, theological principles have not changed, but we are not saved to all the tiring work of the accompaniment and moral discernment of every soul that needs or asks for help.

Now the Pope has proposed to us the second path that the whole Church must travel to fulfill its task of evangelization: the young. The period of youth has always been associated with a time of crisis, and we could cite philosophers, even before Jesus Christ, complaining about the unconsciousness and superficiality of the young people of their time. But today we find a new phenomenon, which some describe as "the man without vocation".

The statistical data on the large percentage of boys who change careers, who do not finish them or who do not exercise them for not being in a working world directly related to the chosen career, is only the tip of the iceberg of this great anthropological crisis. What to say if we inquire on issues related to one's own identity and sense of existence, which is then reflected in so many affective and psychological imbalances! It seems that we are more concerned about how to "fill" the time without getting bored than looking for a life project. We try to live at all times "having fun", "distracted" in our fantasies or the escapes of the virtual world, and often we end up "disoriented" of the road. Being delirious, without direction or destination.

It is said that on one occasion a child asked his grandfather at the feast of his golden wedding marriages: "-Hey, grandpa, how did you manage to hold so long married to my grandmother? -"Look, Son. I think we've lived through different times. In my time when something was ruined, it was fixed. Now, when something breaks, it is thrown away" That is why we can understand our dominant culture: of the discarding, of the provisional, of the inner emptiness. Where, as Thomas Eliot said, man "changes things believing that this way it is not necessary to change himself."

At this situation we must recover a genuine vocational culture; because no one has given life to himself. They didn't even ask us if we wanted to come into the world. Someone calls us and draws our attention. It is said that there are two important "days" in the life of every human being: the day he is born and the day he discovers for what. From the moment they gave birth to us, we discovered a voice that, naming us, demands our attention and an answer.

Who am I? Why am I precisely me, and what values are calling me? Socrates says that a life that does not ask for itself is not worth living; another, more recent philosopher, writes: "all vocations are constellations of values that are made present with respect to a specific person"

In the document that the Pope offers us for the pre-synod reflection, the fundamental steps for discernment are proposed. "Vocation discernment is the process by which the person comes to realize, in the dialogue with the Lord and listening to the voice of the Spirit, the fundamental choices, beginning with the state of life."

Perhaps what we are lacking most today is learning to listen, to be silent and to enter into dialogue in the middle of the noise of existence. The epitaph that received those who visited the temple of Delphi: "γνῶθι σεαυτὸν", know yourself, was considered the principle of wisdom. But today we invoke the principle of absolute freedom, without realizing that for it to be realized, it first needs to recognize its coordinates and its limits.

These are related to the triple source of the call:

1. - What am I: with my qualities, temperamental traits, and capacities at stake. Difficult to recognize when trying to deconstruct and pervert the anthropological concepts that have formed our Western culture, such as nature, life, person, marriage, family...
2. - What happens and demands my attention: that Ortega and Gasset described as "me and my circumstances". Those circumstances are precisely those that demand my attention and my answer.
3. - The other: with his voice and his presence. Because through the other I discover what is valuable to me, and above all, what is valuable in itself, which allows us to recognize our dignity and transcendence.

In the difficult, but necessary, coexistence with "the others" is the second great challenge for vocational discernment. It is not enough to discover who I am called to be but to find who can accompany me along the way. Belonging to a community is often decisive when it comes to verifying, experiencing and taking care of the call itself. Not for nothing, Berdjaev stated that in the family, the fundamental community, the individual becomes a person.

[1] XOSÉ MANUEL DOMÍNGUEZ PRIETO "Call and life project" Ed. PPC, 2007, p. 41