



01-B-04

VOCATIONS ANIMATORS

A break in the clouds

Priests, Brothers, Sisters, catechists, lay militants... all forms of commitment to the service of the Church have been affected by the vocations crisis.

Yet, in recent times a renewal of interest in vocation has become perceptible almost everywhere. But it remains precarious. This has led Brother Superior and his council to write to the Brothers to help them to reinforce and expand this renewal.

Here are the main lines of the circular

"Open your eyes and see the world's needs."

★ If the inspiring of vocations is reduced to mere propaganda for presenting impressive statistics then it were better not to mention it.

★ We must not fix our attention on statistics but on the young and the educational needs which arise.

"We invite each one of you to look at the youth of his own country or region as John Baptist de La Salle looked at those of Rheims, Paris and elsewhere. You will thus become more aware of the extent of the problem... the young need a greater number of educators to meet them — better trained to understand and speak to them and more Christ-like to make Him known to them." (Paragraphs 2 & 3 of the circular)

★ Well then?

— There are young people all around us: do we look on them with a little of the love that Christ has for them?

— Can we find out what is being done for them and what is not?

— Do we know who is working in the service of youth and what we could do to help them?

— Do we know how to pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest? Do we invite others to pray with us?

God's co-workers in inspiring vocations

The circular states that: "Each vocation is the mystery of God's meeting with man." Every vocation of baptised persons: priests, religious or married.

John Baptist de La Salle explains his vocation as Founder: "One commitment led to another without my having foreseen it from the beginning." It is in this way that young people and their educators can discern the authenticity of a call from God. The way in which a person responds to events and commits himself, when this happens repeatedly and becomes habitual, directs a boy or girl towards one or other form of Christian life. Discernment of vocations is a respectful study of the life and personality of the individual.

God and the young person are the protagonists in this encounter, but, parents, priests and Christian educators play the role of precursors: to make plain the way, to help find the right direction, to prepare the encounter.

To help inspire vocations is an educative action

To inspire vocations is an educative action. It is not something reserved for the chosen few. It is the right of all young Christians. It is not something entrusted only to specialists: all Christian educators exercise this apostolate according to their degree of responsibility.

All education worthy of the name helps to direct a boy or girl towards finding his or her place in society. It helps them to discover and develop their talents. It suggests professions...

Thus every Christian educator helps young people to find in the Church the kind of service to which they are called by their baptism. The inspiring of vocations is, in fact, the faith education experienced by young people: deepening of prayer life, gradual commitment, finding the right way in which to respond...

It is in this general framework, normal and healthy, that the educator can carry on a more personal dialogue with a young person without infringing his freedom, and come to the point where he can discuss with him the possibilities of concrete commitment.

Inspiring vocations is, therefore, the concern of all educators:

- ★ of parents first of all — no need to stress that
- ★ of priests and religious, who, more than by their words, should show young people who they, themselves, are and what they suggest, "Come and see"
- ★ of every educator, catechist or militant, who, also, represents an authentic form of service...
- ★ not everyone for himself but each for all in the service of all forms of vocation within the Church. The Spirit of God is not the Spirit of divisiveness but of unity.

In conclusion: a few questions

These questions challenge us as educators because sincere work in inspiring vocations reveals in a clear light what we are doing and what we should be doing.

Have we not said, "precursors of the encounter between Christ and the young?"

★ I cannot fulfil this role without showing that the Lord counts in my life, that my life guarantees the truth of my words.

★ I cannot fulfill this role if I'm interested only in the intellectual abilities of the young, if I do not see them as real human beings with their aptitudes and their dreams as well as the difficulties they meet with.

If I do not listen to their personal questions — those concerning the meaning of their lives — I am merely a dispenser of knowledge.

★ Of what kind of future am I a precursor. What do I consider success in life? Having a good position? a high salary? or does it consist in doing or being something else, for example, putting oneself at the service of others for the sake of Christ?

★ We are all precursors: our families, our communities, our institutions... Are they places where one can encounter the Lord through us, the faithful, who compose, organise and direct them? Groups of people, also, speak a language. What message does the group for which I am responsible or of which I form part, have for young people?

Our Prayer?

- ★ First of all we must ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into His harvest.
- ★ Secondly, we must offer ourselves as workers in the apostolate of vocations among the young people confided to our care.
- ★ We must seek the grace of conversion in order to become authentic messengers of God's call.
- ★ We must realise what that implies for us. We must begin now!

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