

**THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL
AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE**

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**THE PASTORAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF
THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL PROMOTES
EXPLICITLY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND GUIDANCE.**

We all know that the vocational dimension is constituted by a Christian identity and is, therefore, inherent to Christian faith. From here it follows that, the vocational dimension cannot be ignored in any systematic catechetical process.

**1. Vocational education and guidance
by means of the process of Christian initiation
in the Catholic School.**

The Pastoral Educational Program of the Catholic School must explicitly assume the vocational education and guidance of youth and, as a consequence, be involved in helping each student by means of personal accompaniment in order that they discover their Christian vocation. It is in this context where the Catholic School's Pastoral Educational Program must pay special attention to the promotion and accompaniment of priestly vocations and vocations to consecrated life.

But the task of vocational education and guidance that enters within the process of Christian initiation specifically in the Catholic School is developed in all its various levels by means of school structures. Therefore, one should not make the mistake of limiting or inhibiting in an exclusive way vocational education and guidance at the explicit catechetical level or within the catechumen process.

Nevertheless, within the Catholic School's Christian initiation program, there are times and structures in which vocational planning can and should be realized in a form which is more intense and systematic. For example, in the school religious instruction program, in which one is educated and guided in terms of vocation as a Christian view of the world, humankind and history is presented. But it is, above all,

through the catechumen process in which the vocational dimension should be present from beginning to end.

**2. Vocational education and guidance
through the catechumen process
in the Catholic School.**

We shall see, although briefly, how the central core of the catechumen process is the following of Christ and how the vocational dimension is present in the basic content of this process (1).

**• The following of Christ,
core of the catechumen process.**

The following of Christ can be spelled out in these three dimensions:

- a road to conversion,
- a progressive commitment to the Kingdom and
- an option for the Christian community.

Vocational ministry must spring forth and be supported precisely in this central core of the catechumen process. Let us look at each of the three dimensions we have just cited.

* The road to conversion carries with it an attitude of discernment in the search for God's will.

* The progressive commitment for the Kingdom of God leads to an attitude of availability to be able to participate in God's plan which is the program of Jesus.

* The option for the Christian community is spelled out in its being built up drawing upon different charisms, ministries and services that the Spirit stirs up in it.

**• The vocational dimension in the basic content
of the catechumen process.**

If the catechumen process lacks the vocational dimension or if this aspect is neglected, the process would be only meeting half of its objectives. In effect, the fundamental content of a catechumen process demands a vocational dimension in order not to miss out on an essential part of its meaning.

Let us look at the meaning of what we are saying by very briefly analyzing the vocational dimension in the following basic content of the catechumen process: Faith, Life Plan, Kingdom of God, Christian Community.

*** Faith.**

If faith is the encounter between God and humankind, and humankind's response to the meeting with God; the influence of faith in personal history is the phenomenon called "vocation". In fact, vocation is the encounter with God with a concrete person, in the person's historical situation, and it is humankind's response in concrete circumstances.

So then, from this perspective, educating in the faith is identified with "vocation educating", that is to say, to educating to give an historical response (in my life, my personal circumstances) to the gift of faith.

* **Life plan.**

The task of the catechumen program is to lead the young person to the realization of a Christian life plan which is coherent with his/her Christian identity. And vocation is accepting God's plan as mankind's plan, spelled out in personal and historical circumstances.

* **Commitment for the Kingdom.**

"Educating in faith" is the same as having each person participate in the Kingdom of God and taking active part in it. "Finding a vocation" is actively affirming that God has a place for me reserved in his Kingdom as a gift and a commitment at the same time.

* **Christian community.**

There is an intrinsic relationship between vocation and community: it is in community that the true nature of vocation is discovered and developed in its particular charisms and services.

So then "educating for community" is equivalent to integrating oneself within it in a dynamic and participatory way by means of the distinct ministries, services and charisms through which the Church is built up.

• **Sensitivity and vocational guidance for teachers and parents.**

The concern for awakening vocations is a **duty of the entire Christian community**. Consequently, an important work of vocational guidance in the Catholic School is in sensitizing members of the educational community to vocation ministry, particularly teachers and parents and especially in the measure that they are involved in the school's Educational Ministry Program.

* **Teachers:**

In the Catholic School, where the Christian educational mission is **shared** by religious, priests and lay colleagues, there also needs to be developed a **shared** vocation ministry in which all teachers are involved. Therefore, the Catholic School should be concerned about fostering in teachers, especially in those who are directly involved in faith education (religious instruction teachers, leaders of Christian groups...), the responsibility of awakening, suggesting and accompanying vocations and among these, vocations for the priesthood and the consecrated life.

From here it follows naturally "the need of giving adequate training to educators in the faith which will allow for an evaluation of the vocational dimension in the Christian faith

and the meaning of different charisms in the service of the building up of the church" (2).

* **Parents:**

Since there is concern for motivating and guiding parents so that, as the first instructors of the faith for their children, they are involved as much as possible in their education and in their **process of Christian initiation**, the Catholic School also must concern itself with sensitizing and helping parents in their responsibility for the vocational guidance of their children and especially as it relates to the consecrated life (3).

• **Special attention and dedication to the fostering and accompaniment of priestly and religious vocations.**

As has already been pointed out, within vocational education and guidance that is carried out throughout the entire process of Christian initiation, the Catholic School's Educational Ministry Program must pay special attention and devote itself to the fostering and accompaniment of priestly and religious vocations.

We all understand that this special attention and dedication to the fostering and accompaniment of priestly and religious vocations is based fundamentally on three motives:

1. The importance of these vocations for the life of the Church.
2. The difficulties that are inherent in embracing any of these vocations.
3. The critical situation of these vocations today.

And so in the article that follows concerning vocation ministry activities we are referring primarily but not exclusively to the ministry that is specific to priestly and religious vocations. •

(1) The development of the guidelines that follow can be found in "*The relationship of Vocation Ministry with Youth Ministry*", Revista de Pastoral vocacional, "Todos Uno", number 103, July-September, 1990, pp. 15-21.

(2) Cite further "*The Brother in the context of shared mission*", Cuadernos Lasalianos, number 5, CVS, Valladolid, p. 76.

(3) Cite further *Gaudium et Spes* 52 and *Familiaris Consortio*, 53, 65 and following.