

Congregation of the Sacred Hearts
of Jesus and Mary



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24

Com-Union



SSCC Vocation Ministry

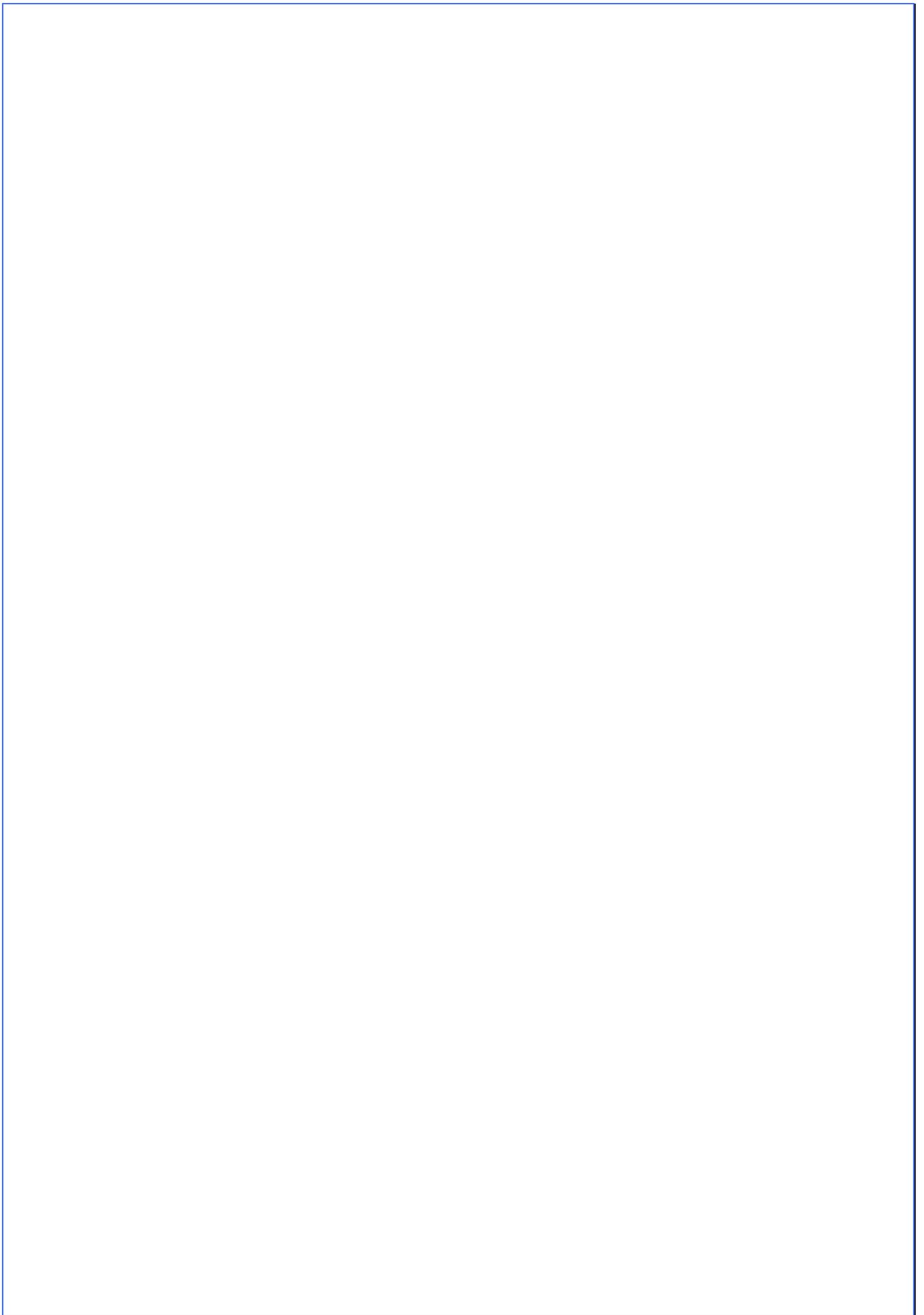


Table of contents

INTRODUCTION: SS.CC. VOCATION MINISTRY <i>Rosa María Ferreiro ss.cc. and Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ss.cc.</i>	5
COMMUNICATIONS AND VOCATION WORK <i>Fernando Cordero Morales ss.cc.</i>	6
SHARING MY SACRED HEARTS VOCATION EXPERIENCE <i>Leini María Ferrín M. ss.cc.</i>	10
ECUADOR: WHAT IS GOING ON IN VOCATION MINISTRY <i>Víctor Gualán Rueda ss.cc., Magín Vega ss.cc., Juan Carlos Vélez Delgado ss.cc.</i>	12
WAYS OF COMMUNICATION AND VOCATION MINISTRY <i>Martha Elizabeth Fuentes ss.cc.</i>	14
HOW IN OUR PROVINCE OF THE UNITED STATES DO WE ACCEPT AND ORGANIZE PASTORAL VOCATIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND PRACTICES? <i>Paul Zaccone ss.cc.</i>	16
"JESUS LOOKED ON THE YOUNG MAN WITH LOVE AND SAID ..." <i>Ana Lucia González González ss.cc.</i>	18
A CULTURE OF CALL, WALKING WITH JESUS <i>Pedro Pablo Achondo Moya ss.cc.</i>	20
MY OWN EXPERIENCE OF VOCATION <i>Morta Sihite ss.cc.</i>	22
YOUTH MINISTRY AND SS.CC. VOCATION MINISTRY IN KINSHASA <i>Willy Mpia Makila ss.cc.</i>	23
WHO LISTENS TO YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY? <i>Nuria San Francisco Lobo ss.cc.</i>	25
AN EXPERIENCE OF VOCATION MINISTRY <i>Christian Flottes ss.cc.</i>	27

“A YOUNG MAN APPROACHED HIM AND ASKED, MASTER, WHAT GOOD WORK MUST I DO TO RECEIVE ETERNAL LIFE?...”	
<i>Martha Montesinos ss.cc.</i>	30
THE EXPERIENCE OF THE IRELAND-ENGLAND PROVINCE	
<i>Shane Halpin</i>	32
VOCATION MINISTRY IN AFRICA, AREA OF KINSHASA	
<i>Véronique Lundolo Kafuti ss.cc.</i>	34
IS VOCATION MINISTRY A PRIORITY OF OUR APOSTOLIC ACTIVITY?	
<i>Alex Vigueras Cherres ss.cc.</i>	36
VOCATION MINISTRY	
<i>Lucia Sandoval ss.cc.</i>	38
DOING VOCATION PROMOTION IN INDONESIA	
<i>Lambertus Enga Hurint ss.cc.</i>	40
HOW VOCATION MINISTRY IS ASSUMED AND ORGANIZED IN INDONESIA	
<i>Sofía Anastasia Sabu ss.cc.</i>	42
HOW VOCATION MINISTRY IS ORGANIZED IN MEXICO: EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICES	
<i>SS.CC. Brothers’ Team of Vocation Ministry of the Province of Mexico</i>	43
THE PROVINCE PARAGUAY-BOLIVIA GLADLY SHARES HOW WE HAVE BEEN ORGANIZING YOUTH AND VOCATION MINISTRY AND YOU... WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? COME AND SEE.....	
<i>Vocation Ministry Team of SS.CC. Sisters of the Province of Paraguay-Bolivia</i>	45
“HEY, LOOK AT THIS GUY, THIS ONE IS DONE FOR”	
<i>Marek Kosendiak ss.cc.</i>	47
A DECISION AT THE CROSSROADS	
<i>Zenobia Gamarra ss.cc.</i>	49
VOCATION MINISTRY IN THE PROVINCE OF BRAZIL	
<i>Luiz Antonio Da Silva ss.cc.</i>	51
THE VOCATION MINISTRY OF THE SACRED HEARTS THE PROVINCE OF PERU	
<i>Lucio Colque Quispe ss.cc.</i>	53

Introduction:

SS.CC. Vocation Ministry

May 2012

Dear Sisters and Brothers;

We wanted to dedicate the current issue of the Com-Union magazine, the last of our mandate, to youth and vocation ministry since it is a topic of vital importance for the life of the Church and the future of our Congregation.

Working with children and youth has been a preferential field of our apostolate since the beginning of our Institute. Because working in this sphere is an efficient way of committing ourselves to the proclamation of the Gospel with a view to transforming society into the Kingdom of God.

The different contributions you find herein offer you an opportunity to know something more about this subject in order to reflect a little more on this important challenge. At the present time it is a challenge that means being close to young people in order to know, to welcome and to accompany them, offering them the opportunity to discover a plan, in the Gospel, that will fill their lives with meaning.

All of youth ministry is vocation in the sense that it must be focused on helping young people to assume their responsibility of becoming Christian persons.

When a young person has decided to serve the Kingdom of God from within the Christian community, it is an opportune moment for us to explain the different vocations and among these is the radical following of Jesus in religious life.

In a time when faith has become less visible we have to be proactive. Our Sacred Hearts' Congregation is a Gospel path through which some of our members have arrived at the height of holiness, receiving official recognition by the Church. Our spirituality can still attract today's youth.

We have the daily challenge of discovering the newness of the generations who come to life with a certainty that the Spirit has a proposal for each one of them. It is a question of being with young people and freely giving time to them so that the seed of the Sower becomes fruitful in them. Otherwise, how are they going to grow if they are not evangelized? (cf. Rom 10)

Fraternally in the SS.CC.,

Rosa Mª Ferreiro ss.cc.
Superior General



Javier Álvarez-Ossorio ss.cc.
Superior General



Communications and Vocation work



Fernando Cordero Morales ss.cc.

In his 2012 Message for World Day of Social Communications, Benedict XVI made an appeal for a balance in communication between speaking and silence. This is sane advice and very applicable to both youth and adults, who, in today's culture of continuous communication, discern their need for such in the silence of contemplation, reflection and prayer. The Pope writes: *"Attention should be paid to the various types of websites, applications and social networks which can help people today to find time for reflection and authentic questioning, as well as making space for silence and occasions for prayer, meditation or sharing of the word of God."*

Benedict, in his messages, discourses and homilies, invites us to engage with the means of communication and to use the new instruments which Internet and the social media offer us to propose the Gospel and also to carry out vocation work.

We have youth and vocation ministries, a commitment to youth stepped out in a specific journey: gathering, weekly meetings, prayer, and accompaniment. In all this there is no way to leave out using all the networks to continue and sustain the work. It is similar in other types of pastoral work. Today, the media is of vital importance to get out there and make yourself known. However, we have to offer something that is alive, challenging, compelling. In our case we have a charism to offer and about which we cannot be silent: *"contemplate, announce and live the love of God."*

From the telephone directory to a list of candidates

God uses diverse ways to call us to follow Jesus and to religious life. To some the call comes in an organized pastoral effort, to others in more original forms. I agree with our confrere Alcindo Lopes who always says with amusement that he first encountered the Congregation by means of the telephone directory. God used a simple and informative instrument. Information is fundamental to inquiring, drawing closer and beginning a journey. An initial telephone call started the contact, and then the follow up was through a process of accompaniment.

With technological advances, in addition to our customary ways, we find that the internet also helps those young people who have not made a decision about a vocation or have not even considered one. For this, a vocation web page has been created in Spain that is oriented towards religious life but with a new concept: assembling together the largest number possible of realities and charisms. Thus 39 institutes of religious life supported the creation of the web page buscoalgomas.com which already has had more than 9,000 visits. The site works through a video guide which leads the visitor to different congregations depending on his or her preferences.

Noemi Saiz who created this site is convinced that one can find a vocation through the internet. *“The site can be a spark in some cases or even an open door to someone who feels called but doesn’t know where to begin looking.”* Twenty have made contact with the site builders. Five of these have been directed to religious congregations for follow-up. *“It is par for the course that they share their doubts with us. We encourage them to follow through,”* adds Saiz.

As normal as pasta and clams

In Spain for example, from the canonization of Saint Damien until now the Congregation has had an interesting presence in the programs on TVE (Spanish Television), which have broadcast the Congregation’s life in India, the Congo and Mozambique, with high quality, in the program “Testigos hoy” (Witnesses Today). It is directed by our brother Isaac García. These programs reach a faithful and extensive audience, what happens is that they are not much within our reach. So we must be attentive to our presence in the local media, especially toward those through whose proximity we can have a major influence in making our life known. At the first meeting of Directors of Information in religious institutes organized by CONFER, we were invited to take advantage of this type of media and not to refuse when asked for a contribution, an interview or a testimony. We are not talking about turning to a reality show like “Big Brother,” or other programs of this sort, but about other more viable offers such as radio, press or television which tend to be multimedia. My experience here is generally positive although sending news, editing, organizing and interviewing or giving one requires a focused effort.

Recently I have had opportunity to participant in “Onda Cadiz,” on several occasions. One time I accompanied our brother Damiano Tonegutti, right after he was ordained a deacon. This had to do with a half hour interview which the director expanded beyond an hour. In my opinion the interview put across a model of church as welcoming and close to the people. Damien was able to tell his vocation story and present certain elements of everyday life. For example, he finished by recommending a recipe for pasta and clams from his country. In addition to being broadcast on the radio, internet and television, the interview was listed in “A la carte” on the channel. In the neighborhood where we live it was good for folks to see pictures of their parish and their priests, to hear positive talk about their environment, about which there is often no news or what is broadcast is negative. The younger ones felt drawn to see this type of program. Who knows what God can draw out of the things we live and recount?

Low budget, home made

Videos, which we get on You Tube, also permit us to show our vocation and mission. These can be made with a simple video camera, even with an ordinary camera which means low budget. Yes, a lot of time goes into scripting, copying, editing... but it worth the effort. In youth ministry as least in the Iberian Province, as in the parish of the Good Shepherd in San Fernando, videos remain an attraction for the youth. In this way we have made many announcements inviting them to the youth ministry process supported by this format and we have produced works that show the life of our Sacred Hearts brothers and sisters. We live in a visual culture and we have make an effort to get into this new language without falling into trivialities, all the while giving testimony to what we believe in and for what we have given our lives. There will come a time when we will see brothers from other places not only in photographs but through video, in a report on their presences, etc. Communication brings us

close to everyone, can be vocationally attractive for young people; and for us, the brothers and sister of the Sacred Hearts, a possibility for building the network of relationships in service of communion.

“To love at 18 or at 81 years old”

Recently I interviewed one of our novices, Pablo Bernal for our SS.CC. Province web. Speaking, for example, of the older brothers he stated: *“Thoughts cross my mind.... on the one hand, it astounds me to think that the Congregation might get too old to be able to fulfill its mission. Then the thought comes to my mind that our mission, from beginning to end is to love...and one can love at 18 or at 81, and probably better at 81. Often I think about all that the brothers ahead of me have lived. In their stories, seeded with both highs and lows, I imagine all they have lived as brother religious and in the name of Jesus.”* Note that without these interviews posted on the Internet we would not have been able to enjoy the responses of Pablo, Jorge, Paco, Pilar Sanchez or Crisanto Pena. The internet means not having to wait for an issue of the provincial bulletin and gives us the possibility of interfacing with tuenti¹, Facebook, Twitter, etc. We received several comments on the web from this interview and it was shared on social networks. It reached family, SS.CC. brothers, friends, acquaintances, and the youth with whom he had been in youth ministry. We also have the “*revista 21*” platform, whose site gets an astronomical number of visits, and where we are offered the chance to post our stories.

Our web sites are another opportunity to do vocation work. In fact our provincial web site has already received many messages from persons wanting to be in contact with the Congregation. Without a doubt, the new technologies have become a showcase in which spectators interact make contact with us. The internet can be a good tool in the task of evangelization. The experience of www.pastoralsj.org, the Jesuit Castilian Province’s web for youth and university ministry demonstrates this. *“There are many people who would not go to a physical location but whom, using virtual means, browse and connect with the contents,”* explains Jose Rodriguez Olaizola, one of the coordinators of the web site who defends the church’s presence in the digital world. *“It is no panacea nor is it something to avoid. One needs to be here; it is where people meet.”* In the same vein, Isidro Catela, the head of the Spanish Episcopal Conference’s Information Office, made many statements at the Congress *“I believe in the Internet”*: *“Digital communication makes sense in the measure that, in addition to being contacted or hyper- connected people, we are people who meet.”* The net becomes a continent to be discovered; an opportunity to make God present in the midst of the virtual world so that the question of vocation might emerge.

While recognizing the risks involved in the internet, Benedict XVI was encouraging in his message for the 45th World Day of Social Communications. *“I would like then to invite Christians, confidently and with an informed and responsible creativity, to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible. This is not simply to satisfy the desire to be present, but because this network is an integral part of human life. The web is contributing to the development of new and more complex intellectual and spiritual horizons, new forms of shared awareness. In this field too we are called to proclaim our faith that Christ is God, the Savior of humanity and of history, the one in whom all things find their fulfillment (cf. Eph 1:10). The proclamation of the Gospel requires a communication which is at once respectful and sensitive, which stimulates the heart and moves the conscience; one which reflects the*

¹ Tuenti is a Spanish social networking platform.

example of the risen Jesus when he joined the disciples on the way to Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-35). By his approach to them, his dialogue with them, his way of gently drawing forth what was in their heart, they were led gradually to an understanding of the mystery.” A strong invitation for a fruitful relationship between communications and vocation work!

Sharing my Sacred Hearts Vocation Experience

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Suffering, or difficulties, or persecution or famine or death?

... Nothing can separate us from the love God has shown us" (Rom. 8, 35 ...)

Leini María Ferrín M. ss.cc.



I was born in the Province of Manabi - Ecuador, but from the age of two I moved with my parents and brothers to live in La Independencia, a small town in the Province of Santo Domingo - Ecuador. When I was twelve I was lucky to meet the brothers and sisters of the Sacred Hearts who worked in my village. I can say that this is where my adventure with God began. Little by little I was involved in the missionary life of the community, it should be noted that at that time sisters and brothers of the SS.CC. lived in the same parish house where both brothers and sisters were concerned with finding the means needed so that the community could take care of its life of prayer and fraternity and from there be witnesses to the merciful love of God for all the people they served.

This way of being and living touched me deeply, especially when despite my young age, I was invited to participate in liturgical celebrations: prayers, adoration, Eucharist, meals, parties, as well as pastoral organizations that they always planned together. This testimony of closeness, concern for one another, respect, brotherhood and sisterhood and family spirit had a great impact on me and at the same time filled me with personal questioning that I gradually cleared up, especially when I discovered little by little that what I was admiring was the "network" that the Lord was using to make me experience that his call was becoming increasingly strong and real. Seeing those SS.CC. men and women living and working together for a common cause awakened in me a deep desire to know more about this Jesus whom they followed and served with much love. I discovered that the way I could quench my thirst of how to know and love Him was sharing with others my gifts and talents, these human and spiritual riches that my parents had cultivated in me. My experience of living in a large family was extended to the community that opened its doors for me to discover new adventures and possibilities.

In this lived experience I felt intensely that God was calling me and that He expected an answer from me which deserved to be given with the enthusiasm and the freshness of a heart that begins to awaken and sets out to find what God wants.

To the extent that I saw the needs of my people, my country and the world, I discovered that the missionaries were very few, so they had to double their efforts to respond to many emergencies and needs, these experiences questioned me constantly, marked me deeply, leaving significant footprints in my life.

I do not remember that they described to me in words the spirituality of the SS.CC. but their testimony was enough for me to drink from the source of this spirituality that CONTEMPLATES LIVES AND ANNOUNCES GOD'S REDEEMING LOVE, embodied especially in the most

disadvantaged in society, I have the certainty that it captivated me because it meant prolonging my family experience where faith, communion and announcing was already a path followed without ceasing.

From an early age, full of expectations and dreams, I began to participate in groups of girls, where we played sang and read verses of God's word that "allegedly" would be lived during the week, so we could animate the Sunday Masses in our parish. Later I prepared myself to assume the role of catechist and as facilitator of a youth community, I also participated in the pastoral activities where the SS.CC. sisters and brothers went. These were my best motivations, from where I could discover, cultivate and clarify the Lord's call to follow Him in this religious family. The truth is that at the beginning I felt fear, resistance and the deep pain of leaving my family where I had lived the most happy, healthy and full moments of my life. To leave my family involved a very difficult and painful decision, but the Lord's love, had seduced and conquered my heart.

At 16 I finally decided enter to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts to be a woman devoted to SS.CC. placing at the service of the kingdom who I am, sure that the Lord would provide everything else.

A year ago I celebrated 25 years of being captivated by that first love of Jesus to me and mine to Him. Every day is an opportunity to continue to listen to His call and to respond with joy to every one of those most in need, who cross my road looking for a hand and a heart to welcome them. I leave my life in the merciful heart of God, for Him to model it every day.

Ecuador: what is going on in Vocation Ministry



Víctor Gualán Rueda ss.cc.



Magín Vega ss.cc.



Juan Carlos Vélez Delgado ss.cc.

Starting from the formation work carried out by the French brothers in the Vice Province of Ecuador, the vocations of our youth to religious and priestly life has been prioritized. Today we verify the fruits of this ministry in the Ecuadorian priests who make up the Vice Province.

In the Vice province of Ecuador, since the eighties, the formation and vocation promotion of the youth has moved forward, almost uninterruptedly, as a response both to the concerns for native vocations as well as to the concern of the French fathers to respond to people knocking on the door for admittance to religious life.

The high points were between 1980 and 2000 when a great influx of vocations occurred. The cause of this was that studies were done in Ecuador and youth ministry was done very seriously by those very same students and together with the SS.CC. brothers and sisters Of the fifteen consecrated brothers that we are today, many of us were encouraged in our vocations by our sisters in Ecuador.

The community has always shown a concern for this pastoral field, responding to the challenge, a brother has always been dedicated to running the vocation promotion of young people. Likewise, there was a concern for forming the right people to receive the youth in the first stage of their formation. It is a stage where although they come in search answers and making a serious commitment, the reason for which, years later, they may determine that their vocation is not to the consecrated life. Everyone knows that this is what happens; it is a normal process in formation.

In the last twelve years we have had fewer entering and little perseverance; our brothers are being formed outside and few continue from the postulancy stage to the novitiate.

The Congregation, now preoccupied with a major discernment, has proposed the voluntary placement of young people in adult communities with the goal of familiarizing them with the charism and style of life. The length of this stage does not be more than six months, and the two final periods have been done in Quito in the same house as the postulancy.

Every brother here thinks of himself as part of vocation promotion and in our parishes we promote the awakening of vocations to priestly life, both diocesan and religious. Every brother does this in support of the brother is handling the vocation promotion and in response to the fact that we are all promoters of vocations in service to the kingdom of God.

The stage of the aspirancy or of vocation accompaniment: youth from 15 years of age and up participate; they are offered missions, retreats and get-togethers, and they continue to open

up to dialog and discernment. This stage is from six months to two years, depending on the time the young man needs to graduate. If he is a graduate we offer a volunteer placement.

This stage can be six months in an adult community where they establish schedules and studies about the Congregation and the life of the saints for the candidate as well as social or pastoral work.

Postulancy: this stage is determined by entering into formation in studies of philosophy and of community life where the candidate prepares himself for a deeper and more radical discernment.

The Vice Province of Ecuador has continued to experience different processes for taking up and promoting vocation ministry, which is linked in some way to youth ministry either because of affinity or the lack of brothers for the work of youth ministry. Some insist that all the brothers be involved, at the time of committing to vocation promotion, and so make it a priority for our vice provincial community. This means placing the theme on the table for discussion from different perspectives at our assemblies and retreats, not only as a renewal of our own commitment to follow Jesus but also as a way to insist on the coherence of each one's life as the most effective way to encourage and promote vocations.

For the year under review, the vice provincial community has asked that an action team be set up that would have a wide participation: the Postulancy and its leaders, together with a full time vocation director who would make the rounds organizing and presenting conferences, retreats, meetings, camps with young people, in the places where we are present, who have a vocation interest.

For this purpose we wanted to put together a calendar with specific activities which would permit us to unify the different tasks in our various locations and to have space in them for direct youth and vocation promotion. Moreover we want to involve brothers in every one of our locations in this undertaking which is vital and central in our vice provincial life.

Finally, we are creating and recreating a way, by fits and starts, in this service of promoting youth and vocation ministry, that integrates organized and planned accompaniment with the movements of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the young people and in the life of our vice province along the line of seeking and finding capable young people who are open to following a plan of life according to the spirituality of our Congregation.

Ways of communication and Vocation Ministry



Martha Elizabeth Fuentes ss.cc.

Given the vastness of the subject I feel the need to define it a bit more and I will do so with two points that came to me after some time of reflection.

1. A vocations ministry internet service. (Although it sounds very pretentious), and
2. What we would need to consider as vocations ministry when faced with the influence the mobile phone, internet and television has on young people.

First of all, I would like to give a brief explanation of two terms:

Vocation Ministry: I understand this ministry as a ministry that seeks to give meaning to life; working with young people so that they can make choices in their lives, from the conviction that they are the beloved sons and daughters of God. I also want to take into account that through this ministry we present our SS.CC. way of living religious life as a meaningful way of life.

Young people: The term "young" contains countless realities. There are different ways of experiencing being young and consequently different experiences that young people have, depending on cultural, religious, economic, social, geographical, technological, gender factors etc. I will use this term broadly realizing that it has great diversity and there is a danger of generalization.

The internet at the service of Vocation Ministry

Why the internet and not other ways of communication? From an optimistic view I believe that the internet, even with all the "junk" that circulates there, is an open easy access and an opportunity. It brings together the other ways of communicating; we can watch TV channels, films, listen to music and radio transmissions, read newspapers, books and magazines of all kinds. This virtual space connects country to country, culture to culture, language to language, one corner of the globe to another. I would say that this is a virtual world of great diversity. In cyberspace we are not only receiving a message, but also emitting one. It is a place where you can create, design, express, interact, where everything and everyone fits. Here we can share thoughts, ideas, news, photos, videos, articles, poetry, life experiences, initiatives, etc. The vast majority of people on this planet interact in this space, especially the younger generation and teenagers. All this makes me think that here we have a good chance to use this medium and put it at the service of a "meaningful life" and to raise awareness of our SS.CC. religious life option as a good alternative.

Today we easily find vocation advertising in the virtual world, especially in websites and blogs, although more in the sense of making an institution known. We, SS.CC. brothers and sisters, have congregational and provincial websites, plus some blogs. Without taking away the importance this has by way of information, I believe that young people are looking for more information, perhaps from someone with whom they can interact. In this case I see the importance of using various social networks that exist on the web to do vocation ministry.

Regarding the above, I wonder how many young people visit the spaces we have on the web, or how many are interested in knowing our way of religious life through this medium? Or better still, how many will be interested in knowing Jesus and his plan for life? Many do not even know that this possibility exists. Could we reproduce, in the cyber world, what we are doing in practice regarding vocation ministry? Do we expect the young people to look for us before going to meet them and take an interest in their life and reality? In this sense, is it not worth "to waste time" being connected? It is for us to decide how we want to influence this virtual space.

What we need to consider is how vocation ministry confronts the influence of mobile phones, internet and television on young people.

- The mobile phone: "The electronic device that gives identity" or "the friend who goes with you everywhere." In the world of young people, not having a mobile phone is like not being a person or being "isolated from the rest of the world." Even for young people in the "lower" social class, the mobile phone is something ordinary and obligatory, regardless of the type of mobile and the opportunities that it presents. In the lives of several young people, the mobile phone takes up a good part of the time, sometimes replacing sleep at night. With the mobile, young people create social networks of friends, keeping in contact all the time through messages or calls.
- The Internet: "The social networking world." This virtual space connects young people from various situations and places. Through the internet young people interact, create virtual communities of friends, get to know each other, express themselves, search, travel, find their "choice in life" create international relationships, find above all what there is to know about sex, and also risk of being victims of large trafficking networks. They connect to the virtual world but sometimes disconnect from the real world.
- Television: Although perhaps the large majority of young people no longer watch TV programs, at least in some Latin American countries it continues to be one of the most influential ways for young people to be controlled by big monopolies, especially the through open signal TV. From an early age TV, with its entertainment programs, "accompanies the development" of children, adolescents and young people. That is, it has a very big influence on the way of being, of speaking, thinking and acting for a large part of young people. We know that several entertainment programs predominate with violence, fame, drugs, sex, money, success, power. It imposes models and paths of unattainable happiness, and tramples on many young people's right to choose, opt for and decide.

I know there are alternative channels of an educational and religious nature, even though they are few. However, they are not the channels most sought after by young people.

These three ways of communicating are influencing the lives of young people in a powerful and accelerated way. When making choices in life and making decisions, if one can speak of this, the offers rain down as consumer product offerings that "*will give meaning to life and bring about happiness*".

For me the challenge remains open...

How in our Province of the United States do we accept and organize pastoral vocations, experiences, and practices?

Paul Zaccone ss.cc.



This is the vision we are now implementing and trying to live out.

We must always remember that a “religious vocation” comes from God.

I am new to this position of “vocation director” for the new Province of the United States, yet the position has been held by many before me, I have some tradition to fall back on and an open field before me. The position has a full-time status that allows me to spend all of my ministry time dedicated to this important work. If, in fact, the Province is to continue to live and grow, we must recognize the importance of inviting others to join us, to continue the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Church today.

The primary call to join us in the Congregation of Jesus and Mary comes from God; this places the person in a position to choose the SS.CC. charism and lifestyle. Once they have recognized their vocation and made the specific choice of the Congregation it is important to see if they pass basic criteria.

Have they taken a look at other orders, groups or congregations? What is their education? Do they meet the age criteria?

It is important to look at the above when considering accepting someone to the Congregation. Once communication has begun, it is important they obtain information on the Congregation via our web site. And, should they have any particular questions, as vocation director I can assist them. Once the communication process has begun, we “connect” the inquirer with a member of the SS.CC. Congregation, who will walk along with the person as he discerns. We try to involve all of the community members in vocation work. The inquirer will be invited to “Come and See” and spend some time with the Congregation through visitations, prayer, social, and other activities.

It is important that the person strongly continues their prayer life and also seeks out a spiritual director so that the discernment process unfolds appropriately.

Many times, the inquirer comes from one of the SS.CC. parishes and the SS.CC. priest/brother/pastor has a direct link with the person, which is better for their getting to know the Congregation and in order to have a spiritual director.

The length of time for this process varies according to the individual and their progress in discerning their vocation and the call to the SS.CC. life. As one can see growth in the

individual, an invitation is extended to the “candidate” to go forward in their journey by asking to become a postulant and entering the pre-novitiate.

The pre-novitiate can be one or two years of living the SS.CC. life in a community and relying on its members to assist in their discernment process.

The basic criteria for the pre-novitiate are their desire, a physical and psychological exam, and a recommendation by a member of the SS.CC. Congregation.

Should good progress be made during this time, at the end the Candidate, accompanied by his Spiritual Director and the members of the SS.CC. community, will make the decision to enter the SS.CC. Novitiate. The novitiate is by its specific characteristics a unique time, which guides the person who is associating himself with the SS.CC. Congregation as a “member”. This commitment for 365 days plus 1, is oriented towards discernment from within the SS.CC. Congregation.

The acceptance process is organized to assist the individual in their personal discernment process. Each call, each individual, each vocation is unique and both God and the Congregation have to respect it as such.

Vocation ministry is only a particular part of the discernment process, which must be considered in the overall context of the SS.CC. discernment which highlights the personal call to enter into a growth process that culminates in the novitiate. The choice of priesthood or lay brother becomes more apparent.

The lived experience shows that through the different phases of the discernment process the “SS.CC. religious vocation” emerges in the reality of life lived from day to day in the community, in the relationships with one another and in our personal relationship to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Experiences outside the community in the context of the Church, world, society and particularly in the surroundings are important for exemplifying our Christ.

Basic traditions to our charism such as adoration, the singing of the Salve Regina in Latin, and community gatherings have become an important part of sharing who we are.

The concrete practices, of the SS.CC. lifestyle, are lived by example and a way of passing on our values and beliefs. The inquirer, candidate, postulant, pre-novice, or novice will glean from the lived experience, what we are all called to be as servants of the Good God.

In all actuality, I and those in formation need to see how little we are and must step aside and allow God to do His great work. For the reality always lies in the truth that all vocations come from God and guided by Him! No matter what the interactions are with those individuals who believe they are being called, it is to be done with respect, truth and fairness.

May we continue to invite and grow in our SS.CC. religious life...

Let us pray for SS.CC. vocations.

To the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary be honor and glory!

"Jesus looked on the young man with love and said ..."

Ana Lucia González González ss.cc.



It is from this Biblical text of this experience of encounter that I want to share with you my views on youth and vocation ministry in Colombia; and there is no other starting point, but from the encounter with Jesus, who loves and looks lovingly on young people. This look of Jesus towards young people is a school for us, because it brings us face to face with an undeniable reality *"young people are increasingly out of our reach or rather, our language is out of their reach"*, Jesus himself experienced this, *"the young man was sad at what he was being told,"* ... so, faced with this reality, what is our way of looking? How do we see things? These are the questions I ask myself each time I go to a community entrusted to me by the YVM.

When we participate in the meetings of young religious, the central theme, in addition to formation, is the YVM, the challenges and demands that we face every day and at every meeting. For us, a ministry with children, with the sick including education is much "easier", but the YVM leaves us almost without words and not because we do not have the preparation to do it or that we fear failure. It is simply because, on many occasions, we are waiting for the young people with everything ready, and one or two excuse themselves. Here again we must turn to the loving gaze of Jesus.

At the provincial level, Colombia has a well organized YVM team. For three years we have worked hard, in one way or another, to study and implement the guidelines provided by the Conference of Latin America. We can confirm that our provincial project is attuned to these guidelines. We feel that we identify with the calls that they present, such as accompanying young people in their reality and being accompanied, of forming ourselves and forming young people to become leaders to work with the SS.CC. VYM. To achieve this, we have been taking small steps, we are aware that the VYM is a process and that, above all, the last thing we should lose is hope. For this reason, we have proposed a pre youth ministry, because time and again we have maintained that young people are over 18 and we do not have "direct access" to them in our works and schools. So, in suggesting the creation of pre-juvenile communities, we do so, with a look to the future, by forming leaders who will give continuity to this process of VYM. In every community where it is implemented, we see significant results. For us as a Province, Easter, painting and music have been occasions that have opened the doors of our communities to welcome, with love, those who respond to the invitation that Jesus makes through our SS.CC. charism. The invitation is always open, our communities seek to be welcoming spaces where children, adolescents and young people share together, with joy, the Christian faith through human development workshops, catechesis and as already mentioned painting and music.

Broadly speaking, this is our contribution to the construction and accompaniment of pre juvenile communities for young people who approach our communities. We entrust this service to God. It is not easy but it is gratifying to find that they are growing in faith and in a critical attitude toward what they experience every day. This leads us to strengthen and renew our commitment to contemplate, live and proclaim the love of God, particularly with young people and adolescents. We look at them with affection, just as they are, welcome them in the diversity

in which we now find ourselves, and above all remain faithful to this mission, undismayed, always looking to say, with Jesus, "*Go, sell everything you have and then come and follow me*" and if there is no response, then," *to look at them with affection.*"

A Culture of Call, walking with Jesus

Pedro Pablo Achondo Moya ss.cc.



Setting out from the Provincial Chapter 2006, the Chilean Province has an interesting project, A Culture of Call. I will comment on the more relevant aspects of this undertaking.

First, understanding this vocation theme is less the promotion or mere accompaniment to discern the call of God to religious life than grasping a culture of call. That is to say that the whole life of the Christian is a great vocation walk, an unceasing search for the will of the Father for his sons and daughters. With this optic, the whole Province settles for a total vocation platform and works out a vocation spirituality and pedagogy. The distinction between a wide culture of call and a particular call to religious and presbyteral life in our SS.CC. family would be solely methodological.

If we understand the theme of a culture of call well, we will realize that, in any form, all is vocation: our works, our daily chores, our life of prayer, our being companions and brothers on the journey, our connection with the heart of Jesus, and our closeness to the heart of Mary. In short, that means our personal and community testimony as SS.CC. religious. This will tell the story of our love, of our options as happy religious committed to the kingdom.

In this line our presence among the youth is fundamental. In recent years we have noticed that people are making decisions about their call later in life. Hence we have formed a Graduate ministry to which we invite youth from the parish and from high schools, who have already graduated from secondary education, be they university students or workers. Working out this ministry is something new, born as it is of community formation, participation in Sunday Eucharist, and connected with a particular church. We offer a retreat, days of reflection, and other chances to meet with all the graduate communities which exist.

The same Provincial Chapter of 2006, on a second and more structured level, created the position of Vocation Director. His principal task is to animate the brothers of the Province in vocation accompaniment and in all that concerns the culture of call. He would stay connected to youth ministries and be a simple and happy transmitter of the SS.CC. charism. For all this the director works with a vocation pastoral team which we determined would be made up of brother representatives from each zone thereby facilitating a connection with each ministry of the zone. The director is a brother who is available to participate wherever there are youth: student associations, spiritual retreats, camps, Christian formation days. Whenever his presence would be needed, he will be present in our various works.

With regard to new initiatives, this past year 2011 saw the birth of a fine publication entitled: *“La Congregación de los SS.CC. en pocas palabras, relatos breves, de quienes viven la espiritualidad”* (The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts in a few words, brief stories of those who live the spirituality). Lay brothers and sisters, religious of the SS.CC. and youth from diverse places tell their experiences of being SS.CC. be it personal or some testimony which touched them as Damian, Esteban Gumucio or Ronaldo Muñoz could have. In the form of short reports, both sharp and challenging, we connect with more than 25 narratives. These express,

from different angles and living situations, what being a Christian with the seal of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in the world today really is and how to be that Christian.

A beautiful activity worth sharing was the vocation Mission in its third version which took place in the month of July in Hurtado, a small locality in Region IV. Twelve youth from different parts of Chile, from apostolic works of SS.CC. brothers and sisters participated. The mission had as its objective to live, for six days, an intense and demanding experience of God quilted in a communitarian life, prayer, Eucharist together and sharing with the marginalized (including in this situation the geographically marginalized) . All of which is to say to live the foundational axis of our charism in a missionary territory.

Also in the month of October, we opened the Office of Vocation Ministry. A new creation! This is located in the buildings of Sts. Peter and Paul in the commune of La Granja. The significance of the location has to do with a place marked by the presence of the SS.CC. brothers; it was the place where Father Esteban and companions first arrived. Today the memory of Esteban Gumucio is alive there. This gives the office great meaning. What better witness to Esteban, where better to know the Congregation; and to know it where Esteban and his life are etched in the hearts of the people?

This year 2012 we have put together a series of vocation videos. An intergenerational group of fourteen brothers share their vocation experience. In an interview/documentary format we have called the series "*Caminando con Jesús*", (*Journeying with Jesus*). Once a month we present another testimony on the page. In conjunction with this initiative, we are working on a new publication scheduled for July of this year. This is a small booklet which answers the question: *Para qué o porqué ser un religioso SS.CC. en el mundo de hoy, en la sociedad actual?* (Why be a SS.CC. in today's world?) Three brothers will prompt the reflection with their stories, oriented above all, to the youth who are in discernment about religious life.

I speak now of my own personal experience. I got into vocation work in 2008 helping the former vocation director implement the Chapter mandate. In 2010 I became the vocation director. This has been an engaging service which stimulates my own vocation. I have to be always on alert, to listen, motivate and accompany. I like the concrete challenge to be creative a lot. If we want to enter into the rhythms of the youth one has to get into their concerns, their questions, their evaluation of things, their hopes. For this one needs to be creative, daring to break molds a bit outdated when it comes to vocation work.

The big difficulty has been time, that is, time to be available for all that one could do in youth work and time to visit our works and our living situations. The temptation to throw oneself into other things has been strong up to a year ago, as a priest wanting to be in a parish to accompany the people, to be with the poorest of the poor. It has not been easy to free myself (or others) for a task as prioritized as this.

My own experience of Vocation

Morta Sihite ss.cc.



To discern and to take a serious decision in life is not always easy. For six years while I worked in Batam, I had money to buy what I wanted, but I was not satisfied. I was involved in many church activities. I prayed a lot asking God to show me His way. I searched a long time for God. I thirsted for Him. I used to pray psalm 42, longing for God. I questioned, “*What is your will for me?*” Sometimes I felt so sad. Why? I put my hope in God.

In Batam, several times, I joined a discernment group because I felt something missing in my life. I was looking for and thirsting for something, but I did not know what to do. So, one day I joined a vocation retreat led by Fr. Rolf ss.cc. and sisters from different Congregations. In the retreat, when Fr. Rolf led the prayer, many of us were resting in the Lord. During my resting I saw the statue of Fr. Damien standing beside me. I felt that this was a called for me from God. After the retreat finished I continued my discernment with the helped of Fr. Rolf. I made the long journey of more or less two years to discern God’s will. Finally, I was, ready to say, “*I want to join the Congregation, and I want to leave my job and everything in order to give my life for the service of God.*”

When I received an invitation letter from the sisters in Bandung, I was very happy. I had a great desire to surrender my life to God, but I faced a big challenge as well, especially from my parents, brothers and sisters. Sometimes I felt alone. I received support from my brothers and sisters in the Congregation. Again I put all my trust in God. Slowly my parents, brothers and sisters could understand my choice to be a religious.

When I was in Batam, many times I went to St. Damien Parish House. The ss.cc priests were very welcoming to youth. I felt the family spirit really alive. These experiences helped me a lot to feel the love of God. One day, I went to the parish house; Fr. Rolf gave me a book of Fr. Damien. So, I read it in a prayerful way. While reading the book of Fr. Damien, his life and his ministry experiences touched me very much. My heart was moving to give my life to God through the service for the poorest and the suffering ones. I loved to do the adoration even before I knew its meaning. It bought me deeply into prayer for the world. I discovered that through adoration I gain new strength and new courage to work.

When I studied in Yogyakarta, my thesis was about the spirit of Fr. Damian and his service. I learned a lot by reading his book. He said, “*I am happy to die as child of the Sacred Hearts’ Congregation.*” In doing God’s will in his life, he never was afraid of being rejected by people. His zeal, his spirit and his service were very deeply rooted. It nourishes, strengthens, encourages and inspires me to give my live to the poorest and the suffering. I am happy to be a religious in the SS.CC. Congregation and to be the heart of God in the world.

I really thank God for all my experiences and for calling me to be the instrument of His love. All that I do and all that I am able to accomplish and to endure on my journey is because of His love. I always pray to God that I may love Him more than other thing and be faithful in following His footsteps. Message for me: *If you really want to give your life and to put all your trust in God, your life will be fulfilled by Him.*

Youth Ministry and SS.CC. Vocation Ministry in Kinshasa

Willy Mpia Makila ss.cc.



The custom of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa is to have two distinct groups: youth ministry and vocation ministry. These different groups of formation follow an itinerary elaborated in the manuals approved by the archdiocesan authority a long time ago. However the vocation group brings together the youth who have clearly expressed a desire to consecrate themselves to the Lord in the clerical or religious life. The Congregation inserts itself in all these structures, giving them its own particular SS.CC. flavor.

The Structures of Youth Ministry

1.1. Parish

The administration of parish is the principal activity of the Congregation in Africa. A great number of the brothers are involved in it. That's where we have a great opportunity to make contact with a great diversity of people. Beyond the relationships which the priests can sustain the young brothers in formation accompany different groups of formation. As they meet up with the young, they draw those who wish to share with us our vocation and mission. Parish ministry is the principal area from which our vocations come.

1.2. Schools

During the high points of the liturgical year, we organize events in our schools. These are days of recollection, retreat, conferences, movies, sports events which motivate the students who ask to enter the Congregation at the end of their studies. At present we have a brother in temporary vows and two postulants who came from Father Damien High School. We work also with the young at Tondisa Ebale Center and in the primary schools which are in the confines of St. Athanasius parish.

1.3. Congregational Week

Around the feasts of our founders and of the saint and blessed of the Congregation, the commission of youth and vocation ministry organizes a campaign to make known our charism and our life. The brothers and sisters are sent into the schools, parishes (even those we do not manage), the hospitals... this threefold approach opens the doors of the Congregation a lot to those youth who are not from parishes under our responsibility.

Some orientations on Formation

2.1. Development Themes

Youth ministry principally looks to re-enforce a sense of belonging to a local Christian community before thinking of a specific orientation to an established life style (religious life,

marriage, clerical life...). The meetings give a favored attention to bible sharing, some theme of human development and of general culture.

2.2. Who is admitted to SS.CC. aspirancy?

- A baptized and confirmed Christian.
- A young person known and presented by the pastoral team of his own parish where he must be integrated into one or other parish group.
- Must have good physical and mental health plus intellectual capacity.
- The youth must be able to appreciate his family and social milieu.
- One who accepts to give himself to discipleship.

2.3. Challenges of youth ministry today in regard to globalization

- Lack of models in society.
- Search for easy payoff.
- The wish to do like everyone even to excess.
- Imitate without discernment.
- Think locally, but act globally; yet it is the contrary that ought to be done.
- Ambitions which go beyond one's strengths.
- Youth who are more and more in touch with what is going on.

Youth and vocation ministry is a work which ought to be done in the family or at school. These two settings no longer have enough time to dedicate to the young. Youth ministry endeavors to make the youth more responsible by proposing Jesus to them as their unique and only model.

Who listens to young people today?

Nuria San Francisco Lobo ss.cc.



As St. Paul says (1 Cor 9.16) "*Woe to me if I do not evangelize!*" because evangelism is not just a mandate that we have received, "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel*" (Mk 16, 15) but a need felt by all those who have received the great gift of faith. It is a gift that has given meaning to our lives and makes us live fully. A gift that we have received freely, therefore we cannot keep it for ourselves, since what we have received is a great treasure that multiplies the more we give it away.

In YVM, evangelizing the world of young people today is a great need that compels us to go out of ourselves to meet them; to go out to the real and concrete world of today's youth. It compels us to know them, to know their experience, what they are feeling, how their relationships are, what moves them, what their dreams are, their ideals, their fears, their desires, their weaknesses ... Perhaps many times we create and talk about stereotypes that do not do justice to the youth of today. Topics that make us go before them with responses to questions, with judgments that they have not asked us for, with rulings that often have nothing to do with their experiences.

Sometimes it can also happen, that we compare our "accumulated youth" with the "youth of today". This is quite "prejudiced" because "any time in the past has been better," and this is the way we teach them. We "hit" them with a past that is not theirs, that hides, "under the guise of good": justice, truth, authority, responsibility, poverty, freedom, good habits, ethics, morality ... a handful of experienced frustrations, that which we see today and what we would have wanted to experience in our youth, but we dare not even admit it.

I often wonder, how can we speak of young people if we do not know them, if we have not approached them, or welcome them wholeheartedly? We speak without knowing them, without supporting them, we talk and talk... but without listening to them. Who **listens** to the young people of today?

For me, this is one of the keys of all vocation youth ministry. To go out on the road and meet them on the way, listening to them, opening our minds, leaving our prejudices behind, accepting their lives without judgment or condemnation ... and only from there do we go down the road with them, **offering** our truth without imposing it, acknowledging that there is not the only one truth, that our understanding of life is not the only way to understand life, that what makes us happy is not the only way to be happy.

It is only by setting out with them, traveling with them and accompanying them in their lives (which is not ours), until they ask themselves and ask me and you ... what makes you live like this? And only then can we respond as the Master did, come and see! If no one is above his teacher, then why do we want get ahead so many times? Walking beside them is another key that for me is also fundamental. **Being close** to them, guiding their lives, respecting them, valuing them, challenging them and opening them up to the basic questions of life: Who are you? Who do you say Jesus is?

Young people today are not "young people" they are Helen, Fran, Laura, Mary, Anthony, and Alicia ... unique and unrepeatable. They are people who have different thoughts, sensitivities, commitments, dreams. ...that is why, for me, YVM is, more than ever, a **one to one ministry**. It is not a VYM of many people, nor a ministry of "fireworks", but a YVM of **relationship**, of closeness, of simplicity.

As sisters we have developed and offer a provincial and school **itinerary**; an itinerary that serves as a guide and unites all pastoral agents (whether we are sisters or lay people who collaborate in this mission). But for us it is important to know that it is always a **personalized** itinerary, since we talk and accompany the process and time of each person. And this is the road of growing as a human being and in faith that has as its end, helping one respond to the ultimate question about vocation with maturity: And you, how do you respond to the Lord's invitation, "Follow me"? That the young person can answer this in Truth is the ultimate key of our accompaniment.

To help **discern** what God wants for each one, and realizing the commitment, certainly entails an **encounter** with the God who gives life, who rescues each one from the graves in which they are enclosed, from the depths from which many feel they are prisoners.

We believe that the VYM has **to provide spaces** in which this meeting can take place. It must help people to express themselves. They must be able to **celebrate with others this meeting in which witness is a key**. They have to be able to commit themselves affectively and effectively for the Kingdom of God. All this is not done without witnesses, without men and women able to go out of themselves to meet with the other, freely and in truth.

Within our schedules, we offer a series of retreats and experiences that help and enable vocation discernment. But it is always with freedom and respect, with gratitude and appreciation that a vocation is a gift that God gives, and we are only mediators in his hands; with a constant prayer on our lips, "*Lord, may I not be an obstacle to your work.*"

Accompaniment is basic I would say essential, but not just any kind of accompaniment. In our Province we ask that people be formed for it. We must be women who are capable of giving a reason for our hope, able walk with others with the utmost respect, and that means a good **formation**. Anyone who has not been accompanied cannot accompany, given that, we talk about the lives of others and nothing should be looked after with greater care than that. Embracing the life of another is to remove your shoes before the sacred ground that God shows us, and therefore it cannot be done just any way.

Papers are not enough, itineraries made by the YVM in our schools, in our provincial ministry are not enough. It is not enough that all the sisters feel really involved in YVM, supporting younger sisters who are more directly involved in this task ... no, this is not enough. What matters here is the knowledge that God continues to ask us that **our way of living show LOVE and that this love spread, making our world a world that is more just, full and true.**

To contemplate, live and proclaim to the world the love of God, is the best of the YVM itineraries that we can have.

With love, united in the Sacred Hearts.

An experience of Vocation Ministry

Christian Flottes ss.cc.



Vocation ministry is related to a desire and willingness of our entire Province to enable young people to hear and answer God's call in their lives.

It is a matter of **enabling young people to see what God is calling them to**; this is what is at stake in all vocation ministry. We note that for a very long time, the provincial chapters have insisted on this mission being taken into consideration in the obediences and ministerial organization. This is why we have chosen to accept various missions entrusted by the church in France to the youth in a variety of services of mission to students or young professionals. What we are living out and offering today is linked to experience and to various researches. We can notice the points of attention associated with the main pastoral trends that have marked our presence with the youth during the last twenty years.

A first stage is marked by attention to the youth in their living environment and in everything that influences their relational lives. It was a matter of living in proximity to the youth and emphasizing friendliness, times of fraternity in the various meetings and gatherings.

In a second stage, the accent was placed on formation to help the youth to recognize their faith. The role of teaching and the word of God constituted the base of the various meetings. In the stage where we are today, we can notice an insistence, not only « being able to affirm one's faith », but also living and experiencing one's relationship to God. For this, our various positions aim at allowing an experience of interiority. What will be decisive for a young person in today's environment will be a personal experience of God, a life with Christ that will become for him a decisive moment.

This rapid review allows us to see that youth ministry has changed very much, has followed « methods » but, in this look at the practice of a mission of Call, we see that today, it is based on three questions that must be addressed:

1. What does God expect from me?
2. Am I certain that what I want is really the will of God?
3. How can I clearly see it in order to decide and respond?

The first pole **“what does God expect from me”** allows us to situate every vocation as a follow-up to Baptism. So every vocation is a gift to accept before being a form of life to be invented. Every Christian, whoever he or she may be, must ask him or herself this question: “to what is God calling me?” This is the diversity of vocations in the Church. In addition, a vocation must be placed in relationship to the Christian community. Another key aspect will be the place of the sacraments which guide, direct and structure every life of faith. Deciding to answer a call is not a challenge to take up; it's a presence and a Word to welcome, a Word that comes to fulfill a life. Without a truly sacramental life and ecclesial roots, we run the risk of it remaining a simple generosity. The great tradition of the believers in the Bible shows us that generosity is necessary but it is not the first and foremost element. Think back to what Pierre Coudrin's life

would have been had it been based only on a simple generosity and not on what would be decisive for him, that is his experience in the granary at Motte d'Usseau of self-abandonment in order to enter into God's plan. Equally the life of Saint Damien cannot be explained by a simple generosity. Without reference to his spiritual experience, filled by his Eucharistic life, we would cut off the source of all of his missionary dedication.

The second pole is going to incorporate the question: "**am I sure that what I want is really the will of God?**" Incorporating this question allows one to note the transition between what could be on the order of desire or generosity to a life that gets its meaning from following Christ or by the call of God becoming first and decisive.

Rule no. 3 of our rule of life reminds us: "*For no other reason than Christ and his Gospel have you made your choice ...*" It's a matter of a good start, not just being prepared to do things for God, but letting God work in and through us. This is also the stage where we situate the call taking root in all that makes up our humanity, our riches and limitations, our weaknesses and our strengths ... It is not enough to dream of a life for God, our response must necessarily take into account everything that represents our life and makes up our personality and our humanity. The conversion demanded by a response to this call is dependent upon our concrete lives and history. It's a reminder that God calls us at the heart of your human life.

The third pole consists in looking at "**how to see it clearly in order to decide and respond?**" This is the challenge of spiritual direction. A young person who has a plan for a consecrated vocation, who will take the time to identify what God is calling him or her to do, must also take measures to make a decision and make a free choice. The purpose of direction is to allow oneself to be guided by the Spirit in order to do God's will.

Concretely the youth meets with a brother of the Congregation. A rhythm of meeting every three or four weeks seems best.

The direction concerns a rereading of his life, in the light of daily meditation on the Word of God. It touches on everything that has to do with life's relationships: to god, with others, with oneself. This approach will promote the transition from a desire or a specific plan linked to a passing impulse to a way of knowing how to go on with this plan that lasts a life time. By way of example, to suggest to the young people: a life of **prayer and daily reading of the Word of God**, the **Eucharist** at least once a **week** in addition to Sunday, the **sacrament of reconciliation** each month and a **retreat** once a year. This calendar, that is easy to remember, will help one to remember to be aware that the call of God regulates one's life and one must show a continuity in the time of welcoming this presence of God in all that makes up one's daily life. The call of God does not appear in what is extraordinary in life but more in what is ordinary in life, our life.

Some realizations

The plan « to live and to serve »

This plan would allow youth with a vocation plan to end up living near on the SS.CC. communities. In a world where these young people are in a minority and where the question of a vocation to consecrated life is very misunderstood, it would seem sensible to us to allow them to gather and interact with each other, sharing their faith experience and their prayer life. Over the course of the year, they gather everyday for the Eucharist with the community of brothers and sisters, one evening a week they share about a topic that is related to their search, and

once a semester they go on retreat. Another brother is in charge of their spiritual direction. This stage precedes the pre-novitiate and is takes place in connection to the Picpus community.

The student house linked to our parish of Saint Gabriel.

We want to allow the youth to participate in our mission of presence with and proclaiming the Gospel to the youth. What's intended is a missionary commitment. This will be the basis for questioning a more specific call to consecrated life. The young people from the provinces who come to Paris to study are looking for housing. We suggest to them, along with the housing, an active participation in the mission of offering the faith to the younger people. It is about leading catechetical groups for the adolescents (from 12 to 18 years old). The fact of having to share their faith, in connection with a Christian community, will oblige them to take up their own faith again, and to see what is central for their lives according to the Gospel. In this case the vocational discernment will have as its base a rereading of what they experience in sharing our mission, but also on the place of God's word, prayer and the sacraments in their own lives.

All vocation ministry stimulates our religious life and compels us to return to what is essential in our consecration. It is, therefore, vital to the missionary plan of a province. We are questioned about the choices and the priorities that characterize our way of life, as religious, and SS.CC. religious. We are also made more vigilant about the centrality of Christ in our lives and our missionary Zeal. But all vocation ministry is also a school in humility. It is the Lord who calls. We are the servants of this Word. It is a demanding task, every day, but so marvelous. We are witness to the beauty of the welcome of the Spirit in a life that wants to be filled by God. This is what renews our religious vocation.

“A young man approached him and asked, Master, what good work must I do to receive eternal life? Jesus answered (...) if you want to enter eternal life, keep the commandments.

The young man said, I have kept all these commandments, what is still lacking? Jesus answered: sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor. Then come and follow me.”

(Mt 19, 16-21)

Martha Montesinos ss.cc.



In writing about vocation ministry, I wanted to start with this text of Matthew, which on some occasions has thrown light the vow of poverty dimension of religious life.

I think, in the case of vocation ministry, it also can enlighten us, since it is a "young" man (Luke's account makes no reference to the age of the questioner), who has a concern in his heart, and asked Jesus "what must I do" to have more life. He expresses concern and awaits a response. Jesus welcomes him, questions him and talks to him, listens to him and guides him.

Faced with the concerns of young people in their vocation search, the sisters of the Province of Chile have become aware that this is a responsibility that concerns us all. It is not just those who work more directly with young people who need to be concerned about the desire of wanting to follow Jesus in religious life that may arise in them. Each one from their mission stance, or simply through their witness of life, their joy of consecration, their welcome and listening, can be an instrument of the Lord to awaken the vocation of a young woman, dialoguing with her, and guiding her to continue her search. We made reference to this in the most recent projects of the Province. The "preferential option for young people" should be expressed in the projects of all local communities, each with its reality, its possibilities and its specific mission.

Vocation ministry is a dimension of youth ministry, because we think that we need to talk about vocation to all the young people to whom we are ministering. From the question posed will come the response of each one as to how to live out the call to Christian life, one of which is a religious vocation. This is a fundamental part of evangelization, of the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

At the provincial government level, special attention needs to be taken to ensure that, in the places where we are ministering and where young people are present, the sisters should be working directly with them, putting emphasis on personal guidance, with time and dedication to be with them. We must encourage young people to ask themselves, at some point in the process of faith, what God wants them to do with their life. To do this, it is absolutely necessary to have someone close by, a friendly conversation, an open dialogue.

Referring to support itself, once the young person comes and expresses her interest, discernment is suggested, and the offer of systematic, committed and serious support that is the beginning of a serious search process. In the course of it, the young person is invited to get

to know some of our communities. And when the opportunity lends itself, they can participate in some of our celebrations of temporary or perpetual profession, jubilees of the SS.CC. sisters and/or brothers.

In 2011 we organized a mission with young people who were receiving vocation guidance, or had expressed concern about RL to one of the sisters. During this time we visited Reñaca Alto's community in Viña del Mar, and took the opportunity to get to know the parish work that our sisters of the Martin de Porres community are doing together with the SS.CC. brothers. After this mission, two of the girls wanted to have an experience in one of our communities. Alexandra and Caroline lived for the entire month of October in the community of Martin de Porres and the Heart of Mary, respectively. Alejandra gave closure to her discernment, because she realized that her life will take another road. Carolina is one of our postulants, and continues her discernment now in the pre-novitiate.

The Experience of the Ireland-England Province

Shane Halpin

The very mention of the word 'vocation' in the Irish Church at the moment draws out a range of emotions and comments depending, of course, on who one is talking to. Some, believe that the dramatic sea change in the level of religious vocation is a direct result of the child abuse scandals that have rocked these shores. Others see it as an institutional Church which is out of touch with people, young and old. Others believe that the religious Congregations have done the job for which they were founded and must be allowed to die out and be replaced by new religious orders. Others are more positive and highlight that this dramatic decline is just a blip and that the Church will recover.

I suspect that there is truth in all these comments and that the reality is that we must believe that God continues to call and his Holy Spirit is as active now in the Church as much as it was when it was founded. The Spirit continues to shape the Congregation and those it ministers to on a daily basis.

In a recent research study undertaken as part of a degree in Pastoral Theology I found that Irish young people were confused about what it means to have a vocation and that congregations were not stating why they exist and what they are about from the outset. In other words it appears that congregations without a clear reason d'être do not seem to appeal to the young person. Congregations who clearly state what they are about and why they exist seem to have better success. One could go one step forward and say religious congregations who are offering a 'radical' 'hardcore' path are getting recruits. The growth in the interest in contemplative orders and the desire to go back to wearing the habit are just two examples of a significant shift to early pre- Vatican II Church values. Young people are looking for clarity, identity and certainty. The religious Orders where this is being presented are gaining recruits. The question from my perspective is whether this certainty that is being offered will be enough to sustain them on their religious calling. Or will they join a religious order only to become disillusioned once the reality that all is not certain in religious life.

So what has this got to do with the specifics of the role of the vocations director in the Province? I believe that the promotion of vocation cannot be done in isolation. It has to fit into a comprehensive plan and be related to mission. God calls us to mission and therefore we need to renew our mission in light of changed society and promote the new mission as answer to God's gentle call to follow him. We need to give opportunities to young people to experience the lifestyle through missions and apostolate which speak to their lives. Research from the US *Lifecycle Institute* states that less than one-fourth of the men and less than one-sixth of the women had ever been asked to consider joining a religious order or community!

Adventure Retreats Ireland is an initiative of the Ireland-England Province with the specific purpose of addressing some of these key issues. Firstly, it is a project which is targeting young people at their level spiritually and providing them with a taste of experiential Christianity. Secondly, it is clear what it is about. It has a clearly defined its vision and has at its heart a degree of certainty for young people – they know what to expect. Thirdly, it raises the profile of the Congregation amongst young people and amongst the broader population and positions the SS.CC. as a group of religious men and women who are not just talking about youth faith

development but tangibly doing something positive. The project now in its second year of operation has given opportunities for personal faith development to over 3500 students aged from 11 to 19.

But how does this project translate to religious vocation? Well if we understand vocation as a being a summons from God i.e. that one does not simply “choose” a course of action, but one responds to a summons. Then the person called must be given or provided with the path to answer that call. In the past this was provided by the opportunity to go to seminary. Today, I believe that this traditional path for many has been replaced by volunteerism at home and abroad. Thousands of young people from the Province continue to give back to society whether it is working in the developing world or in homeless or childcare organizations. Complementary to this is the opportunity for young lay people to study Theology and Ministry and Social Work.

So perhaps with Adventure Retreats, the first step is being done. It provides an opportunity to put God out there as an option, as a personal relationship. The second step now is to provide a relevant, young vibrant life-giving opportunity to young people who feel called to growing deeper in their faith.

Pastorally how do we do that in a country like Ireland where young people feel alienated from the Church of their parents? For me the vision must be the creation of life giving community with a clear sense of identity with opportunity for personal growth and enrichment. In the Latin we have a phrase *Respice Prospice*, look back to look forward. Taking what is radical, integral or fundamental to the SS.CC. we present it in a way that may or may not lead to a classic understanding of religious life, but perhaps to a way of life which is God centered.

How do we achieve this next step? Building on what we have, and the limited resources that are available, we as the SS.CC. make a strategic decision to develop this life-giving community for others, just as the early Christians developed their church in Corinth. We take it upon ourselves to focus on doing this one task, in one geographical location becoming a place of welcome and renewal for those young men and indeed women searching for spiritual nourishment and spiritual community. We name it and we work on it in a way that empowers and generates life.

Vocation ministry in Africa, area of Kinshasa

Véronique Lundolo Kafuti ss.cc.



The vocation ministry in the area of Kinshasa, begins in the month of September or October and ends its activities in June. It begins at the same time as school or academic activities in the country and it also ends more or less at the same time as classes. As we work with young school or college students who go on vacation during the months of July and August and travel to other provinces, we find it difficult to organize activities during these months. Also, we brothers and sisters try to visit our families, go on retreat, or participate in our annual assembly of the brothers and sisters in the area.

We work together, 3 sisters and 2 brothers. Once a month the team meets to organize, plan and evaluate the activities we did or what we want to do. Before the team meets, the two coordinators, a sister and a brother, get together and prepare the agenda and the points to be treated in the team; and choose the person that will lead the meeting. We organize various youth activities in the parishes where our brothers minister, and also for some young people who want to serve the Lord in our Congregation. With the latter we organize a retreat at the end of each month, accompanied by a sister or brother. The accompaniment is done by different brothers and sisters, either by a team or by other commissions. The collaboration between the two teams is good and well taken care of.

Over the years we have tried to develop a common plan of activities with the Mozambique area, i.e. a plan for the entire Province. But we see that our realities are different and so each area has its own training plan, schedule and activities appropriate to the needs and realities and each location. The two plans follow the directives and guidelines of the Province and the Congregation, adapted to each area. They aim to the integral formation of youth with the following issues:

- **Human growth.**
- **Spiritual life.**
- **The Congregation.**
- **General culture and leisure.**

Once this arduous work of planning was finished, it was presented last year (20010/2011) to the two Provincial Governments of brothers and sisters, and was approved.

Our activities: among others, we organize:

1. Pastoral ministry in parishes and in our works (schools, children centers, etc.).
2. Vocation promotion.
3. Monthly retreats, special moments, with subjects selected about the Church, the Congregation, our Founders, our saints and blessed.
4. Specific accompaniment for those who want to opt for the Congregation.
5. Film shows.
6. Vocation week.

7. A Congregational week at end of year.
8. Visits to families of the young people (boys and girls) who want to enter our Congregation.

We also participate in the animation of parish youth days in different parishes where we are invited or where our brothers work. In these places the issues are proposed by the youth themselves.

The YVM is the field where future vocations for the Congregation emerge. It requires much dedication and our own commitment, and sometimes even sacrifices, so that young people may come to believe that God really loves them, and that His love is overflowing with compassion and mercy. With such a God, any vocation is worthwhile. It is also the place and time to discern the vocation and to be able to choose, beginning the adventure of following Christ. In this journey, we discover the traces of God in the lives of these young people while respecting the different calls. These youth come from different parishes, provinces, districts, etc., sometimes with a low intellectual basis, with very different customs and spiritualities. Overall, it is a school of patience and love for those who train and accompany them, it is to believe in the action of the hand of God that purifies, converts and transforms. (Acts 9.1-22)

Is Vocation Ministry a Priority of our Apostolic Activity?



Alex Viguera Cherres ss.cc.

When I entered the Chilean Province of the Sacred Heart in the 80's there was virtually no vocation ministry (VM). This was partly because there was no problem with vocations, as around 7 young men entered each year and, partly because there was wariness in openly talking about the subject of vocations. It was feared that it would seem to be a pursuit of the young men who exhibited certain interest. What happened to several of us was that, having expressed a vocation interest to a brother, he did not pay much attention to us. One had to insist again and again, with perseverance, until a brother took an interest. The insistence that the Congregation was at the service of the Church also had an influence on this, and a preoccupation about recruiting youth for ourselves seemed to betray the vocation of broader service. On the other hand, the idea that the brothers would raise this subject with the youth was frowned upon. It was alright if the youth took the initiative themselves but the reverse was not alright.

The concern for VM arose when vocations began to diminish. One of the most important signs was the necessity of having someone responsible for vocations, a figure that did not exist before. It was important to not be afraid to bring up the subject with the youth, to take the initiative ourselves. There was an awareness of the importance of bringing up the subject in youth ministry and, above all, the need for brothers to dedicate more time to personally accompanying the youth who had a vocation interest. It was realized that this was not only a responsibility of the one in charge of vocations, but one of all the brothers.

In any case, to remove the drama from this diminishment in vocations, we are aware that, in large part, it has to do with the insistence upon the dignity of the lay vocation as a fulfillment of following Jesus and serving the Church. Many of the young, who would have entered the Congregation in another time, discover their path in the lay vocation. The radical following of Jesus is not the sole privilege of a vocation to religious life or the priesthood. What is different at present is that the vocation crisis also seems to be associated with a crisis of credibility in the Church, above all, starting with the scandal of clergy sex abuse and other forms of abuse of power within the Church.

We are experiencing another change of focus, which is the awareness that vocation is something that has to do with all Christians. The call of Jesus is the beginning of the experience of the first disciples. This call is not the final step for a few but the point of departure for all Christians. Hence there is a need to present the experience of faith as something based on the experience of the call. This requires that one be open to a personal experience of God and of Jesus Christ, open to Christian discernment, in such a way that, faced with each decision or important situation in life, one asks oneself: What is God calling me to in this specific situation? What is the Lord asking of me? How can I respond to this call? If our youth ministry is a vocation ministry in this broader sense, it ought to be more normal for some of the young to take an interest in consecrated life and the priesthood.

I would venture to point out three pillars that I consider fundamental to vocation ministry:

In first place is the personal experience of God. Without this experience we run the risk of superfluous or deviant motives. Fundamental to this is the experience of prayer/adoration, and reading and meditation on the Word of God; this both in daily life and in some more intense times such as retreats. For many years now, in Chile, we have had the experience of the SS.CC. Spirituality Retreats for youth, in which around 120 youth participate. These are held twice a year and each young person participates during the last two years of high school and the first year after graduation; a total of six retreats in three years. Each retreat lasts a weekend. Young people from all of our works participate. This has been a place where vocation has gained ground in a natural way and there have been many young people who have become interested in religious life and priesthood.

In second place is the experience of mission among the poorest. Living with those who suffer awakens indignation and a sense of mission in the young people. They become aware of that fact that it is necessary to work towards ending situations of social injustice and the marginalization of so many people. The missions, the experience of the work of the working class and social insertion are fundamental. Now, it is important that this always be linked to a personal experience of God. This encounter with those who suffer must be seen from faith, discerned from it, from the horizon of the Kingdom of God and the call of God. It is not unusual for young people to enter religious life with an authentic vocation for social service, but without a deeper religious motivation.

In third place is personal accompaniment. This is where one manages to go into more depth with the young people: welcoming them, listening to them, helping them to discern their true motivations, and accompanying them in their fears. At this level one must work as a jeweler, giving the young person ample free space. This requires time and dedication. I have the impression that we have a problem here, as we brothers, because of so much work, don't allow ourselves time for this personal accompaniment and we leave all the responsibility to the one in charge of vocations. In speaking of accompaniment, here in Latin America we have the criteria of a minimum of a meeting a month with the young person for a whole year.

In the strict sense, I have my doubts whether VM, as a concern that young people enter our community, ought to be a priority of our apostolic activity. This could lead us to give up some very good services, needed in our time, just because they do not give vocations; we could also become obsessed with attracting young people and reduce our priority for other important objectives. However, if we present the subject of vocations in the broader sense as highlighted above, I think that, yes, it can be given a place of priority as a transversal dimension of all that we do, especially in our work with youth ministry.

Vocation Ministry

Rev. 3.20 "Behold I stand at the door and knock ..."

Lucia Sandoval ss.cc.



For better organization, the SS.CC. Province of Ecuador is divided into four areas according to geographical locations. For the same reason, it has some commissions and one of them is the "MYVM" (Missionary Youth and Vocation Ministry) the members of which are: Ana Isabel González, Alba Lucia Sandoval and Jeanneth Molina.

The MYVM commission has, as a base, a Project which aims to *"accompany and promote the integral development of young people using a continual analysis of reality enlightened by Jesus Christ so that with the experience of living in youth communities, they authentically assume their commitment to building a civilization of Love so that they freely make a choice for life."* The functions of the commission are defined in the Chapter decisions of the Province.

Looking back at history we see that 25 years ago the "SS.CC. Youth, Vocation and Missionary Movement" was formed with youth groups in each place where the sisters and brothers were working, a brother and a sister worked with the YVMM. Not so with vocation ministry given that the Province appointed a sister who gave all her time to this mission. This sister was responsible for organizing missions once a year and visiting some places where she met with young people who were eager to follow Jesus. Also during this period there was a very strong desire to work with youth groups and from this emerged young people with vocation interests who were accompanied by the sister responsible for vocation ministry. This mode was maintained until 2005 when youth ministry and vocation ministry were merged.

Assimilating these ministries brought together in VYM has meant confusion and effort to understand that within the youth communities interested young people might emerge who want to be accompanied in order to discover the vocation to which they have been called, but not necessarily set in Religious Life.

With this wealth of learned experiences, the Provincial Government formed a team for youth and vocation ministry with sisters freed from other responsibilities, and asked that in their community projects, all the communities appoint a sister responsible for this ministry. This means that all the sisters of the Province share this responsibility, thus revitalizing the option for young people. Similarly, there is the task of resolving the contradiction of our vocations coming from rural and poor areas, while our educational work and parish missions are not in these places.

Nor have we decisively supported the periodic missions scheduled for holiday time and liturgical seasons such as Holy Week that have given us some vocations.

We note that of our 14 communities, 8 are educational words covering an average of 5,500 students per year. From this reality, as the YVM Commission, we realize there is a challenge

that should also be that of the Province. How do we do vocation ministry in our education centers in such a way that our way of life is a proposition that our students can embrace?

There is no escape from this same question in parish work, given that youth ministry is a priority in prayer but not in the other activities that complement and shape it as such. On this point we assume that this option will be a priority if it is checked against at least two indicators which are the human and financial resources assigned to it. Currently our Province meets the second indicator.

A concern arises that leads us to take into account the reality of our communities, where we feel that we are not prepared or do not have the charisma to work with young people. How do we understand that most of our works are educational where we are in daily contact with young people and do not feel prepared? Could it be that as a province we have increased our distance from the current generations, have no knowledge of the cultures and subcultures of young urban people and have put little interest in the use and application of new technologies?.

As it is God who encourages us and the Spirit who strengthens us, this Commission has the following dreams:

- To unlearn what remains in our minds of the schemes that place young people within our rigid, static structure and that results in what we want, not in their dreams and interests.
- To work as a team, coordinating and receiving support from the communities of the ss.cc Province of Ecuador, as well as networking with the YVM of the ss.cc Conference of Latin America through common guidelines.
- To open ourselves up to an ecumenical and church awareness, learning from and with other congregations, sharing our experiences on a theoretical level and working together, beginning with the experiences of mission, educational ministry, etc.

United in prayer under the protection of the Sacred Hearts!

Doing vocation promotion in Indonesia

Lambertus Enga Hurint ss.cc.



The task of awakening vocations is an indispensable aspect of our apostolic ministry. While respecting the call, which God addresses to each person, we concern ourselves with sharing our life and charism, our tradition and history. We see in new vocations to grow and renew ourselves so as to walk together towards an ever greater fulfillment of our call. (Const. 68)

Our presence in different ministries in Indonesia is, on the one hand, to serve the local church but on the other hand to share the richness of our charism, tradition and history with the people here. As our Congregation becomes more and more known to them, it helps young people to find a place to answer God's call to serve Him. For example, they join us because they have been inspired by the simple life style of an SS.CC. priest or community, or by our charism. Many times, when I ask the candidates who want to join us what makes them choose our Congregation; very often their answer is, "because I'm interested in the spirituality of Heart" or "because I'm inspired by St. Damien of Molokai". Some have said that they have been doing devotions which are in line with our spirituality.

Pope Paul VI says, "Lets keep in mind, therefore, that there still many young people capable of embracing with great enthusiasm and fidelity a life consecrated to Christ and to men, even to the point of heroism" (Pope Paul VI: World Congress on Vocation 1973). In the Indonesian context this is true. There are still many young people who want to be a religious or a priest. Although we cannot deny that in some places a decrease in vocation is noticeable. There are more and more candidates coming from "outside" of the minor seminary and joining the Congregation or diocese; and some of them are late vocations. In last ten years, there have been more men's and women's religious congregations coming from other countries to establish their presence in Indonesia and started taking local vocations.

In responding to the need of young people and that of our Congregation, the Province, in its last Chapter, took some decisions that are to be carried out by the commission for vocation ministry. Some of these are mentioned below:

1. In collaboration with the sisters:
 - a) To make various means available for promoting the Congregation, e.g. brochures, pamphlets, T-shirts with the SS.CC. logo, simple cards with a picture of an important figure in our Congregation printed on one side and a simple prayer on other side.
 - b) To promote our Congregation and to give retreats on vocations to young people together with the brothers and sisters in the formation and apostolic communities.
 - c) To visit minor seminaries and high schools for vocation awareness.
 - d) To run discernment programs for young people who are seeking to answer God's call.
2. To encourage and motivate our "formandi" and those in their pastoral year to become promoters of vocations.

3. To send our brothers to do their “Pastoral Year Orientation” in different minor seminaries.
4. To provide an “open house program” that will help the young people know more about us.

As of last year, some minor seminaries are not allowing seminarians to enter a congregation if it is not present in the diocese where those minor seminaries located. For instance, a minor seminary that sent us seminarians every year has already stopped sending us students this year. This is one of the challenges. We have to work hard to get the candidates from other schools and it is still possible. We are not full time vocation directors. Each of us has his main responsibility. In order to meet the objectives of this commission, we have to sacrifice and put aside other works. So from one year to the next, we members of the commission go to different places to promote our Congregation in the schools. This year we will do the same thing. Additionally, our brothers in the ‘scholasticate’ also do some promotion work, joining other congregations in Jawa Island, especially in Central Java.

Another approach (this is the best one) that was suggested in our last assembly was to start a presence in areas where there are still a lot of vocations, like in North Sumatra. It is very reasonable because we have been getting the vocations from there but so far our community has not yet been established there. When we do some promotion work there, people always ask, “Where is your community in North Sumatra?” And we always answer in a polite way that we are not here yet, but one day we will be present here. There is nothing wrong in learning



from other congregations. They dare to establish their presence in the areas where there still a lot of vocations and they harvest the fruit. Every year they get candidates from the parishes they run.

Lets always pray for more vocation to our Congregation so that our Good God will send us more young people to be SS.CC.’s. Our life is the best means of promoting vocations and our Congregation. It’s very true. So be the agent of vocations through your life.

One of the Senior High Schools we visited to promote our Congregation

How Vocation Ministry

is assumed and organized in Indonesia



Sofia Anastasia Sabu ss.cc.

In Indonesia we have a special team for this ministry composed of Sofia, Suryati and Lydia. So far we have been working together with the brothers even though it is not easy because of different commitments. The activities that we use to do collaboratively are: making brochures or book marks, organizing and planning vocation activities for parishes in different cities, informing each other when there are invitations for vocation promotion and participating in events together. We usually had an annual program together. Last year we planned three programs together as brothers and sisters but none was accomplished because it is difficult to obtain permission from the bishops or priests of areas where the Congregation is not present. Besides it is not easy to schedule joint projects because of differing schedules in our other ministerial responsibilities.

The sisters always try to participate in activities for youth and vocation ministries which are organized by different groups: dioceses, parishes and religious congregations. Beside these activities we also continue to contact the young people who are interested in religious life even though after journeying with 5 persons only one might be interested in the Congregation. Many choose to join other congregations because we do not use a religious habit.

We also participate in the youth activities of the parish. At this time we are working on discernment programs. Each SS.CC. sisters' community in Indonesia is responsible for accommodating young people who want to visit or live in for a period of time; a sister is assigned to accompanying them (Jogyakarta: Lydia, Batam: Suryati, Bandung: Sofia) At this time, in Batam, Suryati is working with the brothers in giving retreats to different groups, and we hope that vocations will come from this activities.

How Vocation Ministry is organized in Mexico

Experiences and practices

*SS.CC. Brothers' Team of Vocation Ministry
of the Province of Mexico*

In Mexico, vocation ministry is intimately linked with youth ministry and there are two tasks. On the one hand, there is raising the brothers' awareness of the necessity of doing systematic work and on the other hand that of encouraging an atmosphere of confidence in which the young people can become acquainted with our life-style and spark an interest in them to follow Jesus by living as we live.

The youth and vocation ministry team is composed of three brothers: Pedro Díaz, Isidro Ramírez and José Rósemberg Pérez. They coordinate with the youth ministry coordinators in Chiapas, Guadalajara and Puebla, to plan common activities.

The first task has not been easy. On the one hand we brothers have a temptation to leave all the responsibility to the vocation director. We tend to think that naming a director is sufficient for the task of awakening and accompanying vocations. Without denying that the Lord is the one who calls, we have continued to grow in awareness and experience that one of the things that promotes an encounter with Jesus is a personal relationship with young people. And what gives them enthusiasm is the personal and communal witness. A close, simple and fraternal relationship with the youth, from our own experience of a merciful God, helps religious life to be a visible experience that is possible for them. The fact of our houses being open so that the young people can come and visit, see and share with us, sports, meals, work and prayer, helps them to know us, to know our life-style, our motives and to realize that we are happy, useful and fruitful. An informal daily relationship with them allows them to develop emotional ties and promotes an atmosphere of confidence in which they can speak and raise profound questions about their relationships, their plans or their difficulties.

Paradoxically, on the other hand, we brothers are tempted to think that this type of relationship will, by itself, awaken a religious vocation in a young person. So it is a struggle to develop plans and systematically accompany the youth. The youth and vocation ministry team takes advantage of ongoing formation meetings and provincial assemblies as the place to raise the brothers' awareness propose projects and seek parish support and consensus.

It has been an easy task to promote prayer for vocations in our communities and in our works. Generally, the people are generous and always attentive to our vocations. In fact when people know that a particular young person has an interest in a vocation, they often given them our information, and speak to them about our Congregation and charism. The young people who have come to us through this means are not few.

Then, when a young person approaches one of the brothers and expresses an interest in a vocation, or the vocation promotion team finds a young person with a vocation, they immediately ask the young man for his person Information and offer to accompany him. In theory, this accompaniment should be at least for six months. It is not necessarily the vocation

team that does the accompaniment. It is more appropriate that one of the brothers or sisters, who are closer to him in their community, accompany him. The vocation team keeps in contact with him and invites him to the activities that are planned throughout the year. Among these are: a vocation retreat every semester, and a mission experience in Holy Week or during the summer.

The Holy Week or summer missions in the south of the country, whether in Chiapas, Oaxaca or Guerrero, or in the center of the country in Puebla or Hidalgo, have become one of the most meaningful experiences for the youth in all of the youth ministry communities, including those with vocations. This has become so important in recent years that communities organize their annual plans around the Easter experience. Easter, with all that is implied in the liturgical calendar, – Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost – gives meaning to the annual work, and enthuses and unites the Sacred Hearts communities in their identity with and belonging to the Congregation. In addition, the youth are more and more interested in giving continuity to the summer mission work that they themselves plan and organize. It is a work that they feel is their own and that, both affectively and pastorally, bears concrete fruit. They go out to evangelize and return having been evangelized. The contact with poverty, fragility and need and at the same time the welcome, generosity, hope, perseverance, work, simplicity, faith and sharing of the indigenous of Chiapas makes the youth redefine their lives and proposes the possibility of serving the Church in religious life to them, or confirming Jesus' call to them.

The mission experience is not only meaningful for the youth who go to Chiapas. The young people who live in Chiapas are encouraged and challenged by the presence of young people from other places. It excites them and arouses a desire for mission in them. "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción" parish has given the Congregation three vocations and two others are on a vocation track.

Once there has been some follow-up done with those with vocations, at least six months after entering, the brothers and sisters request that the formator from the postulancy contact the young person. There is a mutual time of getting to know each other, and if it be the case, steps are made for entering. For this, the young person is asked to start working on his personal story and to discover God's path in it. Interviews with the formator from the postulancy house are done every month. When this is not possible because of geographic distance, the formator from the postulancy is asked to guarantee at least one visit with the young person before entry. In this case, the brother or sister who has been accompanying the young person up to that point continues to do so, and keeps in constant contact with the postulancy.

An experience of spending a week in the formation house about a month or two before entering helps the integration of the aspirants with the postulants. It also helps to reduce any anxiousness arising from the unknown and clarifies certain images and expectations around community life and religious life in general.

The Province Paraguay-Bolivia gladly shares

how we have been organizing Youth and Vocation Ministry

and you... What are you looking for? Come and see.....



*Vocation Ministry Team of SS.CC. Sisters
of the Province of Paraguay-Bolivia*

Latin America is a young continent and so for years the Church on this continent has made a preferential option for young people and the poor. Our Province's stance is within this context: Paraguay's population is mostly young, 74% are under 25 years old and in Bolivia they are 53% of the entire population, which is a challenge for us. Many of these young people participate in youth groups or communities in the parishes and in our education centers.

Using the guidelines of the General Chapters (1994, 2000), we have sought ways to respond to this priority of the Congregation, committing ourselves as communities and sisters to assume this option which is considered also a necessity for the Church and especially for our religious family.



In the Province, various attempts have been made to promote appropriate initiatives in accordance with our social and congregational reality to respond to the young people who come to us with interest in understanding religious life and to discover God's will in their lives. So, for example, we opened a house of welcome for young people with vocation concerns who are accompanied by a sister who is responsible for them; we have support for groups who meet regularly (every 15 days) in communities, in some places in conjunction with the SS.CC. brothers, they are given the possibility of an experience of community in some of our communities, we offer personalized support for a longer time until the young person has fulfilled what the vocation discernment stage requires, has matured sufficiently and is able to make his, her choice of life.

One of the activities highly valued by young people is the summer mission which is conducted annually at the overall YVM level, accompanied by the brothers, sisters and young SS.CC. Lay people with the participation of young people from our different SS.CC. schools, parishes etc. This event is appealing and encourages a spirit of service to the ecclesial community, especially the poor, because the mission is carried out in poorer parts of both countries.

The Provincial Government appoints a coordinator of the VM who works with the sisters responsible in each community. On a given day of the week (Thursday) communities are committed to pray for vocations, in addition each of the sisters is committed to supporting the VM affectively and effectively in the Province.

We understand that we cannot separate one ministry from the other, since the proclamation we make is the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ is for everyone, so if a young man or woman shows a particular interest in discovering what is moving them within this proclamation, this is when they are listened to and are accompanied in a process of discernment.

The accompaniment is carried out together with the brothers in Paraguay and in Bolivia we look for moments and events to invite a brother from a nearby province to collaborate with us and we take advantage of that time for encounters with young people with vocation concerns. Vocations evolve primarily from parish youth groups, a few times in our education centers; they also arise in the places where we are in mission: neighborhood, farming, rural areas...

We wonder what happens with the young people in our education centers that they do not consider the possibility of this form of life, and we realize, among other things ... that we are shy to suggest this possibility in a more direct, perhaps more daring way.

We are faced with a task of great creativity to discover and provide meaningful experiences for these young people of today's world. It is not ready made, there is no "unique formula" Whoever takes on this ministry is responsible to the person and God's project of life for the young people, that goes deep into a process of purification of the motivations, the challenge of deep insight into the different realities and to gain their confidence to really open up and tell what they feel and experience, it is to know the culture, how it moves the young people and it requires availability, creativity and to be open to change thought patterns that may prevent reaching him or her with more flexibility.

In the area of Paraguay, especially Alto Paraná, new faces of religious life are emerging, those who wear habits, with very closed and traditional structures that attract one way or another. In this area there is a resurgence of vocations, and by the grace of God new congregations are being born with their different expressions, as the Spirit blows where it wills, and there is always something new and good. This implies that we must initiate a path of revitalization of our life and mission which we are doing through the work for the 35th General Chapter, which allows us to go forward with renewed structures responding radically, with newness being significant and especially responding even with more evangelical boldness and clarity in today's world. One thing is clear, young people with a vocation exist, but it is appropriate, and feasible that our ministry is more audacious, no doubt religious life cannot be measured simply by what is seen, or measured by amount, nor through actions, but by evangelical radicalism that responds to this reality, from our choice of life and mission.



With affection: The Vocations Team

“Hey, look at this guy, this one is done for”

Marek Kosendiak ss.cc.



Reminiscence from the school...

“Hey, look at this guy, this one is done for”. These words I heard when I was coming out from the school in my habit, where I lead my “vocation-classes”. For me it was a little bit funny, because the boys didn’t know that I heard the words they spoke. I realized that this was like one of the stories about St. Francis. Francis travelled around in his habit, and he said to his brother in the community that the habit was the best way to preach the Gospel. I’m sure that young people still need a witness of religious life. The habit is only one symbol of our life as such, which people still understand (although sometimes contrary to our vision). It is a sign that forces one to think. But I will not discuss the role and value of the habit in our life in this article. I know there is a different sensibility about it in different countries.

We, in Poland, more and more are talking about catechization in schools: Is it good to teach in school or not? For me there is no question about its value: there is no other chance for us to have such a large group of youth, to talk with them about God and the Christian life. And sometimes we don’t have to say much – we just have “to be a witness”.

Being in schools gives us one of the best possibilities to talk with students about their vocation and about religious life. And it is our latest idea, to go to schools and talk about these life questions - in our parishes, and other places. I was “invited” (we have asked some priests and lay-people to invite us into their classrooms for their lessons) to a school, like it sometimes happens when people whose vocations are interesting are invited (artists, sports figures, adventurers, etc.). And I went there... and we are planning to go even more often.

There are also other good ideas, but the most important thing is what we have chosen, to assist young people in their everyday life. The best possibility to do that for us is still found in parish life. The ministry of altar boys and the ministry of preparing youth for Confirmation are very important. We still preach and lead some parish retreats. But now we are thinking how we should live and what more we can do, giving answer to the question if possible: what does our Master want us to do?

Situation in the Polish Church

Polish Province is recognized in Europe as a young community where there are still vocations. But unfortunately the situation has changed. At the moment we have two brothers in the Initial Formation. And it is for us a new reality in which we must discover how to live and how to act.

We observe some new trends in the young generation. Now young people defer a decision as to what they want to do with their life. Some of them continue their studies for several years. Many of them live together as a couple without being married, because they “want to see” if they want to live together for life.

And it is the way the youth choose to live: not to decide about the future, just to live in the present. This has some after-effects for religious life. Most religious congregations in Poland

have had a reduction in the number of young members. And on the other hand there are more questions about religious life from “the seniors” above the age of 30 or 40.

Our SS.CC. vocation ministry

We still need the vocation ministry in the traditional sense. That means we invite boys for retreats, we assist them in their life in our parishes, we organized some trips or holidays, we lead Lenten retreats, we still teach in schools, we are spiritual advisors for some Christian groups like “Oaza”, and Boy Scouts in Europe. But at the same time we are trying to face up to new challenges.

The internet is a huge “resource” we can utilize, but we observe that such contacts with young people do not bear fruit. There are some contacts but these are usually brief and without possibility for future contact. Some advertising in catholic newspapers gets no response. It is still a good idea to support other publications connected with our spirituality, especially those in Poland.

In the end I would like to quote an experience of our brother, whom the vocation ministry helped in the past to know and to join our Congregation. And it is for me an example of the best way to serve young people: by assisting young people in recognizing their way of life and to pray with them to our “good God” who still leads his “Work of God” – our Congregation:



Voice of sharing - (Br. Wojtek Bartnicki ss.cc.)

I'd like to share some reflections about the pastoral care of vocations, as my personal vocation is a consequence of it. This leads me to a comparison of the scene found in the Gospels of abundant fish (Lk 5, 4-11). Jesus showed the disciples where to cast their nets. But the disciples had to struggle with drawing in the full nets, and bringing them to the shore.

It is God who calls, shows the time, place and person – vocation ministry is like the disciples in the boat who struggle to get the net out of the lake - the world - and bring it to the shore - allowing them to make a free decision to leave “the world” and join the path of religious life and possibly to priesthood.

What in my case made the net “work”? Vocation ministry experience - what was in it that attracted me to it? First, there was a personal meeting with a witness - a priest who lived the Gospel, the Eucharist, adoration, our charism, not being afraid to wear the habit while wandering in the mountains. And he really didn't have to talk much about it - it was fairly clear to see and feel what his life was expressing. It was then that the desire was born in me that I can compare to the words of St. John the Baptist's disciples to Jesus: “Teacher - where are you staying?” (Jn 1, 38).

Second, the experience of community and elements of religious life was important: prayer, common meals, common work and common play, exploring my own talents and abilities, and that of the community. I experienced all of these on trips and retreats. The experiences created a beautiful desire through which God ask me the question: “Do you want to follow me?” I said “yes” and I said it thanks to an experience of vocation ministry. I am convinced that God is calling more people to our Congregation, and they are waiting only for a boat with the disciples - the vocation ministry, which will lead them to a free decision!

A decision at the crossroads

Zenobia Gamarra ss.cc.



For our Province of Peru, Brazil, México, youth and vocation ministry are always a concern and a constant preoccupation, because of the need to accompany them and form them in the search for meaning in their own lives and that of humanity in a permissive society. Aware of these changes and the demands and challenges this presents us, as brothers and sisters we delve into the world of youth helped by experts working with young people.

The incredible accelerations of our time, environmental pressures, the needs arising from improper media models, compulsive consumerism, the fragility of values and forms of reference influence the creation of new cultures and youth stages that often are unknown to us, so we feel called to a greater integration into the world of youth.

Changes in the family, social and religious structure, impact on the BEING and Doing of young people. Young people today live in nuclear families, extended families, single parent families and households without a conjugal nucleus, a reality in both urban and rural areas. Just as there are young people living in poverty, there are young people with financial resources who are open to narcotic addiction and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. However, in these extreme situations, it is essential to recognize the sensitivity and commitment of young people in situations of poverty and injustice, as well as their capacity and ability to create alternative ways of living that are more dignified and more humane. In the words of Jesus: a fuller life.

Given the alternatives that young people have in society, consecrated life is not a very attractive possibility because of the permanence of the choice, the commitment involved and the little they know about this way of life. It is easier for them to opt for volunteer experiences or temporary services than to opt for a commitment that lasts a lifetime. Those who consider consecrated life as a life choice do so from an experience of working alongside the sisters in various services or activities or participating in parishes, youth groups, campus ministry, etc.

As a team of sisters responsible for vocation and youth ministry we are convinced that considering consecrated life arises from the different areas shared with young people, and depends on the testimony of life and the coherence of it as transcendental values for the young men and women. Being aware of this reality which is wide, complex and rich in depth and diversity, the Youth and Vocation Ministry Commission, attentive to the action of the Spirit welcome the invitation of Jesus to find new ways to respond to the world of youth, **"Cast the net to the right side of the boat and you will find fish. They lowered the net and were not able to pull it in because of the great number of fish."** Jn. 21, 6.

Being with young people challenges us to be constantly changing language, physical spaces, material, content and suggestions for significant experiences that makes them fully enjoy God's unconditional love and the commitment to show the presence of the Kingdom in the midst of humanity.

Inspired by the words of Jesus and the current reality of young people we propose:

1. To create a "young Sacred Hearts" Web Page, which aims to provide a space for evangelization from young people for young people, sharing our spirituality as a prophetic response to the world of youth.
2. To create a listening centre, in order to strengthen formation and support young people and adults in their own human development and their commitment to the Church and society, "Sacred Hearts Youth making amends for the world today." The centre's mission is: To listen to and support young people and adults, to foster youth missions once a year, to organize youth retreats, to offer formation workshops and to support young people.
3. To strengthen ministry to adolescents in schools through the student communities, towards a youth culture.
4. To renew vocation ministry to religious life of the Sacred Hearts through mission experiences, away days, retreats, workshops, meetings, gathering together, camping, hiking, vigils, among other things.

Of these proposals last year we were able to realize the youth mission and vocation retreat, experiences that have enabled us to organize ourselves differently because of the time factor of the young people and the sisters. For this year as a team we have put forward:

- To conduct a three-day mission in each sector, the place and date will be given by young people themselves.
- To prepare with time, motivational things such as advertisements, posters, shirts, missionary bracelets.
- To have vocation days in each sector: Lima, Arequipa, Juliaca.
- To have a retreat, which will take place where the greater number of young people with vocation concerns live.

At team level we want update ourselves on the use of new information technology and communication in order to carry out the proposal in a creative and dynamic way on the web page, as well as developing Sacred Hearts material of accompaniment in order to provide a better service. We are sure that the Spirit will continue leading us on roads not yet known, to proclaim the Good News of God's love.

Vocation Ministry in the Province of Brazil



Luiz Antonio Da Silva ss.cc.

Despite being an SS.CC. religious for only eleven years, this already is my eighth year of service in vocation ministry in the Brazilian Province. The present article refers only to vocation ministry in Brazil given that the region of Paraguay, which now belongs to the Brazilian Province, has its own organization. Here I will address the current relationship of the SS.CC. Province to vocation ministry. At another time it would be interesting to recapture the historical memory of how the Provinces dealt with the problems throughout their history. In Brazil, for example, different ideas and ways of addressing vocation ministry had already been proposed from the time of the arrival of the Dutch and Spanish missionaries. Speaking of change, the Church in Brazil currently does not use the words vocation ministry. In the desire to create a “culture of vocation” we use the term SAV (“Servicio de Animación Vocacional”), “Service of Vocation Coordination”.

I have no doubt that the Brazilian Province takes up vocation ministry as one of its priority jobs. The action that the successive provincial governments have taken is significant: creating committees, insuring the ongoing formation of the brothers who are responsible for the SS.CC. SAV, financially subsidizing the work, and providing for interchange and dialogue in provincial assemblies and chapters. At this time the Province does not work with a so-called “Vocation Director”; this is a brother who, as a priority, dedicates his pastoral work to vocation ministry. Currently we have a provincial committee made up of three brothers who are designated by the Provincial Government. Those who are on the committee are: Fathers Ricardo Gomes, Walterson José and Luiz Antonio. The committee’s function is to structure vocation ministry in the Province. The provincial committee works in conjunction with the vocation coordinators in each local community. The provincial committee and the local vocation coordinators make up what is known in the Brazilian Province as “The Sacred Hearts’ Vocation Coordination Service”.

The functions are fairly clear. The provincial committee is responsible for: supporting the work of the vocation coordinators, promoting national vocation meetings, accompany those young people who come in contact with us from places where the Congregation is not present, taking care of both printed and virtual “vocation marketing, together with the formators, accompanying the young person’s entry process for the postulancy, and connecting the SS.CC. SAV with the national SAV. The local vocation coordinators are responsible for: promoting local vocation meetings, accompanying young people in their vocation discernment process, and accompanying the parish vocation teams.

The schedule of activities is also quite precise. We organize four vocation meetings throughout the vocation year; two national meetings and two meetings in the areas of the Province. In the first semester of the year, each area each area holds "Vocation Awakening" meeting for both young men and young women. After this area meeting the youth are invited to attend the "Vocation Awakening" meeting at the national level. In the second semester an area meeting called "Discernment and Grow" is conducted. It can be co-ed or only for young men. At the end of the year a final national meeting is held. This is only for prospective candidates to the postulancy for the coming year. Between the meetings the vocation guidance of the youth continues through conversations, visits to their families, and a close relationship of the young

person with SS.CC. communities and with the postulancy house. The provincial committee meets four times a year, two of these meetings are with all of the SS.CC. SAV Team.

The background for the aforementioned vocation meetings is the vocation Itinerary that the Brazilian Church is following. The itinerary consists of four stages: 1. AWAKENING, opening oneself to the mystery of the human vocation, the Christian vocation and the specific vocation. 2. DISCERNING, opening oneself to the paths of self-knowledge and the discovery of one's own vocation. 3. CULTIVATING vocation, oriented toward the youth who are in a process of defining their vocation. 4. ACCOMPANYING the difficult process of a change of life that the young person must go through, starting from the time a vocation is defined up to the entrance in the postulancy. We address the SS.CC. charism in all of the stages. It is important to highlight two elements of the relationship of the SAV to the houses of initial formation. The first is the importance that the SAV work in communion with the initial formation team. The second, is the necessity to be clear that the SAV only work with the young person until his entry into the postulancy, leading to a pedagogical break between the roll of vocation coordinators and that of the formators.

Let me conclude this article by mentioning some of the challenges that face the SS.CC. SAV in Brazil. Making a play on words, one of the principle challenges is "encouraging" those who encourage vocations at the local level. That is to say that no provincial vocation work is fruitful if the local communities do not have a co-responsibility in the work. It is important to point out that vocation accompaniment is entrusted to a work team. But, the awakening of vocations, the religious and missionary witness, is the mission of each religious in each local community! Another big challenge is how to give vocation accompaniment to the growing number of so-called "adult vocations". A further challenge is how to maintain a dialogue with the ongoing process of change in what are called "youth cultures". Additionally there is the challenge of how to use the internet correctly as a means of vocation promotion. Gender (male-female), and from an ecclesial point of view, the large number of youth who have a spiritual experience linked to the different movements and to the new communities are both questions that also challenge us. A constant attention to the subject of the "transit" of young people who move between the different orders and diocese, and the necessary care need in their specific accompaniment also raises questions for us. Lastly there is the challenge of the vocation committee itself, composed of brothers who have many responsibilities besides the SS.CC. SAV. In spite of all these challenges, however, we have a passion for vocation work and are convinced that vocation Grace is solely a Gift from God. "Salud y Paz" to all!



Meeting of SS.CC. SAV , April 17 and 18, 2012, Belo Horizonte



Meeting of the Provincial Commission for Promoting Vocations, February 2012

The Vocation Ministry of the Sacred Hearts

The Province of Peru

Lucio Colque Quispe ss.cc.



“The promotion of vocations is based on our belief in the validity of our charism, and it is the responsibility of every member of the Congregation...” (Constitutions 69.2)

When we speak of vocation Promotion in the Congregation we have from our origins many documents which inspire and guide this work. Our Constitutions in ##68, 69 indicate the tasks all the brothers have to undertake.

At the 37th General Chapter, there was a reflection on the vocation and mission of the Sacred Hearts brothers. However, there is nothing said of the crises in vocations through which both the church and the Congregation are passing. In the 44th article of this Chapter, there is only a whisper of what appears to be a common problem with regard to vocations: we are diminishing in numbers. *“True enough. There is no doubt that we are going to have to organize ourselves wisely and generously. But none of that is fatal to our vocation nor should it rob us of reason for hope.”* 37th General Chapter, #44.

Inspired by these documents among others, the brothers of the Province of Peru, in the past ten years placed, as a theme of two Provincial Chapters, the concern to pay more attention to vocation Promotion. Subsequently the term vocation ministry was brought into use.

We can go back to the 13th Provincial Chapter of 2006, numbers 10 through 19. What stood out in the discussion of the theme: have two half time directors; work out a plan for vocation promotion, train brothers in the topic, let every community include the vocation task in its community projects, maintain the vocation purpose of the Service Center of the Damien Youth Ministry etc.

These decisions would permit us to give greater attention to the promotion of vocations on the part of local communities, although, as always happens in situations like this, some communities and some brothers are more committed than others. It has helped to have chosen vocation directors, who, despite their interprovincial trips, bring about an accompaniment close to the candidates and in the majority of the cases, establish contact with the families. I consider that we have made some good strides. Nonetheless recently we feel the need to organize ourselves better on the level of vocation ministry: change of terminology for that of vocation promotion because we consider that one must give attention not only to the care and cultivation of a vocation among the young but also in the diverse aspects of our pastoral work, with children and adolescents, parents etc. That is to say a vocation ministry that looks beyond

vocation promotion among the young and is seen within ministry as a whole where lay pastoral agents play an important role.

At the 15th Provincial Chapter 2012, we took up afresh the vocation theme of the Province (the document of the vocation team on the SS.CC. vocation project in Peru, annexed in the document on the decisions of the Chapter). In point 5 with its 12 subheadings, we speak of a ministry and a SS.CC. vocation culture. At that Chapter, we were able to see the gains and difficulties which we have in vocation ministry. The decisions which I consider to be of greater importance in continuity with the gains of the decisions of the 13th Provincial Chapter are: the team of vocation ministry is to animate and coordinate the pastoral work of those responsible for the ministry, religious and lay; maximize times for welcoming youth to our communities of brothers; to update materials; formulate an operating plan; reclaim the vocation focus of the Service Center of the Damien Youth Ministry etc; network with the vocation directors of other Congregations etc.

Since 2010 a vocation team of four brothers has been in place, two of whom had the opportunity to get the diploma in vocation ministry which ITEPAL in Columbia offers. So there have been steps forward in the working out of a plan of vocation ministry: frequent trips to Sur Andino where we have contact with priests, religious, men and women and laity who help us contact new candidates (a zone where since 2011 we are not present as a congregation); days of reflection, retreats in a place close to where the youth live. In Lima the capitol of Peru, where 80% of the SS.CC. presence is concentrated, remarkably we have had little success in our vocation plan. This remains a challenging task given the context and the culture in which the young live.

This year 2012, there are three of us on the vocation ministry team. We want to be a team that animates, coordinates, develop materials, and above all have the time to accompany the young in vocation discernment and to present the SS.CC. charism. The decisions of our last General Chapter give direction to our task. Beyond those already mentioned, there are these initiatives: putting together new materials on vocations, using surveys to get to know with greater certainty how to handle vocation work in each of our locations, the creation of a web page focused on vocations, www.vocaciones-sscc.pe, an entry on Facebook and an exclusively vocation e-mail address: vocaciones@sscc.pe. These initiatives are a proposal to be present where the youth are themselves more and more present today, internet and social media. We do not know if any young person will come to us through this medium. However, a fisherman throws out his net without any definite knowledge of having a big catch; our confidence is rooted in the belief that the Lord will see to it that our efforts have good results.

Personally, I think and I believe that you will agree that the major deal for anyone who promotes vocations is first his own convictions: to be a happy man living the religious life, to feel himself accompanied and loved in the community, supported and understood in the work undertaken and to have an intense spiritual life. Not living that way makes for great difficulty if our way of life is to be followed, attractive to young people who sacrifice themselves, renouncing marriage (a concern frequently of the youth whom we survey) . For their part, the youth have many questions; they want to know in detail how we live the religious life. If, to motivate one to join the Congregation, a religious gives only the ideals, but does not live what he says to a young person, he comes across as telling lies. We know our weaknesses, every

province, very community, everyone is unique. That's why planning a vocation effort and carrying it out is no small challenge. In a world that is changing especially for the young, we have to give up-to-date and honest answers although I think that at the same time we need to own up to our crises, personal, community and congregational on the theme of vocation.

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