

Initial Formation



To form the Heart

Dear Sisters,

THE HEART, SENSITIVITY, ARE THEY FORMED, SHAPED?

This is what we try to respond to in this issue of INFO, based on the testimony and reflection of sisters who are experiencing, or accompanying, the processes of initial formation.

In life we meet people who are sensitive, who are empathetic and easily moved by the pain of others, and people who border on indifference to the suffering of others. So, what did the first ones receive in their education, and what did the last ones lack? Is there, perhaps, a pedagogy to be used to shape sensitivity?

Hasty answers will tell us that sensitivity is brought at birth, that it is something congenital or acquired in the first years of life, and that very little can be changed. Thus, we can easily divide the world between sensitive and insensitive people (with their different nuances, of course), but without taking on board reality. And the prisons fill up, and the penalties increase as insensitivity and indolence grow, and the seriousness of the crimes increases.

However, our evangelizing task, as expressed in the Constitutions, is clearly that: *so that the Kingdom of God may be present, we seek the transformation of the human heart* (Const. 6). This is our commitment to the Church and to society.

So, let us go to the beginning. To educate the hearts of others, to form the sensitivity of the people in our care, we must have developed our own. We must know what it means to be sensitive and to have a good heart; we must know some steps or strategies to transform it. In short, we need to have worked on the orientation of our emotional life and live attentively to what the senses, sensations, emotions, affections, desires, dreams, motivations tell us... all the constitutive elements of sensitivity, which sometimes, even unconsciously, tarnish the goodness of the heart.

It is a fact that sensitivity begins to form within the family with the first education, but continues to be shaped throughout life by the personal decisions we make on a daily basis. And there are sensibilities oriented to good, to beauty, to love of others, and sensibilities that we could call unhealthy, which reinforce selfishness, indifference and disinterest in others. This depends on the training received, and on the opportunities that life gives us, which are always very different...

The testimonies of the sisters, which we are going to read, tell us about paths: about painful steps and moments of joy, as growth always is. They tell us that their sensitivity has been formed in the contemplation of God's heart, in contact with those who suffer, in accompanying their sisters and brothers, in listening to God and to others, in the awareness that the Potter is working for us, in the discipline of desires, etc. But above all they invite us not to underestimate the care of the heart, because what is in it, triggers what we do (cf. Mt: 15-19).

In the coming days we will contemplate the tenderness of God's heart in a Child lying in a manger. And as we relive history to better live the present, we will remember that today many children are born in the mangers of the world because there is no room for them in the inns.

As we renew our vows this Christmas Eve, may we allow God's Spirit to continue to transform our hearts.

Affectionately,