



Custodian of vocation

Dear Sisters,

The question of vocation concerns identity, personal history, abilities, talents and deepest desires. The INFO you have in your hands aims to encourage reflection on the question that lies at the origin of our religious life, a question that has never ceased to be asked. It reappears from time to time in different situations: during prayer, at celebrations, during difficult times, when hearing someone's testimony or when witnessing someone's need. It emerges with new nuances, accents and depth.

Throughout our lives, we construct many identities: that of a child, a student, a daughter, a friend, a teacher, a neighbour... These words speak of roles, relationships, tasks and belonging. Each one defines something important about who we are, but they are transient, meagre and incomplete definitions. None of them fully encompasses the mystery that we are. Nevertheless, they accompany us along the way, being necessary and valuable, albeit inconclusive.

Perhaps the true inner path lies in being grateful for these identities and acknowledging what each one has given us, while not confusing them with our deepest being. Meanwhile, we seek something deeper that promises a fuller life. It is an 'I AM' that does not depend on circumstances or stages of life and that identifies who we are at our core. This identity remains when roles change, relationships transform, or time invites us to leave behind what we were doing, where we were, and with whom. It is revealed in silence, where we discover that this deepest identity is neither conquered nor manufactured, but welcomed and recognised as it slowly unfolds throughout life. It is here that we can locate our religious vocation.

Following an intimate and personal search involving experiences, encounters, doubts and silences, a new identity gradually emerges. This process is gradual because we are learning to listen to the deepest desires of our hearts. There, we recognise the voice of God, who, as St Augustine says, is within us more deeply than our innermost self. During this heart-to-heart encounter, the Lord's call remains until we welcome it with determination and enthusiasm.

But a religious vocation must be sought, received and nurtured. As the liturgy this month reminds us of Saint Joseph, let us contemplate our patron and protector. He knew how to protect Jesus and Mary, his mother, ensuring that God's plans were fulfilled. We can learn from him how to care for others.

As stated in the Cahiers de Spirituality No. 22 on Saint Joseph, the congregation's principal patron:

*“Pope Francis tells us that Joseph is a “guardian” because he knows how to listen to God, allows himself to be guided by His will, knows how to read events realistically, is attentive to his surroundings and knows how to make wise decisions. He affirms that in Saint Joseph we see how to respond to God's call with openness and readiness”.*¹

Saint Joseph teaches us five attitudes that help us to care for our vocation. If we live by them with constancy and conviction, we will certainly be caring for our own religious vocation, as well as that of our sisters.

Affectionately.

¹ Aurora Laguarda, in Cahiers of Spirituality no. 22, pp. 7-8.