**** *« Youth, faith and vocational discernment »*

*THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN TODAY’S WORLD*

***28th January 2018:***

***Let us pray for the young people***

 ***LET US PRAY FOR THE VOCATIONS!***

 ***Let us pray for us!***

***TODAY, IN PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS, READ “Preparatory Document the Synod of Bishops” in joint piece***

 **Walking with Young People****:**

Accompanying young people requires going beyond a preconceived framework, encountering young people where they are, adapting to their times and pace of life and taking them seriously. This is to be done as young people seek to make sense of the reality in which they live and to utilize the message which they have received in words and deeds in their daily attempts to create a personal history and in the more-or-less conscious search for meaning in their lives.

Every Sunday, Christians keep alive the memory of the crucified and risen Lord in their encounter with him in the celebration of the Eucharist. Many children are baptized in the faith of the Church and are engaged in the journey of Christian initiation. Nonetheless, this is not the same as making a mature choice for a life of faith. Arriving at this point requires a journey which sometimes includes unpredictable paths and uncustomary places which are far removed from ecclesial communities. In this regard, Pope Francis said: “Vocational pastoral ministry is learning the style of Jesus, who passes through the places of daily life, stops without being hurried and, by looking at our brothers with mercy, leads them to encounter God the Father (*Address to Participants in the International Conference on Pastoral Work for Vocations*, 21 October 2016). Walking with young people builds up the entire Christian community.

Precisely because the proposed message involves the freedom of young people, every community needs to give importance to creative ways of addressing young people in a personal way and supporting personal development. In many cases, the task involves learning to allow for something new and not stifling what is new by attempting to apply a preconceived framework. No seed for vocations can be fruitful if approached with a closed and “complacent pastoral attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way’” and without people being “bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 33). Three verbs from the Gospel, which describe the way Jesus encountered the people of his time, can be of assistance in adopting this pastoral style: “going out”, “seeing” and “calling.”

***Going Out:*** Pastoral vocational care, in this sense, means to accept the invitation of Pope Francis: “going out”, primarily, by abandoning the rigid attitudes which make the proclamation of the joy of the Gospel less credible; “going out”, leaving behind a framework which makes people feel hemmed-in; and “going out”, by giving up a way of acting as Church which at times is outdated. “Going out” is also a sign of inner freedom from routine activities and concerns, so that young people can be leading characters in their own lives. The young will find the Church more attractive, when they see that their unique contribution is welcomed by the Christian community.

***Seeing:*** To “go out” into the world of young people requires a willingness to spend time with them, to listen to the story of their lives and to be attentive to their joys, hopes, sadness and anxieties; all in an effort to share t2hem. This leads to the enculturation of the Gospel and for the Gospel to enter every culture, even among young people. In the accounts of Jesus’ encounters with the men and women of his time, the Gospel precisely highlights his ability to spend time with them and his appeal to those with whom he exchanged glances. The same is the case with every true shepherd of souls, who is able to peer into the depths of the heart without being intrusive or threatening. This is the true look of discernment, which does not want to take possession of another’s conscience nor pre-determine the path of God’s grace, but begins by setting aside one’s own mental framework.

***Calling:*** In the Gospel accounts, Jesus’ look of love is transformed into a word, that is, a call to newness of life which is to be accepted, explored and built up. Above all, calling means awakening a desire and jarring people from what blocks them or from the complacency which slows them down. Calling means asking questions which have no ready-made answers. In this way, and not by passively respecting norms, people are impelled to embark on a journey and to encounter the joy of the Gospel.