

## THE EMMAUS NARRATIVE AS A MODEL OF VOCATIONAL MINISTRY

The Church through its earnest desire to proclaim the kerygma, attempted and will continue in its endeavour to provide various models of evangelization. Yet, one of the main pitfalls that often we succumb to is that such models become more self-oriented projects detached from discipleship, or Christ-following. Conscious of this fact, through this paper, we would like to explore and recommend a model that is rooted in Christ himself, more specifically as exemplified literally hours away from his resurrection event: the Emmaus Narrative (Luke 24:13-35).<sup>1</sup>

The program that we would like to propose is in vocational ministry, precisely that towards the ordained ministry within a Catholic religious community. However, before delving any deeper into the main thrust of the Christian religious recruitment program, some pertinent issues must be addressed. First, we need to initiate the discussion by advocating a more holistic view of the term ‘vocation.’ This is vital since we often risk reducing “vocational pastoral care only as an activity whose sole purpose is to “recruit” priests and men and women religious.”<sup>2</sup>

Given such a proclivity we would like to affirm a ministry that engages with youths which ought to be *vocational*. This calls for a ‘broader vocational care’ which is meaningful to and

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<sup>1</sup> On an extensive study of the Emmaus Narrative as a model of Evangelization, Cf. Marcel Dumais, *After Emmaus: Biblical Models for the New Evangelization* (Collegetown, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2014), 92–109.

<sup>2</sup> “Instrumentum Laboris: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on ‘Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,’” Vatican Archives, 2018, accessed November 3, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20180508\\_instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20180508_instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html), 86.

includes all young people.<sup>3</sup> The implication is that before establishing any vocational promotion group, a dynamic youth ministry program needs to be established and sustained. It is only through such vocational youth ministry in the broader sense that a group of specific individuals is formed towards the aim of religious vocational discernment.

Vocation is the hinge around which all dimensions of the person are integrated. This principle concerns not only the individual believer but also pastoral ministry as a whole. So it is very important to clarify that only in the vocational dimension does all pastoral ministry find a unifying principle, because here it finds its origin and its fulfilment.<sup>4</sup>

There are two main reasons why we would like to develop this vocational promotion program. First is an attempt to address the current scenario of the field, which indicates vocations towards the ordained ministry are experiencing a significant decline.<sup>5</sup> While it is not the merit of this study to go into the causes of such a decline, it is evident that the issue merits more concern and ways of addressing it. The second is realizing that the existing models attempting to attract youth towards priesthood or a lifetime commitment towards religious life are often ineffective or dated.<sup>6</sup> Given this vacuum, the scope of this paper will provide a model

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. "Instrumentum Laboris: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on 'Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,'" 86, 93, 95, 100.

<sup>4</sup> "Final Document: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on 'Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,'" Vatican Archives, October 27, 2018, accessed November 15, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20181027\\_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20181027_doc-final-instrumentum-xvassemblea-giovani_en.html), 139.

<sup>5</sup> "Frequently Requested Church Statistics," Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate, accessed November 8, 2021, <https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

<sup>6</sup> In preparation of this paper, we attempted to consult material on the subject which unfortunately is exceptionally limited. Attempts were made to consult others vocational promoters which they equally complain that a proper and relevant model for vocations in today's setting is difficult to find. This neglect should not be considered as a minor omission.

Cf. Martin Galea, "Vocational Ministry in a Time of Vocations Crisis" (Dublin, Ireland, All Hallows College, 1998).

for vocational ministry, which aims to support individuals (vocational promoters) who accompany youth in their discernment towards the ordained ministry.

The paper, as already indicated, will take Jesus' journey towards Emmaus as the meta-narrative of the program. This passage, while being one of the key models of evangelization, more so to our demographic, is also understood to be "paradigmatic for our understanding of the Church's mission to the young."<sup>7</sup> Through our program, we will distill four points of engagement or attitudes: listening, welcoming, accompanying, and going forth.<sup>8</sup> These attitudes we would like to argue can present a synthesis of Christ-centred pastoral program which satiate well with the yearnings of the contemporary youths. Moreover, as we shall realize, these attitudes will form a foundation on which each religious community with its own distinct charisma leads towards fruitful vocational endeavours.

Through our study, we would like to extensively use two primary documents penned by Pope Francis in recent years. First is *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), which is considered the blueprint of Christian evangelization in the contemporary world.<sup>9</sup> While the other document is *Christus Vivit* (2019), a post-synodal apostolic exhortation addressed to young people. This document, chiefly chapter 8, addresses the prominence of vocation mainly as an elementary theme of youth ministry.

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<sup>7</sup> "Final Document: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on 'Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,'" 4.

<sup>8</sup> These four attitudes are based on what the Church in Malta is proposing as part of the pastoral vision for 2020-2023. There the Maltese Church attempts to live these "four ecclesial dynamics" as a way forward in evangelization. Cf. Archdiocese of Malta, "Being Renewed as One Church," One Church, One Journey, accessed November 8, 2021, <https://journey.church.mt/commitment/>.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Duncan Dormor and Alana Harris, *Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, and the Renewal of the Church*. (New York: Paulist Press, 2017).

We will also make use of two additional documents that acted as foundational material for the Synod realized in October 2018. The *Instrumentum Laboris*, which is a comprehensive working document that gathered two years' worth of data, mostly feedback received from youth themselves in preparation for the Synod, and a *Final Document* released at the end of the Synod summarizing the critical discussions that took place during the Synod. The document *Christus Vivit* is the subsequent fruit of such endeavour.

The application of this program is not limited to one cultural, geographical context or specific religious congregation.<sup>10</sup> However, the program was established in view of a definite framework and pastoral scenario. The author of this program is a member of the Missionary Society of St Paul and is assigned to coordinate the vocational youth ministry in Malta for the upcoming years.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the dream being realized in this document is to present and facilitate a way towards realizing this mission effectively. It will be doing so by reaching two objectives. The first is by providing a sound theological basis that enhances the pastoral priority of the attitudes of listening, welcoming, accompanying, and being sent forth. Then in the appendixes, we will present several pastoral recommendations that aim to engender the fruitfulness of the program.

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<sup>10</sup> While not limited to Catholic priesthood, given the author of this paper's Catholic's background evidently this will be the main perspective realized in this paper.

<sup>11</sup> The Missionary Society of St Paul (MSSP), being the dream the Servant of God Mgr. Joseph De Piro (1877-1933), knows its foundation on June 30<sup>th</sup> 1910, in Malta, Europe. Through the missionary zeal of St Paul, our Patron Saint, we as brothers within a community, and through the vast number of lay collaborators are called for evangelization and the implanting of the Church in missionary lands. Cf. "About Us," Missionary Society of St Paul (MSSP), accessed November 23, 2021, <http://web.paulistmissionaries.org/>.

## I: AN ATTITUDE OF LISTENING

The narrative in Luke 24 opens with the journey of two disciples that depart from Jerusalem as they head towards Emmaus. Clearly, they were in distress (v 17), and Jesus joined them in their walk, but they failed to recognize him. In response to their sorrow, Jesus provided them with an interpretative key for their own situation: the Word of God (v 25), who is Christ himself, revealed and fulfilled in the Sacred Scripture.

Attuning oneself to the Word of God is fundamental in the work of vocational ministry when understood as a means of evangelization. Pope Francis declares that “all evangelization is based on that Word, listened to, meditated upon, lived, celebrated and witnessed to. The sacred Scriptures are the very source of evangelization.”<sup>12</sup>

The contemplation of the Word grounds our endeavour on realizing that God has the supreme prerogative in the Christian calling.<sup>13</sup> This is understood when analyzing the various callings found in Sacred Scripture – mainly the narratives of God’s callings to the Old Testament prophets and Christ’s calling of the apostles and disciples – we realize that the prime agent of vocational ministry is God himself. As Christ himself affirms: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” (John 15: 16). That in itself attempts to lessen the exigency and pressure on those working as vocational promoters with the knowledge that our call is primarily to pray constantly to “the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:38)

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<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis, “*Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World*,” Vatican Archives, November 24, 2013, accessed November 2, 2021, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), 174.

<sup>13</sup> Douglas J. Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 17–18.

Another type of listening that we are called to develop is that of listening to the youth themselves. Such was the case with Jesus in following the call of the disciples at the very beginning of the Gospel of John. There we find John and Andrew attempting their first steps towards Jesus. He turns, recognizes their yearnings and asks, “What do you seek?” (John 1: 38)

Unfortunately, very often, we do not take heed of the need to listen to young people, as they repeatedly request: “we seek to be listened to and to not merely be spectators in society but active participants. We seek a Church that helps us find our vocation, in all of its senses.”<sup>14</sup> As ministers to the youth, we are called to genuinely listen to young people who often plead for our assistance, most often in silence or in a subtle voice.<sup>15</sup> Our calling then is to lovingly let young people voice and clarify their desires.

We need to practice the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God’s love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives.<sup>16</sup>

As vocational promoters, we are called to help youth become more attuned not only with their inner voice, often buried under a lot of noise. We are also called to guide them to the contemplative listening of the Word of God, as it is addressed to them personally. As we find with the prophet Samuel, he needed Eli to help him recognize God’s voice, which led him to give

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<sup>14</sup> “Pre-Synodal Meeting Document: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on ‘Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,’” Vatican Archives, March 23, 2018, accessed November 15, 2021, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2018/03/24/0220/00482.html>.

<sup>15</sup> “Young people often fail to find responses to their concerns, needs, problems and hurts in the usual structures. As adults, we find it hard to listen patiently to them, to appreciate their concerns and demands, and to speak to them in a language they can understand.”  
“*Evangelii Gaudium*: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World,” 105.

<sup>16</sup> “*Evangelii Gaudium*: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World,” 171.

his life for the prophetic vocation (1 Samuel 3:9-10). Thus, the contemplation of and familiarization with the Word of God becomes the guide to interpreting one's story and one's direction in life: "We must remember that prayerful discernment has to be born of an openness to listening – to the Lord and others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways."<sup>17</sup>

Finally, as mentors for those at the beginning of the journey, we can only communicate this listening skill in the measure that we refine it ourselves and integrate it into our personal story. This ability to attentive listening itself has the influence to attract in "meeting their [the youth] expectations and their search for a deep spirituality and a more real sense of belonging."<sup>18</sup> That space of belonging will be the following aptitude that we will look next.

## II: A WELCOMING PRESENCE

In the narrative of Emmaus, what Jesus does is quite remarkable. He squandered the day of his resurrection with two disciples who were filled with anguish as they ran away from Jerusalem. Yet, Christ was willing to do all the journey with them, welcoming their narrative – even if erroneous and negative - while at the same time helping them to discover a new space of becoming.

Likewise, today's youth are crying for spaces where they can feel welcomed and at home. In a culture where individuality is heightened and where the young person has to frequently live

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<sup>17</sup> Pope Francis, "Christus Vivit: Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God," Vatican Archives, March 25, 2019, accessed November 3, 2021, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html), 284.

<sup>18</sup> "Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World," 105.

with the complications or the absence of family life, the youth yearn for an opportunity of feeling the warmth of hospitality.

Vocational ministry can yield most results when it attempts to genuinely answer this angst, chiefly when done as a community endeavour.<sup>19</sup> As Pope Francis writes,

The community has an important role in the accompaniment of young people; it should feel collectively responsible for accepting, motivating, encouraging and challenging them. All should regard young people with understanding, appreciation and affection, and avoid constantly judging them or demanding of them a perfection beyond their years.<sup>20</sup>

Pope Francis here and elsewhere highlights the need of the whole Christian community to realize the personal calling of every individual. Such a community is called to be akin to “a city on a hill” (Matthew 5: 14) that embraces the responsibility and often the discomfort of opening its doors to youth to help them authentically discover their identity and sustain the question of their personal vocation.<sup>21</sup> It is through such an attitude of genuine welcome and encounter that vocational ministry can be fostered.<sup>22</sup>

Those who are already living the religious calling, and more so those who assume the role of vocational promoters, are asked to be mentors, “[who] should not lead young people as passive followers, but walk alongside them, allowing them to be active participants in the journey.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Diarmuid O’Murchu, *Reframing Religious Life: An Expanded Vision for the Future*, 2nd edition (Maynooth: Saint Paul Publications, 1995), 18.

<sup>20</sup> “Christus Vivit’: Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God,” 243.

<sup>21</sup> “Being present, supporting and accompanying the journey towards authentic choices is one way for the Church to exercise her maternal function, giving birth to the freedom of the children of God. Service of this kind is simply the continuation of the way in which the God of Jesus Christ acts towards his people: through constant and heartfelt presence, dedicated and loving closeness and tenderness without limits.”  
“Final Document: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on ‘Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,’” 91.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ben Moore and Adam Paylor, “I Took an Internship at a Monastery,” BBC News, August 18, 2019, accessed November 25, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqsHpxuHx6M>.

<sup>23</sup> “Christus Vivit’: Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God,” 246.

Christian mentors are asked to be faithful to their vocation in the process of seeking holiness, believing in youth while being able to engage, listen and respond without judgement to their anguish; they are called to be loving and humane as they recognize their own limits, and constantly involved in the process of ongoing formation.<sup>24</sup>

It is poignant in the account of Emmaus that when the disciples felt welcomed, they, in turn, reciprocated that hospitality to Jesus. They willingly asked Him to remain with them (v 29), and while with them, Christ celebrated the gift of communion through the breaking of the bread (v 30), an intimate connection to the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist.<sup>25</sup>

Liturgical celebrations, mainly the Eucharist, have the potential of becoming a space of encounter, which youth yearn to participate and engage in. Youth would like to find a space where liturgy is celebrated with the simplicity of signs. The preaching can connect the Word and life, and the gathering can be actively involved within the liturgy.<sup>26</sup>

Wherever the liturgy and the *ars celebrandi* are well crafted, there is always a significant presence of active and engaged young people. Considering that young people are more sensitive to experiences rather than concepts, and to relationships rather than notions, [others] mention that eucharistic celebrations and other ceremonies – which are often considered as points of arrival – can provide a place and opportunity for a renewed initial proclamation to young people.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. “Pre-Synodal Meeting Document: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on ‘Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,’” 10.

<sup>25</sup> Pope Francis, “General Audience,” Vatican Archives, May 24, 2017, accessed November 20, 2021, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2017/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170524\\_udienza-generale.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170524_udienza-generale.html).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. “Final Document: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on ‘Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,’” 134.

<sup>27</sup> “Instrumentum Laboris: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on ‘Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,’” 187.

### III: THE ART OF ACCOMPANIMENT

While Jesus walked with the two disciples, He listened to their narrative by helping them attune themselves to the Word of God. He welcomed their present situation and their desire to offer hospitality and providing supper. This process can be seen as a model of accompaniment. Interestingly the etymology of the word ‘accompaniment’ does affirm what Jesus did with the Emmaus’ disciples: ‘the sharing of the bread’ (cum-pane).<sup>28</sup> Likewise, while accompanying someone, we share who we are, the gift of each other’s presence.

Pope Francis affirms that pastoral leaders are called to follow this ‘art of accompaniment,’ which aims to walk at the same pace as the other while gently guiding them towards a better future.<sup>29</sup> When accompaniment is done well, it helps youth understand that they are not walking by themselves but have someone to turn to, predominantly in challenging times. Which unfortunately, youth often complain that they find this missing, notably from ordained ministers.<sup>30</sup>

Pope Francis repeatedly encourages the Church to adopt the art of accompaniment with the same attitude of Christ, the good shepherd. We are likewise called to be shepherds that “have the smell of the sheep.”<sup>31</sup> This entails more than a methodology and implies a way of being that calls us to help others as they journey along life.

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<sup>28</sup> “Final Document: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on ‘Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,’” 92.

<sup>29</sup> “Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World,” 169.

<sup>30</sup> “Final Document: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on ‘Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,’” 9.

<sup>31</sup> “Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World,” 24.

Such an accompaniment also calls for a delicate balance that does not undermine but respects one's freedom, mainly when dealing with youths.<sup>32</sup>

It would certainly be an error to impose something on the consciences of our brethren. But to propose to their consciences the truth of the Gospel and salvation in Jesus Christ, with complete clarity and with a total respect for the free options which it presents – without coercion, or dishonourable or unworthy pressure.<sup>33</sup>

When genuine accompaniment takes place, trust in the one leading them is building, which provides the ideal window where kerygma is communicated. Pope Francis reminds us that the Good News cannot be shared as a detached reality. For it to be effective, the Good News must be offered through the person's experience.<sup>34</sup> Another vital aspect of the sharing of the Good News is that it is delivered by the 'way of beauty:' "Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties."<sup>35</sup>

A significant step towards fruitful accompaniment is discernment. As Pope Francis reflects, discernment follows the 'first step,' that of Jesus willing to become a friend accompanying the individual in the journey.<sup>36</sup> From this perspective, discernment is not just a process of decision making but a process of becoming one in the company of Jesus, which follows the process of recognizing, interpreting and in due time choosing a way forward.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "Christus Vivit': Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God," 242.

<sup>33</sup> Pope Paul VI, "Evangelii Nuntiandi: Apostolic Exhortation on the Theme of Catholic Evangelization," December 8, 1975, accessed November 15, 2021, [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html), 80.

<sup>34</sup> "Christus Vivit': Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God," 231.

<sup>35</sup> "Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World," 167.

<sup>36</sup> "Christus Vivit': Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God," 250.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. "Final Document: XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on 'Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment,'" 104.

#### IV: THE CALL TO GO FORTH

So far, we have looked at Jesus' actions; his listening, welcoming and accompanying the two disciples. However, as we approach the end of the narrative of Emmaus, Christ takes the back seat as he "vanished out of their sight" (v 31), and now the disciples' eyes "were opened" (v 31), resulting in themselves becoming agents of the Good News. At this point, Jesus' physical appearance was no longer indispensable as they are enflamed with his presence and go forth with the courage to proclaim Jesus to others, out of an authentic encounter coming from the depth of their own experience (v 33).<sup>38</sup>

While these four points of engagement stated earlier do not necessarily follow a chronological order, this fourth point does come as a fruition of the previous ones. By now, youths are called to become the "agents of youth ministry. ... [while] they need to be helped and guided, but at the same time left free to develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity." From our perspective, this implies an attitude of stewardship or, as understood by Pope Francis, a synodality that is journeying together as a "participatory and co-responsible Church" that accepts and appreciates the gifts of all, including the young people.<sup>39</sup>

Such collaboration in ministry harkens back to Jesus understanding of the term 'apostle.' Mark's Gospel tells us that the apostles were appointed to be with him (which signifies a

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Bogdan G. Bucur, "Blinded by Invisible Light," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, no. 4 (2014): 689–90.

<sup>39</sup> "Christus Vivit": Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God," 205.

formation process) while also being sent out (3:14).<sup>40</sup> Essentially, the direction that an encounter with Christ evokes is that of being sent, as we also find at the end of the same Gospel: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16: 15). Even in the face of the unbelief and hardness of heart of some of the apostles (v 14). In the same way, Pope Francis rightly indicates that “it doesn’t take much to make young people missionaries. Even those who are most frail, limited and troubled can be missionaries in their way, for goodness can always be shared, even if it exists alongside many limitations.”<sup>41</sup>

In this respect, any model of evangelization, and more so any vocational model, ought to include those that are being evangelized: “Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.”<sup>42</sup> This implies trust from those leading the vocational program, which gently engages with the youths to become themselves agents and protagonists of reaching out to others.

These questions should be centred less on ourselves and our own inclinations, but on others, so that our discernment leads us to see our life in relation to their lives. That is why I would remind you of the most important question of all. “So often in life, we waste time asking ourselves: ‘Who am I?’ You can keep asking, ‘Who am I?’ for the rest of your lives. But the real question is: ‘For whom am I?’”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Pope Francis, “General Audience,” Vatican Archives, October 16, 2013, accessed November 20, 2021, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131016\\_udienza-generale.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20131016_udienza-generale.html).

<sup>41</sup> “‘Christus Vivit’: Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God,” 240.

<sup>42</sup> “Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World,” 120.

<sup>43</sup> Pope Francis, “Address of Pope Francis at the Prayer Vigil in Preparation for the XXXIV World Youth Day,” Vatican Archives, April 8, 2017, accessed November 15, 2021, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/april/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170408\\_veglia-preparazione-gmg.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/april/documents/papa-francesco_20170408_veglia-preparazione-gmg.html).

This missionary dimension of aiding youth to work for others aims to bolster their conviction in the life of discipleship. Furthermore, it is affirmed that when the youth feel this sense of engagement and ownership, it assists in appropriating the attitudes they are being engaged with. As a result, this brings a joyful consolation of a fulfilling life. As Pope Francis contends:

Young people are greatly enriched when they overcome their reticence and dare to visit homes, and in this way make contact with people's lives. They learn how to look beyond their family and their group of friends, and they gain a broader vision of life. At the same time, their faith and their sense of being part of the Church grow stronger. Youth missions, ... can lead to a renewed experience of faith and even serious thoughts about a vocation.<sup>44</sup>

Through the first segment of the paper we attempted to propose a model of vocational promotion inspired by Jesus' journeying with the two disciples as they walked away from and back to Jerusalem. Such a model aims at rejuvenating the process that responds to the query of youth to discover their worth and their calling in life. Through the four aptitudes discussed in this paper, we affirm that when these principles are lived and applied, they can yield a more effective ministry in the camp of recruiting young ones in the dedicated life-long commitment of ordained ministry. As we worked towards the fruition of this paper, we would like to affirm that ministering the youth, and more so in vocational ministry is indeed the treading on sacred ground that must not be taken lightly or in fear, but through a process of "taking off our shoes" (Exodus 3:5), discovering He who would be willing to listen, walk, accompany, and finally send us and those we minister to, towards a life lived in abundance.

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<sup>44</sup> "Christus Vivit": Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God," 240.

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## APPENDIX: PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS

As we already established throughout the paper, vocational ministry to be effective must be realized within a broader and more integral youth ministry context. This program, however, focuses on a more specialized goal of discovering one's Christian calling, namely that within the missionary religious life within the MSSP. The pastoral context aims to be of youths who have already had a Christ encounter and yearn to live the Christian life faithfully. Given its specific goal, this program is limited to the male audience, with the age bracket of 18 and 35 (younger and older individuals who would like to discern the MSSP calling must be encouraged to do so with the various groups and ministries within the Society). Ideally, the vocational discerners are in the pursuit of further studies and exhibit human and Christian aptitudes conducive to the calling. The duration of the program can be not less than a year and can be extended to fit the particularities of the group.

In the following section, we would like to develop further ways that are more applicable to the four attitudes described in the paper. Having said that, given that we are dealing with attitudes, one cannot simply reduce them to definite and quantifiable actions that are accomplished through one objective action or event. What is being asked is the conscious awareness that in ministry, here more focused in the vocational ministry, the one responsible must *embody and engender* deep learning of the attitudes discussed here.

The following recommendations attempt to be developed in two main focuses. The first is the consideration of how the vocational promoter can embody the attitude being discussed. This deals mainly with how he, together with the community that ministers towards this scope, develops a

culture that listens, welcomes, accompanies, and sends forth. The second focuses on how the attitude can be transmitted in more tangible examples that affect more youths who are part of the program.

Given the evocative nature that the Emmaus story has, notably as we asserted as a journey of vocational ministry, one way of initiating a vocational program could be through a weekend retreat that deliberately develops the narrative, which also aims to highlight the attitudes being presented. On the following page, we created such a tentative program that does precisely that (Refer to Appendix I). Then we will offer some potential recommendations for each attitude: an attitude of listening (Appendix II), a welcoming presence (Appendix III), the art of accompaniment (Appendix IV), and the call to go forth (Appendix V).

**APPENDIX I:  
WEEKEND RETREAT BASED ON THE EMMAUS NARRATIVE**

<b>FRIDAY</b>	
<b>5:00pm</b>	Welcome
<b>5:30pm</b>	Introductory Session
<b>6:00pm</b>	Lectio Divina on Emmaus Narrative <i>Allowing the Word itself to be the inspiration while also highlighting the four attitudes that Christ did with the disciples.</i>
<b>7:00pm</b>	Dinner <i>The youths are invited to help out in preparing the table and cleaning afterwards.</i>
<b>8:30pm</b>	Fellowship
<b>SATURDAY</b>	
<b>7:30am</b>	Morning Prayer
<b>8:15am</b>	Breakfast
<b>9:00am</b>	Session 1: Listening*
<b>10:00am</b>	Break
<b>10:30am</b>	Session 2: Welcomes*
<b>12:00pm</b>	Lunch
<b>1:30pm</b>	Free time
<b>4:00pm</b>	Session 3: Accompanies*
<b>5:00pm</b>	Break
<b>5:30pm</b>	Session 4: Send forth*
<b>7:00pm</b>	Dinner
<b>8:30pm</b>	Fellowship
<b>SUNDAY</b>	
<b>7:30am</b>	Morning Prayer
<b>8:15am</b>	Breakfast
<b>9:00am</b>	Community Sharing <i>This space can be the time when as a whole community gathers to share what was it like to live this weekend and how do they would like to continue to live the spirit shared in it.</i>
<b>10:00am</b>	Break
<b>10:30am</b>	Concluding Eucharist <i>The Eucharist can be the most conducive experience where they re-experience the narrative of Emmaus, even as they participate in the various parts of the Eucharist:</i> <i>(1) realizing their own narrative (Penitential Act)</i> <i>(2) listening to the Word as a way of re-storying (Liturgy of the Word)</i> <i>(3) being welcomed in the process of becoming an offering (Offertory)</i> <i>(4) being accompanied to venture into the space of the meal (Liturgy of Eucharist)</i> <i>(5) in the process of becoming another Christ to others (Eucharist's concluding part)</i>
<b>12:00pm</b>	Lunch

\* Each of the four sessions can be developed separately to reflect more on the attributes of each attitude or follow an analogous pattern that repeats itself for the four attitudes. We would like to suggest that for each hour period, it can be initiated by 10-15mins input on what the attitude implies and how Christ embodies it in the Emmaus Narrative and elsewhere. Then a discussion among the participants can follow that aims to encourage engagement with the attitude in question. Three key questions can be asked:

1. When have you experienced being (listened to), (welcomed), (accompanied), and (encouraged to go forth)? How did that make you feel?
2. What can we as a community do to make you feel more (listened to), (welcomed), (accompanied), and (encouraged to go forth)?
3. What can you do to become more (a listening presence), (a welcoming presence), (an accompanying presence), and (encouraging others to go forth) to the people around you?

It is encouraged that what is being discussed is recorded in a desire that it would be implemented. Each session can end by reflecting and praying with a specific biblical passage that embodies the attitude.

## APPENDIX II: AN ATTITUDE OF LISTENING

*The disciples' journey towards Emmaus might have been an inconsequential episode in the life of two unknown runaways if it wasn't for Christ's willingness to approach them and journey with them along the way. Christ proceeds to query about their current state, patiently listening to their account, even if it was incorrectly construed. Jesus then offered the Word of God as an alternative option for interpretation of their own situation.*

1. One foundational realization is that through ministry, and more so through this ministry, the main focus should not be about the vocational promoter or the program itself but more on Christ. Therefore each program and those who contribute to its fulfilment must have Christ as their primary focus.
2. This also aims to acknowledge the tension often palpable in vocational ministry to produce fruits, which often leads to unhealthy pessimism when results are not apparent. Our assurance must counter this, by constantly being conscious that it is God who calls, and the realization that the mission is equally his (Cf. Matthew 9:38).
3. This attitude can be fostered through personal attuning to the Word as we become more nurtured in contemplative listening.
4. Another source of engagement is an attitude of listening towards the youths themselves whom we are called to minister. This listening can be cultivated through formal spaces of meetings done with this scope.
5. One effective formal way of listening is a dedicated space of community sharing. Together with the discerners, the community that welcomes them can spend time - weekly or bi-weekly - to share about their individual situations, and how it is effect them. Unencumbered from technological devices and other means of distraction, the group is asked to be engaged in listening and contemplatively be interested in each other.

6. Other favourable listening spaces that are often ignored are informal moments where the youths can engage unhindered. These spaces can be created by casually 'wasting time,' with the scope of building trust and earning their respect.
7. These two streams of listening (to the Word of God and the youths) must be integrated into our ministry, which in the same way assists our youths to become more attuned to the Word as they contemplate their Christian calling.
8. Various ways to do so can be by providing opportunities that study and reflect on the Word, spaces of *Lectio Divina*, and the encouragement of the daily reading of the Word. In addition, one can suggest apps or online platforms that facilitate and provide suitable material to facilitate the reflection of the Word.
9. Another recommendation can be to present the various calling in Scriptures (from prophets to apostles) as a way of discovering God's call. This can be done in one session or various dedicated sessions that relate to the different callings found in Sacred Scriptures.
10. Another option would be facilitating workshops where the participants can write their own psalm or their own summary of the Gospel or write their own letter to specific groups or even individuals (similar to the New Testament Epistles, notably Paul's). This can help the participants in synthesizing the biblical message as they aim to understand and fulfil it.
11. One way of getting familiar and becoming more invested in a subject is when the individual wrestles with it in order to deliver it to others. Vocational ministers must find suitable spaces where they empower the youths to deliver reflections/homilies on specific passages to a supportive audience.
12. These various forms that facilitate listening must aim towards helping the participant become more attuned with his (or her) own inclinations and the yearning of their heart as they discern their calling in life. While it is imperative to provide activities that lead towards listening, it is the absence of more clutter that can offer a suitable space of attunement with the voice of God.

**APPENDIX III:  
A WELCOMING PRESENCE**

*In the Emmaus narrative, Christ listened and provided the disciples with another interpretation of the events based on the Scripture. But, more imperative, even if it was his most glorious day of resurrection, Christ invested time to walk with Cleopas and the unknown disciple (the individual then and now whom we are asked to associate to). Christ welcomed their views, Christ welcomed their needed spaces of realization whom they are talking to, and Christ welcomed their request to provide a home where they can rest.*

1. As explained in the paper, the vocational minister and those called to assist him are called towards a calling of mentorship. Formation must remain an ongoing task for the vocational promoter. With the typically psychospiritual formation requested, another dedicated type of formation in digital literacy is warranted. Today's youths live and find their being in the social media sphere, and the vocational promoter must be enculturated in it, in order to minister to the younger generation effectively.
2. While adopting ways of integrating the digital media in ministry, vocational promotion's primary medium should favour the physical encounter. Youths are similarly asked, akin to the prophecy found in Hosea, to be taken "in the wilderness," which for our youths the physical and social reality can also harken such thoughts of wilderness, in the process of discovering one true self. As we find in Hosea's metaphor, there, in the desert of being outside of one's comfort zone, that we trust that God might speak tenderly to their hearts (Cf. Hosea 2:14-15).
3. Vocational ministry should not be a job done by mere one individual. It is a whole community that aims to embark on this delicate and dedicated initiative. While there should be one designated individual who is assigned and formed in such ministry, yet when it happens in the space of a community it leads towards an optimal context of vocational fruitfulness.

4. It would be ideal that a relatively young and healthy community take on this ministry. This is done, not to present an artificial or deceiving experience of religious life, but rather it aims to present a profound ideal of the religious charisma well lived.
5. The community is called to become a city on a hill (Matthew 5: 14), which ultimately means a community exposed to present authentic and even raw spaces to which youths can be relate to.
6. This should be done in a delicate balance that while it presents a more genuine representation of a Christian community, it should likewise respect its boundaries. Therefore, even and more so in the heightened sensitive issue of clergy abuses, the community must make it its utmost priority to protect and enhance safe and sensitive protocols that prevent inappropriate behaviour. Training in this regard is highly recommended.
7. In order to facilitate a welcoming presence apart from the human community, the physical spaces must also radiate the attitude of welcome. The community house must be a graceful space that, even in simplicity, speaks of beauty that attracts.
8. Youths can be invited for planned liveins that can happen over weekends once a month. During these weekends, a specified theme or topic pertinent to the themes of discipleship, discernment, community's charism/mission can be studied and reflected upon. Such weekends must have a delicate balance of structured meetings, with other equally critical informal spaces where more genuine encounters might happen.
9. If possible it would also be helpful that the community dedicate one evening once a week where an open house method is introduced. Youths are invited to come over, and a simple program could be followed. The program must reflect the actual program of the community as a way of providing normality. In these spaces, moments of dining together, praying together, and having fellowship together ought to further highlight the sense of being at home.
10. The community must yearn and allow the youths to make the space their own home. That implies dedicated time for the upkeeping of the house, such as cleaning, minor manual

work, preparing food, etc. Work is an essential tool in building community, house ownership, and in turn provides a suitable space for getting to know one another better.

11. The community must also facilitate a space of welcome through the space of liturgy. In vocational ministry liturgy, mainly the Eucharist, should be integrally included within the program.

12. While formation can be one way of helping the participants to understand the importance of the liturgy, what is more needed are spaces of active engagement in the liturgy that connects the various dimensions of liturgy. More than mere informative knowledge about the liturgy, it must be encouraged an embodied and active participation, which affirms an interaction of the prayed experience with the one being lived.

13. While intimate spaces of the liturgy (when lived in the closed group of the community and the participants) are at times preferred and desirable, it is also advised, exceptionally during key times of the liturgical year, that an assembly, the whole believing community worship together. There is evangelizing power when an entire community gathers, prays and lives its faith.

#### APPENDIX IV: THE ART OF ACCOMPANIMENT

*The attitudes already discussed that of listening and welcomes are elements that can be incorporated into the art of accompaniment. Jesus, in the Emmaus narrative and elsewhere was willing to stay with the individual or multitude in need. At times even miraculously provides food himself or else dining in with others in a way of levelling relationships. As we shall see, this attitude is a distinctive marker in the process of effective vocational promotion.*

1. While, as we already established, vocational ministry ideally happens within the context of a functioning community, it is also essential that one assigned individual be a reference point to the youths in discernment. Vocational ministry evidently has a sense of attraction towards a specific individual. This is not incorrect. Rather, its realization should lead to a heightened responsibility that the vocational promoter must live a life worth being considered a role model and even a father figure.
2. The individual in charge of the vocational ministry must invest the utmost energy in getting to know those he who is leading. He must provide spaces of informal relational authority where youths can be comfortable and associate with. Often minuscule gestures speak louder than most. For instance, following up with the youths through sending a message or calls for one's birthday, upcoming exams and other occasions, or following an issue previously discussed highlights a genuine concern.
3. The vocational promoter must also realize as his chief duty to continuously pray, intercede and fast for the youths who are in the process of discernment. With the youths themselves, he is being asked to discern God's calling for each of them.
4. Part of the ministry of the vocational promoter must be the bridge between the community and youths doing the vocational discernment process. He must coordinate the program to be followed, assign different responsibilities, and remind those involved about upcoming events.

5. Even if very laudable, the vocational ministry is often than not a thankless and challenging ministry to fulfil. The vocational promoter must be thus rooted in one's vocation, know one's limits, and find spaces for supervision and support. It would also be suggested that given the sensitivity of the ministry required here, the vocational promoter finds alternative spaces of peer-to-peer friendships. While we are called to befriend the youths, we are equally requested to maintain personal boundaries.

6. In such a scenario, it is more than desirable that the whole religious community supports and assists not simply vocational ministry but also the vocational minister in this delicate ministry.

7. Most often, the vocational ministry is one job among others that the vocational minister attends to. While acknowledging that there are various pastoral reasons for this, as much as possible, the vocational promoter must attempt to relinquish businesses in preference to presence.

8. Additionally, vocational ministry should be considered a ministry that, like other ministry needs ample time to develop. That implies that an extended period must be given dedicated towards the fulfilment of the ministry. This is exceptionally warranted as it provides stability for those whom he is asked to follow as they grow in their vocational journey.

9. The vocational promoter must be as much as possible consistently present during events and celebrations where youths are invited. That would help the youths as they seek a reference point and further established stability in the exposure experiences.

10. Dedicated formal one-to-one meetings must be part of the vocational journey, which must happen once a month or as the individual's situation warrants. In these meetings, the youths must find spaces conducive to being listened to and helped in their journey. Follow-up questions from previous meetings and points of growth planned for upcoming meetings can segue growth.

11. Another recommendation warranted is the healthy inclusion and engagement of the parents of the youths participating in the vocational program. Typically, the contemporary youth is hostile to the idea of sharing his space (even and especially in the digital world) with his older generations and more so with one's parents. However, one can still plan – in coordination with the participants and those involved - various moments throughout the year where the participants' parents are invited to the community to establish a link and further familiarity.

12. As elsewhere stated, the optimum spaces of vocational ministry must happen in a larger context of believing Christian community. Other lay adults can also be engaged in accompanying the youths discerning their vocation by welcoming, being present, building friendship and facilitating spaces of prayerful intercession towards the participants.

## APPENDIX V: THE CALL TO GO FORTH

*The fourth and last attitude under our consideration is the actual fruit of Christ's listening, welcoming and accompanying. The disciple then and now, illuminating by new insight and knowledge of the heart, is encouraged to make the first steps of evangelizing others. Cleopas and the other disciple made the journey back enkindled even if holding the same story that they ran away from. The difference is that now they have a new interpretation that the advent of Christ presented, which ought to be shared with others.*

1. Through this process of empowering the youths, the vocational minister must invariably keep in his awareness that the youths he ministers to are 'not his' – they belong to Christ. In recognizing the attitude of servant leadership, the vocational minister must grow in the ability to relinquish those whom he invested much effort, time, and prayer in.
2. The vocational promoter must also live with the prospect that not all youths are called to follow the religious life. Some, even those who through one's perception might look like as 'the better ones,' in God's perspective might be different (Cf. 1 Samuel 16: 1-13).
3. Youths in this vocational discernment process must be given the independence and space to develop other opportunities that help them find themselves and the vocational identity that they would like to embrace.
4. The youths must feel that they are the agents of the program. Therefore, while the vocational promoter must guide and assist the youths, this should be held in tension with trusting the youths to act – even if committing contained errors.
5. When the youths lead towards misjudgements or oversights which at times are inevitable, the vocational promoter, rather than being a harsh and condemning critic, must embody Christ's compassionate attitude that continuously cares for the individual to realize a way forward that develops from one's own mistakes.
6. Those in vocational discernment must remain free all the way to stay or terminate the program. Fundamentally, they remain in the process of discernment, which also implies not

considering the option of religious and missionary life in view towards other as healthy and sanctifying vocations. Accompaniment in freedom must be a key.

7. A delicate sensitivity must be reached that while youths are empowered to be agents of evangelization, they are not labelled as already fully committed missionary priests. This sensitivity is more than valuable in assisting the youths to remain for the good reason rather than because of shame implicated in quitting the program.

8. Some responsibilities that those discerning vocational life might be encouraged to contribute to are leading other youths or children ministry groups, participation in other ministries within the local church, and other opportunities that might be fruitful.

9. One pertinent environment of sending forth that youths might be encouraged to evangelize is the digital world in which they and their peers find their existence. Youths must also be given the tools and opportunities to do so, even as an opportunity of shared ministry.

10. The youths participating in vocational discernment must not be completely separated from the youth group that they used to form part of. These youth groups and various youth events can be the right spaces where the youths themselves can invite others to live their faith in a more meaningful way.

11. Possible options of prolonged experiences of being sent forth can also be helpful, such as summer missionary experiences abroad or local voluntary placements. While organizing such experiences, the vocational promoter must see that the youths are accompanied.

12. Another fruitful opportunity can be a working opportunity (such as a summer job) within the community's various ministries. These experiences can prove worthwhile as they continue to grow in responsibility while also being part of the mission of the community at large.