



The National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors (NAVFD)

October 2017

CREATING A VOCATION CULTURE

By Rev Raymond Lafontaine. *Excerpts from a presentation given at the J.S. Paluch Vocation Seminar in Chicago on Aug 22, 2017.*

Way back in 2002, there was a Vocation Congress in Montreal whose theme was: Vocation, Gift of God, Given for God's People.

Knowing that WYD was going to be held in the summer of 2002 in Toronto, we thought that the timing of gathering in the spring in Montreal to reflect on the future of vocation ministry was an important bridge to build between youth outreach and vocational discernment - a connection that is being directly made in the upcoming 2018 Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith, and discernment.

At that Congress, there were 125 young adults who prepared a declaration on vocations whose points are still important today.

In essence, what they asked for was a renewal of their covenant relationship with the church. They asked those who serve in ministry to be credible and generous witnesses, to engage in open and fruitful dialogue, to help them to claim and grow in their Catholic identity, their commitment to human dignity, to an open and inclusive church, to genuine experiences of Christian community. They asked specifically for mentoring, for guidance, for encouragement, for opportunities to grow in prayer and for assistance in discerning

the path on which God was calling them. They invited us to trust in God and in them.

After the Congress a pastoral plan was developed that could be applied and used as a basis for vocation ministry efforts. The points made then are just as relevant today:



-CONVERSION - need for profound personal change and ecclesial transformation

-DISCERNMENT - paying attention to the signs of the times, in the church and in the world, and in particular of the world of young people

-MISSION - rather than recruiting people to a way of life, offering concrete opportunities to be engaged in the mission of the church, allowing that to be the primary locus for initial vocational awakening and discernment, rather than a personal predisposition.

-FOSTERING A VOCATION CULTURE

-PREFERENTIAL PASTORAL OPTION FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

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**-PARADIGM SHIFT FROM
RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION
TO DISCERNMENT AND
ACCOMPANIMENT**

These are the five pastoral priorities for Vocation Ministry:

TO PRAY - not just to pray for vocations in the conventional sense, but to be ourselves people of prayer, who radiate holiness, who draw young people into an experience of both communal worship and personal relationship with Christ in prayer. You must be on fire!

TO EVANGELIZE - the need for relevant, high quality adult faith education directed specifically at the questions and concerns of young adults, a place where they can both grow in the heritage of the Church but also to ask questions and raise concerns that they and their contemporaries share which often block their way to a deeper commitment in the church.

TO EXPERIENCE - the need for young people to be engaged in all levels of church life and experience. We highlighted four areas that seemed essential and fundamental:

- Leiturgia - prayer and worship
- Koinonia - communion and fellowship
- Diakonia - service and charity
- Kerygma - witness and proclamation

There is a vocational component implicitly present in all of our work with teenagers and young adults.

TO MENTOR - to witness, to model, to accompany, to guide. The struggle with declining numbers and increasing age to do this - but it is the task not just of priests and religious, but of the entire church. Willingness to be open, to share our own struggles, to be honest, but also, in the words of Ron Rolheiser, 'to live our own lives in such a way that we can say to a young person, with conviction and credibility,

God is calling you to entrust your life to him. Give it to him!'

TO INVITE: to discern, to choose, to commit

Pedagogy of accompaniment - based on the parable of the Sower

- Jesus sows the seed
- growth is accompanied and nurtured
- Education in self knowledge and
- discernment of Gods plan in taught and inculcated

Our freedom is engaged in a choice and commitment to a path we believe is Gods plan for our life.

The idea of Vocation Culture has taken root in the Church - we accept the idea that the particular question of vocations to consecrated life and ordained ministry can only be addressed within the larger question of what the 2018 synod will be studying - young people, faith, and discernment.

We are still far from what the Congress called a "preferential option for youth and young adults." This will be our ongoing challenge for many years to come.

CONFERENCE 2018 TO ACCOMPANY WITH JOY AND HOPE



You may be awake at night wondering who will be the facilitator for the NAVFD Conference in Hamilton in April. Wonder no longer. Sister Sue Kidd a Sister of the Congregation of Notre Dame situated in Charlottetown, PEI will be guiding us through our days. Sister Sue is a Campus Minister at the University of Prince Edward Island and we are delighted that she sees

her way clear to be with us for our conference to animate the conversation arising from the keynote presentations by Cardinal Gerald Lacroix and Sister Nathalie Becquart, xav. To register for the conference: vocations.ca.



LANDSCAPE OF RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS IN CANADA

Héctor Acero Ferrer, Project Manager

Greetings from the team of the “Canadian Vocations Ministry Study”!

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the religious congregations that continue to support NAVFD in this large-scale research project! Through your participation in our congregational surveys (of religious institutes and new members) and your contribution to our three focus groups, you have enabled us to produce the necessary data to generate a comprehensive understanding of the reality of religious vocations in Canada.

In a particular way, we would like to thank all those religious congregations who have hosted our researchers and other personnel during the focus group stage of our research. Your tangible contribution has allowed us to meet our budgeting goals while conducting high-level research in urban centres such as

Montreal and Toronto.

The next stage of our research is a line up of site visits. In these visits we will take a closer look into the congregational life of the institutes that continue to attract and retain large numbers of new members. Our hope is to trace and document their best practices in vocation animation, hoping that these could serve other institutes across the country. If you represent an institute with large numbers of new vocations, stay tuned –as we might be contacting you in the next few weeks.

If you have any questions, or wish to participate in one of our site visits, please do not hesitate to contact me at navfd.research@gmail.com.

We ask for your prayers and support as we continue this important research.

Have a blessed fall season!

