

THE EYM IN ITALY PROJECT DIMENSION

Italian EYM Team

Four commitments for life...

The EYM is a proposal for life expressed in four very precise commitments called, in the terminology of the Movement, the "four laws".

These "laws" coincide with the four constitutive values of the EYM spirituality: the Word, the Eucharist, the Community and the Mission; here they are:

- *Read the Gospel.*
- *Live the Mass.*
- *Love your brothers.*
- *Be the 13th apostle.*

Read the Gospel. As the Good News of Jesus Christ Son of God (cf. Mk 1:1) the Gospel is not considered a mere book, but a person. Therefore reading "the Book" means being in Jesus' company as a friend, "looking him straight in the eyes" and allowing oneself to be transformed and moulded by his words. Reading the Gospel we thus learn to live like him, we "use his eyes" to observe the reality of the world and "his heart" to transform it into new earth and new skies.

In order not to keep Jesus at a distance from our own everyday life, the commitment becomes that of "never allowing the dust to settle on our own Gospel", nourishing ourselves daily at the table of the Word" (In the course of this brief treatise there will be put in inverted commas expressions and phrases which, in the course of the years, have become commonly used in the Movement and become real "idioms" of the EYM. These expressions express synthetically though effectively a certain familiar and affective way of relating with the Word of God and the Eucharist).

Live the Mass. After dying for us all, Jesus continues to offer his life for the world in the Eucharist. Through a full understanding

of the sacrament, its existential and projectual dimension is culled and consequently Jesus-Eucharist is adopted as the only lifestyle. In virtue of the Baptism in which Jesus consecrates each Christian as his priest, life becomes a Mass to be lived "24 hours out of 24", and one's whole existence is transformed into a Mass on the world and for the world.

Love your brothers. Loving one's brothers signifies seeing Jesus, the brother who gave his life for all men and women, in their faces. In order to love everyone without exception the EYM educates to the exercise of "a priori sympathy", i.e. a positive attitude of welcome towards everyone, even before knowing them, to the exclusion of no-one.

The small communities into which the EYM is divided become the privileged place for learning to cultivate this lifestyle.

Be the 13th apostle. It is Jesus who calls us to be his witnesses and apostles – as friends and not as servants! (cf. Jn 15:15) – to build a new world, joining his life and mission of salvation, making God's problems our own.

In continuity with the first Apostles, we receive from Jesus the mission of opening our eyes on the world, not to condemn it but to understand, love and serve it, and therefore to "travel through every village" (today we speak of the world as "global village"), to bring the Good News to the "extreme boundaries" of what we belong to.

... in view of a Project

Even though the constitutive values of its spirituality are Word, Eucharist, Community and Mission (which the four rules refer to) the specific ecclesial charism of the Movement is the Eucharist. With this awareness the EYM has felt the responsibility of going in-depth throughout its history into the "infinite treasure"

(Ep 3:8) of the eucharistic mystery.

We can indicate some of the stages which manifest as a whole the progressive "revelation" of this mystery.

- *Sacramental Eucharist*. We started to go in-depth into the Eucharist in its cultural reality, as heart/centre of the "Lord's Day", in which all God's people are protagonists and not simple spectators.

- *Existential Eucharist*. The next intuition was that of living our whole existence as Eucharist: initiated around an altar, the Eucharist continues throughout the day, for the whole of life. This awareness gave rise to the "slogan": "Live the Mass!".

- *Projective Eucharist*. In a perspective of salvation life is not a sum of days but the answer to a call. An answer which, to become incarnate in the various seasons of existence, is organized in a project: the *project-of-life*. The "24 hours on 24" Mass thus becomes a real project-of-life.

- *Eucharistic Man Project*. The Good News of Christianity is not a system of ideas, an ethical code or an ideology, but a person in whose light the project-of-life consequently becomes a *man-project*. The Word tells us that this man, this Jesus of Nazareth who became present and remained among us in his paschal fullness as eucharistic Bread, is also God. Therefore the person of Jesus-Eucharist translates the man-project for us, bringing it to its fullest expression of Man Eucharist (cf. Identikit of the Eucharistic Man in the following pages).

- *Men and women of the Eucharist*. "And I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me (Ga 2:20). With these words Paul culls and reveals the root of the Christian path. If Christ's paschal fullness is fulfilled in the Eucharistic Man, for those who wish to follow Christ the project-of-life is translated

into becoming men and women of the Eucharist. It is precisely the radical option of taking Christ-Eucharist as project-of-life which allows us to "become what we are", i.e. God. In fact in Baptism – which is later confirmed in Confirmation – we are configured in Jesus, incorporated in him: we start living of God, because we are made God by God himself. This configuration with Christ ripens in Confirmation and is accomplished in the Eucharist (In early Christian preaching, in the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, this "human deification" in Christ through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation and, even more, in the Eucharist, was common catechesis.

"The Father of immortality sent the immortal Son into the world to regenerate us to eternal life. If therefore man has become immortal, he will also be God... God in fact does not skimp his gifts, he who...made a God of you". (Saint Hyppolitus).

"A Christian identifies himself with Christ. Christ is formed in those who adhere to him with true love. Consequently he becomes a copy of Christ and, insofar as his condition allows it, he will become Christ himself". (Saint Augustine – Comment on the Letter to the Galatians).

"Let us congratulate one another and give thanks not only because you have been made Christians, but Christ... Do you understand, my brothers, God's grace towards you? Wonder, be happy: you have been made Christ!". (Saint Augustine – Treatises on the Gospel of John).

"Receiving the body and blood of Christ you acquire con-corporeity and consanguinity with Christ... We become consorts of God's nature". (Jerusalem Catechesis).

Christ says: Come, eat my body, the bread which nourishes you in strength, drink my blood, the wine which makes you become God". (Saint Procopius).

"Through the gift of charity, we are given the gift of truly being what we mystically celebrate in a sacramental manner in the sacrifice of the Eucharist". (Saint Fulgentius – Treatise against Fabian).

"You are the body of Christ, you are his limbs... If you are the body and limbs of Christ, your sacred mystery is placed on the Lord's table. You receive your true mystery in the Eucharist. To what you are, you answer AMEN! And answering you subscribe to it" (Saint Augustine).

"Receive what you are: the body of Christ". With these words a priest from Zaire invited the faithful to approach the altar to take communion).

- *Eucharist, communion, community.* "Do this in memory of me". This is the eucharistic testament of Jesus who handed over his sacramental body to his disciples for it to become leaven of

salvation" to the ends of the earth" (Ac 1:8) Jesus does not entrust this mandate to individual witnesses but to his Church who, nourishing herself with the bread of life, is transformed into a eucharistic social body in history.

From its origin the Christian Church intuited the collective dimension of the Eucharist, its destination to a "polis" and not to individuals. In the letter to Diogneto (200 A.D.) - one of the first descriptions of Christian identity - there is no mention of individuals but of lands, countries and cities. As citizens of the Church Christians constitute a widespread spiritual republic with no definite territorial belonging: "Every foreign land is a country for them and every country a foreign land"... The Eucharist is the bread of this "polis".

The last stage of the reflection of the EYM on the eucharistic mystery thus culls "the link between Christ's sacramental body in the Eucharist and the social body of Christians in history". With these words Philip Rosato, a Jesuit theologian who teaches dogmatic theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome, highlights the relationship which mutually binds and recalls eucharistic orthodoxy and orthopraxis, understood above all as active charity which springs from the eucharistic liturgy and as social commitment for upright justice in the human community.

Methodological Dimension

So far we have followed the projective dimension of the "theoretical horizon" of the EYM. Now we will explore the methodological dimension. While "Four laws for a project" sums up the ecclesial charism of the Movement, we will try here to clarify through what structures its spirituality is organized.

Integral Pedagogy

One of the most lucky and original anthropological

intuitions of the pedagogy of the EYM is the involvement of the human subject, with its fundamental components, in a reading of reality through a triple approach: *to know, to live, to celebrate*. The Movement's pedagogy stresses these three moments which, in succession, articulate the formative path, both in its entirety and in its individual proposals. In other words we can say that this kind of structure, which is applicable to every reflection proposed by the Movement, guarantees its in-depth study and the process of interiorization.

We start with *knowing* the subject presented, i.e. with the acquisition, the theoretical development of all the elements and information which define a thought or a series of facts and allow one to cull its meaning, with particular reference to Holy Scripture;

a second step is the proposal that we *live*, i.e. experience directly and personally – though also as a community – what we have learnt, through practical application and existential verification;

the moments of *celebration* then allow us to exalt and manifest with signs of festivity - within the group, the community and the Church - what we have understood and lived on a personal level.

Cyclic Catechesis

The EYM divides its catechesis into a three-year cycle which follows three guiding words: *Word, Eucharist, Mission*. This methodological distribution refers explicitly to the evangelical story of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24) in which the two disciples, having met Jesus who "explained the Scriptures to them" (*Word*) and who "broke the bread" with them (*Eucharist*), "set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem" (*Mission*). Thus it is from this page of the Gospel that the definition of the EYM as Evangelical, Eucharistic and Apostolic

Movement was born. It is in this perspective that the centrality of the Eucharist in the economy of the Movement must be stressed. In fact, just as the Church suggests the subdivision of the year into liturgical periods to fully understand the salvific unity of the paschal mystery, so the EYM, for pedagogical reasons, divides the cognition and interiorization of the Eucharistic mystery into these three stages.

Word. The progressive acquaintance with the Old and New Testaments (which in the EYM are often indicated with the term "Book") is the fundamental premise for meeting Jesus. Through reading the Bible, its explanation, and through reflection and prayer, we acquire familiarity with the Word and a progressive sensitivity to "God's thought" and his project of salvation is developed.

Eucharist. After nourishing ourselves at the table of the Word, we approach the table of the Bread and Wine. An in-depth approach to the various dimensions of the Eucharist causes an ever growing awareness of how this mystery can live again and become incarnate in each person's reality. Thus the eucharistic celebration too – especially the Sunday celebration, lived together with the parochial community one belongs to – becomes a central and irrenounceable appointment for every young person who is a member of the Movement.

Mission. One of the most concrete commitments of this year of training is that of gaining an awareness of reality: the reality in which each person lives his own daily existence, as well as that of peoples and persons distant from us whom we can only know through the means of information. We practise – to use a terminology dear to the Movement – "looking at the world with God's eyes, i.e. developing an evangelical way of looking at any situation and event, and assuming with God himself the "burdens" of humanity. This commitment is fulfilled:

- by indirect participation, through money offerings for the realization of projects in distant countries. In particular during Lent everyone is solicited to be solidary with our poorer brothers, contributing personally and as a community towards fund-raising.

This initiative is called *Lent of Love*.

- Through direct involvement in commitments of solidarity and permanent service *in loco* on behalf of the entire community.

Community is the fourth guiding word which, even though it does not appear explicitly in the three-year cycle of the Movement's proposal, runs through it and completes it. Jesus left his "spiritual testament" and addressed his message of salvation to a community and not to individuals. Consequently, for the Movement, which is formed of many small communities which want to be authentic expression of the Church, it is first of all in the community, with the community and through it that Word, Eucharist and Mission are known, lived and celebrated.

We must also add that the guide word which marks each year's path is always associated with another word which indicates the style, the key to how to approach the theme: it is the *specific attitude* on which, for that year, the attention and commitment of the communities must converge (Ex. Word and Faithfulness, Eucharist and Benediction, Mission and Hope...).

Yearly Progression

Whatever the theme of reflection – Word, Eucharist or Mission – the EYM proposes developing it in the course of the year in four stages: the *Running-in stage* and *three Periods*.

Generally the *Running-in stage* is a time devoted to the recomposing - or new birth – of the group after the summer break, and the renewal – or determination – of the motivations for belonging. This first phase is characterized by reflections which are not necessarily linked with the general theme but deal, rather, with anthropologically oriented subjects concerning above all the identity of an EYM community.

On the other hand the *first second and third Periods* analyze

the general theme of the Year in three stages which, on average, refer to the liturgical periods of Advent-Christmas, Lent-Easter, Pentecost. Each of the Periods generally closes with a *Feast* which celebrates the path followed up till then by the community and takes a look at its possible future, in an ideal balance between memory and dream.

Division into branches

The path of faith of a member of the EYM occurs in four successive stages which correspond to four seasons of growth (*branches*). It must be noted that the denomination of each branch could in future be changed following on its possible evolution and definition.

- *EMMAUS GROUPS (E.G.)*. The Emmaus child (8-10 years old) goes to the school of Jesus who opens his eyes, as he did with the two friends at Emmaus, and asks him to follow him in order to collaborate with him in the salvation of the world. The slogan of this branch is: *Recognize Jesus as you break the Bread with him!*"

- *NEW YOUTHS (N.Y.)*. Jesus speaks to the N.Y.s (11-13 years old) of a New World to build together with him. In order to do this the first commitment must be to become himself like Jesus, allowing himself to be transformed by his Word: the Gospel is the New Youth's handbook. The slogan of this branch is: *"If you want a new world, become a new youth yourself!"*.

- *COMMUNITY 14 (C.14)*. The C.14 young person (14-16 years old) learns that the New World must start from his own environment. This is a serious commitment, but he knows that he can count on a community of friends who share it with him. The slogan of this branch is: *"Bring Christ into your environment!"*.

- *PRE-GROUPS WITNESSES (pre-W.)*. The training period

of the pre-Ws (around 17-23 years old) aims at leading them to make the fundamental choices in life which will turn them into adult Christians and lead them to live their testimony of men and women of the Eucharist, in an attitude of service, in the Church and in the world.

- The natural outlet of the pre-W groups is the *Witness Groups (W.G.)* who, rather than being a regular branch, form an "apprentice" group which, sustained by prayer and sharing, practices working, individually and as community, in a concrete way in their own environment in order to bear witness to faith in Jesus-Eucharist.

The Leader

Each community in the Movement is made up of many small groups from the various branches, each of which is supervised by a "Leader", who is generally an older member of the Movement who chooses group-animation as his specific service.

The EYM Leader is defined himself as *a man or woman who, in virtue of Baptism and Confirmation, belongs to a community of faith and feels called by Christ to share a path of faith with a group of brothers, placing himself at their service out of love, bearing witness with his life, trying not to lose any of those entrusted to him.*

It must be stressed that the Leaders are called on to feel directly responsible for the good functioning of the entire Movement and not only of the small community in which they concretely operate. In this sense the EYM speaks of "*joint responsibility*".

The times, places, ways

Let us now consider through what instruments and what

cadences the educational project of the EYM finds its application.

Weekly meetings. The EYM chooses the groups as its basic structure of life and operations. These meet on a weekly basis under the guidance of a Leader. Particular attention is given to listening to the Word and discussing the themes proposed for that Period through dynamics and sharing, giving special care, especially with the younger members, to the dimension of playing.

Regional Days. Three times a year the communities of the same Region meet to study certain specific themes and to celebrate together. These "extended" assemblies try to harmonize the cognitive moment, the existential one and the celebrative one. They are privileged occasions in which those present have an occasion to live the experience of encounter, friendship and communion and to cultivate the sense of belonging.

National Meetings. Once a year the Movement offers all its communities the occasion to celebrate the path of faith of the entire Movement in a vast meeting of fraternity in which ample space is given to training and prayer. Each branch has its Meeting (except for the Emmaus and the New Youths who meet together). The Movement considers these Meetings essential because they offer a unique occasion for the exchange of experiences and the circulation of the various charisms, and above all because of the strong affective dimension which characterizes them.

Training School for Leaders. Recognizing the wealth of the charisms God gives the Movement through the laity, the EYM has assumed the permanent training of the Leaders. National meetings are organized annually, aimed at progressive growth in the cognition of the various spheres in which the service functions and the instruments for their realization.

The Spiritual Exercises. The most profound maturing of the

spirit occurs through careful and aware listening to the Word of God, with the human subject's availability to be transformed by it. This is why the annual Spiritual Exercises, lived in complete exterior and inner silence, are one of the fundamental experiences for the older members of the Movement – and in particular for those who offer the service of Leaders - for verifying their own faithfulness in following Jesus and for preparing themselves to bear witness in the various spheres of their own lives. The EYM thus proposes annual participation in graded experiences of Spiritual Exercises (3-5-7 days) according to Saint Ignatius' method, to all those who already have an itinerary of faith behind them and who, assisted by a priest, intend carrying out serious discernment concerning God's will for their lives.

The Press. A bi-monthly *Aid* is distributed telematically. Its purpose is to assist the Leaders (and to be an instrument of work for the pre-W's). In it they can find the contents of the annual programming, a few methodological cues to transmit to the groups, as well as information concerning the life of the Movement and the Church.

Contributions. This is the annual contribution the EYM asks of each of its members to sustain part of the running expenses of the Movement itself. This symbolic contribution – the equivalent of one ice-cream a month – helps the Movement support itself, but its scope is also that of educating each boy and girl to feel solidary and responsible with the entire EYM.

The Organisms. In its national structure, the Movement is divided into various organisms and refers to certain guiding figures who collaborate in programming and promote and coordinate the various activities and initiatives at a regional and national level.

Organization Chart

Denomination, characteristics, functions and tasks:

National Leader [NL]

- Is a Jesuit, appointed by the Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus;
- Works in ideal harmony with the Leader of the AP;
- He is responsible for the Movement at a national level, where its vitality, the faithfulness to its charism, its organization, development policy and economic operation, are concerned;
- He represents the Movement in front of the S.J. and the CEI;
- He is answerable to the S.J. Provincial Superior.

Board of Directors

- Is composed of Regional Leaders who are Jesuits appointed by the Provincial Superior of the S.J.;
- They can also be lay persons chosen by the NL
- They collaborate in a spirit of fraternal friendship and sharing with the NL in his specific tasks of enlivening, organizing and administrating the Movement.

Secretaries

- These are lay persons employed with a regular work contract.
- They run the secretariat of the EYM in all its aspects.

EYM Centre

- This is the group composed of the NL, the Board of Directors, the Secretaries;
- It is the ordinary "place" where decisions suitable for enlivening, organizing and administrating the Movement are taken;
- It is presided by the NL, who has the ultimate responsibility for decisions.
- It formulates the calendar of the national events of the

EYM: it is responsible for the general programming of the Movement;

- It organizes the meetings of the National Board and the National Meetings;

- It watches over the execution of the programming;

- It takes care of relations with the communities in the national territory and with the foreign groups of the EYM.

National Council [NC]

- This is the advisory assembly of the EYM and represents the entire Movement;

- It is called, consulted and presided by the NL, normally twice a year;

- All the members of the National Centre and the representatives of the Regions are a part of it.

- It considers all the relevant aspects of the life of the EYM over which it is consulted [for ex: themes of catechesis, meetings, press, initiatives...] though decisions are taken by the NL, assisted by members of the *Centre*.

Task Forces

- These are groups of people formed especially to carry out specific tasks in specific situations.

They will be composed as the need arises by...

- The secretary of the meetings;

- The press committee

- ...

