

# Prayer and Service

## EDITORIAL



Dear friends,

In this new issue of our on-line magazine you will find hints for proposing the Apostleship of Prayer to young people and to all Christians, in the light of today's culture.

Important events have accompanied the steps of the AP and the Eucharistic Youth Movement in the world these past months. In May, in Tanzania, we had the second ever Pan-African meeting for our National Secretaries and part of their teams. Jesuits, diocesan priests, religious and lay people were there, representing 17 countries, with a total of 27 participants. The meeting helped us reanimate the AP and the EYM and to encourage others to start them. We chose a four-person team to work in the coordination of both services for all Africa, with father Rigobert Kyungu, sj, from D.R. of Congo as Coordinator. We found great interest for the EYM in the "young continent", the delegates saw it as a useful tool to give Christian training to children and young people. (The documents of this meeting are already posted on this website at <http://www.apostleshipofprayer.net/docs/AP-Documents-en.aspx>).

In Poland we had last September the meeting of the European National Secretaries, that for the first time met with the French and Polish EYM. The theme of the meeting was: How can the AP respond to the spiritual quests of today's young people and today's culture. We also discussed ways to promote a greater and better collaboration between the AP and the EYM. You will find in this issue the talk Father Joseph Augustyn, sj, gave us on a pastoral approach to young people. Shortly we will post on our website a summary of the conclusions of our meeting.

A motivating testimony of a young Jesuit, my words addressed to young Jesuits in Croatia and the profound message from our General Director to the French MEJ will make us aware of the youth and the validity of our spiritual proposal. Happy reading!

*P. Claudio Barriga, S.J.*

## THE APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (CLAUDIO BARRIGA, S.J.)

**A text based on my words to a group of young Jesuits in Zagreb, Croatia, November 6, 2008**

I suppose that everyone here aspires to live a life full of meaning and at the same time consistently generous in serving others, and to be deeply happy. That's exactly what I mean when I say in more Christian language: I suppose that everyone here seriously hopes for holiness. That's like saying that we want our lives to be lived totally for God and our hearts totally united with him in our daily actions, even in the smallest details.



I know that this is something huge, that it is an ideal that is very high, difficult, and seemingly unattainable. But I'm talking about an interior desire to ask to live that way. "I ask, I desire, that my life – every detail of my life: My work, my relaxation, my eating, my sleeping, my singing – be only for God." I'm talking about having the sincere desire and the intention that my life be lived totally for the Lord. Or at least to have the desire for this desire, as St. Ignatius suggested.

If we don't have that, then this conversation will not interest you at all.

I've come to speak to you about a spiritual proposal to place your everyday life in the hands of God; it's called the Apostleship of Prayer. Its youth branch is called the Eucharistic Youth Movement.

The Apostleship of Prayer is basically an invitation to choose and make each day a radical option which says to God that my life is his, that I want to live, not for myself but for him, and that everything I do is much better when I do it with him and in his way.

I talk of a radical option because we are people free to choose how we want to live our lives. And because we can always choose other options. Each day we can, and at times we actually do, choose sin, which distances us from God. The Apostleship of Prayer helps us to remember and to make each day the radical option for God, making that our habitual way of life. The Apostleship of Prayer guides our will so that the choices and the way of life of Jesus can penetrate our daily actions, even the most humble and hidden ones.

What does the Apostleship of Prayer consist in? How is it embodied? Basically it consists in offering one's life to God daily, in union with Jesus' offering of himself to the Father. We practice that by means of a prayer which we can say in the morning and repeat during the day. Here we have one possible formulation of it. I invite you to look at it now and to read it together.

God, our Father, I offer You my day.  
I offer You my prayers, thoughts, words,  
actions, and sufferings  
in union with Your Son Jesus Christ,  
Who continues to offer Himself in the Eucharist  
for the salvation of the world.  
May the Holy Spirit, Who guided Jesus,  
be my guide and my strength today

so that I may witness to Your love.

With Mary, the mother of our Lord and of the Church,  
I pray especially for this month's intentions  
as proposed by the Holy Father.

What am I saying with these words? I'm offering God my whole life; I give it, I make a gift of it to the Father. I return to God freely everything I have received from him, I offer him what I am, what I do, what I will do. In this prayer I decide against leading my life according to my criteria, my leanings. I say to him that I want to unite my life to Jesus Christ, to his heart and his way of being. In this way, with my life lived in accord with his will, I offer to collaborate in the work of salvation.

There's more. I join this offering of my life to the Eucharist, which is the life of Jesus given over to the Father and to us for our salvation. I'm saying that I want my offered life to be like a Eucharist, like a life given for others. That's what the Apostleship of Prayer proposes to us. Let's stop here a minute to take a look at its implications.

This is something very serious. It sounds very difficult or even impossible. How live everything for God, every detail, at each moment? I'm not capable of that!

I want to be honest with you; this isn't easy for me. After having offered the day and my whole life to God in the morning, many times I arrive at my evening Examen with a record that isn't very clean. I struggle daily with temptations in my sexuality, in my interpersonal relations, in my ways of relaxing, my vanity, my pride and many other things – and I don't always win. I come to the chapel to ask Jesus' pardon for my faults, to tell him that I trust that tomorrow will be better and to beg him for his grace. At the same time I praise him, I recognize the good he's done with me, and I thank him. The next morning I begin the day with renewed (and obstinate) hope. I express again to the Lord my sincere desire to offer him what I'm going to do and I ask of him with bold optimism the grace of the Holy Spirit to be able to live that out. I say 'bold optimism' because I know who I am and I am aware of weakness and powerlessness. But I say it because I am placing my trust in him, because I know that he has the power to make all things new.

Each day we wage an interior battle with the enemy who wants to deflect us from God's path, as St. Ignatius describes it in the meditation on the Two Standards [Spiritual Exercises 136]. For my part, I already made the option to live wholly and only for the Lord. But my inconsistency, my distraction and my sin hinder me from living what I desire. I need something which allows me to remember always that the sense of my life is "to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord" and that my "one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created" [Ibid., 123]. The Apostleship of Prayer helps me orient each new day toward doing this. When I make the Morning Offering I am renewing my decision to live each day, the whole day, this way. I do it in the spirit of the preparatory prayer of the Spiritual Exercises, that "all my actions, intentions and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of His Divine Majesty" [Ibid., 46]. Offering the day with the Apostleship of Prayer helps me to remember and repeat daily the generous response of every good Christian to the Eternal King: "It is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice...to imitate Thee.... [Ibid., 98].

The offering is a way of always choosing the Standard of Christ and of living every day with the attitude with which we end the Exercises: offering our lives, "Take Lord and receive" in order in all things to love and to serve [Ibid., 234].

Summing up, The Apostleship of Prayer is a radical offering of my existence, made every day. I offer my life to fulfill in every way the will of God this day.

Now it's important to understand that I can't achieve this just by dint of my own strength, my personal capability. I can only achieve it by invoking the Holy Spirit. I don't offer my life supported by my own achievements or successes – they don't exist – but in the confident optimism of someone who seeks and desires to be of God and to live as Jesus did. The Daily Offering is basically a prayer of supplication made by a poor sinner who desires to live with a heart given solely and only to God.

I take it for granted that key to changing one's life is to make this prayer of offering as sincerely as possible every day. It won't work just to see it as a devotional prayer which one repeats rapidly, like something magical or a mere external gesture. I have to pray it from my heart, offering with wholehearted desire what I am and possess. Rather than a declaration of what I'm going to do or live this day, which could seem pretentious, it's a humble supplication for the Holy Spirit to grant me the grace to be able to live as Jesus did. The Apostleship of Prayer is, then, besides an expression of radical nostalgia, a yearning which we may call "a longing for holiness."

Finally, the Prayer of Offering of the day takes the focus off myself and helps me place all my confidence in divine providence. I learn to accept everything as coming from the loving hand of God, even when I'm in difficult situations, because I have offered Him my whole day.

You might say that everything I've said up to now is only an introduction to a talk on the Apostleship of Prayer, because I'm going to continue with a bit of its history and speak to you about the Eucharistic Youth Movement. But it was perhaps the most important message I wanted to give you.

I went on to emphasize that the Apostleship of Prayer has to do first of all with our own lives. It makes us set our very existence on this path of giving God everything and not only a bit. For this reason Father Kolvenbach called it "a way of sanctity for Christians of the Third Millennium." That's why I can't be a good promoter of the Apostleship of Prayer if I don't first of all live it and practice it in my personal life. "A way of sanctity." Beautiful, demanding, bold, it will fill with new meaning every single minute of my life.

*Going on, I talked about the historical particulars and foundations of the spirituality of the Apostleship of Prayer, generally following the outline of the unsurpassable text of Father John Vessels, "The History of the Apostleship of Prayer," to which I refer the reader (on our Website, under Documents). I also explained the methodology of the Eucharistic Youth Movement as a form of bringing this spirituality to children and young people.*

## THE YOUNG IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURE PASTORAL DEPICTION (JÓZEF AUGUSTYN, S.J.)

(Talk to the European National Secretaries of Apostleship of Prayer in Czestochowa, Poland, September 26, 2009)

### I. INTRODUCTION

The fall of communism as well as joining the European Union by the eastern bloc countries started a gradual disappearance of differences which had existed until recently between the young of western and eastern Europe. The Iron Curtain, which divided Europe for a half of the century, was the reason for the diversity of attitudes and behaviours of the young on both sides.



Dealing with politics and any other social activity in the communistic countries was exclusively meant for the people connected with the regime. Therefore the vast majority of the young isolated themselves from any social and political activity. In order to involve the young socially, communists organized so-called "community service," for instance spring cleaning of parks. It was a form of forced work, hated by the young and regarded as political violation. Every form of opposition to that type of "social" activities was treated as an act of courage and "fight for freedom."

I remember from high school, two friends of mine, fifteen-year-olds, unwilling to take part in the 1st May Parade "lost" somewhere on the way two red flags which they were supposed to carry during the event. The teachers' board saw this action as desertion and something detrimental to the country, for us – their peers – they were heroes. The headmaster threatened them with expulsion and with so-called "wolf ticket" which would make it impossible for them to study in any other school in Poland. However, owing to their own "repentance," parents' intervention, as well as the headmaster's magnanimity, they were punished with two-week suspension, and later they were allowed to come back to school.

Yet such lenient punishment for the young for "enemy actions against the country" existed only in the Polish People's Republic. It was completely different in Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic not to mention the Republics of the Soviet Union. At the beginning of the 70-ties, I was friends with one Czech family whose oldest son entered seminary, the only one in the country at that time. The rest of the family had to pay a high price for this decision. His younger sister's application to university was turned down, and his younger brother was not even allowed to attend high school. The boy, despite considerable intelligence, ended his education with vocational school. At the age of 17, he had to get a job even though he wanted to continue studying.

The vast majority of the young raised in the climate of political, economical and ideological repression became resentful towards any form of social engagement and withdrew into their own internal world. The contemporary low social awareness of the adults and the young as well as a lack of political engagement in Eastern Europe is the heritage of the Iron Curtain.

There is also the other side of the coin of the division of Europe from the period of communism. The social living conditions in both blocs were extremely diverse. When in 1968 the young in the west of Europe rebelled against

their democratic governments and adapted a hippie lifestyle, their peers in the East struggled with the difficulties of everyday existence. And although in the socialist system there was no unemployment, quite the opposite – there was the “national work order,” yet the conditions of everyday existence remained – plainly speaking – poor. Graduating from university or purchasing a small, two bedroom flat for a young married couple was their fondest dream. Ambitious teenagers from villages and towns willing to graduate from some high school got up at 5 a.m. in order to commute on crowded public transport for the first lesson starting at 8 a.m. They got back home at 6 p.m. only to get up again at 5 a.m. on the next day. It went on for four or five years. For many, it was a heroic effort.

Such conditions of everyday existence made the young grow up much faster than their counterparts from Western Europe. From their early childhood, they had to face the hardships unknown to their peers from the West. During martial law, in the 80-ties, teenage boys willing to help their parents queued for hours, sometimes also at night, so as to buy food and other necessities. When I was studying (1981-1984) in France and Italy, I met the young from these countries and I was under the impression that these 20-year-olds behaved like 15-year-olds in Poland. It seemed obvious to me. Tough living conditions, economic hardship, the police system of control required from the young living in the eastern bloc maximum effort, persistence and sacrifice.

Nowadays when the conditions of everyday existence are becoming more and more similar in the European Union countries, the attitudes and behaviours of the young are also beginning to converge. Young Poles, born in Poland after 1989, do not differ much from the young French, Italians or Germans, yet, undoubtedly, the national, cultural and religious differences still play some part.

In the following article, I would like to discuss those characteristics of the young which require special attention in direct pastoral work.

## **II. THE GENEROSITY AND NOBLENES OF THE YOUNG**

The first characteristic I would like to draw attention to is the generosity and nobleness of the young. “Nowadays the young are generally generous but sensitive, delicate” – we can read in one of the documents of the Congregation for Catholic Education. The manifestation of the generosity and nobleness of the young – according to John Paul II – is their engagement in various forms of voluntary work as well as social and church services: “The young participate, most of all, in various associations both traditional ones which have undergone revival as well as in the new ones.” In Eastern Europe, the young are willing to get involved in parish communities, religious movements, in pilgrimages as well as in charitable work whereas they are less sensitive towards social matters. Voluntary work, so popular in most countries of Western Europe, is not yet as popular with young Poles, Slovaks or Ukrainians.

The young manifest their generosity and nobleness through sincere religious and moral commitment. On numerous occasions, did I conduct Spiritual Exercises among the young in complete silence and with real involvement. The participants were very young, in their final year of high school. Not once have I been impressed by their sensitivity and openness towards spiritual and religious issues. If spiritual desires of the young are not satisfied, they turn into frustration, which results in religious indifference sometimes leading to religious and moral cynicism.

Owing to his or her generosity, the young person is capable of making a decision which requires serious commitment, effort and devotion. It is this adolescent nobleness that serves as the foundation for priestly and monastic vocations. In my opinion, a lack of vocations is not so much connected with a lack of courage and generosity of the young but rather with the blurred identity of priesthood itself. A young person will not devote

his or her whole life to something which is blurred, vague, unclear or ambiguous. Admiration and fascination are essential requirements in order to be able to commit oneself to something. A great number of vocations, which until recently existed in Poland, is falling gradually. It is – I think – connected with an increasing crisis of priesthood also in Poland. One sign of that crisis are more and more frequent resignations of young priests. For the generosity and nobleness of the young to last and become their permanent attitude, they require a strong support from their parents, educators and priests. Priesthood offered to the young is supposed to help them realize their adolescent generosity in their everyday lives. It may result in specific religious engagements: in everyday prayer, self-development, overcoming their weaknesses, artistic work and creating friendship love bonds. Referring to generosity and religious and spiritual openness of the young, we should not fear teaching them extended, personal prayer, reading the Holy Scripture, meditation, the adoration of the Holy Sacrament, examination of conscience, participation in the Eucharist. Spiritual desires of the young which are not satisfied usually bring about the feelings of disappointment and failure.

### **III. THE EMOTIONAL OPENNESS OF THE YOUNG**

Another significant characteristic of the young which we must consider in pastoral work is their emotional openness, sincerity and spontaneity. The contemporary young people, compared with their parents, generally have less difficulty in sharing their personal experience, both during community gatherings as well as during individual meetings. This exceptional gift of youth – sincerity and openness – is noticed especially by those working with the young every day. Yet this adolescent openness and spontaneity is – similarly to their identity – delicate and fragile. A young person most often expresses a desire – or even hunger – for being accepted, well-received and loved. The young whose parents failed to devote enough time, attention and heart so as to listen to them, understand and support them seek help with priests or educators. By doing so, they pass on them their frustrated expectations. These young people express their resentment towards their parents sincerely, openly and directly.

It is essential that their needs and desires were not once again disregarded and neglected. If adults disappoint them yet again and do not try to understand them, the young will become even more withdrawn and distrustful. Such distrust usually continues into adulthood. It is from this disappointment with adults that suspiciousness of the young towards the old stems from. Robert Bly in his book *Iron John* talks about “demons of suspiciousness,” who destroy the relations between young and old men: “Those demons, invisible, but eager to talk, encourage suspiciousness towards the old. Such suspiciousness results in breaking up of the community of the older and younger men.” It is us adults who have to first overcome our distrust towards the young.

In our pastoral work with the young, from the very first meetings we must do our best so as to create an atmosphere of trust, friendliness and total acceptance. By doing so, we can sustain their emotional openness and sincerity. In adulthood, it may bear beautiful fruit of sincere and pure relations between friends, engaged couples and family members, while in case of vocations for priesthood, sincere community and pastoral relations.

However, it requires from the priest great commitment and willingness to listen to the young. It seems to me that it is the listening that is the most significant help and ministry for them. The most important thing we can really give the young is to listen to them with comprehension, compassion and care. The young do not need our sermons, conferences and instructions but we should listen intently to what is happening in their hearts and minds. What they also need is our honest, based on partnership dialogue with them. It seems to me that our priesthood for the young is still “verbose.” At least it is the case in Poland. When some priest invites me to a meeting with the young, he expects me to talk for an hour and at the end allows a few young men to ask some casual questions. Such a pastoral model is, undoubtedly, anachronistic. It confirms the temptation of inaction and passivity of a certain group of the young. Others, impatient, abandon ministries lead in such a way. After

the period of communism, when academic ministries also used to be some form of political resistance, nowadays they are experiencing a crisis. Many priests, appointed accidentally, do not know really what they could offer students.

Any form of paternalistic instructions as well as imposing even the most correct moral values is received today by the young with a deep distrust. It prejudices them against Church and religion as such. While the older people sometimes patiently put up with our moralizing and preaching mentorship, the young go away disappointed and disheartened. What they are listening to does not touch the hearts. It does not answer their questions, needs, desires and existential fears. Having observed priesthood for years, I am under the impression that here lies the source of the gradual abandonment of Church by the young in the East as well as in the West of Europe.

#### **IV. A DESIRE FOR FREEDOM**

When offering our spiritual and existential support for the young we must take into consideration their incredible need for freedom. Imposed help may be rejected by the young. Educators and priests must acknowledge the fact that the young are incredibly sensitive about their freedom and consider it essential to their lives. Any attempts to limit their personal freedom are considered as an attack on their lives. Then they react angrily, not to say, aggressively. This desire for freedom is, by no means, any threat to them. We should not fear it. However, it may be dangerous to separate the experience of freedom from their responsibility for themselves as well as for the people they make close contacts with.

Nowadays the young need to be aware of the fact that freedom is an incredibly difficult gift which requires great commitment and toil by the sweat of their brow. It is integrally connected with love and responsibility. The young think in a very logical way. Entering into an honest dialogue with them, it is easy to show them that freedom is not an autonomous value which allows us to do what we like. Understood in such a way freedom is a destructive experience, both for the given person as well as for those with whom he or she makes contact with. A man suffers consequences of his or her actions, regardless of the fact whether he or she accepts that.

When in the consciousness of a young person, freedom becomes separated from love and responsibility, what it turns into is, in fact, only an abuse of freedom. Satisfying their own desires connected with objectification of their neighbours is not a manifestation of freedom but constraints which do harm to their neighbours. The true measure of human freedom is always love and responsibility for oneself and his or her neighbour.

In order to make an honest, based on partnership contact with the young, we must respect their sensitivity about personal freedom. Any form of pressure on the part of the priest results in distrust towards Church. The more we pressurize them, the more ostentatiously they demonstrate their independence and autonomy. Questioning or limiting the freedom of the young is therefore a dead end. The young entering the world must learn to understand the essence of freedom and earn it through everyday hard work. It is the only way for them to choose true values among the moral and religious chaos they live in.

If a priest himself fears for his freedom, the young lose not only their trust for him but also for the religious and moral values he offers to them. Everything that has a spiritual character may be authentic only if it is accepted in the climate of freedom. Values imposed against one's will lose their "human" and "spiritual" meaning. Nowadays the freedom education of the young is a foundation of their integrally understood development.

## V. PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY AND FRAGILITY

Youth is characterized by exceptional, emotional sensitivity. Françoise Dolto, a French paediatrician and psychotherapist, in the book *To Understand a Child* compares adolescent growing up to the changing of its shell by a lobster. "When lobsters are changing shells, they first lose the old one and remain unprotected until they build a new one. During that period, they are in danger. For teenagers, it's quite the same. Building a protective shell requires so much effort and tears that it like a painful "exudation." There is almost always some sea snake lying in wait for the lobster deprived of its shell. The snake is ready to devour the poor thing. Our snake lies in wait both inside and outside, which we rarely realize."

It is this sensitivity of the young that makes them so susceptible to harm. A teenager who does not know if he or she is still a child or already an adult can easily be humiliated and shamed and therefore hurt. The humiliation and shaming of the young can be very painful to them. It is a way of confirming their own complexes and fragility, which they experience painfully. As many psychologists emphasize, "adolescent coolness," which the young demonstrate so willingly, both towards their peers as well as towards adults is, by no means, the result of their internal freedom, but – quite the opposite – it is the cover for fear. It also serves as a specific shield protecting them against the people who question or reject them in any way.

Antonio M. Sicari, an Italian activist for the young, claims: "I have met many boys and I have discovered that many of them, under the pretence of ostentatiously "not caring for anything" and cheekiness typical to adolescents, fear that they have failed in their lives. Believe me, there are much more of them than one might expect." The young hunger for recognition, respect and approval from adults. Owing to these qualities they can overcome inferiority complexes and boost their self-esteem. Uncertainty, feeling lost and fear for their future make the young seek help with adults.

It is owing to their sensitivity that the young worry too much because of sometimes minor failures. Even minor difficulties give rise to deep discouragement and temptation to despair. They say then: "I am a loser, I am weak, nobody needs me, I will fail in my life." Breaking up with a girlfriend – boyfriend, false accusations, being laughed at by friends, humiliation from peers sometimes become the reason for suicidal thoughts and attempts.

So as to ease the pain of failure and frustration, many young people resort to intoxicants: alcohol, drugs, so-called "dope." By doing so, they are trying to escape from the burden of life. Such solutions are proposed to them by consumptive civilization which is more likely to encourage escapism from life rather than fighting and tender loving care for life.

Nowadays more than ever in the past, the young need deep support from adults. Their emotional growing up sometimes lasts much longer than into their 20-ties. Their fragile psychological immunity makes them doubt themselves and their strength. This escapism of the young would not be so dangerous if it were only exceptional and temporary. Unfortunately, such tendency to escapism may continue into their adulthood although it takes on other forms. Priests and educators need to be aware of the fact that today it is not enough to warn against and dissuade from taking drugs, using pornography and other abuses.

What the young need is an honest dialogue with their educators and priests, which could protect them against various "sea snakes" lying in wait for them. Friendly and infused with trust talks with the young are the most important tool we have at our disposal so as to help them find their own vocations. The young are not suicidal, by any means. Although the fear of life failure is typical to many of the young, desire for life and happiness proves to be stronger. Nowadays more than ever before in the past, the young need to be trusted by adults especially parents. It is impossible to help the young by controlling them, manipulating their freedom or using any form of pressure.

## **VI. AUTHORITY CRISIS**

The crisis of authority is another essential problem the young have to deal with. It refers to young men in particular. Undoubtedly, this crisis is connected with the influence of numerous trends of contemporary civilization which questions every authority, especially the religious and moral one. The cause of authority crisis may also be the breakup of family as well as a lack of mature relations within the family, especially a lack of relations with the father. Authority crisis is closely intertwined with the crisis of fatherhood. The openness of the young, I have mentioned before, is often connected with seeking fatherly support. Therefore if the education of the young is to be fruitful, it should be marked with fatherly climate. An honest dialogue with educators and priests, after a few years of education, can cure the young of their distrust towards authority and by doing so boost their self-esteem and help them trust their strength. A young man has to be given "a chance to be a good son," so as to be able to "become a good father," a chance to "be a good student," so as to "become a good teacher." The question and the tragedy of many young men is: "How one can be a good son if he has a bad father?"

A young man can find his own value if he manages to trust a person with authority. That person can help him find his great artistic potential: intellectual, emotional and spiritual, which characterizes youth. This potential may often be muffled by fear, anger, rebellion as well as a low self-esteem. If the relations with parents are based on conflicts, the young are often afraid to trust adults: priests and educators. As priests we must be very credible, so as to overcome in the young the prejudices against faith, Church or religion. Sometimes these prejudices have been taking form for years.

## **VII. ENDANGERED BY CYNICISM**

I would like to draw attention to one more threat, which we should warn the young about, namely, religious and moral cynicism. Despite the fact that this, no matter how great threat, refers to – I suppose – a narrow group of young people, it requires serious consideration. In order to show how very dangerous to the lives of the young, a cynical attitude is, I will refer to a specific example.

23-year-old Miroslaw Nahacz, recognized in the literary circles as the most gifted writer of the young generation, committed suicide in 2007. He wrote three books. His first short story, entitled "Eight Four," was written when he was only 18. It was this short story that opened the door to the literary salons for him. When I was reading "Eight Four", I kept asking myself how such a young boy coming from a village in the Carpathian Mountains managed to obtain such literary mastery. While the form of the book is beautiful, its content is very sad. The young characters of Nahacz live desperately, use brutal and vulgar language, and by their adolescent drug experiments, they court death.

This short story emanates emptiness, lack of ideas and adolescent despair: "We can do, think, say almost everything, and, on top of that, we don't have to anything; there is no need to fight, there is nothing to fight about anyway; there are no ideas; if somebody wants to, he can make himself become a scout or an altar boy, he may find some sense and similar crap in it, we need nothing of the sort [...] We also knew that, despite everything, we are as stupid as the others, like our whole spoilt generation. We knew that by talking alone we won't win. Yet it's impossible to win as there is nothing to fight about. It's even better, nobody would care to fight anyway. [...] No. It's never been about what we don't have, or that somebody did us harm, that the father was an alcoholic, or that somebody was flogged at home. The point is that everything's often illusorily normal." Nahacz is aware of the fact that in his life "something isn't working as it should be," but he consoles himself that he "may grow out of it." Unfortunately, he didn't.

Such attitudes of the young are the effect of the civilization which promotes the world without God. Left-wing, French philosopher, Emmanuel Todd, who in a cool, emotionless way describes "the death of God in the western culture," claims that the veterans of the world without God have, in fact, nothing to be happy about. A man deprived of the Creator did not prove to be any better. The humanistic culture of the West has not developed its own equivalent of religion which could become the guardian of personal and social morality. "After the death of religion, an under-skin psychosocial revolution started, something much more radical than an increase of individualistic tendencies. It is, namely, the general flourishing narcissism" – Todd concludes. Now, having put God and religion to death in the culture of the West, a question arises: What can oblige a man to behave in a moral way towards his neighbour? The answer is: Nothing. Literally, nothing. What the young writer lacked was the testimony of moral and religious values, he lacked simple human help. He was left all alone with his bitter cynicism towards religious and moral values. He could not bear it. The words from The Book of Job are of great importance: "To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty." (Job 6,14)

### **VIII. MORAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT**

The only barrier against cynicism may be the moral and religious development of the young. Nowadays it is one of the most difficult problems.

Moral and religious behaviours are most often – especially in the first period of growing up – a reflection of the family and peer environment the young live in. It would be naïve to suppose that contemporary social changes, the relativity of moral and religious values especially the ones referring to human love and sexuality have no influence on the young. According to sociological research, there are many contradictions in the moral and social attitudes of the young. On the one hand, they readily approve of premarital sex, using pornography and divorce. On the other hand, they would like to build a good marriage and family.

The research carried out by the Laboratory of Sociological Research at the University of Gdańsk a few years ago is considerably significant. When the young respondents were asked: "Is it acceptable to you to use contraceptives?" as many as 90% said – "yes"; 7% – "hard to say"; and only 3% – "no." When they were asked another question: "Is it acceptable or not to have sex with the person you are going to marry?" 83% said "yes"; 12% – "hard to say"; and 7% – "no." While asked: "Is it acceptable to you to watch pornographic films?" as many as 67% said "yes"; 20% – "hard to say"; and only 13% – "no."

If we took into consideration only these findings, the moral and religious picture of the young would seem quite pessimistic. Here are some more questions which show that the young can appreciate values connected with marriage and family life. When asked the question: "Do you agree with the opinion that marriage is an outdated form of relationship between a man and woman?" over 70% said "I disagree"; and not even 10% – "I agree." When asked: "Would you consider having church wedding with your future partner?" as many as 80% said – "yes," and only 9% – "no."

The contradictions in the answers of the young respondents are the reflection of the society they live in. Since the society in their moral and social behaviours is inconsistent, thus the opinions of the young are also inconsistent. Therefore we should interpret very cautiously distancing themselves from "traditional" values and moral attitudes; we should not identify them with a lack of moral and religious sensitivity. John Paul II – having a deep insight into the situation of the young generation – emphasizes the fact that the young "bluntly ask basic and inevitable questions concerning values which, in fact, are able to make human existence, suffering and death worthwhile. Many young people feel and express a need for religion and spiritual life. It gives rise to a desire for the experience of desert and prayer, a desire for a come-back to the more personal and permanent reading of the Bible." The fact that the young feel morally lost is most often not only an expression of their

superficial piety, but most of all, of inappropriate "life example" set by adults themselves. When parents, educators and priests expect from the young moral behaviours which they themselves do not respect, the young regard this as hypocrisy and injustice. It is hard not to go along with that. The continual media news concerning sexual scandals involving clergymen also influence the moral and social attitudes.

The discrepancy between moral and religious expectations the young face and between a personal example set by educators and priests – poses the greatest threat to the moral and social attitudes of the young. Many of them distance themselves from their parents' piety because they do not want to repeat their inconsistency. The more imposed the opinions and religious practices were in their childhood, the more likely the young are to cut themselves off their parents' religion. The period of growing up proves to be a sort of purification and sometimes deepening of faith experienced in their childhood. In families where spiritual and religious values were really important, they usually become significant for the children as well, even if temporarily they distance themselves from them under the influence of their peers or the media.

There still remains an undoubtedly significant problem of experiencing human love by the young, sexuality, preparation for family life, but these issues exceed the confines of this paper.

\* \* \*

"Youth is "growth." (...) It is the time of psychophysical development: the growth of all energies through which normal human individuality is build up. But this process has to be accompanied by "growth in wisdom and grace." (...) Youth should be a process of "growth" bringing with it the gradual accumulation of all that is true, good and beautiful." – John Paul II wrote in his Letter to the Young (1985).

Józef Augustyn SJ, (born in 1950), assistant professor of pastoral theology, St Ignatius retreat-giver, spiritual director, priest, editor-in-chief of quarterly "Spiritual Life." He has published numerous books on spirituality as well as Christian pedagogy, among others: A Guide to Youth; Sexual Integration; Fatherhood; Celibacy; How to Pray. A Guide; The Sacrament of Penance.

## REPORT ON THE DAR ES SALAAM PAN-AFRICAN MEETING (CLAUDIO BARRIGA, S.J.)

### For Apostleship of Prayer (AP) and Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM)

May 14 to 21, 2009, Tanzania

*Note: This and the other main documents of this meeting are available in the [AP/Documents](#) section of our website – [www.apostleshipofprayer.net](http://www.apostleshipofprayer.net) - in [English](#), and some of them also in [French](#). If you are reading online, you will find links that will take you to each one of them as they are mentioned. (Vous pouvez trouver quelques textes en français dans la section [Documents](#) de notre page française.)*



The Mbagala Spiritual Centre in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) was the meeting place for 27 AP / EYM Directors and staff members from all Africa, invited by Fr. Claudio Barriga, sj, Father General's Delegate. We represented 17 countries of Africa: Madagascar, South Africa, Mauritius, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, DR Congo, Zambia, Burundi, Cameroun, Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya. Rwanda and Malawi were represented by the delegates coming from Burundi and Zambia respectively. Altogether we were 14 Jesuits, 3 Diocesan Priests, 2 religious sisters and 8 lay people (3 from Congo, 2 from Zambia, 1 from Kenya and 2 from Tanzania). The meeting was held in English and French, with translations done on the way by Rigobert Kyungu, to French, and by Chris Chatteris, to English. General Secretaries for the meeting were Charlie Searson, who wrote the minutes in English, and Guillaume Ndayishimiye who did it in French.

This was the second time this type of meeting has occurred, the first one being in Lagos, Nigeria, in 2002, with 8 participants, all Jesuits, representing 7 countries.

We began the first afternoon with welcome introductions and the mass. After dinner we had the chance to see a power-point presentation of AP and EYM that Claudio showed us.

**The next day**, Claudio started the sharing with a worldwide overview of the AP and EYM as he has seen it in his first two years in office and after 36 countries visited. AP counts with about 40 million members in over 90 countries. Even though it is flourishing in some places, like Brazil, Philippines, Angola, Madagascar and some other African countries, in most of the world the AP lives a time of crisis and a need for renovation and reformulation. Today there are basically two models for working the AP: the Movement Model and the Service Model. In Africa the Movement model with its visible parish groups and uniforms is still popular and is important. The Service Model is also useful. It helps people to move beyond an individualistic spirituality to a sense of the universal Church. It is a service of spirituality that is available to all Christians, connecting us to Holy Father and his pastoral concerns. It is remarked that among Jesuits there is not much interest for AP, as it is seen by many as "an old lady devotion".

The rest of that day was dedicated to each country's presentation of what they did on AP and/or EYM. The reality is quite uneven, as we find big developments of AP in Angola, Congo, Tanzania, while other countries are starting out or searching for the right way to begin with the AP. As for the EYM, in Madagascar, Burundi and Angola it is very numerous and widespread throughout the country.

That night we saw a video of the AP work in RD of Congo.

**The third day** was devoted to the spirituality of the AP. Claudio started by telling us in detail the history of the AP, based on a text written by one of his predecessors, John Vessels. A workshop followed, seeking to pinpoint the main characteristics of our spirituality. We came up with a list of 11 elements, the five most important being: 1) the Eucharist, 2) the Heart of Jesus, 3) Making daily life a prayer, 4) Connected with the Church, and 5) AP as a way to see how God is active in my day. Each one of these five were then worked out in groups, to formulate a simple explanation of our AP and African understanding of that theme.

That afternoon Charlie Searson spoke about the Eucharist and the Heart of Jesus.

**The fourth day** we had a guest speaker, Bishop Method Kilaini, who lectured on The Church in Africa and Tanzania. He did a wonderful job summing up in one hour what has happened in many countries and many years of history, with a very positive and optimistic outlook. Starting from the description of the three major religions in Africa, namely the traditional religions, Islam and Christianity, he tells us about the outstanding success of evangelization in the last 200 years in Africa. In the year 1900 Christians constituted only 9.2%, in 2000 they were 46.59%. From the experience from the early Church in N Africa we have learned two lessons, he told us: the Church must be strong in unity and love if it is to survive. In Egypt it was not united. They spent more time in division and even gave room to Islam rather than remain united. Secondly we learned that if Christianity is to survive it must become African: shake off the foreign coat and put on an African coat. As we say in AMECEA we need to cook Christianity in an African pot, only then can it have a African flavour. He went on telling us interesting details on the different ways of evangelization brought about by the three major missionary congregations in Africa: the Holy Ghost Fathers, the Missionaries of Africa and the Benedictines. Today the role of the Church in Africa can be described in these five points:

1. Give hope to the poor and the suffering, the hungry
2. Be the Conscience of Africa in the face of corruption
3. Organizer and voice of voiceless rural poor in an Africa which is disorganized.
4. Globalization in hands of media; we should have a role in the media and use it.
5. Church should be a promoter of peace

The rest of that morning was for personal study of a document called The Practice of AP, written by Claudio Barriga, sj.

That Sunday afternoon we had mass and shared with the local AP Sacred Heart groups at Holy Martyrs of Uganda parish. A beautiful liturgical celebration in Kiswahili, presided by Emmanuel Mchopa. Presentations, sharing, dances and supper followed.

Monday morning was devoted to the situation of the youth in our countries, and the Eucharistic Youth Movement. We then heard the presentations of the EYM in two countries where it is very active and numerous: Angola, characterized by its good organization and its strong unity with AP, and Burundi, with 200,000 members, a great producer of religious vocations for the Church. The information was completed on the EYM in Madagascar, which is very dynamic and may have up to 250,000 members.

In the afternoon another guest speaker, Father Victor Missiaen, MA, helped us make the connections with the upcoming Synod of African Bishops. The Synod, under the theme of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, will face the big challenges of evangelization in Africa: inculturation, poverty, violence, sorcery, tribalism, etc. The Church has grown in quantity but not in quality . Africa needs today spiritual inspiration, a "theology on our knees". He hopes the African Church will be able to appropriate the conclusions of the Synod, something that did not happen after the First Synod.

AP wishes to be at the service of the bishops to live out the guidelines that will come from the Synod.

The next day started with a short talk by Claudio on the Ignatian roots of AP. We saw that the inspiration for the AP comes clearly from the Spiritual Exercises. Starting from the Principle and Foundation [23] and the Preparatory Prayer [46], and ending in the Contemplation to attain love [234], the whole experience of the Exercises points to living a life according to God's will. The Offering prayer of the AP can be explained as a beautiful and compact synthesis of this spirit of the Exercises, that we renew on a daily basis. AP is a way to live the Sp. Ex. according to the 18th annotation proposed by Saint Ignatius.

The rest of the day was dedicated to our general conclusions. It was the occasion to bring up some themes discussed previously and comment on some documents we had read, including the communiqué from the Lagos AP meeting in 2002.

### **Conclusions:**

We agreed on the convenience of an African coordination for AP, whose mission could be

- to assist Father General's Delegate in all AP / EYM matters concerning Africa
- to do the follow-up of this meeting
- to favor networking among us to exchange information
- to prepare and make available material for formators of our works
- to favor the sharing of experiences between neighbouring countries
- to help in the promotion of AP and EYM in Africa
- to prepare our next meeting.

The names of Emmanuel Mchopa (Tz), Rigobert Kyungu (RDC), Charlie Searson (ZAM) and Vivianne Rasoanirina (ETH) were suggested for a coordination team, but we would like to have an official appointment made by the JESAM – Jesuit Superiors for Africa and Madagascar – for the African coordination of AP and EYM (at least for the appointment of a Jesuit coordinator for these apostolates).

We discussed if, when and where the next Pan-African AP meeting. We did not fix a date, but it was suggested that every three years might be better for Africa than every two years, considering economic hardships. It was mentioned that we could go to Dublin together with the Eucharistic Congress in 2012, but others were of the opinion that it should be on African soil. It should not be the same year as the EYM world gathering. The group left that issue for Claudio to evaluate and decide. The decision will depend on what happens in our countries for AP en EYM after this meeting.

We decided to write a final statement addressed to Jesuit Provincials in Africa, which was drafted by a committee and approved by the assembly after the necessary changes.

### **Other opinions:**

Charlie suggests that there be a working a committee to follow up on what we have discussed here. The same working committee would call, as needed, another Pan African meeting and invite Father Claudio. Instead of Fr Claudio organizing for us... it would be better if we did our own organizing for ourselves.

Or maybe all we need is a contact person for each Province to keep in touch with Claudio.

Afonso: let's keep in mind this co-ordination but, as the Bishop said yesterday, for the moment let's concentrate on our local people without going up too high. The personal contact between neighbouring countries might be enough for the time being.

Make use of existing structures such as JESAM. To find someone there to this work for us.

Having hand books for the formators and for the youth would help a lot. Many of us need to learn how to go about this and when we have difficulties to have someone to whom we can refer. We need a way of exchanging information and ideas especially for those who are just starting to be helped by those who have more experience.

Claudio: Possible conclusion:

1. We need a way of sharing info
2. We could make working committees for different things: a. Act of Consecration b. Guidelines for the Mej and other tasks. The coordinator would call these working groups into existence and would also stay in touch with Claudio and also with JESAM for Jesuit coordination around Africa. So several working committees...do their work and then dissolve.. they do not have to be permanent.. We can decide over the next few days....

We then moved on to share on the Document "The Practice of AP": we discussed in the groups how to implement the AP here in Africa.

#### **Group 1: on the EYM (MEJ)**

- a. Mej. in the Congo: Attempt to start Mej by the OMI but there were some clashes with the AP. Solution: just try to reconcile the Mej and the AP with the help of the National Secretary of the AP.
- b. Many groups in the Archdiocese of Kinshasa. Promote Mej in the different Jesuit schools.
- c. We need common guidelines for those who are starting the Mej. This includes the formation of the animators so that we do not run short of leaders of the MEJ.
- d. We need to keep the gate open in Sudan so that when the young Jesuits come they can get it started in co-operation with the young sisters who have experience of the Mej from Egypt.

#### **Group 2:**

We spoke of the practice of the AP. We spoke about the 9 1st Fridays and the Consecration of the Family to the Sacred Heart. 2 Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This adoration can be weekly or a 15 minute visit during the course of the night. 3. Mej can link up by a visit once a month. 4 Personal consecration once a month. 5. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart in June and Christ the King. 6. Image of the Sacred Heart in the family. 7. A Procession with the Blessed Sacrament once a year in a town, with a guard of honour to help people think about the sacred heart of Jesus. 8. We would promote the idea of Spiritual Communion for those who cannot receive the Sacrament.

#### **Group 3: on the EYM (MEJ)**

- a. We need to get the ok from Provincials to start Mej. Need AP members to train the leadership of Mej.
- b. All Catholic children should be members of MEJ, breaking into 4 groups according to age: Grade 1—4 short offering of life to Christ, life of saints, make acts of offering during the day.. to receive Jesus in Holy

Communion and be an apostle to the family. Give them a token a cross or medal to show that they belong to the S. Heart.

- Grade 5—8. Age 11—13 continue as above, attend Benediction, read bible, confession. Pope's intention. Night prayer. Be Apostles not only to family but to friends at school. Let them make the examen.
- Age 14: do all of the above and in addition: attend adoration Thursday before 1st Friday and receive a badge of the AP. Belong also to the student Christian groups. Now full members of AP. They give out the AP intentions each month to the younger ones.
- Adult Mej: are now AP members and become Apostles of Prayer to fellow workers or fellow students. See Jd Act in their own environment. What would Jesus want in this situation. Ready to be trained as teachers of the younger ones. The leaders are to look out for children who are left out or who left out or who are handicapped. Find solutions for these problems. If child is not going to school help parents to find a solution. Have their meeting after Sunday Mass or 1st Friday Mass so that there are not too many meetings to attend. But on the feast of S. Heart let them have a Mass for all of them to come together and also on the feast of Christ the King. That is the day to receive new members. Let's have in the Messenger magazine directives and simple articles that they read at home, jokes, stories, to learn more about the love of Christ... We need to love in action: if member of Mej is sick or with any problem or a moment they should support by a visit.

#### **Group 4:**

1. We recommend 4 things:

- a.) Morning Offering
- b.) 1st Friday Communion and sacrament of Reconciliation
- c.) Holy Hour
- d.) Consecration

Morning Offering, Lectio Divina and Examen are daily.

Reparation: should it appear in the Morning Offering? some MO have omitted this word. We found that reparation is still valid if understood properly. It means to repair a harm that has been done through our sins or the sins of other people. The concept is also present in the phrase "for the salvation of the world". It does not mean to placate an angry God. We repair a broken world and rebuild it. When we say in a group say WE offer you OUR.

2. The 9 1st Friday practice should not be pharisaical, nor mathematical. It is Bible based: anyone who eats my flesh will have eternal life.

3. Consecration: needs Catechesis preparation before pronouncing these words. Not just a formula. Involves loving lifestyle.

4. Holy Hour: avoid a lot of noise. leave some room for silence. 4 times five minutes of silence. Consoling Jesus who is suffering is a bit sentimental. Can be understood in a positive manner: you have touched Jesus in the Eucharist now go out to touch him and console him in the poor outside the door of the Church. Consoling Jesus can be defended theologically. When we remember a mystery of Jesus that mystery becomes present to us here and now; we can meet Jesus in that mystery. We can be with Jesus who is suffering here and now.

Keep the ringing of the bell, the incense, the humeral veil have a function to remind us the mystery taking place in front of us. Lectio Divina and Examen do not need a commentary.

## **Group 5:**

In Zambia it is essential for the Pioneers to practice the SH devotions. From this they get the strength to keep their pledge. They encourage a certain visibility to encourage other members of the faithful. In Zimbabwe have many SH groups but not connected with AP. Therefore it is important to remind SJ's of the importance of AP. In Kenya lots of youth groups but it ends there. Suggests the need for a follow up. In S. Africa: many SH groups but the AP is not known in an explicit way: suggests we work with the existing groups but to do so in a sensitive manner. Tanzania: go beyond devotion to action: give members tasks to perform. Also the importance of Family Groups. AP is a great resource for the Church and especially for those groups already formed.

Angola: he wrote to the Bishops reminding them that AP is not just a prayer movement but that it is a Communion. He also sent a letter from the Pope to the General and in return he got a Diocesan Director for AP. (The Directors of the AP in each Diocese is the Diocesan Priest appointed by the bishop. The Jesuit is the Secretary assisting these Director in each country).

This great amount of info will be collated in the minutes and can be put into action according to the needs of each country.

We closed our gathering with a mass presided by his Excellency Mgr Joseph CHENNOTH, the Apostolic Nuntio in Tanzania, who gave us in his homily very supportive words for our AP ministry. That afternoon we visited the nearby town of Bagamoyo, of historical importance in the slave trade, and had the chance to admire its beautiful seashore.

## **Final evaluation that last day, after supper:**

Apart from the written evaluation form that each one was asked to fill in, we had a meeting to comment on our impressions and what should improve for next time:

1. More time to reflect and study documents: schedule too packed with activities. Maybe the afternoon activities could start a little later to allow this.
2. See to a more creative way of presenting each country
3. We missed Fr Mchopa: he was too absent. Next time we need to have an event manager to do the practical work.
4. Give us the Lagos Meeting document earlier: not at the end
5. Dedicate more time to work on the MEJ: give them more representation; how to have formation for the MEJ leaders, teach how to start out with MEJ.
6. More care for the liturgies: We should have had time to prepare Mass together: spread work around (10 min before each mass).
7. We could have come better prepared by receiving some docs in advance for our previous study. We did not come prepared for what we were going to do here.
8. Coming in time of school vacations could have been better for some of us.
9. No serious assessment of where AP is. No critical reflection or a way of implementation in African terms of an AP that we said was in crisis in other parts of the world. We need a common search: how to give a new face to AP.
11. The talks of the two guest speakers were excellent

12. Good organization: good co-ordination of work sessions and input...time table.. take more songs...more free time during the evenings.

13. Good work of translation, even if the two were improvised. Somebody recommended we should try to bring in special translators for the occasion.

14. To have a secretary or assistant for the General Coordinator of the gathering (Claudio) was suggested.

#### Homework:

What will we do when we get back? Claudio asks of us that within a month, by June 20th, we send him a 3 or 4 step plan telling him what you intend to do for the AP and/or EYM in your country, like for example:

1. Visit Seminaries and Houses of Formation
2. Visit certain schools...
3. Print what needs to be printed....

We finished by singing in Portuguese the hymn of the Gathering, taught to us by Estevão Jardim: **Ofereçovos, o meu Deus... !!!!**

The next day, even though it was not officially part of the program, we all spend the day in the beautiful offshore island of Zanzibar where we celebrated mass in the Cathedral, visited the former slave-market and then went swimming and had a magnificent lunch at a seaside restaurant. The one hour boat trip to get there was beautiful, but the rough sea caused widespread sea-sickness in many of our people on the way back to Dar es Salaam.

The next day, May 22nd, with our hearts filled with happiness and gratitude, we started heading back home.

• **Attention:** Si vous voulez trouver le compte rendu complet de notre secrétaire français, P. Guillaume NDAYISHIMIYE, sj, voir dans le site web.

• **Note:** If you wish to see the 35 page long Minutes file as written by our English secretary, Charlie Searson, sj, see the website.

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## THE SACRED HEART AND CONSECRATED LIFE (JAMES KUBICKI, S.J.)

### Part 1: Loving with the Heart of Jesus

Loving with the Heart of Jesus! Who can deny that our ultimate calling is to love with the Heart of Jesus?

A few years ago I got some insight into how we might attain this goal. I was reading a book called *In the Footsteps of Jesus* by Bruce Marchiano, an actor who played the role of Jesus in "The Gospel According to Matthew" in a series called *The Visual Bible*. [1]



Marchiano described how he approached playing the role of Jesus. Like any good actor, he knew he had to get into the mind and heart of his character. He could not approach a scene merely thinking to himself, "What would Jesus do here?" He had to become the character he was playing. And to do that he had to get into Jesus' point of view, his attitudes, thoughts, and feelings. In Marchiano's words:

*"It's essential for an actor to grasp the character's point of view. The world looks different to different people and therein lies the difference in people's reactions and sensitivities. A good example is two people looking at the same homeless person. One's heart is broken, the other's gets annoyed, resulting in two very different responses".* [2]

So how exactly did Marchiano seek to enter into the point of view of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Here's what he said:

*"My acting coach, Al Ruscio, used to quote the saying, "The journey from the head to the heart is a journey of a thousand miles." Somehow I knew it was that journey that had to be taken before the cameras rolled, so that was the specific focus of my prayer—a prayer that, for the first time in my life, went like this: "Lord, show me what it all looks like through Your eyes".* [3]

And so Marchiano prayed for the grace to see and feel what Jesus would have seen and felt. As he describes it, that grace was given to him in a flash. He entered into the human and divine Heart of Jesus and felt all its human emotion with divine intensity. He described the experience like this:

*"Everyone was swarming around me, paying no attention. I was pacing and praying and looking over the tide of faces, "Lord, show me what it all looks like through your eyes." This is where it gets difficult because I don't have words to describe what happened in the next moment. It was so fast—just a fraction of a second—and I'm convinced the reason it was so quick was that the Lord was protecting me. And what I "saw" in that moment was not with my eyes—it was something in my heart. And the only way I can put it into words is to say it was a sea of people living lives in ways He didn't plan. People living lives away from His love, away from His care; outside of His goodness, His embrace, His plans, purposes, and hopes for them.*

*It was so awful a thing—I don't have words to describe to you how incredibly awful it was. I remember when it happened, it was as if the wind got knocked out of me; I couldn't breathe, and my heart just broke. It broke on a level I never knew existed, and I just started shaking and weeping...*

*For the first time in my life, I understood what the word "compassion" means when it comes to Jesus Christ. I understood that it isn't just a feeling sorry for people; it's a heartbreak so intense, so deep it's like your gut is getting ripped open. It is a heartbreak that screams in utter agony for the needless, pointless pain of people—people who need only turn to Him. What I felt that day was so incredibly tragic. And there can be no doubt what I tasted was just a drop of water in the oceans of the universe compared to what it truly feels like for Him".[4]*

Like Marchiano, our goal is to enter into the mind and heart of Jesus Christ, to be, in the terminology of the Church, configured to Christ. We desire to love with the Heart of Christ, not just for a short period of time while we act a role, but always, permanently, every day of our lives. This configuration, this transformation, is what Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, calls "Loving with the heart of Christ." [5]

To be configured to Christ means to live in union with His Heart and to love as He loves—the Father and all of God's children for whom Jesus suffered and died. Configured to Christ means having the love of God at the center of our being so that all our thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds radiate from that fiery core. Configured to Christ means being set apart and being totally committed—consecrated—to God's purpose of calling each human being into a spousal relationship. Like the heart which pumps the life blood into every part of the body, so the hearts of consecrated people—configured to the Heart of Jesus and loving with His Heart—send eternal life and love through the Body of Christ and into the world.

At the beginning of *Vita Consecrata*, Pope John Paul II wrote: "In every age there have been men and women who, obedient to the Father's call and to the prompting of the Spirit, have chosen this special way of following Christ, in order to devote themselves to him with an 'undivided heart'"—a reference to 1 Corinthians 7: 34. There is only one truly "undivided heart"—the Heart of Jesus. Being devoted to this Heart is essential for living the consecrated life with authenticity. [6]

From the first centuries of the Church, devotion to the Wounded Heart of Jesus has been an important spirituality. Pope Benedict continues that tradition, and, in 2006 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Pope Pius XII's great Sacred Heart encyclical *Haurietis Aquas*, he wrote a letter to the then-General Superior of the Jesuits, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach. In his concluding remarks he said: "Therefore gazing on the 'side pierced by the lance,' in which shines God's boundless will for salvation, cannot be considered a passing form of cult or devotion: the adoration of God's love, which has found its historical-devotional expression in the symbol of the 'pierced heart,' remains absolutely necessary for a living relationship with God." [7]

If devotion to the pierced heart of Jesus is urged upon all the faithful, how much more essential is it for a consecrated person who is called to follow Christ wholeheartedly "by conforming one's whole existence to Christ..." [8]

This is the meaning of the vows: "The evangelical counsels, by which Christ invites some people to share his experience as the chaste, poor and obedient one, call for and make manifest in those who accept them an explicit desire to be totally conformed to him." [9]

Ultimately such conformity is a matter of the heart. It begins with "heart knowledge" of God's deep personal love. It is not enough for a consecrated person to have "head knowledge" about Jesus. Each of us is called to a deep heart to Heart relationship with Jesus, to come to know Him intimately. This is the knowledge that transforms hearts and configures consecrated people more closely, one day at a time, to Jesus.

But remember what Marchiano the actor did to enter into heart knowledge of Jesus—he prayed. And God favored him with an encounter with the very Heart of Jesus. Prayer is essential for those called to a closer configuration to Christ. Prayer is so much more than reading about Jesus in the Gospels and then going out and trying to imitate Him. Imitation asks the question “What would Jesus do?” We pray for configuration, to be drawn into a living relationship with Jesus so that we share His attitudes, values, desires, thoughts, and feelings. It leads us to say each day ever more authentically, as St. Paul put it, “Now I live, not I, but Christ” (Galatians 2: 20). As our hearts are gradually configured to the Heart of Jesus, they beat in unison with His, as did the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We pray that our two hearts—Jesus’ Heart and our own hearts—may beat as one in their love of the Father and His love for every human being.

As we have seen, devotion to the Sacred Heart is not one devotion among many, nor the particular charism of a few, but an essential element of the Christian life. The actual expressions of this devotion—the artistic representations and prayers—vary widely, depending upon personal practice and cultural preference. Yet devotion to the Heart of Jesus is simply not an option for those chosen to be configured to Christ. For how could anyone be configured to Christ without His Heart?

## **Part 2: “I will give you a new heart.”**

Consecrated persons are called to be closely configured to Christ as He Himself was totally consecrated to His Father and His Father’s will. St. Paul expressed his own consecration in these words, “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2: 20). This was not an obliteration of himself but the transforming union of himself with Jesus Christ.

How can we follow St. Paul’s example? How are we to grow in our consecration so that it is truly a configuration to Christ? How can we truthfully say, “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me”?

We can do this through “the source and summit of the Christian life”—the Holy Eucharist. [10] Only this most holy sacrament can change us poor, weak sinners into saints, configured to Christ, living icons of Jesus for today’s world. It is through this sacrament that we receive a new mind and heart capable of thinking, feeling, and loving as Jesus did.

Confronting the hard-hearted sinfulness of the Chosen People, the Prophet Ezekiel proclaimed a great promise. He spoke God’s word to exiled Israel before the vision of the dry bones:

*“I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)”*

This prophecy of a new heart is fulfilled in the Heart of Christ. Only in Jesus can we find a natural human Heart capable of loving the Father with every thought, word, and deed. His is a Heart filled to overflowing with the love of God for every human being created in the divine image, made for a nuptial union with God. His is the Heart that can beat within us and empower us to follow Jesus more closely in chastity, poverty, and obedience. This new Heart, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is given to us in the Most Holy Eucharist.

The Catechism, quoting the Council of Trent, states: “In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist ‘the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.” [11] Because Jesus is totally present, His Most Sacred Heart is present in the Eucharist. Pope John Paul II wrote of this beautifully in his Apostolic Letter for the Year of the Eucharist:

*"There is a particular need to cultivate a lively awareness of Christ's real presence, both in the celebration of Mass and in the worship of the Eucharist outside Mass....The presence of Jesus in the tabernacle must be a kind of magnetic pole attracting an ever greater number of souls enamored of him, ready to wait patiently to hear his voice, and, as it were, to sense the beating of his heart".[12]*

When we come to Eucharistic adoration, we place ourselves in the Presence of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. Like St. John at the Last Supper, we draw near and rest on His Heart, drawing strength for the challenges and trials that we will face.

But even more, when we receive Holy Communion, Jesus' Sacred Heart and our own heart become one, even in a nuptial sense. In the Holy Eucharist we receive the new heart God promised through Ezekiel, the Heart of the only Son of God. Jesus gives us the heart that can follow God's law. His Heart united to ours transforms ours and configures us more closely to Christ.

In 2005 Pope Benedict XVI spoke eloquently about the transforming power of the Eucharist. The Holy Father said:

*"Yesterday evening we came together in the presence of the Sacred Host, in which Jesus becomes for us the bread that sustains and feeds us, and there we began our inner journey of adoration. In the Eucharist, adoration must become union.*

*By making the bread into his Body and the wine into his Blood, he anticipates his death, he accepts it in his heart, and he transforms it into an action of love. What on the outside is simply brutal violence--the Crucifixion--from within becomes an act of total self-giving love. This is the substantial transformation which was accomplished at the Last Supper and was destined to set in motion a series of transformations leading ultimately to the transformation of the world when God will be all in all (cf. I Cor. 15: 28).*

*To use an image well known to us today, this is like inducing nuclear fission in the very heart of being--the victory of love over hatred, the victory of love over death. Only this intimate explosion of good conquering evil can then trigger off the series of transformations that little by little will change the world".*

All other changes remain superficial and cannot save. For this reason we speak of redemption: what had to happen at the most intimate level has indeed happened, and we can enter into its dynamic. Jesus can distribute his Body, because he truly gives himself.

*"This first fundamental transformation of violence into love, of death into life, brings other changes in its wake. Bread and wine become his Body and Blood.*

*But it must not stop there; on the contrary, the process of transformation must now gather momentum. The Body and Blood of Christ are given to us so that we ourselves will be transformed in our turn. We are to become the Body of Christ, his own Flesh and Blood.*

*We all eat the one bread, and this means that we ourselves become one. In this way, adoration, as we said earlier, becomes union. God no longer simply stands before us as the One who is totally Other. He is within us, and we are in him". [13]*

Pope Benedict's words are echoed in Preface VII for Sunday:

Father, all powerful and ever-living God,  
we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks.  
So great was your love  
that you gave us your Son as our redeemer.  
You sent him as one like ourselves,  
though free from sin,  
that you might see and love in us  
what you see and love in Christ.

How is this possible? How can we be so configured to Christ? Through the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus.

At the moment of the Incarnation, the Eternal Word of the Father took flesh. Within twenty-one days of His conception, the Son of God's physical heart began to beat. In the womb of the Virgin Mary a marriage took place—the marriage of humanity and divinity. Now God loved with a heart that was human and divine.

With each celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Word becomes flesh again and opens His Heart in a complete act of self-giving love. Because He unites His Heart to ours in Holy Communion, we now have a new heart configured to His, united to His Sacred Heart. He gives Himself to us so that we may be one with Him and able to say "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me."

One final thought: The transforming power of the Eucharist is not automatic. It requires our cooperation and devotion. St. Paul tells the Corinthians that "whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord" (I Cor. 11: 27).

Jesus told the great saint of the Sacred Heart, St. Margaret Mary, to ask for reparation for those who do not discern the Lord's Presence in the Eucharist, or who respond with apathy. In her own account:

*"One day, kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament...I heard him say: "Do what I've already so often asked you; you can't show your love in a finer way than that!" He disclosed his divine Heart as he spoke: "There it is, that Heart so deeply in love with men...meets with scant appreciation from most of them; all I get back is ingratitude—witness their irreverence, their sacrileges, their coldness and contempt for me in his Sacrament of Love. What hurts me most is that hearts dedicated to my service behave in this way".*

Then, after repeating his request for a feast of reparation in honor of his Heart, Jesus promised:

*"I promise you that I shall open my Heart to all who honor me in this way, and who get others to do the same; they will feel in all its fullness the power of my love".*

Our cooperation with the transforming power of the Eucharist is essential. It is like plugging in a lamp. Power is there to light it, but unless we plug it in and turn the switch, the light won't go on. So too, the light of Christ will enlighten and shine through us only with our cooperation.

### **Part 3: The Chaste Heart of Jesus**

In the 1980's pop radio stations played a song entitled "Hole Hearted." Its catchy refrain went, "There's a hole in my heart that can only be filled by you." The song was meant, of course, to express romantic love, but it speaks far better about our relationship with God. St. Augustine famously declared that each one of us is made for union with God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in God.

We each have a God-shaped hole in our hearts, an emptiness that only God can fill. Yet much of the time we don't recognize our need for God. We try to fill the hole with all sorts of other things—possessions and position, power and prestige, pleasures and people. We think we want these things. We believe they will satisfy our deepest needs. They may, in fact, distract us from our built-in hunger for God, but they will not truly satisfy us.

Only God can satisfy us—eternally, yes—but also in our present moments. We have heard this before. We have perhaps even experienced that satisfaction from time to time. But how do we make this satisfaction a continuous aspect of our lives as consecrated persons? Chastity.

Pope John Paul II called the vow of chastity the “‘door’ of the whole consecrated life.” [14] Through chastity a consecrated person's heart is configured to Jesus Christ, who is truly God-with-us. Only the chaste Heart of Jesus can fill our emptiness. For chastity, says Pope John Paul II, “expresses the yearning of a heart unsatisfied by any finite love.” [15]

How few understand this! The world views chastity in negative terms, as a problem, even as an absurd sacrifice of something essential. The world sees love as a feeling. The heart symbol now everywhere declares one's love for all sorts of things: I ♥ New York! I ♥ cheese! I ♥ my schnauzer! In other words I love whatever gives me pleasure. It's all about me! I want to feel good! The love that satisfies does not center on myself. True love is something completely different.

Chastity is a sacrifice, but it is not a lack. Chastity opens us to the love which alone can satisfy. Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Deus Caritas Est* that if we want to see real love, if we want a definition for true love, we need to look at the pierced side of Jesus. The Roman centurion thrust his lance into Jesus' side and pushed it into his heart. Blood and water gushed out. In his pierced heart are joined the passionate love of eros and the selfless love of agape. The Son of God loves us with an intensity that expresses itself in his complete gift of self. [16] Jesus' love alone can fill the emptiness within because it is, as Christopher West has observed, free, total, faithful, and fruitful. [17] This is the true love for which God has created us: union with Himself.

The passionate, selfless love of the Son of God reached its climax on the cross. Now it is made present at every celebration of Holy Mass. There Jesus offers himself completely to the Father and to us, uniting himself to us in Holy Communion. His Eucharistic Heart fills our hearts with love and we also receive the power to love with pure hearts.

In the Beatitudes Jesus declared: “Blessed are the pure of heart, they shall see God.” [18] Purity of heart leads to true love. Those who are pure of heart, as Jesus and his mother Mary were, will be filled and will see God.

Those who have pure hearts like Jesus' Heart will share his intimate relationship with the Father. They will be filled with hope and will say with St. Paul: “The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.” [19]

St. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would be “strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self.” To what end? “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” [20] Those with pure hearts have no obstacle to being filled with God's love. Their vision is pure, capable of seeing God clearly, without distraction or distortion.

Full of God's love, deeply satisfied by the love pouring out of the pure Heart of Christ, the pure of heart open their hearts to all people, they are overflowing with the love of the Father for all His children. In 2002 the

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life said this: "Virginity opens the heart to the measure of Christ's heart and makes it possible to love as he loved." [21] The pure of heart do not see other people as objects for their pleasure. When one is filled with the love of God, one loves others with pure love. Purity of heart means not only being free of the stain of sin but also being purely or 100% devoted to God's will. Purity of heart means seeing others as God sees them and willing the good that God desires for them. The pure of heart see God in others.

True love—love that is not self-seeking—is ultimately an act of the will. Consecrated persons who know the depths of the love of God revealed in the Heart of Jesus are free to love with the same sacrificial love with which Jesus loved. And the great mystery is that by loving in this way, we are not emptied but filled even more. Love grows in loving.

Pope John Paul II, reflected deeply on the following invocation in the Litany of the Sacred: "Heart of Jesus Enriching All who Invoke You." He said:

*"This is the generous Heart, because fullness abides in it: in Christ, true Man, abides the fullness of the divinity; and God is Love. He is generous because he loves, and to love means to expand, to give. To love means to be a gift. It means to be for others, to be for all, to be for each person. ... Love will never be depleted through this generosity but will grow. It grows continuously; such is the mysterious nature of love. And such is also the mystery of the Heart of Jesus, enriching all. It is open for each and every person. It is completely open of itself. Its generosity will never be depleted. The generosity of the Heart of Jesus gives testimony to the fact that love is not subject to the laws of death but to the laws of resurrection and life. It gives witness to the fact that love grows with love, such is its very nature". [22]*

The love of the Heart of Jesus makes all this possible: a total love for God which overflows to a universal love of neighbor. Again, as Pope John Paul II put it:

*"Yes, in Christ it is possible to love God with all one's heart, putting him above every other love, and thus to love every creature with the freedom of God! This testimony is more necessary than ever today, precisely because it is so little understood by our world. ...Thanks to this witness, human love is offered a stable point of reference: the pure love which consecrated persons draw from the contemplation of Trinitarian love, revealed to us in Christ. Precisely because they are immersed in this mystery, consecrated persons feel themselves capable of a radical and universal love... Consecrated chastity thus appears as a joyful and liberating experience". [23]*

Chastity is "joyful and liberating" because the heart of the consecrated person is no longer "hole hearted." The consecrated heart in union with the Heart of Jesus becomes "whole hearted." The chaste person does not try to fill up the emptiness of human nature with things that can never satisfy. Instead, God fills the chaste person with his own love—with the fullness of Himself.

#### **Part 4: The Poor Heart of Jesus: Rich Is Better (1,500 words)**

As a young Jesuit seminarian I worked on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in western South Dakota. Sometimes I would stop by to visit a lay co-worker who lived in a trailer on the mission property. It was a simple house in the middle of Shannon County, the poorest county in the United States. On a wall in his tiny bathroom he had put a big poster that showed the front of a fabulous mansion. Beneath the picture were these words: "I've been rich and I've been poor. Rich is better."

I admit I was little surprised to see such a sentiment expressed in the home of a deeply committed Christian, as I knew my friend to be. At first I made excuses for him. Maybe the poster was there before he moved in. Maybe he didn't see the contradiction. Or maybe he just thought the poster was funny. Looking back, I see I have since revised my opinion about why he displayed that poster in his bathroom. It took me a few years to get it.

Rich certainly does seem better than poor. The rich are well fed, well clothed, well housed, well educated, and well exercised. The rich are not necessarily selfish. They have the leisure to do good. The rich give to the poor hoping they will not be poor always. Poverty, on the other hand, is full of hunger and deprivation, hard work and ill health. It leads to a host of social and personal problems. No wonder most people see poverty as an evil and struggle to escape or overcome it.

Yet in the Beatitudes of Matthew's gospel, Jesus says to us, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5: 3). And in the Beatitudes of Luke's gospel, Jesus speaks to us even more simply, "Blessed are the poor" (6: 20). In both cases Jesus calls the poor "blessed" because the kingdom of God belongs to them. Jesus is saying unequivocally that "poor is better."

Jesus lived what he preached. He came from heaven, but he was born in a shelter for animals. Warned about the murderous intentions of Herod, the family had to flee to Egypt, political refugees. They stayed in Egypt several years as displaced persons, far away from their extended families and neighbors. When Jesus grew up, he embraced the hard life of the road. "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests," he said, "but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head" (Matthew 8: 20; Luke 9: 58). In the words of a song by the late Rich Mullins, "The hope of the whole world rests on the shoulders of a homeless man." Quoting another song, a hymn of the first century, St. Paul said that Jesus "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" (Philippians 2: 7). Apparently Jesus saw value in poverty.

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul tries to explain. "For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (8: 9).

Jesus' poverty makes us rich? How does that happen? It's a mystery wrapped in paradox. Jesus' poverty makes us rich the same way that Jesus' death gives us life. Jesus' poverty makes us rich the same way as his gift of emptying himself on the cross and in the Eucharist fills us with the fullness of God. When Jesus died, his heart, overflowing with the love of the Father, poured out the riches of that love. In his death, Jesus gave the Church her sacramental life, the water and blood of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist.

We consecrated persons take a vow of poverty because we desire to be more closely configured to Christ. Our vow is our promise to be poor in both body and spirit--like Jesus, who possessed nothing and relied totally on the Father.

As we've have seen previously, within each of us there is an emptiness that only God can fill. Yet we are tempted to fill our emptiness with all sorts of things that do not belong there, including possessions and the comforts they bring. We are tempted to trust in material wealth, thinking it will save us from unhappiness and uncertainty. Although we know that "here we do not have a lasting city" (Hebrews 13: 14), we are nonetheless tempted to establish, expand, and fortify our homes in this world. We are always in danger of forgetting our call to poverty.

The vow of poverty we take is a profound acknowledgement of the reality of the human condition. We recognize that we are born with nothing, and we take nothing with us when we die. No hearse ever had a luggage rack or pulled a U-Haul trailer.

The Human and Divine Heart of Jesus knew that we can't take the material goods of this world to the next. Jesus knew where true wealth lay—only in the love of the Father. He challenged his followers, saying: "Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be" (Luke 12: 34). He did not mince words: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God" (Luke 18: 25). Every person who desires to be close to God must surrender all. Hands grasping for and holding on to things are not free to receive the greatest gift of all. The substitutes for God—the material idols we are tempted to cling to—close us to the true wealth that is God himself. Pope John Paul II wrote: "Poverty proclaims that God is man's only real treasure." [24]

Our vow of poverty not only opens us to the love of God but also to the love of neighbor. Filled with the love of God, the Heart of Jesus has room for all, for the love of the Father embraces all his human children. And there is a special place in the Heart of Jesus for the poor. Pope John Paul II reminded us: "At the beginning of his ministry, in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus announces that the Spirit has consecrated him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to captives, to give sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free... (cf. Luke 4: 16-19)."

The Church continues the mission of Jesus in caring for the poor. Those of us configured more closely to Christ through the evangelical counsels share Jesus' "preferential option" for the poor. Pope John Paul I continues: "The option for the poor is inherent in the very structure of love lived in Christ. All of Christ's disciples are therefore held to this option, but those who wish to follow the Lord more closely, imitating his attitudes, cannot but feel involved in a very special way. The sincerity of their response to Christ's love will lead them to live a life of poverty and to embrace the cause of the poor." [25]

When it is lived, the vow of poverty configures the hearts of consecrated people to the poor Heart of Jesus. Emptied of all, consecrated persons can be filled with the love of God and with Jesus' love for the poor. Because we know Christ and the love revealed in his Heart, we can say with St. Paul: "Whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him..." (Philippians 3:7-9).

So there I was, a naïve seminarian, standing in that tiny bathroom gazing at a poster of a fabulous mansion. The caption: "I've been rich and I've been poor. Rich is better." I didn't get it at the time. I didn't factor in my friend's humble manner of life and his service to the poorest people in the country. I am sure now that my friend understood the message of Jesus' poverty in a deep way. I believe he put up the poster as an ironic reminder that the true riches of God cannot be compared to the phony riches of this world. He knew the riches of this world are, as St. Paul said, so much rubbish. In the final analysis, the love of God is the only thing worthy of being called riches. When we embrace poverty to seek the love of God, we find our treasure in the Heart of Jesus. In our poverty, we are rich beyond all imagining. Truly, rich is better.

#### **Notes:**

[1] In the Footsteps of Jesus: One Man's Journey through the Life of Christ, Bruce Marchiano, Harvest House Press, 1997.

[2] Marchiano, p. 115

[3] Marchiano, p. 115

[4] Marchiano, p. 116

- [5] Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, paragraph 75.
- [6] JP II, *VC*, 1.
- [7] Pope Benedict XVI, Letter to Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, May 15, 2006.
- [8] JP II, *VC*, 16.
- [9] JP II, *VC*, 16, emphasis in the original.
- [10] *Lumen Gentium* # 11.
- [11] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 1374.
- [12] *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, # 18.
- [13] Homily at Closing Mass, World Youth Day, Marienfeld, Cologne, August 21, 2005.
- [14] *Vita Consecrata*, 32.
- [15] *Vita Consecrata*, 36.
- [16] *Deus Caritas Est*, 9-12.
- [17] *Theology of the Body for Beginners*, 91, 141
- [18] Matthew 5:8
- [19] Romans 5:5
- [20] Ephesians 3:16-19.
- [21] *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 22.
- [22] Angelus Message, August 3, 1986.
- [23] *Vita Consecrata*, 88.
- [24] *Vita Consecrata*, 21.
- [25] *Vita Consecrata*, 82.

## MISSIONARIES OF THE HEART (FRANCISCO MACHADO, S.J.)

**(A personal testimony on the Apostleship of Prayer from a young Jesuit who is in Taiwan at the moment, preparing to be a missionary in China.)**

In Braga, our house of formation for Jesuit students, we had a visit a few months ago from Fr. Claudio Barriga sj, world assistant for the Apostleship of Prayer. As a Jesuit, I had already heard of the Apostleship of Prayer, but had never made up my mind to look more closely at what this spirituality offers.

After the meeting, in which he explained to us the fundamental principles of this spiritual apostolate, I was deeply moved, because it seemed to me to be a profound idea, demanding and at the same time extremely simple.



I began to say the morning offering each day. As I wake up, even if I do not always use the prescribed formula, I place myself before God and offer him everything that I am going to experience and do in the course of the day. I offer it as someone offers a gift to a beloved person (that is a way of looking that helps me to make it real). For a few moments I also remember the Church's intentions for that month.

What I want to share is what I have felt since I started this form of prayer and this way of thinking. It seems incredible, but I feel that I have come to receive the grace of constantly remembering my offering. During the day a deep desire comes into my heart to offer the different moments to God, as a gift united with the gifts of millions of people in the Church. The missionary longing to transform the world into the Kingdom of God begins with the transformation of one's own heart. 'Change yourself to change the world', as someone said.

We don't give just anything to the people we love most. I want my gift to be something beautiful. And so I began to be aware of the huge demands of a commitment of this kind. It means that, if I offer all the moments of my day in this way, then I want them to be lived to the full. The little weaknesses, inconsistencies, concessions of various kinds, as well as the moments of courage, of faithfulness to daily work, or love and affection for others - all of this is offered together. And, through the grace of God, I come to want to make my gift better, by taking small steps towards making my offering more beautiful, more complete, like the offering of Jesus, who thought only of pleasing the Father. I can say that what the Apostleship of Prayer offers is more than an intention: it is a very real help in my life, for God to keep giving shape to a generous and sincere commitment. And, as in the miracle of the loaves and the two fishes, the little that I am able to offer is transformed and used by God, to be turned into enormous good in my life. The Lord is not outdone in generosity, and each night, when I turn to look at what he has done with the gift I offered him, I am surprised and full of gratitude. The good, small as it may be, was given with love, and it is multiplied, and keeps on opening up ways for a commitment that becomes constantly greater and more joyful. From a very small good, come presences of God beyond all expectation, full of mercy and of new opportunities.

**Points that I want to remember about the Apostleship of Prayer, which seem to me to sum up this spirituality:**

- The specific life of each person has immense meaning and value (loving offering).
- Living in a eucharistic way, united with Christ's offering of himself. (Heart of Jesus).
- Union with the Church and sense of universality (intentions).

In the morning prayer I offer in all simplicity everything that I am going to do and to experience during the day. It is an expression of my desire to live completely united with God's will and of my need of his help to fulfil it.

In the night prayer (Examen) I ask to see and give thanks for what the Lord has done with what I offered to him, and I thank him for the way in which he multiplies the good and heals what is bad.

## TALK OF FATHER GENERAL ADOLFO NICOLÁS TO FRENCH EYM DURING THEIR ROME PILGRIMAGE ON MAY 9, 2009 (P. ADOLFO NICOLÁS, S.J.)

I'm happy to be with you and have the chance to speak to you.

You've been engaged, or are actually engaged now, in EYM formation to live the style of life that Jesus lived. I'd like to understand exactly what this means for you. What does it represent for those of you who are veterans of EYM, often for a number of years? What does it mean today to live in the style of Jesus? You could surely share many beautiful experiences with me.

Perhaps you'd say to me: We have found a real friendship, the deep meaning of life, and a chance to be really at the service of others. That would in itself be a beautiful experience, a deeply human experience. But it seems to me you would say rather: through EYM we have met the living, joyful Christ, Christ the friend; we have experienced God up close. Because EYM is first of all living in knowledge of Christ, with Christ, like Christ – even in Christ. EYM is a path of formation configuring our life to Christ, making us become like him. That's the goal of the pedagogy of EYM. How is it possible? The many activities, meetings, celebrations, camps, courses, the music, the games have as their goal, even if it's not always made explicit, to make the life of Christ known deeply and to share in it, in various ways and in our different realities.



That's exactly the meaning of your Eucharistic spirituality. You're invited to allow your lives to be modeled by the Eucharist. Pope John Paul II said those words in the course of his talk to the world leaders of the Apostleship of Prayer in 1985. He went on:

*Moreover, you should strive to form Christians that are shaped by the Eucharist, which gives them the strength to commit themselves generously to embrace all the dimensions of their own life in service to their brothers and sisters as the offered body of Christ and his Blood which was shed.*

The Eucharist is a source of inspiration for life. Even if participation in the Mass regularly is essential for our entering, in our turn, into this offering of our lives, what is most important is that our entire life be taken up by this Eucharistic dynamism. For members of EYM, the Eucharist is a way of life. In everything, always, in "all the dimensions of their lives" it is living "in service to others." It's to live a Eucharistic life during the week, even when I'm not in church. It's a spirituality which teaches us to accept and be grateful for the gift of life, in order to pass it on in service of others.

This way of living is nothing else but the way Christ lived. And we find the complete meaning of Christ's life, as if in résumé, in the Last Supper. He reveals by his words and actions the final meaning of his life given up for us.

Another quote from the Pope, this time Benedict XVI, can help us understand the profound meaning of the gestures of the Eucharist for Christ himself:

*What is happening? How can Jesus distribute his Body and his Blood? By making the bread into his Body and the wine into his Blood, he anticipates his death, he accepts it in his heart, and he transforms it into an action of love. What on the outside is simply brutal violence – the Crucifixion – from within becomes an act of total*

*self-giving love. This is the substantial transformation which was accomplished at the Last Supper and was destined to set in motion a series of transformations leading ultimately to the transformation of the world when God will be all in all (cf. 1Co 15:28). In their hearts, people always and everywhere have somehow expected a change, a transformation of the world. Here now is the central act of transformation that alone can truly renew the world: violence is transformed into love, and death into life. (XX WORLD YOUTH DAY, Cologne – Marienfeld, 21 August 2005).*

In conclusion, to live a Eucharistic spirituality engages the whole life of a Christian. It's the great challenge of EYM for those who take its spiritual proposal seriously. It's a program of life at the service of the transformation of the world, which begins with the transformation of our own hearts.

So far I have reminded you of something you already know, something that forms part of your spiritual makeup. But often the question that comes to us is the question Mary asked the angel: "How is all this possible? We know the ideal and the message, but who is going to help us live it out?"

The answer is in the Sacrament itself, in the Celebration of the Eucharist, in the liturgical ability of our hearts to read and discover in the Celebration the response of the Lord to our questions. We know how complicated our life can at times become inside our own selves, and also outside in relationship with others. We get entangled, confused, mixed up in conflicts of feelings, ideas, presuppositions and the like. Our life is full of drama, good drama and bad, painful, threatening drama. Often we do not even know whether it is comedy or tragedy.

Well, the Lord guides us with another set of dramas, dramatic narratives like those we find in the Gospels, in the whole Bible. He explains to us how to live better, how to live as children of God and his Kingdom through parables, miracle stories, encounters and conflicts... and ultimately through the drama of his life, death and resurrection.

The Liturgical celebration of the Eucharist is a little ritual drama to help us put our life dramas, daily or extraordinary, in the light of Jesus' drama. It is the best bridge we have to bring light to our questions, our problems, our crises... But that presupposes that we really bring our questions, problems and crises to the Eucharist. If there is no question, there will be no answer. If we do not bring our lives to the Eucharist, how can we expect it to transform our lives? The Celebration is the arena, the, the playground where our conflicts are solved, where our lack of confidence is tested, where our faith finds its challenges and its strength.

This means that the members of EYM have to be experts in celebrating the Eucharist so that the Eucharist does all these things that the Popes speak about and the transformation of the world the EYM speaks about.

If we speak of the Eucharist as the Transformation of the World, it is because it is true... and it means that we have to let it be true, beginning with our daily lives, which are touched, blessed, transformed as we let the drama of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, his teachings and messages touch our daily realities, our problems and questions. This daily transformation is the best expression of God's desire to transform everything: the bread and the wine, our lives and our thoughts and feelings; our families and relationships; our societies and our environment. The bread of the Eucharist is the same bread of the poor, of our lives, and it is made from the wheat that the hands of the humble ones have sowed and reaped. The wine of the Eucharist comes from the grapes that have been cared for and pressed to give out their sweetness, our lives, meant to be given out in the vineyard of the Lord of all.