

Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment

(A) Young People In Today's World

The world is changing all the time. Today's world is different from that of the past generation or the generation before that. After Vatican Council II, there was a dramatic drop in the number of priests in the universal church. Now there are less than 400,000 priests world-wide, and the average age of the priests is getting older each year. "Is God still calling?" The answer is definitely "Yes" – but fewer people are responding to this call to the priesthood. The Synod of Bishops in 2018 will study the problem of youths.

In the present-day society, 25% of marriages end in divorce. There is no security at home. Young people in today's society feel that they are not given the freedom to choose. Economic and social changes have affected the extent of obligations and opportunities. In many parts of the world, young people find it hard to make the correct choices in life. The role of parents and families is crucial, but often it is problematic. In Mexico, religion is not allowed to be taught in schools since the 1960's (in a Catholic country), so morality has declined and 600,000 persons have been killed in "drug wars". In China, religion cannot be taught in schools today, so similar problems will also arise.

(B) Faith, Discernment, Vocation

The church wants to state her desire to encounter, accompany and care for every young person. Faith is seeing things as Jesus does, and faith is the source of vocational discernment. Vocation is not limited to priestly vocation, but also includes vocation as a lay person – a doctor, a lawyer, a father, and a mother. Vocational discernment is the process by which a person makes fundamental choices and includes three processes:-

- to recognize (the signs of the times)
- to interpret (the presence and action of the Spirit)
- to choose (making a decision is an exercise of authentic human freedom and personal responsibility)

(For details of the talk, see Appendix p.1 – p.4)