

Accompaniment Project Conversation # 1

Introduction to Accompaniment



These handouts are provided as part of the Accompaniment Project provided by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry and the Center for Ministry Development.

Thank you for being part of this conversation which introduces a vision for accompaniment and provides the opportunity to consider the resources of your community and the things that need to change to accompany youth.

Faith Sharing Questions within prayer

What questions are on the minds and hearts of young people in our community?

Who is someone who has accompanied you in faith?

Accompaniment

Jesus walks with two disciples who did not grasp the meaning of all that happened to him and are leaving Jerusalem and the community behind. Wanting to accompany them, he joins them on the way. He asks them questions and listens patiently to their version of events, and in this way he helps them *recognize* what they were experiencing. Then, with affection and power, he proclaims the word to them, leading them to *interpret* the events they had experienced in the light of the Scriptures. He accepts their invitation to stay with them as evening falls; **he enters into their night**. As they listen to him speak, their hearts burn within them and their minds are opened; they then recognize him in the breaking of the bread. They themselves *choose* to resume their journey at once in the opposite direction, to return to the community and to share the experience of their encounter with the risen Lord.

Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019, # 237

Today, we need a Church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey...

Pope Francis, World Youth Day, 2013.

The Art of Accompaniment

The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other....

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #169

Person to Person

In such places...the person-to-person contact indispensable for passing on the message can happen, something whose place cannot be taken by any pastoral resource or strategy.

218- *Christus Vivit*, April 2, 2019

Going Beyond a Preconceived Framework

Accompanying young people requires going beyond a preconceived framework, encountering young people where they are, adapting to their times and pace of life and taking them seriously.

Preparatory Document for the Synod on Youth, Part 3, #1

...speaks against providing ‘pre-packaged answers’ and emphasizes the importance for pastors to listen to young people and to prepare persons “to accompany” them.

Quotations from Synod Final Document October 27, 2018

Accompaniment means that we:

- We share bread with
- We don't judge
- We walk along side (not pulling or pushing)
- We listen to questions
- We recognize where God is working – lead young people to the holy

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, # 101

Go where youth are

- We accompany youth **where they are** and take them seriously.
- Making a choice for faith requires a **journey beyond our ordinary means** of ministry.
- Because the proposed message involves the freedom of young people, communities must **engage young people in creative, personal ways.**

Going to the Young

- Avoid everything that makes the Church feel outdated and makes people feel dissatisfied.
- Accompanying young people as they face challenges
- Going to where youth and young adults are – technology, sports...

Sometimes the availability of the young meets with a certain authoritarianism and mistrust from older people and pastors, who do not sufficiently recognize their creativity and who struggle to share responsibility.

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, # 54
Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019, # 67

Calling

“It is not possible to understand the significance of the baptismal vocation in its fullness unless we remember that for everyone, without exception, it is a call to holiness.”

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, # 84

- Awakening faith for youth
- Asking questions without pre-determining the answers.

“In the Gospel accounts, Jesus’ look of love is transformed into a word, that is, a call to newness of life which is to be accepted, explored and built up. Above all, calling means awakening a desire and jarring people from what blocks them or from the complacency which slows them down. Calling means asking questions which have no ready-made answers. In this way, and not by passively respecting norms, people are impelled to embark on a journey and to encounter the joy of the Gospel.”

Preparatory Document, page 5

Which young people?

“...all young people without exception have the right to be guided in life’s journey.”

Preparatory Document, page 14

- Youth already joined through baptism.
- We have a special call to reach young people who are marginalized

Who accompanies?

“As well as family members, those called to exercise a role of accompaniment include all the significant persons in the various spheres of young people’s lives, such as teachers, animators, trainers, and other figures of reference, including professional ones.”

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, # 93

- A responsible community
- People of Reference (adults who work with young people)
- The family
- Shepherds of souls (Pastors, Bishops, Vocations ministers)
- Teachers

“Those who accompany should be welcoming and patient, they elicit pertinent questions and recognize the signs of the Spirit in the replies of the young.”

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, # 97

“...the accompanier will need to cultivate his own spiritual life, nourishing the relationship that links him to the One who assigned this mission to him. At the same time, he needs to feel the support of the ecclesial community to which he belongs. It is important that he receive a specific formation for this particular ministry and that he can benefit in his turn from accompaniment and supervision.”

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, # 103

“The role of credible adults and their cooperation is basic in the course of human development and vocational discernment. This requires authoritative believers, with a clear human identity, a strong sense of belonging to the Church, a visible spiritual character, a strong passion for education and a great capacity for discernment.”

Preparatory Document, page 2

“The skill required for working collaboratively involves cultivating specific relational virtues: the discipline of listening and the capacity to give the other person space, readiness to forgive and willingness to ‘put oneself on the line’, according to a genuine spirituality of communion.”

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, # 103

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Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, # 103

The Parish Accompanies

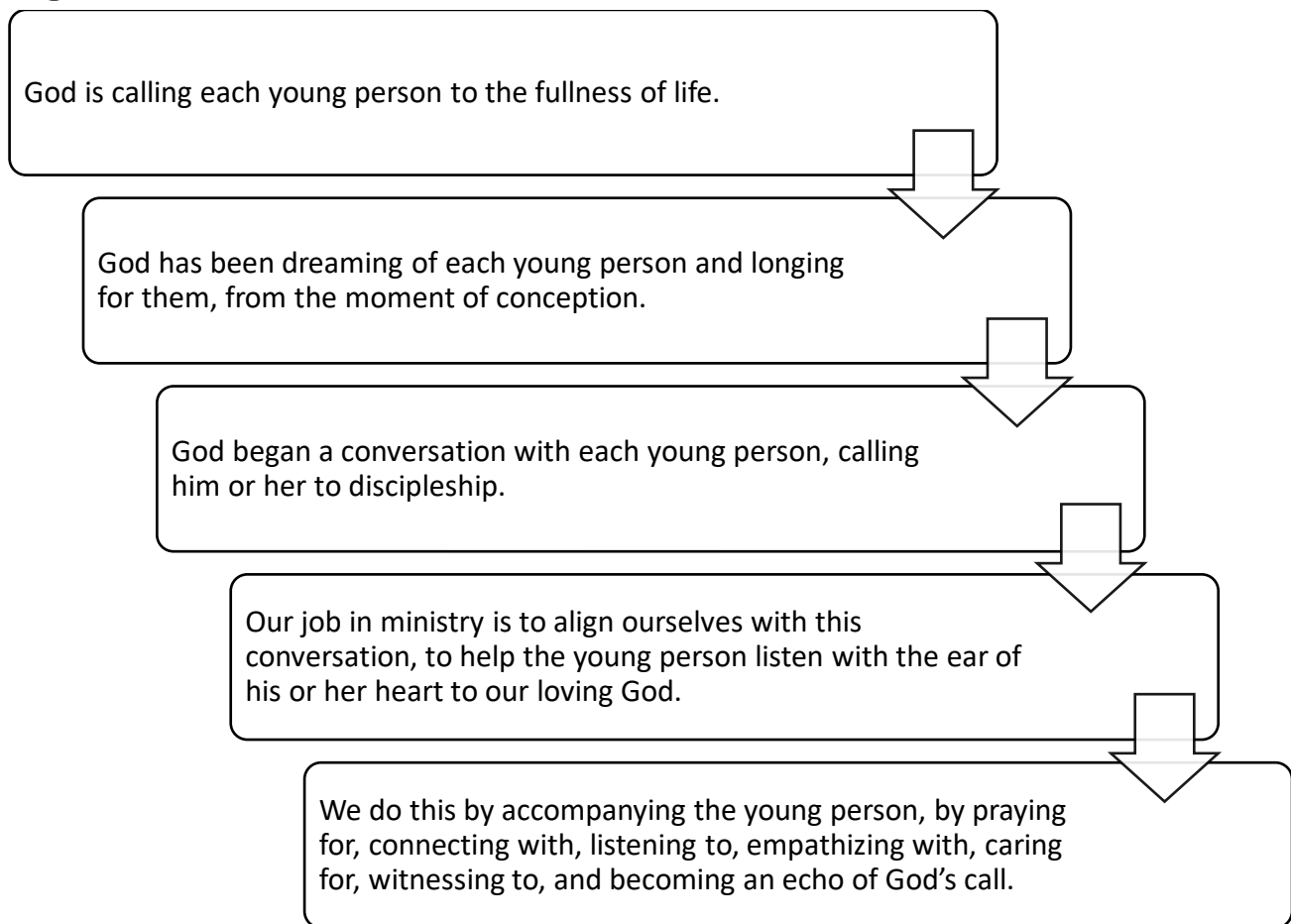
... (Young people) will be better integrated into **(parish) communities that are open, living their faith, eager to radiate Christ, joyful, free, fraternal and committed.** These communities can be settings where they feel that it is possible to cultivate precious relationships.

Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019, # 220

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

Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019, #243

Big Picture



Be new!

Precisely because the proposed message involves the freedom of young people, every community needs to give importance to creative ways of addressing young people in a personal way and supporting personal development.

In many cases, the task involves learning to allow for something new and not stifling what is new by attempting to apply a preconceived framework.

No seed for vocations can be fruitful if approached with a closed and "complacent pastoral attitude that says: 'We have always done it this way'" and without people being "bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 33).



Preparatory Document, page 14

Reflection Questions:

What are you hearing? What are you thinking?

What are the implications of an Accompaniment approach to ministry with youth?

- For you personally...
- For parents and families....
- For ministry with youth....
- For parishes...

Working towards Change

- *How can we share vision?*
- *How can we build structures that serve accompaniment?*
- *How to we develop the practices of accompanying?*

Becoming a Community Who Accompanies

- Empowering the parish to accompany young disciples
- Equipping Parents and Faith Companions
- Transforming ministry to provide accompaniment

RESOURCES

What are the resources of our parish for accompanying youth in faith?

Think of the people, the communities, the traditions, practices, patterns, and possibilities for youth involvement.

CHANGE

What needs to change in our parish to accompany youth in faith?

Think about the policies, the communities, the practices, the challenges and tensions.

Links and Resources

All links were successfully accessed as of March 3, 2021

Preparatory Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20170113_documento-preparatorio-xv_en.html

Instrumentum Laboris for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment:

<http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione/instrumentum-laboris-for-the-synod-2018--young-people--the-faith.html>

Final Document on the Pre-Synod Gathering:

<http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/news/final-document-from-the-pre-synodal-meeting.html>

Final Document for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment:

<http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/fede-discernimento-vocazione.html>

Christus Vivit – Christ is Alive – Papal Exhortation, April 2, 2019:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html

Synthesis of *Christus Vivit*:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-04/pope-francis-apostolic-exhortation-christ-is-alive-synthesis.html>

Blog: 10 Things in "Christus Vivit" Addressed to All of Us Who Work with Young People:

<https://www.cmdnet.org/cmd-blogs-ministry/entry/christus-vivit>