

YOUTH MINISTRY WITHIN INDIAN PLURALISM

Towards a Catholic Youth Pastoral Plan

- Soroj Mullick SDB

ABSTRACT:

An ideal Youth Ministry (YM) with a concrete Youth Pastoral Plan, following the proposals of the Synod on youth, 2018, noting the Indian situation, could be a legitimate contribution for the growth of all the Youth Pastoral activities in India. A dialogue of human experiences of God in context, is the intimate heart of the mission of the Church in the light of the Gospel. The foundation of YM, therefore, is based on the intercultural and interreligious dialogue (of life and faith) for universal unity through peace and harmonious living.

The Church in India continues to respond to the demand of faith-life integration of the young people. Today, it requires the adaptations of the Gospel in the soil and the settings, where the youth are found. With the present situation of indifference, division and incoherence in the young people, this paper offers a systematic practical steps for an ideal and adapted YPP in the Indian context faced with the challenges of the cultural and religious pluralism. It invites the Church to make radical option for YM, giving attention to the cultural and religious problems, and find ways for co-existence in peace and unity, for the Kingdom of God. YM starts from the last, from the needs and from the hopes of the underprivileged youth. It requires, therefore, collaboration with all the available energies of the Church - movements, groups, associations, and the world of the lay and consecrated adults. We present therefore, certain criteria for an YPP for the dioceses/regions, objectively directed, taking into consideration the present youth perspectives with the cultural presuppositions, and lead towards certain criteria, structures, methods, content and lines of action.

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Towards a Youth Pastoral Plan for peace and harmony

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1. Introduction

Instead of going backwards, filling gaps, a new Youth Ministry (YM) with new paradigm and with a priority to youth, has to emerge through Church debate and co-responsibility, without of course, overthrowing the structures. Within an endangered Church the YM calls for an end to clericalism, diversification of ministries and get in touch with grassroots realities. Such YM will be nourished by encounter. The human person in the young and the message of Jesus Christ are central to YM. The Church has to be with the fractured, forgotten and scorned youth. They represent a minority, a new generation. There cannot be separation between them and the structured Church hierarchy. All Christians, young and old, as baptized human beings, are equal.

Jesus Christ and the Church can meet the need of the young people for meaning, model and mentoring. Youth too can contribute their energy and resources for building the kingdom of God. As Pope Francis calls the young to become 'missionary witnesses', the Church needs to change YM's paradigm through its self-diagnose. It is up to the People of God (Church) to innovate.

Along with violence and destruction there is fast progress in science and technology. Yet the human instincts remain natural and crude. In the midst of routine political killings, populist nationalism, divisive religious sentiments, hate propaganda, we need to think broadly for our youth, and enable them to rise above such instincts and forge a common human identity. As Pope Francis writes, "[A]n authentic faith [...] always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. [...] If indeed 'the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics,' the Church, 'cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.'" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 183).

Youth all over provide with an extraordinary value to both the community and the world. The current generation of youth is more motivated and committed than ever to spreading God's word.¹ As individual many youth go through the process of re-examining their belief system and become certain of their life choices. There are full-time youth ministers who themselves have gone through this process of transformation and decided to dedicate themselves in the service for the youth to encourage further leadership in the Church. In fact, the young people have demonstrated positively in answering to the present challenges that the Indian society presents to them. It is an assignment of communion of the Christian community (Church), and accompanies

¹ Justine Smith/Courier international, *Youth International Year: Youth minister enjoys helping bring teens closer to God*, <http://www.catholiccourier.com>, 21.8.2010.

them in their walk of maturation in the faith, transmitted through human mediation according to the logic of the sacramentality. According to Percival Holt, President of ICYM², who attended the Synod on Youth, “The Church needs to kindle the sparks of the young people into the right flames.”³ Youth need wise guidance of elders who can enable them “to fall in love with Christ and his Church and become a leader and inspiration to many.”

Acknowledging positively the role of youth, an ideal model of a Youth Pastoral Plan⁴, following the proposals of the Synod document on youth, 2018, noting the Indian situation, could be a legitimate contribution for the growth of all the Youth Pastoral activities in all the dioceses of India, because it becomes an effective response to the demands of the entire youth world in the Indian context.

It is not only an intra-ecclesial need, the interest goes towards all the young people in as much as they are the ‘careers’ of what the Church feels the need to respond to, as an obligation. As the Church in India is trying to respond to the demand of faith-life integration of the young people, it requires the necessary adaptations to offer them the truth of the Gospel like a beatific mystery and the liberation to know, live and share with others, with conviction and courage, for the proclamation of the evangelical message. In the present situation of incapability, indifference and the incoherence in not knowing how to apply faith in daily life,⁵ we propose here few practical suggested steps for an ideal YPP in the Indian context which needs to be adapted according to contexts faced with the challenges of the cultural and religious pluralism.

2. Brief history of the YM and YPP

Much has happened recently in the Universal (Catholic) Church that compels to consider different approaches to YM. This leads to reconsider, reformulate and renew the already existing National Youth Pastoral Plan (NYPP, 1996). The Meeting of the bishops of Asia in 1998, while centering its attention on interreligious dialogue (*Ecclesia in Asia*, EA 47) and inculturation, did not forget the young people. In a clear

² ICYM is the Indian Catholic Youth Movement. It is spread across 627 districts and functions through 14 Regions and 171 Dioceses. The CBCI had approved ICYM as a National Youth Movement on 14th September, 1999.

³ This is from the testimony that Percival Holt, National Youth President, of the ICYM. Cf. *Conference of Catholic Bishops of India [CCBI] (India), present at the Synod as Auditor, presented on October 16, 2018, during the 12th General Congregation of the Synod*, <https://zenit.org/articles/synod2018-testimony-of-percival-holt-indian-catholic-youth-movement/>, 4.3.2019.

⁴ This article has been elaborated and updated in continuation with the previous article. Cf. Soroj Mullick, *Towards a Renewed Youth Pastoral Plan. Youth service for Peace and Harmony*, in “Kristu Jyoti” 26(2010)2 and 26(2010)3, 252-265. This proposed YPP is in keeping with the culture of the young people in India in the light of the Synod Document on Youth, 2018. Many of the aspects are difficult to interpret since the youth situations are varied in various dioceses in India, and these diversities constitute an integral part of evangelisation and youth work. Cf. Soroj Mullick, *The New Approach To Youth, A Study on the Preparatory Document of Synod 2018*, in VJTR, 82(2018)2, pp. 105-120.

⁵ Cf. L. Meddi, *Integrazione fede e vita*, LDC, Leumann 1995, 5.

and incisive vision the Bishops have entrusted to the young people with the assignment of realizing a Youth Pastoral Plan (YPP).

Continuing on the same plea, the CBCI General Assembly (2010)⁶, chose the theme of Youth in the service of Peace and Harmony during the eight day long 29th Plenary Assembly of the CBCI in February, 2010. The objective was to have deliberations on the theme and formulate strategies for a National Catholic Youth Policy. While dedicating time to the main theme, it focused also on the challenges and possibilities that today's youth face in the country. The Catholic youth are no different in facing the challenges that are faced by the youth at large. The serious felt issues were: the youth demographics, education opportunities, employability and social and political consciousness. These have no ready-made solutions but certainly need to be addressed.

Again, the United Nations declared August 2010-August 2011 as the International Year of Youth to harness the talents and energy of the world's young people urging dialogue, respect and empowerment to promote better understanding between different generations, cultures and religions. Therefore, dialogue and mutual understanding was the theme of the Year.⁷ The goodwill, talent and idealism of the youth can ignite economy in the countries, make important contributions to eradicate poverty, contain the spread of disease, combat climate change and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United States hosted an innovative event to bring the voices of youth, who represent nearly 50 percent of the world's population, directly to the UN Security Council. It is affirmed that youth opinions and concerns can contribute to the key decisions on global peace and security.⁸ Therefore, the UN and its youth organization partners are determined to focus on the need to encourage dialogue and ensure that young people are included in important policies and decision-making processes. This way the youth are challenged to pursue peace and justice, and along with adults to work to achieve sustainable development, and to address the violations of human rights. So too does the Church wish for them in India!

⁶ Cf. Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), *Statement of 29th CBCI General Body Meeting "Youth for Peace and Harmony"*, 24 February - 3 March 2010, Guwahati, at <http://www.ucanews.com>, 2.5.2010.

⁷ International Year of Youth was formally launched on August 12th - to coincide with International Youth Day being observed every 12 August - in the General Assembly Hall at UN Headquarters in New York. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon used his message for the Day to urge UN Member States to boost their investment in social and economic programmes that benefit the estimated 1.2 billion people worldwide aged between 15 and 24.

⁸ The fifteen members of the Security Council of the UN joined in to discuss on the theme "Your World, Your Future: Voices of a New Generation" (December 2010), based on the three top ideas submitted by young people (aged 13-21) from around the world: "What is the most vital challenge to international peace and security facing your generation? Tell the UN Security Council what issue you believe deserves more attention, and explain why it is important." The three dominant issues the youth wanted to address were: Why is there excessive spending on war and weapons? How can you guarantee us durable peace? How will you address terrorism in all its forms, including cyber-terrorism? Cf. *Voices of a New Generation*, ANS, <http://www.infoans.org/1.asp?Lingua=2&sez=1&doc=5951>, 23.12.2010.

There certainly exists huge pyramidal structure of responsible leaders for the YM at the national, diocesan and parish levels⁹, as well as at the Religious Congregations' regional and provincial levels. The Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM) along with other church-related youth organizations, all designed and reformulated for youth renewal and to meet their needs, is conceived to bring deeper faith and commitment in the young. Yet often, the model of comprehensive YM resulted at distancing itself from the faith education of the youth. This is so due to the lack of understanding of the goals of YM itself. What then are the goals, scope, contents and sequence of actions for the YM in the Church?¹⁰

Conservative Church-adults (read *hierarchical leaders*) have gone through some renewed awareness of youth situations within the community, and led to reflect and study seriously on the pastoral praxis of the Church regarding the young people during the past Synod on youth, 2018. In the last 25 years the need began to be felt to adapt a Youth Pastoral Plan (YPP) to the new socio-economic circumstances. In this way a think-tank process was begun for a renewal of an educative and pastoral practice, in view of a renewed YM. This re-thinking will help to develop an YPP which responds to the new situation of the young; re-affirm the close connection between education and evangelization. The recent Synod document on Youth has been an outcome of that, where the bishops along with other experts and representatives carried out a re-think regarding the youth pastoral work, pointing an outline for a new YM and YPP.

3. Youth Synod Document – a Motivational Source

A sweeping summary of the main themes of the Synod on Youth 2018 (YS) is: dialogue, openness and attention to the youth reality full of positive aspects and enthusiasm, strengths and challenges, and guidance through accompaniment¹¹ etc., marked by issues e.g. vocational discernment, formation, migration, sexual abuse, family, work, technology, defense of the embryo, etc. Young people want to be “heard, recognized, accompanied” and want their voice to be “considered interesting and useful in the social and ecclesial field” - the essential lense through which the issues are to be viewed.¹²

The synodal document, a motivational force, a result of a teamwork including the young people, inspired by the episode of the disciples of Emmaus, with 364 “precise and constructive” modifications, or amendments, was passed with the 2/3

⁹ Cf. CBCI Commission for Youth, *A Plan for Youth Ministry in India, National Youth Pastoral Plan*, Delhi 1996, 31-37.

¹⁰ The final statement of the CBCI on Youth Ministry (2010) has not sufficiently emphasized on this dimension of faith education. Cf. Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), *Statement of 29th CBCI General Body Meeting “Youth for Peace and Harmony”*, 24 February- 3 March 2010, Guwahati, at <http://www.ucanews.com>, 2.5.2010.

¹¹ The concept of ‘accompaniment’ is already found in : Cf. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy, *Colloquium of Asian Catholic Chaplains*(1994): *Accompanying the Youth*, Lucky Press, Manila 1996, p.16.

¹² Cf. *Synod's final document, The Church's responses to the challenges of young people*, Vatican City (AsiaNews), <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Synod's-final-document,-the-Church's-responses-to-the-challenges-of-young-people-45324.html>, 19.2.2019

majority.¹³ It complements the *Instrumentum laboris* of the Synod on youth, with three-part sections. The youth synod has largely avoided contentious doctrinal disputes. The document - a “modus operandi”- is a pastoral action plan which lays the groundwork for more radical pastoral shifts. Based on this outcome, full of various proposals of concrete issues, Pope Francis has signed a magisterial text – a post-synod “apostolic exhortation” on 25th March 2019, at Loreto on the feast of the Annunciation, to help young people.¹⁴ A common thread in the document is the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

The first part (YS 5-57) titled “*He walked with them*”, deals with the concrete situations of young people while emphasizing on the Catholic educational institutions and dynamic parish setting for vocation and faith formation. Along with the clergy, it acknowledges the need to train the laity for youth ministry. The reality of migration, abuse, the “throwaway culture” are also addressed upon with certain “pastoral resources” e.g. art, music and sports. It calls for a “rigorous preventive measures” against sex abuse, e.g. educating and forming leaders.

The second part (YS 58-113) - “*Their eyes were opened*”- affirms God’s presence in the young (“theological places”) through whom the Church can renew herself, coming out of its “heaviness and slowness”. The Church’s Mission is a “sure compass” for youth with close connection with his/her vocation which is a call to holiness achieved through accompaniment and discernment.

In the third part (YS 114-164) - “*They left without delay*”- the young Church is presented with the icon of Mary Magdalene, who first witnessed the Resurrection to affirm that all are in God’s heart. All are asked to ‘walk together’ with synodal dynamism and as a united universal Church (People of God) to find contextualised pastoral solutions through discernment within diverse faces, sensitivities, origins and cultures. It asks for a national directory for youth ministry in a vocational key. The families and Christian communities will have to accompany young people to discover the gift of their sexuality in the current cultural context with ‘formative paths’.

Lastly, other topics are covered with a vocational thrust i.e. universal call to holiness. The synod document, a motivational source, in its conclusion, invites all to become saints and reawaken the world with holiness, being dragged by the holiness of the young people (YS 165-167). Through the young people who are faithful to the

¹³ There were 267 voting members, 72 experts and observers, including three dozen men and women under 30 to discuss “young people, the faith and vocational discernment.” 249 members voted on 167 paragraphs divided into 3 parts, with 12 chapters running into 60 pages.

¹⁴ The post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation for the Synod on *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, entitled “Christ lives” (*Christus vivit*) is a letter to the world’s young people that represents the fruit of the Synod. Francis explained that there are 3 sections to the Exhortation which mirror 3 phases of the Synod process: *listening* at deeper level, where moral and spiritual forces act and “tune in to God’s action”; *discernment*, to discover God’s ‘surprises’ in its facets through responsible collaboration, needed to live out one’s vocation; *Decision* implemented by means of incarnating the ‘yes’ (to one’s call from God) into action through multitude of family relationships. Cf. John Waters, *Loreto: Pope signs Apostolic Exhortation to young people*, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-03/pope-francis-signs-synod-exhortation-paplor.html>, 26.3.2019

Gospel in the midst of persecution, the Church's spiritual ardour and its apostolic vigour can be renewed.¹⁵

4. Motivations connected to a renewed YM

The principal motive behind a new YPP lies in an essential precedence: the integral education of the young people to the Gospel of love and service, the human and spiritual formation through acceptance, accompaniment of the young by listening to them, inculturation and the interreligious dialogue¹⁶ for peace and harmony through an well-organized YM. The FABC document states: "Only by listening with the heart and through dialogue can we enter into their minds and their many questions. We accompany our youth in their doubts and disillusion, apathy and indifference, towards hope and meaning in life."¹⁷ The motivations arise from the problems connected to the YM and the need of an abled methodology that can educate the young people to faith and life.

Pope Francis at the World Youth Day, Panama 2019, addressed the Youth as "the now of God", and asked them to "keep walking, keep living the faith and sharing it."¹⁸ Young people are asked to live their faith and life according to Gospel values; become the voice of the marginalized, take part in politics; take positive part inn social media through networking. Making the Synod on Youth (2018) an experiential event based on Jesus' journey accompanying the Emmaus disciples - a symbolic narrative of the Church accompanying the young people in their life's journey (YS 5) by listening with empathy - the Young people need to be heard by the Church, pastors and qualified laypersons (YS 6-9) within the changing contexts and pluralistic cultures.

Often, the youth are victims of exclusion, marginalization, cultural colonization (YS 10-14) and migration (YS 25-28). In such context, the Church's involvement in education, Youth ministry, administration, parish ministry, Christian life and formation are of major concern (YS 15-20) within the present digital environment (YS 21-24) and all types of abuse, seeking its solution by going to the root and seeking forgiveness (YS 29-31). Additionally, the family is a privileged point of reference for formation, unity, friendship and relationships (YS 32-36), growing and maturing in affectivity (YS 37-39) and in moral consciousness, however vulnerable they are (YS 40-44). Today's youth want to be socially engaged, and are interested in art, music and sport (YS 45-47) but they need to grow in spirituality and religiosity (YS 48-51) within the different religious contexts and encounter Jesus

¹⁵ Cf. *The Synod on Young People: What does the Final Document Say?*, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2018-10/synod-of-bishops-young-people-final-document-summary.html>, 1.11.2018

¹⁶ Cf. A. Pushparajan, *Interreligious Dialogue and Imperative service to the Youth today*, in T. Kalathuveetil (ed.), *Serving youth today in India. Papers, Reports and Final Statement of the All India Research Seminar on Youth*, Kristu Jyoti Publications, Bangalore 1993, 486.

¹⁷ Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Office of the Laity and Family -Youth Desk, 2nd Bishops' Institute on Lay Apostolate (BILA2) on Youth (2007): *Youth Ministry in Asia: Reliving the Emmaus Story*, FABC-OLF-Youth Desk, Taytay Rizal 2008), p.82., as cited in, Max Maria, *FABC on Youth Ministry*, p. 7, https://www.academia.edu/35768331/FABC_on_YouthMinistry, 21.3.2019;

¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Pope WYD Panama: Homily at concluding Mass - full text*, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-01/pope-francis-panama-wyd-2019-concluding-mass-homily.html>, 25.3.2019.

through sacramental participation – a living liturgy. Through active involvement, the young men and women can get in close union with the ecclesial community (YS 52-57).

Today the Indian Church institutionally also organizes an office for the YM; its relevance lies in taking up the Synod on Youth as an opportune moment for a critical passage, from an informal phase less structured with a dominant presence of some associations and groups, to a phase of full accession of pastoral responsibility towards the young people through empowerment and accompaniment.

In this way, the youth will experience the Church as a community marked by synodality and harmony in living with the other faith communities through opportunity for relationships with family and community members who witness a Christian/(other faiths) way of life. They will hear the Gospel proclaimed in a manner adapted to their pluricultural and multireligious situations and experience initial conversion towards a harmonious living. The Church will utilize all of its pastoral ministries in its work with youth to achieve the Synod's proposed goals. It will enhance partnerships with parents and other laity in developing the faith life of the youth in order to achieve the Church's synodality in communion. In this context, the youth will have opportunities for meaningful involvement in parish life and for the development of intergenerational relationships and consider the adult Christians' life the 'axis' around which they youth can revolve. Such witness and adult relationships with the youth will have deep implications on their faith development. Besides, the YM programs with positive approach to youth will prepare them to unite in the midst of diversity of the youth situations, with self-respect and dignity.

In most of the dioceses there exists, or in the process of development, an organic YPP with rich elements that can enable its growth. Its essential elements must consist of a precise educational planning in respect to the youth reality, present in the dioceses; launching or increase of diocesans organisms, of co-ordination and of sharing; comparison with the continual change of the juvenile world in the context of cultural and religious pluralism; reflection and verification of the projective lines with their impact with the praxis. Here, we present therefore, certain criteria for YPP for the dioceses/regions, objectively directed, taking into consideration the present perspectives¹⁹ with the cultural presuppositions, and lead towards certain criteria, methods and practical orientations.

4.1. Holistic Hermeneutical-Theological approach to YM

Youth ministry, as a theological discipline, is to discern God's activity with, for and among young people. Youth ministry serves as a "hermeneutical agency to help the youth discern God's working in their lives and reflect on their lives what God's plans could be for them."²⁰ YM has to be contextual by reflecting on the needs and context of each young person. It calls for reaching out to the unchurched youth and those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Besides being interested in the spiritual and religious growth of the youth, YM should be a pastoral

¹⁹ See my previous article on, *A Renewed YPP*, in "Kristu Jyoti" 26(2010)2 and 26(2010)3.

²⁰ Garth Aziz., *Youth ministry as an agent for reconciliation in the breakdown of coloured families, from urban communities in Cape Town: A post-apartheid perspective*, in *The South African Baptist Journal of Theology* (2, September, 2014), p. 13.

apostolate in the lived realities of the youth and function as a “descriptive agency”²¹ that is informed by its mission i.e. “God revealing himself to people.”²² A descriptive youth ministry begins in the context of young people, and with youth animators listening to their need stories. Contemporary youth ministry, however, should recognise a more holistic approach to and with the youth, who become active agents to contribute to the Church and society. It is, therefore, important to clarify the objective of the contemporary youth ministry as one that seeks to understand God’s action with and through the youth.²³

4.2. A Synodal Church that listens to the Youth

The young people desire for ‘authenticity’ in the Church. The Synod document states: “The youth help to enrich what the Church is, and not only what she does. They are her present and not only her future” (YS 54). While highlighting the spiritual and religious experiences of the youth, the document encourages them to encounter God, instead of living a morally relativistic life or choosing other “forms of alternative religiosity.” On a different ecclesiology- “synodal Church”²⁴- , the synod showcases a Church which listens, “walks with” people, gives women a role in decision making process following the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. This synodal “path”, is treaded by listening, welcoming and engaging the young in a “common discernment”. The “missionary synodality” is all the more highlighted with a focus on the most vulnerable, the poor and those outside the parish communities. This requires a mutual listening where the ‘People of God’ lead the way and young people become “co-responsible” in the mission to bring the Gospel to emerging generations.

A young Church as an icon of resurrection reaches out and walks with all the young in their journey towards spiritual, pastoral and missionary conversion (YS 115-118). This calls for a Missionary Synodality of the Church which becomes a constitutive dynamism, continuing the walk together, making it a participatory and co-responsible Church that involves in a joint process of discernment (YS 119-124). This Missionary communion in dialogue that reaches towards the peripheries of the world, becomes the style of the mission (YS 125-127). Through daily renewal of the parish community, together we move from structures to relationships, from delegation to involvement (YS 128-130). The life of the community consists of the mosaic of faces, built on Kerygma, catechesis, liturgy and *diakonia* (YS 131-137). Youth Ministry, then is seen, from a vocational perspective (YS 138-143) within the Church, that is, a home for the young, through vocational animation for the young, helping them grow towards

²¹ Cf. Garth Aziz, *Toward a contemporary understanding of youth ministry as a descriptive agency*, 2019, In die Skriflig 53(1), a2403. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v53i1.2403>, 26.3.2019.

²² Cf. A. Root, *Regulating the empirical in practical theology on critical realism, divine action, and the place of the ministerial*, in Journal of Youth and Theology 15(2016)1, p. 59, <https://doi.org/10.1163/24055093-01501007>, 26.3.2019.

²³ Cf. Garth Aziz, *Toward a contemporary understanding of youth ministry as a descriptive agency*, op.cit., p. 3.

²⁴ The only single footnote in the Document on the Synod on Youth makes reference to the source of the term ‘Synodal Church’ and illustrates the nature of synodality. It cites from: International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, 2 March 2018, n.9.

integrated self through fruitful relationship between events and daily life (Groups, movements, Youth Centres, etc.).

A Church that does not listen to the youth cannot be credible. Their questions challenge us, their criticism is necessary. The Church has to listen to young people, take them seriously, recognize and acknowledge them as full members, patiently walk with them and guide as they discern their vocation to live their life and faith. Such 'listening' extends to all people including women in order to renew communities and structures for a "synodal Church" where all members listen to, support and challenge one another and share responsibility for the Church's mission of spreading the Gospel. Through friendship and mutual listening, without paternalism and going beyond faith content, youth are to be helped to live a personal relationship with God and participate actively in the celebration of the sacraments. Besides, it is time to stop *doing* things "for young people," rather do everything with them.

4.3. Youth to rejuvenate the Church

Open to the Holy Spirit for a new Pentecost (YS 59-62), the youth are invited to have an authentic experience of God and in turn rejuvenate the Church. As the gift to the Church, the wounded youth in their healthy restlessness, gazing at Young Jesus, become adult (YS 68-72) and involve themselves in the mission with authority, dialogue and strong family bonds (YS 63-67). They are called to responsorial freedom (YS 73-76) with faith in the Gospel, making a vocational journey of discovery within a vocation culture in the world that comprises of various charisms (YS 77-80) as they follow Jesus (YS 81-83) as true disciples, as a consecrated, or ordained or single, imitating the Virgin Mary (YS 84-90). The Church accompanies (YS 91-94) either as groups or individuals in their entry into society (YS 95-100). This community-spiritual-integral accompaniment continues during formation for the ordained ministry and consecrated life, helping them to reconcile themselves with God and the world. This calls for quality accompaniers for their formation (YS 101-103). The Church, then, becomes a conducive environment for discernment through the Word and Sacraments for the formation of conscience (YS 104-105) as God speaks to the heart (YS 106-109). Through familiarity with the Lord and through attitudes of the heart, the discernment process leads one to decision and confirmation through dialogue (YS 110-114).

5. Objectives for the Youth Pastoral Plan

Following the above main need-based orientations given by the Synod on Youth, the specific objective for India is the maturation of youth in faith²⁵ to the point of being 'witness' of the universal love, harmony and peace of Christ (GS 19, 20), according to the proposal of the Gospel and with radical root into one's own culture.

²⁵ With priority, faith formation of youth has been the repeated 'slogan' of the Church in India. Cf. Catholic Council Of India (CCI), *Final Statement of the 10th General Body Meeting 12, 2010 January -9, Nagpur*, in CBCI Office For Youth, *ICYM Directory 2013* (3rd edition), CBCI Centre p. 119 ; CCBI Commission for Youth, *Guidelines for Youth Commission*, CCBI Secretariat, Bengaluru 2018, pp. 7-11.

These can be realized by putting the Good News in action with accurate analysis and judgment, ethical and religious values, and motivated interest in evangelizing life. In the context of the religious and cultural pluralism of India, this comes about through inculturation, integration of faith-life and the interreligious and inter-culture dialogue, harmony and peace. Thus, the youth are led to be conscious and to engage themselves with the conviction that they are called to build the future of the human society.

Being minority in a multiethnic and multireligious country means 'fighting' continually in order to affirm the identity as citizens and as Christians as equal to the Hindus and Muslims and other religious groups. Without a profound engagement of interreligious dialogue, peace and harmony, the violence against the Christians will increase. It will be encouraging to see the Christian youth always in a peaceful co-habitation with other young people, majority of who are forbearing and hospitable through reciprocal dialogue and friendship. For the recognition of a better role of the Christians, the young people have the duty to incarnate the evangelical values through identification with the poor, tolerance, justice for the repressed and the human dignity of the underprivileged. In this way, they could give witness to their faith in a society that lives with contradictory and inadequate values.

Lastly, these following three constants are important for the youth animators who wish to improve the quality of the YM: listening to young people not just as a formative act, but as a basic attitude of educators and youth 'accompaniers' (YS 101-103); relationships as the key to a truly missionary YM, one that is capable of going beyond the limits of its own structures (YS 128-130; also 32-36); building *synergy* to move from the desire to network to a real pastoral convergence on the unity of the person through vocational discernment and a mission-oriented youth spirituality. Additionally, stress is to be given, especially for those interested in pastoral work, on the necessity of allowing themselves to be formed by personally being challenged by young people who are very demanding with regard to adults, and sensitive to the least sign of incoherence and falsity. For this reason, Church leaders and youth animators must be ready to question themselves every day, ever ready for personal and pastoral conversion.

We can, therefore, formulate the above numerous needful urgencies into the following objectives:

- To *accompany* the youth in all dimensions of their daily life and social commitments: personal, relational, economic, spiritual and educational, enabling them to discover their vocation and mission, through nurturing of faith and vocational discernment. (Schools, universities or civil and ecclesial institutions to contribute to young people's formation in vocational discernment.)
- To *acknowledge* and accept young people as agents in the Church, which in turn acts as a 'responsible community' offering them space and to utilize available and adaptable resources that help deepen their journey: social media, art, music, sports, literature, drama, etc.
- To *give priority to formation in youth ministry* (YS 157-162) at all levels, in order to promote growth in the passion for *education and evangelisation*, and *co-responsibility* in the educational mission.

- To *animate* so that the Diocese/Provinces/Regions may promote, in a more systematic way, a *youth ministry that is missionary and vocational* so that the young people may meet Jesus in the experiences of life, and respond to God's project.
- To *motivate* the Diocese/Provinces/Regions to *give courageous response* to the *educative needs* of the poorest young people and to render our educational environments places for the promotion of the integral development of the person, and for *evangelisation through dialogue and solidarity* in view of a society that is more humane, harmonious, just and peaceful.
- To *accompany* the Diocese/Provinces/Regions so that the educating parish/local communities may have a *holistic vision of the Youth Ministry* in order to be able to respond to the current challenges of education, employment, migration and *empowerment* of youth.

6. Five Year YM Plan with Selected Focus of Attention

An oriented model plan is put before the dioceses with the above selected objectives directed towards a pointed focus and with the conviction that they can be improved, towards empowerment of youth, intercultural and intergenerational dialogue, peace and harmony. There is certain demand to make YPP more organic, especially in the reaffirmation of the same urgencies expressed by the CBCI and the Bishops of Asia as well (cf. EA 21, 22, 30, 31, 47).

The following proposal, therefore, is not an experiment on the field, but a selective choice for the encoded tentative plan which needs to be adapted according to place and context. Based on the concerned YPP and implicitly translating the Synod document on Youth, and of the human sciences into action, it tries to point towards integration as an element central to the pedagogy of faith just in virtue of the fact that it is an objective end for each authentic faith journey.

Vocational discernment, accompaniment through patient listening, digitization, technological development, demographics, global warming, migration and sexuality being themes dear to the present Catholic Church, they will have to be given priority by the national youth policy in keeping with the Indian context. The YPP in the coming five-year period has to be in continuity with the previous five-year (if exists any), at the same time, it will consider the priorities indicated by the Church in India in general, by listening and accompanying the youth.

It is in the light of the universal Church that we want to animate the Youth. The previous YPP of the Church in India (1996) had already defined well the figure, structures²⁶ at the national, diocesan and parish levels and the duty of those directly involved in YM (Youth delegate/director/council). Here instead we wish to proceed further to state that they will:

²⁶ Cf. CBCI Commission for Youth, *A Plan for Youth Ministry in India*, op.cit, nn. 31-37.

- animate the apostolic activity of the diocese/region in its various forms, always in fidelity to Church priority and with the needs of young people in mind;
- offer guidance and accompaniment, so that in every diocese/province true “educating communities” may be formed, which, in the spirit of dialogue, harmony and peace, will promote the integral formation of youth through vocational discernment in a way which will enable them to become apostles in the Church and in society.

With reference to the Five-year Plan, we have come to identify the Youth Ministry’s (YM) focuses of attention. In this Five-year period we will consider some vital aspects that emerged in recent synod document on youth (YS) and proposals given by the CBCI:

- to *listen* to young people and consider them ‘*stakeholders*’ in the Church;
- to learn the art of forming the youth, seek *employment and empower* them;
- to be confronted by the *challenges* coming from the young in this digital world and their situations especially the *poor youth*;
- to recognise that *young people* are the ‘present’ and ‘future’ of the Church and of the society and work ‘*with*’ them;
- *accompaniment and encounter* with the young as an *experience* of communion in the Synodal Church (YS 118).

In keeping with the Five Year Plan we shall consider seriously the *report on the life of the young* in the Church, the *evaluation of the YM* after its five year term and *dialogue* with young people of other faith in view of the mission to establish the Kingdom of peace and harmony.

7. Youth Reality: the need for a socio-cultural analysis

With 72% of the nation under 40 years of age²⁷, 66% under 35 years²⁸ and 47% under the age of 20, the youth of the nation today has important significance in our present strategies and future orientations. Amidst the population of 1.17 billion, the youth, the most dynamic section of society under the age of 35 in the country is almost 780 million (12% of world population). The 460 million Indians today are between 13 and 35 years of age and 333 million of them are literate. The 64% of people will be in the working age group and with an average age of 29, India will be the World’s youngest country by 2020.²⁹ Of the world’s 620 million economically active youth, 81 million were out of work by the end of 2009 (The International Labour Organization, An ILO Report). The 18% of the world’s population are youth. Nearly 87% of them live in developing countries, with limited access to resources,

²⁷ Cf. <http://www.yionline.org/youthindia.html>, 23.3.2019

²⁸ Cf. <http://www.youthportal.gov.in/statistics/demographicdetails.htm>, 23.3.2019

²⁹ Cf. Taranjith Singh Sandhu, *Financial Express*, 26 March 2017, cited in, Valan C. Antony, editorial, “Vidyajyoti” 83(2019)3, p.6.

health care, education, training, employment and other economic opportunities. The UN has focused on three objectives – increasing commitment and investment in youth; raising youth participation and partnerships; and boosting inter-cultural understanding among youth.³⁰ The Church's YM needs to support this move.

The time today demands for focus on policies that would keep development of the young people as the priority and carry them forward. Indian Church's potential for growth is determined by its policies for its youth. India will have the demographic advantage with a majority young force and the human resources for growth. If not nurtured well, they can be the greatest threat as well. If marginalized, these disadvantaged youth can distant themselves from the Church and society, and turn to anti-social activities.

The 73-year-old Cardinal Oswald Gracias who attended the Synod on Youth in the presence of 36 young people from all continents, says that the Church in India plans to adapt the synod process in the Church in India - the country with 600 million under the age of 25 - the largest number of young people in the world. In general, in the coming years, India will have the maximum number of youth. With an average age of 29 years by 2020, Indians will be in a better position to take advantage of the Indian economic progress. But, we observe contradictory pictures of youth situation when it comes to basic questions of: identity, relationship, purpose and destiny. In the multicultural and multireligious context youth have to discover their authentic self within the family and community social structures; feel belonged to and accepted and loved in families, in local church communities and in the society; have a clear reason for existence with a mission; and know for sure where one is destined for in life here and now, and in faith in an eternal God.

As different people and traditions are coming closer in the world, the young people need to “learn how to listen intently, empathize with others, acknowledge divergent opinions, and be able to resolve conflicts” (Mr. Ban, UN).³¹ To be able to do so, the YM has to study socio-cultural settings in which the youth find themselves. Being actively involved in education at all levels, the Church can be a major player in their formation. What is needed today is a Church which knows how to respond to the expectations of young people.

Sadly, as Percival Holt says, today young people prefer seeking assistance from the laity than consecrated people/clergy. The urban young people are easily drawn towards: fast money, corporate culture, western lifestyle, addictions and sexual relationships. Whereas there is still lack of education, poverty, oppression, anti-social practices in the rural youth. The youth of today are disturbed, a time timid, coward and

³⁰ The UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), meanwhile, announced that it will make grants to 51 projects proposed by youth people from 31 countries. The grants will be drawn from the Programme's Urban Youth Fund, which awards funding amounting to \$1 million each year. The UN first marked the International Year of Youth in 1985. A decade later, the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth, setting a policy framework and guidelines for national action and international support to improve the situation of young people. - www.un.org, 12.20102.

³¹ *Secretary-General's message on International Youth Day*, 12 August, 2010, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2010-08-12/secretary-generals-message-international-youth-day>, 26.3.2019.

selfish, and have broken relationships. They cheat, hurt & hide from self and others.³² In the midst of political turmoil, corruption & communal disharmony, there is further competition in education and career, which lead youth to migrate to other places and countries.

Not all youth are the same in all regions. At the same time it seems youth are seeking, searching, groping, yearning and pondering within the reality of emotional upheavals, peer-pressure, authority-defiance, contrasting ideologies, conflicting solutions, visual media impact, cheap literature, etc. The sufferings of the rural youth are doubled by class-caste, discriminations, employment, crisis and despair resulting in indiscipline while urban youth are into ambitions, one-upmanship, values/spirituality crises, bad company and drugs abuse. But both the groups suffer from severe identity crisis. It is in this context that the youth will have to discover a meaning for their life, a sense of purpose, identity and sense belonging, coupled with the desire to conform to traditions, customs and practices.

Youth groups of various kinds have been attempting to help youngsters face the challenges and find meaning to their lives. ICYM, Jesus Youth, CCBI commission for youth, religious congregations' youth wings, AICUF, YCS\YSM (Young Christian Students & Young Students' Movement) and other Catholic youth groups must strongly root themselves in a close relationship with Jesus and get involved in the local socio-cultural and justice issues in an organized and collective manner.

In the above global and the local Indian contexts, an YPP that wishes to walk in the path of Synod Fathers and all the faithful - the synodal Church – it needs to analyse the situation from social, religious, environmental, communitarian and organizational perspective, to characterise the needs that emerge and the objective that it must achieve progressively at all the levels through its contents, experiences, tools and adequate means. There is the necessity of an YPP that answers to the demands of the culture and of its history at the beginning of the third millennium marked with the telematic innovation, globalisation, interculture and inculturation of the Word of God in the midst of ethnic and communal unrest and violence; amplify the faith and the culture in order to touch deeper into the souls of the young people with the announcement of the Word of God in the context of the Indian Church; chart out projective actions than deepening systematically the arguments for inculturized YPP; revitalise and encourage the plan with an ability to study the situation in which the young people live, aiming on more important needs and facilitating the integral maturation of the youth.

With the increase of education and income, the life-style of the youth has changed. The Church in India needs to create avenues for young people to make a positive contribution to the Church and society through active citizenship, inter-cultural understanding and social solidarity, in order to ensure equitable development, justice, peace and social cohesion.

³² Cf. Percival Holt, *National Youth President, of the Indian Catholic Youth Movement [ICYM] – Conference of Catholic Bishops of India [CCBI] (India)*, op.cit., <https://zenit.org/articles/synod2018-testimony-of-percival-holt-indian-catholic-youth-movement/>, 4.3.2019.

The All India Survey conducted by the AICYM on Indian catholic youth highlights some of the major concerns of the youth: poverty, migration, proper education facilities, gainful employment, social upheaval, political instability and environmental degradation. These are compounded in the context of economic globalization. The lack of basic infrastructure, finances, technology, networking and exposure hinder the effectiveness of youth and their pastoral care. The survey results on the fact that the youth need to be encouraged: to form social forums and to participate actively in political activities; to promote forum for dialogue and cooperation among the youth-related activities and organizations within and outside the church. In the multi-religious context of the country, they are to be motivated to be channels of interreligious dialogue, of peace and harmony.

“Young people are our biggest asset and greatest hope,” says Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the CBCI first vice president.³³ The apex body of the Catholic Church in India in the past focused on other pastoral issues and had ignored the youth. Now the Church realizes the need to involve youth who form an integral part of the collective Catholic population, and who are “highly talented, generous, committed, patient and idealistic”, in their activities. In the midst of widely infested corruption only the youth can bring probity in public life. These youth need to be helped to translate their ideals into action, participate in the Church’s activities, energize liturgies and render services.

A ‘paradigm shift’ in modern youth’s world view is noted. They are now less involved in social causes, often are silent and self-centered. They are ‘easy prey’ to consumer values and ‘a hedonistic outlook on life.’ In this crucial context the youth need to remain rooted in their Christian identity and culture, and not bring in corrosion of “their Christian perspectives on faith and morals.” Therefore, there is the need for new evangelization to help young people discover God and engage in interreligious activities, encouraging them to get involved in a dialogue of life.³⁴

Globalization, which has contributed to an economic resurgence with opportunities and possibilities, has made negative impact on the poor marginalized young people, with increased levels of poverty and unemployment; and spiritual, cultural and political unrest.³⁵ The rural youth migrating to towns and cities, away from their family, face exploitive and degrading situations. Therefore, we find the young within a new situation. This too can be said in regards to their religious faith experience.

8. Youth Ministry in the Present: Challenges and Responsibility

“Youth ministry is the response of the Christian community to the needs of young people and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger

³³ Cf. *India - Bishops told to involve youth more in Church*, Guwahati, India (UCAN), February 25, 2010.

³⁴ The previous YPP (1996) speaks of a dialogue of life, a dialogue of action, a dialogue of religious experience and a dialogue of prayer. Cf. CBCI Commission for Youth, *A Plan for Youth Ministry*, op.cit., no. 71, p.20.

³⁵ Cf. CBCI, *Statement of the 29th CBCI General Body Meeting “Youth for Peace and Harmony”*, p.4.

community”³⁶. To address the complex reality of youth issues, it has to be comprehensive including different dimensions: catechesis, prayer, community life, pastoral care, justice, service, leadership, empowerment, advocacy and evangelization. Youth Ministry is *to-with-by-for* youth wherein the Youth Minister advocates youth’s legitimate concerns.³⁷ The active National Youth Commission with its regional centres, numerous youth specific institutions like colleges, training institutes, schools, etc., and ICYM and other organizations, is trying to focus on the above dimensions but fails to reach out to *all* (unorganised inclusive) youth within the Catholic fold. For many youth the Eucharist celebration is monotonous; Church does not show enough interest in them; Youth Masses, seminars, youth camps are denied; they are not being heard; physical spaces within the Church setting and time, are not given to them; strong-spirited youth leaders are avoided. About 10% of youth participate actively in most of the parish organisations.

The youth culture with new values and new criteria for living has changed profoundly along with society and the Church; the traditional settings for the transmission of culture and religion (family, school, Church) are weakened. Christian and secular education, and the pastoral activities are constantly changing. It is not possible, then, to limit ourselves to small modifications to our traditional praxis. Therefore, this is an urgent need to design a ‘new’ presence among the young, a ‘new evangelization’, a ‘new education’, and a ‘new model’.³⁸

YM is a challenge and responsibility for the Church, that finds difficult to provide relevant guidance to the youth who have a fashion for sports, arts, media, new technologies, fun, adventure, relationships, idealism, creativity, great dreams and ‘*experience this moment*’ trend. Such trends are significant to the Church, society, and politics. It is up to the Church to listen to the promptings of God’s Spirit and face the challenges of the contemporary young generation.

In the light of the current youth situation the need was felt to have a complete overall view, and to bring together, in a structured and shared synthesis, the fundamental guidelines so as to facilitate and provide directives for a renewed youth pastoral plan. The CBCI Commission for Youth has been trying to respond to this need by offering the Church in India a manual for youth work, with guidelines of a youth pastoral model.³⁹

³⁶ US Catholic Bishops Conference, *Renewing the vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, RTV, 1997, p1.

³⁷ Cf. *A Vision of Youth Ministry*, United States Catholic Conference, Department of Education 1986, pp. 6-7.

³⁸ Cf. Paschal Chavez, *Acts of the General Council*, Salesian Generalate, Pisana, Rome 2010, no. 407; *Chávez writes a letter to the Salesians on Youth Ministry*, (ANS – Rome), 7.5.2010.

³⁹ There already exists a Plan for Youth Ministry in India with the Supplement Guidelines, published in 1996, having all the major concerns raised by the CBCI meet on the Youth (2010). An Evaluative Research Study (2000) was done by me on the two diocesan YPP (Krishnagar, Kolkata) in the light of this National Youth Pastoral Plan in the multi-cultural and pluri-religious context of India. Cf. Soroj Mullick, *Youth Pastoral Plan in the dioceses of Calcutta and Krishnagar (West Bengal). An Evaluation, in the context of cultural and religious pluralism*, (original in Italian), an unpublished Thesis for Licentiate in Theology with specialization in Catechetics and Youth Pastoral, UPS, Rome 2000.

A number of approaches⁴⁰: befriending, faith formation, counselling, life skills, group work, service learning, mentoring, accompanying, family peace mediation, parenting talks, volunteer training, outdoor adventure, sports/recreational activities, seminars and camps, have been tried out in the past. Such mentoring is integral to Church's mission for the young. But the question still remains: How do we reveal Jesus Christ, God-made-man, to this multitude of young people? "How are we to enable them to know the meaning, the import, the fundamental requirements, the law of love, the promises and the hopes of this Kingdom?" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 35).

As Jesus took the initiative to animate the disciples on the way to Emmaus, so too the Church leaders and youth animators resolved to take the initiative to encounter and witness Jesus in the life of the young. To this end, the CBCI Youth Council stated:

"We understand the confused and inconsistent situation of youth and we will strive to accompany them, to rise above the divisive tendencies based on caste and language and help them to develop a culture of tolerance and cooperation. We will endeavour to achieve holistic and integral growth of youth and inspire them to be achievers, by reaching out, to empower, correct, appreciate and spare more time for them. We attend to their problems individually through dialogue. Being compassionate to them, we shall suffer with them by changing ourselves and set an example for them to follow."⁴¹

The Youth Council collectively resolved to implement the following strategic plan and vision for 2015-2017 in collaboration with CRI and Education Commissions: promote Career Advancement Program (CAP) in order to empower the youth with clear vision and mission; foster political leaders, people in the judiciary, civil servants, professionals, entrepreneurs, scientific farmers and allied services and mould the character. It also planned a *Yuvagram* with skill based training programs and promote youth action along with *Volunteerism*.

YM is a process through which the youth are first welcomed to the community, meeting them where they are; challenge them and form them through Psychology, group dynamics, Word of God, teachings of the Church; and commission them for the Kingdom. This is an integrated approach, active and sensitive to gender, culture, interest, education, etc. YM is a coordinated effort through dialogue and collaboration of various youth specific ministries in the Church (education, art, media, catechesis, social service, vocation, social concern, etc.). A secular youth approach with a broader outlook to YM will look out for the professionals, the artists, the talented ones and those in focused leadership, will care for the wider catholic youth in the wider society than just those who come to 'us'. Therefore, integrated approach is the holistic path for contemporary YM. Understanding of the 'unified and holistic nature' of the youth apostolate in a plurality of works, services and activities, is crucial at this juncture, in order to overcome a compartmentalised YM still frequently present. What

⁴⁰ Cf. Soroj Mullick, *The New Approach to Youth*, op.cit., pp. 105-120. See also, *Our Mission. Youth Guidance*. <http://youthguidance.org.sg/front.htm>, 23.3.2019.

⁴¹ The 6th CBCI Youth Council - ICYM National Consultation, June 9-10, 2015, KROSS, Bangalore, <https://www.icym.net/about-us/reports/1080-6th-cbci-youth-council-icym-national-consultation>, 22.3.2019

is required is a more systematic relationship of the various CBCI commissions along with that of the YM. An important strategy in this effort has been the promotion of regional groups with their delegates with regular meetings for assessment, study and planning. This has made it possible to guide the youth pastoral action of the individual dioceses along the lines set out in the national level planning. This has not been a success in all cases. The role of animation of the diocesan youth delegate and his team has been understood and appreciated better, for example, in the choice of the delegate, in the continuity of his service, in the assessment of its work to make it more active and effective. In some dioceses the position of the youth delegate needs to be strengthened further.

There exists certain creative openness to the new youth frontiers, above all to the new and old forms of poverty, skill-training, vocational career oriented approaches and working conditions (non-formal education for drop-outs, job oriented and income-generating activities etc.), to the world of youth groups and to the new forms of expression (music, media, theatre, travel etc.). On the other hand, except a few individual groups, the area of youth spirituality is quite often neglected. There is difficulty in coordinating the more traditional and organised presences such as the schools, parishes, with the new youth presences (e.g. migrant youth), Church-dropouts and unorganized youth activities.

There lacks a renewed sensitivity to a more *educative and evangelising quality* to the youth pastoral project, by means of a re-think of a uniform policy in order to adapt it to the new challenges. Practical plans and procedures have not been drawn up still in order to make the youth apostolate more missionary, which is, witnessing and proclaiming the Gospel. “The Synod singled out young people in particular as those for whom [the Church] should provide greater opportunity for fellowship and communion [...] by means of organized youth apostolates and youth clubs” (EA 25). Contemporary YM needs to focus on some urgent issues: migration, media culture, vocation/professions and careers, social concern & service, public presence and secular leadership, education, politics, management, technology, research, healthcare with Christian mindset. The Church has to watch and take note of the youth cultures and have a plan of interaction on this “reading the signs of the times” (Lk 16:1). “The Christian formation of young people in Asia should recognize that they are not only the object of the Church’s pastoral care but also ‘agents and co-workers in the Church’s mission in her various apostolic works of love and service’” (EA 47).

9. An Inculturized YPP as a Response to the New Situation

Along with the traditional educational agencies “new presences” emerge, which can transmit values to the young, especially towards holistic peace and harmony through vocational discernment and missionary discipleship. There are also new possibilities for formation and involvement towards such similar goal. A progressively secularised environment with discord and distrust presents new challenges to the marginalized youth and open the way to new opportunities for the integral education

towards holiness, peace and unity. This calls for new approaches⁴² in order to encounter the young. These ‘new presences’ require a new educative and pastoral approach, a new relationship with the Church and non-Church communities. Therefore, the dioceses need to renew their own presences and make them more significant (e.g. Schools, Vocational Training Centres, Clubs, Associations, Cells, Family, Youth Centres, etc.) and seek out ‘new frontiers’.⁴³

The Church sees herself in the young. “The Church has so much to talk about with youth, and youth have so much to share with the Church. This mutual dialogue, by taking place with great cordiality, clarity and courage, will provide a favourable setting for the meeting and exchange between generations, and will be a source of richness and youthfulness for the Church and civil society” (*Christifidelis Laici*, 46). The difficulty consists, on the part of the clergy, due to over-clericalism, in assuming this important role of pastoral animation, which cannot be reduced to organising some activities “for youth”, or coordinating some events or areas. Instead, they need to accompany the local communities in their efforts to put into use the YPP, overcoming the tendency to compartmentalise, while growing in the joint-planning mentality and in the community dimension of the youth apostolate. The youth director, with the collaboration of the team, ought to coordinate all the areas of the youth activities of the region, ensuring that in each of them there are all the fundamental dimensions of the YM along with socio-political awareness. This requires a full-time director with the ability to be in contact with the local communities and in close connection in pastoral animation with the governing body/representatives of the diocese and parishes.

The structural plan laid out in the YPP (1996) was not easy to understand, and especially to put into practice in some places, where it took a long time to assimilate and implement the YPP. It has been seen that the dioceses which depended on a team for pastoral animation, managed to set up such structure on the basis of the renewed criteria, supported by a Diocesan Pastoral Council which devoted time to pastoral reflection, and continuous dialogue and an exchange of ideas with the department/commission and other intermediate bodies of animation.⁴⁴ In fact, they make progress in developing an YM which is energetic, meaningful and corresponds to the new situations.

The present system and existing ‘content’ of YM, cannot achieve its purposes as proposed by the recent Synod on Youth, in the multireligious and multicultural context of India. The result of the analysis and the verification of the plans with its

⁴² The approaches suggested by the Pre-Synodal Document were interpreted by me in a previous article. Cf. Soroj Mullick, *The New Approach to Youth*, op.cit. pp. 105-120.

⁴³ For knowing more about the ‘new frontiers’, cf. Soroj Mullick, *New Frontiers in the World Mission, Church’s Creative Evangelizing Activity*, in “Indian Theological Studies” 46(2009)4, pp. 109-125.

⁴⁴ The Archdiocese of Calcutta has come up with an integrated Pastoral Plan (2018-2022) with some goals for the YM e.g. have a youth centre built; raise fund for YM; see to spiritual, human and academic growth through education, compulsory catechesis, sex-education and counselling; make Church more attractive to youth and make parish premises available to them without discrimination; empower them in the Church activities, skill them for employment; and involve them in community services. Cf. Archdiocese of Calcutta, *Pastoral Plan (2018-2022)*, Archbishop’s House, 2017, pp. 89-98.

said content, necessarily require a dual fidelity to the evangelical message and to the recipient in the 'place' and in the 'daily life' of the young people.

Claiming to do the plans in the western-European style is to condemn the Christian young people to the superficiality and then betray the mission of the Church in India. One needs to evangelise the juvenile culture in Indian soil through an 'incarnated' YPP. It, therefore, proceeds from the doctrinal learning to a remarkable and expressive planning of evangelisation inclusive of the principal aspects of the life of the young and help the educators of the young people to bring their capacity of animation towards their maturation of faith. Some areas of the youth world are still to be evangelised: social, spiritual, religious, political, professional, cultural life, etc.

10. Towards a Progressive Development and Articulation of YPP

Effort is being made to study and clarify the fundamental elements of the YPP in the context of the religio-cultural pluralism, offering practical suggestions, in order to provide pastoral action-plan for the youth according to the indications given at the CBCI meet (2010). Through these guidelines, the CCBI commission for youth enabled the regions to come to know, take up and develop in their own concrete situation the central lines of the model for youth apostolate as something unified and structured. This effort of systematic all-round reflection, formation and communication started in 1996, was followed up in the dioceses in a very haphazard way. Others continued with the previous model, sometimes only changing a few names. Difficulty is faced by such conservative groups in taking on board the new mentality and renewing their daily praxis.

The area of youth apostolate needs a further serious examination of its structure and of its operating method. After a long period the youth has been given a lot of general encouragement but not the innovative, decisive and operative structural impetus, with the allocation of the necessary personnel, means and directives as it had been deliberated in a unified, structured and practical NYPP (1996). For example, the fundamental lines of a process of education to the faith which corresponds to the complex youth situation in its various expressions, fail to achieve in practice the synthesis between education and evangelization till date. This shows that the NYPP so meticulously drawn up, has not been implemented fully. It already presents, in a dynamic and progressive form, the central elements of the four areas/dimensions of the process of holistic development of the youth, areas which correspond perfectly with the four dimensions of the educative-pastoral project: human maturity; an encounter with Jesus Christ; belonging to the Church; a commitment for the Kingdom.⁴⁵ The existing NYPP develops the values of Indian youth spirituality which, as a distinctive plan of Christian life and a path of holiness, constitutes the goal and the inspiration which ought to guide and support the whole process of education to the faith. It is through this that peace and harmony are sought for, based on inter-faith dialogue with life.

A well planned pastoral animation of the youth at the diocesan and regional level fosters and promotes the structural unity of the various aspect of the pastoral

⁴⁵ Cf. CBCI Commission for Youth, *A Plan for Youth Ministry in India*, nn. 10-24.

work; gives vocational guidance as a characteristic element of the process; gives importance to social communication as the current process and method of evangelisation. The limited formation of the animators makes these plans quite ineffective. Contrary to the dependence on the clerical structure, a novelty stems from the involvement of the laity and their Christian experiences into youth pastoral activities as volunteers and full time collaborators, through involvement in the mission, from practical help to very real co-responsibility, from relationships which were mainly formal to individual and group interpersonal communication.

The YPP starts progressively, setting itself in the required direction according to the present needs of the young people keeping the challenges of "inculturation of the gospel" in mind, particularly, that which involves the intercultural and interreligious dialogue and involvement for peace and harmony. If the finality of the YM is the maturation of the faith and the human promotion of the young people, the YPP has to enter into mutual dialogue between faith and life. This is the main service to fit young people, in order to resolve their crisis of faith, motivating them to undertake responsibility effectively in the Church and in the society.

Here, we propose a blueprint of the structure, the generalities and other important elements of an ideal YPP with a distinctive attention to the dimensions: anthropological, ecclesiological, theological-pastoral and educational implicitly expressed through the criteria, methods and lines of action.

Based on the available studies - scientific and magisterial- we present an ideal model of YPP in Indian context with an outline of a composite structure with the following indications: objectives, contents and methods, action plans, techniques and tools for evaluation. This 'grass root model' will help to develop the needed YPP further. It will presume the theological pastoral, socio-cultural, ecclesial and educational foundations, followed by general and specific objectives based on certain criteria and with a methodology of 'future vision,' as a point of reference, for projecting the YPP.

The last part will try to evaluate all those means and methods of the YPP and its execution. The critical evaluation of the YPP will be realized in relation to the given success indicators: cultural and religious presuppositions, social conditions, criteria of evangelisation, inculturation, missionary spirit, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, peace and harmony, coherence among goals, aims, methodological orientations and the action plans. This way one establishes the validity of the plan, its agility for the redefinition in the context of the cultural and religious pluralism, inspiring to the values, to the goals and to the aims selected and impersonated, trying to point out the following developments for the re-launching of the YPP.

11. Quality of the YM: Not 'for' Youth but 'with' youth

Since 1995 we saw a development which was mainly structurally expansive in character. This was required particularly on account of the new beginning of a systematic move towards consolidation of the YPP, the emerging social needs, the growing involvement of lay people etc. Because of this, there was an increase in the appointment of personnel in YM and a multiplication of youth departments and its

activities at the diocesan and at the regional levels. Often this expansion led to a certain loss of quality in working for the youth in the local communities, weakened and burdened by organisational and management tasks.

Now the time has come to improve the quality of the youth pastoral activity. Such quality is a necessary condition for making an impact and also for improving the quantity as well. Therefore, YM needs to concentrate on these areas: *not being content with* 'keeping the youth amused' or keeping administrative or management control of the activities; concentrating on the objective of developing human maturity, and of education to the faith, leading young people to a personal encounter with Jesus; educating to a sense of life as a vocation and to a life of generous commitment towards peace and harmony; *developing the educational and religious dimension* with personal conviction; involving with more co-responsibility and *better preparation* all those carrying out the apostolate with enthusiasm and dynamism: the parish communities, lay collaborators, youth leaders, etc.

The first priority of the Church in India is faith formation with special attention to youth.⁴⁶ With the challenges of cultural and religious pluralism a qualified Youth Pastoral Plan would work towards a Vision: maturation of faith in the young until to the point of being "testimony" on the universal love of Christ, according to the Gospel values and with a radical root in one's own culture, through an inter-religious dialogue in peace and harmony. Its objectives would be: to mature in the faith and the human promotion of the young people through peaceful living, based on inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue through an inculturized YM; to be conscious and to engage themselves with the conviction that they are called to build the future of the human society.

Being minority in a multiethnic and multireligious country means "fighting" continually in order to affirm the identity as citizens and as Christians as equal to the Hindus and Muslims and other religious groups. Without a profound engagement of interreligious dialogue the violence against the Christians will increase. It will be encouraging to see the Christian young people always in a peaceful co-habitation with other young people, majority of whom are forbearing and hospitable through reciprocal dialogue and friendship. For the recognition of a better role of the Christians, the young people have the duty to incarnate the evangelical values through identification with the poor, tolerance, justice for the repressed and the human dignity of the underprivileged. In this way they could give testimony of faith in a society that lives of contradictory and inadequate values.

Here are the success measures of a consolidated YM in India that can bring in peace and harmony. The end result should be: *an integral development of faith and life of the young*; a more youthful and human Church; a humbler Church in close relation with other religions; a less clerical Church and more of a Synodal Church of the young laity; a more inclusive Church (truly Catholic); a more open Church; a Church which finds unity in diversity; a Church which discovers its cultures/ traditions along with other communities; a Church which truly reflects the integral person and the universal values of Jesus. We can achieve this through the YM when the vision is

⁴⁶ Cf. CCBI, *Pastoral Plan for the Church in India*, CCBI Centre, Bangaluru, December 2013, nn. 25, 29.

to establish a *Dharmarajya* in India with: a Christian spirit of forgiveness and self-sacrifice; an Islamic body of discipline and fellowship; a Hindu-Bahai mind of unity in diversity and universality; a Sikh-Buddhist-Jain heart of courage, compassion and non-violence; a Parsi intellect of creativity; a Jewish will of indomitability; and a Tribal conscience of cosmic solidarity without neglecting any.

12. Criteria to consider for the YPP

The principal criteria of an YPP are those that emerge from the fundamental issues on the present youth situation, as mentioned in the recent Synod on Youth; and particularly in Indian context, the challenges of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, peace, harmony, and 'juvenile needs'. It will comprise of further research and suggestion, alternative possibilities, offering a deeper vision of life and to turn towards a positive outlook to the youth situation that can give hope and encouragement, and point out a direction to follow.

The elements around which the re-projection of the YPP in the dioceses/regions could revolve with the new proposals of the Church, considering the socio-cultural and socio-religious aspects for an inculturation and a better integration of faith-life of the young people, could be:

- ✓ to consider the real-life difficulties and immense problems faced by contemporary young Catholics, who often seem lost in space and more attuned to superficial, secular fads than to deep, spiritual yearnings
- ✓ identity and educational proposals for vocational discernment through the Youth Ministry, not forgetting the educational finalities: human promotion and maturation to the Christian life through listening and accompaniment of the young within certain structures, e.g. family, school and parish, etc.;
- ✓ individualisation of criteria for determining concrete multireligious and multicultural context, considering the four dimensions (anthropological, ecclesiological, theologico-pastoral and educational) and of education, employment, migration and empowerment of the young people;
- ✓ *Encountering God in Harmony* with concerns on: identity, generations, leadership, and culture of encounter and dialogue, each examined through the faith of youth expressed and faith engaged.
- ✓ evaluation of the dimensions of the plan, with reference to the values of education, culture, interreligious dialogue, inculturation, evangelisation, catechesis, associative proposal (ICYM, YCS, YSM, AICUF, JY, etc.), orientation and vocation;
- ✓ clarify the legal configuration of the Youth Ministry in the life of the Church; establish a precise institutional rule and the structure of animation of YM.

From what has been mentioned so far, there emerge the general structures for the re-projection of YPP. The process of its maturation could foresee the following:

- ✓ at the first level, it requires the absorption to institutional level of inspired charismatic beginnings of the ideal model of the proposed YM, so that they illuminate the bases of the interreligious, intercultural and intergenerational

- dialogue for peace and harmony, and help to identify the more greater cultural and religious challenges posed to the mission of the Church community;
- ✓ at the second level, it requires personal reflection of the destined protagonists and of the animators on the presented themes, and an awareness of the social and cultural reality so that the YM is inculturated in the living consciousness of intercultural and intergenerational dialogue among the subjects, respecting the culture of the other and the age differences;
 - ✓ a third level of exploration at zonal level, on the thematic issue and reflections of the juvenile reality, with the consciousness that the Holy Spirit continues to act in the history of the young people of that distinctive zone;
 - ✓ a fourth moment of condision in the assembly through forms and synthesis of the reflections in order to modify partly some operational orientations according to the demand of convalidation of the re-projected YM.

In order to make it effective, it would require an institutional task of editing or re-formulating the final document: the approval would take place in the assembly and the ratification from part of the competent persons; finally the verification and the re-projection would be realised in a given time. In the complexity of YM it could be asserted that the work of re-projection could be realized within the given period of time and with an adequate cultural and motivational attention of the persons involved.

The criteria for youth animation, for the meetings programmed with other sectors of Church's pastoral activities, for the central animation of the Diocesan youth ministry will be as follows:

- *Education and vocational discernment* of the young in cultural contexts characterised by complexity and pluralism, with dialogue and openness to the great ecclesial and national realities.
- *Accompaniment with* the preferential option for the poorest youth while opening up to frontiers of education, employment and empowerment of the young.
- *Formation of Youth Animators* in particular, the co-ordinators for YM and other members of the pastoral team for a shared and contextualised animation in order to create a functional network.
- *Continuity through a "process-mentality"*, that is, a gradual, systematic and inter-related concrete programs so that they may reach the local communities\parishes.
- *Co-ordination and synergy with* other sectors of Pastoral ministry (National, Inter-Regional, Diocesan and Local Council, in order to reach and strengthen the local communities.
- *Collaboration and inter-relation with the governmental and other secular Youth Departments* – for reflection on YM, for Schools/Youth Centres, Vocational training, and other possibilities.
- *Evaluation* – in order to identify opportunities and limitations in the YM.

13. A Christian YM in Socio-Religious Perspective

In order to work for unity, peace and harmony, the youth need to involve themselves in peoples' struggles for justice. Without justice, a kingdom of peace and harmony is only a distant dream. Such social involvement would entail inter-religious fellowship and dialogue, a community of young brothers and sisters who can live in harmony as human being. To carry out this plan of action there is the prior need of personal faith development of the young which is rooted in their own culture, with a sense of belonging to the nation and to the church.⁴⁷ In short, one has to involve in evangelization as a youth missionary within one's socio-cultural reality.

Therefore, Christian living through faith formation is one of many dimensions of youth ministry, which together form the basis of an integrated approach with the objectives: to empower and make young people live as disciples of Jesus; to lead young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Church; to foster a deeper personal and spiritual growth (cf. *NYPP* 77, 78, 44-46). Education to the faith helps the young expand their knowledge of the Scriptures and the traditions and their application to life through prayer, justice, and loving service. It is concerned with the whole person and with the fostering of faith in all three dimensions -trusting (heart), knowing and believing (mind), and doing (will). The characteristics of effective faith development program for youth are: providing a progressively appropriate content and processes; teaching the core content of the Catholic faith as found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC); integrating knowledge with skills for living the faith; fostering dialogue between life and faith; engaging young in the learning process through interactive methods; creating an environment conducive to hearing, searching, questioning, expressing and responding in faith to God's call in freedom; opportunity for real-life applications of learning; promoting family faith development; recognizing and celebrating multicultural diversity in unity and peace; exploring a personal call to ministry. Proclaiming Christ is the foundation of Catechesis with a kerygmatic quality and with "right types of language and methodology, without ever losing sight of the essential, namely the encounter with Christ, who is the heart of catechesis" (YS 133; *Evangelii Gaudium*, 164).

These above characteristics suggest that the selection of themes or topics for learning programs will be based on the developmental needs and life experiences of the young, following the structures of the CCC. The previous *NYPP* provides invaluable guidance for the Church's YM, including the renewal of faith education by discerning the direction for the future. The full benefit of these documents, however, depends on dialogue between pastoral leaders.

An YM which shows that "*Deus Caritas est*" (God is love) in the figure of the Good Shepherd is the true approach that is needed to tread upon. A review of the youth pastoral activity in India shows the essential breach of link between evangelisation and education. This educative-pastoral action becomes the revelation of God. Jesus "took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length "(Mk 6: 34), a practical expression of Christ's mind, heart and shepherd's hands. This was the first response of his pastoral compassion which is *evangelisation*, along with satisfying the basic human needs.⁴⁸ It

⁴⁷ Cf. CBCI Commission for Youth, *A Plan for Youth Ministry in India*, nn. 38-39.

⁴⁸ Cf. Paschal Chavez, *Acts of the General Council*, Salesian Generalate, Pisana, Rome 2010, no. 407.

must answer to the “what” (needs to be done), the “how” (looking to the future) and especially the “why” regarding the YM. This model of Jesus in YM is to be studied and contextualized and be put into practice through a cultural revolution and a conversion to the young.

The description of the overall picture presented by the CBCI shows the shambles found in various sectors on the YM operating without unity and qualities. The various sectors would include: clubs, associations, and youth centres; Parish oriented youth groups and movements; the school and the world of formal education; professional formation and work preparation; university students; migrant and marginalised youth; other presences and flexible forms of service to the young; information technology and means of social communications etc., so as to lead them to the risen Lord, and so to discover in him and in his Gospel the deeper meaning of their own existence.

14. The educative YM and the socio-cultural option

The pastoral ministry is the "doing" of the Church in space and time of its present history-in-the-making. The YM, therefore, is the same life of the Church at the service of the world. In this context, the cultural and religious pluralism must be interpreted as a special occasion with a concrete participation in the reality, all oriented towards the universal values, through a mutual "compenetration" of the distinctive cultures to the values common to all the young people, for their maturation to life and faith. This answer to the actual challenges, will require a change in the style of YM according to the actual multireligious and multicultural context: the "coherent vision" in perspective and the appointment to understand and appreciate values of the other religions in an universal perspective and in harmony; the availability to collaborate in a network with non-governing bodies, and organisations in the educational ambient with other groups for a socio-economical development.

The adoption of the pedagogical prospective introduces the young people to involving themselves gradually to the cultural, social and spiritual responsibility. This approach becomes a fundamental Christian attitude of dialogue with persons of different cultures and religions, inspired by a "vision" of the signs of the time that reveals the "pedagogy of God." To improve the same YM, one needs to take care of human relations and the quality of spiritual experience of the young. In this fundamental perspective, the urgencies of a renewed appointment to the communion and to the dialogue for the YM have been affirmed, finding its base in the "logic of the incarnation". It is necessary, therefore, to start from the life and aspirations of the young people in an attitude of mutual respect, appreciation and comprehension.

From a panoramic view on the study realised so far, affirming the validity of the ideal YPP in the context of the religious and cultural pluralism, and a critical evaluation, it is to be noted that it needs a primary synthesis of the operational orientations for re-projecting the YM and a final evaluation by means of confronting with the central objective of the YPP, noting the consonances and the differences. Basing on the prospective methodology, the conclusion centres on the hope that the inculturation of YM, in the particular socio-cultural and socio-religious surrounding,

will be the incarnation of the Gospel in the cultures of various regions of India, for a profound enrichment of the young people.

The YM in the dioceses, therefore, should be organic, intelligent, and rich of those elements that allow the decisiveness and the development according to the lines reported. It has been called to avail itself to the precise educational plan in which the young people become involved in respect to his/ her behaviour and with specific life-journey, considering the actual realities of the dioceses. It's more important, therefore, to offer correct educative orientations through which the dioceses must stimulate, with least minimum common structures, a unitary itinerary of growth.

15. Towards Peace and Harmony through Encounter and Dialogue

The plan for YM invites the ecclesial community to take the path of dialogue, and of maturation in the faith of young people in the concrete multireligious and multicultural context. The dialogue, in these ambient, is urgent in India, where one can observe the phenomenon of integralism, associated to political instrumentalisation and at the same time weaved with the economic and social crises, and where the necessities push the religions towards a common action with regards to poor people, human laws, social justice and peace. Such dialogue helps to find answers to the problems and to the challenges of YP in India. This present proposed map of a YPP, therefore, can be an invitation addressed to the local church to be at the same time evangelised and evangelizer, and to orient herself towards a comprehensive youth mission by means of a triple dialogue with: the other religions, the different cultures, and with the old and new necessities. The "way" of being Church, therefore, is determined by a common practical plan of condivision, peace and harmony through service, and through witness and prayer in a climate of mutual dialogue.

The religious and cultural pluralism is a reality *de iure* and *de facto* and, that the varied religious traditions are concurrent and complementary.⁴⁹ It is a responsibility of the YM, through interreligious and intercultural dialogue, to transform the latent convergence of all the young people of the territory in concrete reality, to achieve the goal of YM and thus, to build the Kingdom of God.

The present proposals of YPP confirms that the interreligious and intercultural dialogue, is the primordial service to render to the young people. In reality, the interreligious and intercultural dialogue is integral part of the evangelical mission of the Church (CCC 856) and it is, therefore, fundamental for the YM. In the choice of evangelisation and missionary activities, the criteria of inculturation and of interreligious dialogue answers to a divine appeal, because the mutual exchange and sharing, lead the young people to a mutual testimony of their own religious vision, to a deepened acquaintance of the respective convictions and to an agreement on the fundamental values for the integration of faith-life. Thus, the YM orientates itself towards sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ (EA 19) with all the young people and it invites to a change of mentality so that the YM in India as a whole might become a

⁴⁹ Cf. J. Dupuis, *Verso una teologia cristiana del pluralismo religioso*, Queriniana, Brescia 1997, p. 522; G. De Rosa, *Una teologia problematica del pluralismo religioso*, in "La Civiltà Cattolica" 48(1998)3554, p. 139.

good point of departure for a genuine dialogue among young people and always worthy of “the graces continually offered by God” (EA 4).

The intergenerational, interreligious and intercultural dialogue will help to extend the concept of "community in communion" (*koinonia*) to all the youth, with a prospective vision that the metamorphosis (*metanoia*) of the young people takes place according to the times and the style of God. If so, the YM has a long way to go to meet the sensibility of the diverse cultures of India. It needs to offer an opportunity to rediscover the mission of the Church in the dioceses/regions in order to understand the new aspirations of the young people, and inspire the Church to open the interreligious dialogue for peace and harmony. It proposes, therefore, a new approach, fit to understand other cultures and religions with the value of a missionary apostolic zeal of the young people. In a spirit of interreligious and intercultural dialogue one can discover gradually the richness of the same dialogue with God in the interreligious experience.

The present roadmap of a YPP, considering the cultural presuppositions with a specific elaboration of the four dimensions and of the bases, puts to light then, a composite structure (objectives, criteria and methods, structures and techniques, tools and materials, organisation of the existing resources and evaluation) of the YPP, offering an orientative tools, the urgency of which has been felt in the actual situation of India.

16. Organization and Structures of YM

The diocese/local community is the structural basis that the Church organizes and animates a life of communion within certain geographical setting. It is the unifying element for the local communities (parishes) among themselves, with other regions/diocese. Thus the diocesan community is the pivot for ongoing renewal in YPP.

In this setting the YM is linked to the *service of government*, providing information, making contacts, motivating, encouraging participation, promoting co-responsibility, continually awakening spiritual forces, and forming the individual youth. Such animation is at the same time both *religious* and *apostolic*. The diocesan YPP becomes the guiding force and the stimulus, through its structural organization.⁵⁰ Therefore, the need to develop a structured youth pastoral program in collaboration with the local Church is clear and is indispensable.

The forms of youth pastoral animation would be such that it would energize the YM with focus on important issues. In fact, it is not a matter of "getting things done" nor of giving the impression that "everyone is doing a lot of work," but rather of constantly uniting the communities and enabling them to respond effectively to the youth situation.

In YM of the diocese/region, importance should be given to: joint animation and pastoral government of the diocese by the diocesan Pastoral Council under the direction of the Bishop. He with his council has the primary responsibility for the

⁵⁰ For an in-depth study and organizational model of YM cf. Salesian Youth Ministry Department, *The Salesian Youth Ministry, a Frame of Reference*, 3rd edition, Editrice S.D.B., Rome 2014.

animation and pastoral government of the diocese with the fundamental role: to provide direction according to the situation and resources available, to achieve the objectives, to observe the priorities, to adopt strategies, and develop the resources, etc.

This pastoral council is a body that reflects and takes decisions regarding youth ministry, with the primary responsibility for unifying pastoral practice in the diocese, presupposing: discernment, reflection and planning beyond administration; analysis of the youth situation; set up criteria and formulate priorities for action; promote a unified pastoral mentality and activities in the service of the young; periodically assess the results; use the time and resources available for youth animation.

The objective of YM with the above concern, therefore, is to encourage co-responsibility through involvement of the local communities and the youth themselves. All the priests, religious and youth bodies together with the lay leaders are involved in studying and formulating youth pastoral criteria and aims. For this reason, the animators rather than undertaking a large number of activities, ought to be guides, promoters and facilitators for youth to take up their responsibilities. Points of strategy for this would gear to: ensure the *quantitative and qualitative* consistency of the YM; *support* the local communities in youth pastoral animation in its various sectors; promote frequent pastoral *communication and exchanges* between youth workers with criteria and aims, collaboration and mutual enrichment; give special care to the process of formulation and evaluation of the YPP, the definition of pastoral roles and the responsibilities of the YM animation teams and the programming of formation for Youth animators.

As for the organization of services through the diocesan\regional structures for YM, the following criteria need to be followed: unified structures; *comprehensive*, integrated and complementary pastoral plan; *directing* the activity the YM rather than directly organizing many initiatives; *homogeneity in* organizations to facilitate coordination and collaboration; and net-working with other dioceses and with civil or ecclesiastical organizations that are concerned with YM. According to these criteria the diocesan\regional organizations of animation will train youth animator; coordinate the youth activities; stimulate creativity; and be pro-actively present in the civil and ecclesial youth programs.

The diocesan\regional Delegate for YM and his team will coordinate the youth work and will ensure the convergence of all activities on the objective of education to the faith, human formation and dialogue towards peace and harmony. The YM delegate\director therefore works in agreement with the diocesan council. His first subjects are the Youth animators, the clergy and the parish communities. He is not the one in charge of the initiatives, but the one who ensures a structured pastoral functioning and pays attention to all aspects. He helps in the formulation of the YPP with common pastoral directives and guidelines; coordinates the diocesan youth ministry team; supports the local communities in their pastoral planning, implementation and assessment; keeps in close contact with animators of the YM, with the parish YM team, and with the Youth department as a whole.

The diocesan youth ministry team collaborates directly with the delegate in his tasks: i.e. reflection, planning, coordination, evaluation of YM. Its main objective is to ensure the integrity of youth pastoral activity and to foster the presence and the cohesion of the different aspects of the YPP in the different sectors of the diocese.

For the guidance and animation of the different sectors of Youth Pastoral Ministry (Clubs, Youth centres, Schools, Parishes, the marginalized, Volunteers, Vocation, Youth movements, etc) the Bishop appoints a representative usually assisted by a group of members who help to animate, direct each work to achieve its specific aims with a coordinated effort.

For a better pastoral planning and animation there are already structured organizations for contacts and for coordination: diocesan and regional teams for Youth Ministry, national youth ministry delegations, national centers for YM etc.⁵¹ These organizations or teams are set up and directed by the respective bodies, counting on the collaboration of the local Youth Pastoral Department. To this effect the following *criteria* should be taken into account: coordination at all levels in order to respond to a youth problem and situation which is much broader and complex; to foster solidarity and an exchange of resources in the context of YM; to further facilitate the circulation of pastoral experiences and models, etc.; organization of structures for education to the faith; all the coordinating bodies ought to be structured in a convergent, integrated and comprehensive manner, avoiding sectarianism and a bureaucratic centralization.

The National or Regional Delegation is normally composed of the diocesan YM delegates who would: reflect together on the youth situation and the challenges present in the context of the various dioceses formulating joint criteria and guidelines for YM; coordinate joint collaboration on common issues, such as the formation of animators etc.; foster the sharing of experiences, aids, initiatives and projects; provide a type of combined and unified presence and action in the Church and at the national and regional levels.

Similarly the National or Regional Centers for YM are there in order to: foster and develop studies and research on current YM problems; publish and distribute these reflections and experiences; put itself at the service of the diocese\regions and the local community to animate the process of planning and programming.

Lastly, the youth animation in a particular place is the responsibility above all of the local parish community, especially the Parish Priest and his council. He, with his council will make sure that in every activity, the integrity and the unity of YM is achieved. It gathers together the lay people and involves them in a co-responsible way especially the council to collaborate with the Youth pastoral team in the parish. The local YM coordinator with a team will plan, organize, coordinate and stimulate the pastoral activity according to the objectives proposed in the local guidelines and criteria of the Parish council.

In short, the parish YM team will foster and direct the participation of all in the YPP in its formulation, implementation and evaluation; organize specific programs and sees to their implementation; coordinate different pastoral activities; connect and collaborate with the youth pastoral strategy of the local church and with other educational bodies in the area.

⁵¹ Cf. CCBI Commission for Youth, *Guidelines for Youth Commission*, CCBI Secretariat, Bangaluru 2018. See also, CBCI Office for Youth, *ICYM Directory 2013* (3rd edition), CBCI Centre, New Delhi 2013.

17. Youth Pastoral Contents and Methods

The Church has repeatedly asked for a renewed Christian formation of the young, giving priority to evangelisation and to a renewed proclamation of Jesus Christ. The inadequacy of the deliberations of the CBCI on youth (2010), makes one aware of the urgent need to seriously re-think the contents and the methods of educating the youth to the faith, particularly: an *organic unity and completeness of the YPP*, including the religious aspect, for the all-round development of the young person within the 4 dimensions (educative, evangelising, associative and vocational); *the community sense* along with the elders, adults, and all the young men and women through accompaniment and listening to the young; a *planning mentality*, with contents and methodology, organising and coordinating a progressive process towards concrete and verifiable objectives; a *style of animation* which expresses in the new youth situation given importance to interpersonal relationships that creates communion and convergence around a shared plan.⁵²

In order to realize the above fundamental points, there is a need for *systematic pastoral formation of the youth animators, collaborators and youth leaders*. This needs *coordination* along with the sharing of initiatives and planning, which would in turn foster a more unified and integrated view of the apostolate. Here, attention needs to be given to team work and net-working, facing in a positive manner the complexity of the apostolate and rising above compartmentalisation. Thus, the pastoral formation of youth animators would enhance the implementations of the new style of YM and carry out their specific role as promoters and guides of the YM. This would entail professional formation and work preparation which would gear to: an *all-round formation* of the young through vocational discernment; strengthen and develop *personal qualities* of character; a systematic and serious *social formation*, being open to the needs of others through intergenerational dialogue. The Synod document on Youth (YS) places the social involvement of the Church within the context of God's loving plan for the young people; every other subsequent reflections derives its meaning and legitimacy from its fidelity to God's plan. Therefore, the social ministry that the youth should take up, primarily promotes human family, leading all to its final realization in God through holiness of life. Such historical commitment by the young generations takes on a redemptive meaning.⁵³

“If young people are to be effective agents of mission, the Church needs to offer them suitable pastoral care” (EA 47). “It is the task of the Pastors to ensure that the laity are formed as evangelizers, able to face the challenges of the contemporary world, not just with worldly wisdom and efficiency, but with hearts renewed and strengthened by the truth of Christ” (EA 45). The formation of the young would include these elements: knowledge of the complex socio-political situation; know the

⁵² Some of these concepts are taken from the recent letter of the Salesian Rector Major on the Salesian Youth Ministry, Cf. Paschal Chavez, *Acts of the General Council*, Salesian Generalate, Pisana, Rome 2010, no. 407.

⁵³ Cf. Sahayadas Fernando, *Images of the Church in Gaudium et spes and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, in “VJTR” 74(2010)4, pp. 270-274.

social teaching of the Church⁵⁴; confront situations requiring solidarity and assistance (unemployment, exploitation, racism, etc.); develop a culture of *work*; offer a *process of evangelisation* as a significant contribution the youth can make to the Church. The various youth development centres (e.g. *Yuva Kalyan*) at diocesan, regional and national level, must exchange experiences, projects, resources and closer collaboration especially in the formation of animators, in the production of programs and in methodology. Another important content of YM is the world of the marginalized and migrant young people. The new situation challenges the Church to find new solutions to eradicate poverty and separation that afflict many young individuals. There is also the “new forms of poverty” among the youth often with “social exclusion” (YS 42), especially the migrant youth (YS 22) and those at risk, faced with hardship and delinquency (YS 26).

During the last 25 years, there have been many projects, initiatives and developmental works giving the young people an opportunity to build their lives and take their place in society in a responsible way: projects offering care, protection and education to young workers, providing rehabilitation for young victims of drugs, youth at the correctional homes or those coming out of prison etc. This commitment needs to increase even more in individual diocese and parishes; more attention needs to be given to the culture of solidarity and of active citizenship.

Other presences and flexible forms of service of the young must be part of the content of YM in India which is complex as being a pluralistic society where emerges *new forms of educating the youth*. We can think of computer study, social media, networking, fan clubs, music or sport clubs, educative tourism, social or Church commitment, free time engagement, etc. thus adapting to changing needs and demands with greater freedom of action and initiative. These give possibility of relating with the young in their natural environment; they give more emphasis on spontaneity in relationships and on freedom, on the centrality of the individuals rather than on the structure itself.

As for an YM method, the existing YPP with its structural organization tends to follow a progressive integrated method: recognition and analysis of the existing Youth work/YPP, with the help of the fundamental sources available; an interpretative action plan in perspective, based on the four dimensions (anthropological, ecclesial, theological-pastoral and educational); finally the necessary evaluation to find the relation for further developments. Therefore, the organisation of an ideal YPP follows the principle of uniformity and of simplification, based on the hermeneutic model. It proceeds from the analysis of the plans to the interpretative foundation, in order to give space to the planning and to the new perspectives, beginning with a critical evaluation.

The youth animators, the responsible and the youth directors in India, have been desiring ardently a proper YPP, intensifying their search in consultation with the young people of our country. With this expression, there has been an increasing attention towards young people, in an attempt to overcome the difficulties that can be seen in the praxis and in the organic YP plans revealed in Indian context. For some years, the directors and the persons in-charge have been trying to gather youth

⁵⁴ Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2004.

between the age group from fifteen to thirty years, to strengthen their faith, through courses of formations in the faith. It is in this continued effort that the present projected plan will be of great help. The intention is to orient towards re-projecting the YM, considering the socio-cultural and socio-religious situation, enhancing towards peace and intercultural and interreligious harmony.

18. Areas of Concerns as Prospects for YM

The future of the YM in India depends on the assimilation and putting into practice the deliberations of the bishops at the CBCI made out of the Synod on Youth (2018). It has to focus on the youth's vocational dimension, on vocational discernment with special attention given to the poorest and those at risk through accompaniment with a listening heart; evangelizing towards peace and harmony (proclaiming Christ) through encounter and dialogue; intra-religious peaceful living and educating the young to the faith; a linked coordination between various commissions (Youth Ministry, Missions, Education and Culture, Family, Social Communication etc.). This would include the following concerns of the Synod Fathers, CBCI and the youth themselves.

18.1. Constant assimilation and execution of the YPP

The YPP has to respond to the new needs and expectations of the young with an openness to new schemes and practices, a new way of thinking and organizing. There has to be practical application of structures, objectives and principles, within various contexts and situations, adopting a *unified and organic vision* of YM, centred on the person; strengthening *the community dimension of pastoral activity*; having a *planning mentality* according to precise objectives. To this end, the pastoral formation of lay collaborators in the YM is an urgent need.

18.2. Communicating Christ and faith education

Priority to the heart of our mission in the midst of structural expansion consists in religious values and faith motivations within the materialistic youth culture, that help to discover the driving force of youth pastoral praxis with missionary passion. The evangelization process has to be *fully inserted in the field of education of the young* inspired by faith and gospel value with emphasis on cultural contents offered in the daily activities ensuring a meeting point between culture and faith, between methods and values, and with adaptation to the evolving condition of the young person, developing the fundamental human attitudes. The YM needs to be open to the religious dimension inspired by the Gospel of Jesus (YS 56) and the social teaching of the Church.

18.3. Youth are Called to Holiness

The YS document focused on young Catholics' baptismal call to holiness (YS 165), their contributions to the Church and on the process of growing in faith and in discerning their vocation in life. There are young Catholics who are involved in parishes or communities, through their services, time, talent and membership in groups and movements. Yet, some clergy members doubt their commitment and are unwilling to share responsibility with them. Young people do challenge the Church to find clearer ways to express the teachings of the Church or to respond to new situations with the wisdom of faith, "conversion of heart and a renewal of structures" (YS 116). The vocational differences are gathered in the one and universal call to holiness. The Church is called to "a change of perspective": through the sanctity of many young people willing to give up their life in the midst of persecutions in order to remain faithful to the Gospel.

18.4. Emphasis on the vocational dimension of YM

Vocation is one of the main themes of the YS and is mentioned often in the YS document. It is a 'Vocation to Follow Jesus' (YS 81) being fascinated by Him whose life was good, poor and simple, spent in generosity and offered as a gift, because Christ "fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear"(GS 22). The common Christian vocation is the call to holiness, which can be lived out in every state of life: young or old, single or married or in the priesthood or religious life. Vocation is not a script to be recited. It is not a theatrical moment without traces. Youth being the age of decisions, the Church regrets the provisional culture, which supports the idea of an indefinitely prolonged adolescence. The youth synod calls for a "true and specific vocational culture" with a mission towards those in the peripheries in the society with dedication to an 'outward Church'.⁵⁵

The single priestly life with a logic of faith and self-gift is a constituent element of the Church that leads to paths through which the grace of baptism acts and directs toward that holiness we are all called to. The communal life lived intensely by the youth through the Eucharistic celebration in signs, symbols and preaching, and through silent contemplative adoration, transmits the "faith and formation for mission" and speaks of God. Therefore, there has to be a careful selection of candidates for the priesthood and to seminary programs to ensure that future priests are men who can recognize the gifts of others, relate well to women and men of all ages and are devoted to serving the poor.

18.5. Vocational Discernment for a Mission

Another 'safe compass' for youth is mission, a gift of self out of freedom through vocational discernment and moral reflections, that leads to an authentic and lasting happiness in searching for the truth in charity. Vocation is linked to mission: every life is a vocation in relation to God, it is not the fruit of chance or a private good

⁵⁵ The Synod on Youth proposed that a National "Directory of Youth Ministry be prepared from a vocational perspective, so as to help diocesan leaders and local workers to offer good formation and action with and for the young" (YS 140).

to be managed on its own. It is “not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an ‘extra’ or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 273, cited in YS 69).

It is call to holiness. Each one must live his own specific vocation in every area: the profession, the family, the consecrated life, the ordained ministry and the permanent diaconate. A renewed missionary vigour is called for in the midst of the challenges faced namely, digital environment, migrants, women’s role in the Church, Sexuality, Economics, politics, work, care of the earth (YS 144-150) within an intercultural and interreligious context through ecumenical dialogue (151-154). A prerequisite for such renewal is the integral formation (YS 157-162) through education and concrete action plan, both for the youth and youth animators, making them missionary disciples through an accompanying discernment. This holds too for accompaniment for marriage and joint formation of lay people, religious and priests (YS 163) with emphasis on pastoral care of young people, backed up by experience and in a community context leading towards pastoral responsibility (YS 164).

In this context, vocational promotion and guidance are an essential element of an YM which helps every young person to make life choices in a responsible manner, in the light of faith. Promoting a culture of vocation through YM is decidedly evangelizing and calls for generous commitment to the service of others. It has to foster apostolic commitment through faith education in collaboration with the local community, thus witnessing with courage and joy the beauty being a Christian. Through open spaces for community building and missionary experiences, within the Church, the creative ideas can be put into action, giving the youth opportunities to contribute, to the Church and society.

18.6. Attention to the poor, marginalized and unorganized youth

Church’s concern for youth at risk is an openness to and concern for situations of poverty, exclusion and marginalization (YS 12). It identifies those aspects that produce discrimination and exclusion; makes efforts needed to change them; fostering the presence, the participation and the protagonism of the most needy and at-risk youngsters in activities, in groups, in positions of responsibility through empowerment; focusing on the *transformation of mentality and of cultural tendencies*, promoting a culture of solidarity; developing the religious dimension of the individual, considered as a fundamental element in the process of becoming fully human; and awakening the positive aspect found in every young person - an awareness of his dignity.

18.7. Listening to Girl-Youth and Women

“Listening is an encounter in freedom, which requires humility, patience, willingness to understand and a commitment to working out responses in a new way” (YS 6). It calls for “courageous cultural conversion and a change in daily pastoral practice” to promote the equality of women in society and in the church. Consequently it asks for “the presence of women in Church bodies at all levels, including in

leadership roles, and the participation of women in Church decision-making processes while respecting the role of the ordained ministry” (YS 148). “This is a duty of justice” (YS 140). Women are to be recognised and valued in society and in the Church, which a time becomes difficult (cf. YS 55). Overcoming “many forms of dominion, inclusion and discrimination”, the Church has to acknowledge and value women with a greater feminine voice and outlook. It recalls that “any domination or discrimination based on sex offends human dignity.”

18.8. Sexuality and Abuse

Although the YS speaks little of friendship, affection, sexuality and “sexual inclinations” it calls for “a more in-depth anthropological, theological and pastoral elaboration” on the Church’s position on those issues⁵⁶ that, “everyone be made more aware of the urgency of an inevitable change, not least on the basis of anthropological and theological reflection on the reciprocity between men and women” (YS 55). In some countries, it is found that young people are moving away from the Church or question its teachings, especially on sexuality. The Church through a commitment of time and patience help young people “grasp the relationship between their adherence to faith in Jesus Christ and the way they live their affectivity and interpersonal relationships” (YS 38) without a judgmental attitude.

The clerical sex abuse scandal and financial scandals are leading many young people, away from the faith.⁵⁷ Behind the crime of abuse, there lies a “spiritual void” and a form of exercising power. Reaffirming the anthropological importance of the difference and reciprocity between man and woman, a person's identity cannot be defined only by his/her 'sexual orientation'.⁵⁸ The Church communicates the “Christian vision of corporeality and sexuality.” The Synod document states: “We must propose to the young an anthropology of affectivity and sexuality that is also able to give the right value to chastity, showing with pedagogical wisdom its most authentic meaning for the growth of the person, in all states of life” (YS 149). To do so, it calls for the formation of pastoral workers themselves to maturity of their own affective and sexual dimensions. The Church has to recognize and act against abuse of every kind, power, economic, conscience or sexual. Sexual formation and not just sporadic advice with chastity are being proposed creatively, showing its value for personal growth, asking to follow certain “journeys of accompaniment in the faith for homosexual persons” and help the young to “recognize the desire to belong and contribute to community life” (YS 150).

⁵⁶ The final document used the term “sexual inclination” (YS 150) rather than “sexual orientation” as the draft document had.

⁵⁷ The synod acknowledged that the draft document’s section on abuse gave too much prominence to the topic’s importance in the United States, Ireland, Australia and Chile.

⁵⁸ This is cited from a 1986 document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) that has been criticised by gay Catholics. Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 1986, n.16, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html, 22.3.2019.

The “different types of abuse” (of power, economic, conscience, sexual) call for rigorous preventive measures e.g. “selection and training of those who will be entrusted with tasks of responsibility and education” (YS 29). In order to bring about a healthy restlessness that engenders dynamism, youth must be welcomed, respected, accompanied (YS, 66). This way the Church renews itself, taking the model of “young Jesus among the young” (YS 63) and the witness of the saints. Young people have to discover sexuality as a gift by acknowledging “the beauty of the Christian vision of bodiliness and sexuality” (YS149), and by looking for more adequate modalities, and other formative paths. The clergy will ‘favor’ the “paths of accompaniment in the faith of homosexual people”, in order to integrate more and more the sexual dimension in their personality, growing in the quality of relationships and walking towards the gift of self.

18.9. Migrant Youth

Young people who are poor or experience discrimination - especially migrants, victims of religious persecution and those struggling to find employment for “the world of young people is also deeply marked by the experience of vulnerability, disability, illness and pain” (YS 43). The Church is concerned about those who “escape war, violence, political and religious persecutions, natural disasters [...] and extreme poverty” by leaving their countries in search of “opportunities for themselves and for their families” (YS 25). Often they are fed with “unrealistic expectations that expose them to hard disappointments” (YS 26). Such vulnerability due to un-accompaniment and a xenophobia regarding migration often “promoted and exploited for political ends” has to be addressed justly. The Church needs to address the issue of migrants, a structural phenomenon – “paradigm of our time” through the reception of migrants and refugees, as an opportunity for enrichment for the communities and societies.⁵⁹

18.10. Redefining “New Youth Presences” and “New Frontiers”

The renewal of YM requires a re-organisation and new management style with importance to accompaniment and on the formation of the youth animators and of the young people, through a gradual process of training and evangelisation reaching lastly to Christian life of commitment. It will promote initiatives and projects which involve the largest number possible of individuals and institutions at the service of the education and evangelisation of the young, net-working together and working in communion with society and the Church. Besides, particular attention is to be given to marriage preparation programs as “a kind of ‘initiation’ for the sacrament of matrimony” (YS 162) in the life of the young; Youth Forums are to be organized on the theme hunger and thirst for justice, peace and harmony. It has to adopt clarity, in

⁵⁹ Cf. *Synod's final document, the Church's responses to the challenges of young people*, Vatican City (AsiaNews), <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Synod's-final-document,-the-Church's-responses-to-the-challenges-of-young-people-45324.html>, 19.2.2019

‘unambiguous language’ in focusing on structure and content of YM and YPP. Emphasis is to be given on education and formation of young leaders. The schools and universities play an irreplaceable role in it. They are called to face the relationship between faith and the demands of the contemporary world.

The Church as a family must constantly accompany the youth in their holistic growth. The animators (lay and clergy) must be present with them and know them personally. The dioceses can hold a synod at the local/regional level, in order to discuss and pass on the deliberations of the YS and draw a National pastoral plan for YM in every country, while creating forums for young people in parishes and institutions, providing opportunities for spiritual, social, educational, skills and professional growth, under the leadership of young people and youth directors.

18.11. Inter-Linked and Coordinated YM

Today, networking with other commissions and departments is essential for a fruitful YM, creating specific and practical relationship to the missions and with family commissions within the inter-religious context. It has to work in close networking, and collaborate with the department for social Communication and secular media. It requires a clearly missionary approach in which priority is given to the first proclamation of the Gospel among the people of other faiths. This way, the YM assumes more and more the new culture of social communication in order to improve the quality of human and Christian communication.

19. Lines of action with re-projecting and precedence

From the description given above, it is possible to establish a projective draft of YM, constitutive of the exemplary elements of the life of youth in each of the local Churches. From what has emerged in the analysis of the YM for the past years and from the Synod on Youth (2018), there is a proposal of structuring some projective lines, beginning with the context of interreligious dialogue and inculturation, finding those processes and ideal methodological strategies in order to improve the examined plans as practical orientations and directives of YM at the national level. Therefore, it’s opportune to place some lines of action for re-projecting, in order of preference with consequent aiming on more important and essential needs, according to the given indications by the FABC, CBCI, CCBI and the recent Synod on Youth.

19.1. Accompaniment of and Listening to the Young People

Beyond the concrete issues, the two key words of the recent Synod on Youth are, “accompany” and “synodality.” The Church is called to accompany and listen to young people and help them to “read their own story” and live out their baptismal call “freely” and “responsibly.” The Church, therefore, “recognizes the need to train consecrated persons and laypeople, male and female, to accompany young people” (YS 9). The young appreciate collaborative approach to work. The formation of the

young in that direction can be more effective in YM by cultivating certain relational values: “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” (YS 103). Often, the Church functioning still revolves too much around the parish priests. Now, the youth has to be drawn in to collaborate with the clergy for the Parish ministry, accompanied by the priests and laity. “To accompany requires placing oneself at the disposal of the Spirit of the Lord and of the one accompanied, with all his or her qualities and capacities, and then having the courage to step aside with humility” (YS 101).

19.2. Formation and Accompaniment of Youth Animators

The educative YM encourages the youth experiences through the "services of priority," that consist of interreligious dialogue and inculturation of faith, and lead the young people towards the human promotion and the maturation in the faith. The formation of the animators (YS 103), in this context, is the first choice in order to start an organic YM, because the inculturation of the Gospel and the interreligious dialogue in the YM will depend largely on the adequate formation of the animators. It needs, therefore, to consider the formative perspective of the pastoral animators of YM before realising the project. They must be well prepared, with solid grounding on the acceptance of differences, dialogue and solidarity.

In the context of certain pluralism of values like peace, liberty, justice and solidarity within the multireligious situation of India, the young people must enter into dialogue with the cultural and religious values of the others through maturation towards intercultural forms of expression of faith. In first place, therefore, it needs conscientization of the phenomenon of multiculturalism and multireligiosity, on the pedagogical ground of formation of the animators in the intercultural dialogue, in order to encourage an incultured and contextualized YPP. Likewise, there is the need also to favour the protagonism of laity (avoiding traditional forms of clericalization) where the young people become conscious of their own being, of their laical ministry and of the different contexts of the society, building progressive communion and participation for a 'rereading' of the Gospel and of the directives of the Church with the collaboration of the other specific pastoral sectors in the dioceses.⁶⁰

The only service of the Church for and with the young people in the context of the varied people, cultures and religions, can be fulfilled by a multitude of animators of the YM with a spirit of interpersonal-meet and of collaboration with other religions. The animators, the parents, the teachers and the same young people must be formed for the interreligious and intercultural dialogue, for the specific mission in the society, territory and in the culture. The formation and the systematic conscientisation will help to create the processes of selection for the person in-charge of the YM (laity, priests and religious) that they will be able to choose among the persons proposed from the groups, on the basis of criteria e.g. vocation, formation and personal choice for the

⁶⁰ Cf. F. Pinto, *Kittyism or Catechism. Faith Workers Talk Back*, in “Catechetics India” 17(2000)2, pp. 26-29.

young people with an openness to dialogue, in order to develop a YM in which the persons in-charge are able to understand, accompany and share the life and the language of the youth.

Above all, it needs to develop a language adapted for communicating the evangelical messages in the context of the religious and cultural, scientific and laical pluralism, through a formation of the young people in spiritual humanism and invest on new formative models that take into account the changed cultural situation and of the plurality of religious experiences present in the territory, with the challenge of dialogue, of comparison and of a depth interiority. The formation of the animators, therefore, is the prior choice for re-projecting the YPP with an educational spirit and with the formative moments lived together by the adult animators and the young people.

Following the first objective of Youth Animators' formation at all levels, in order to promote progressive education, evangelisation and co-responsibility, we have the following lines of Action:

- Systematic program of formation of co-ordinators\animators and other key persons of YM;
- Preparation and realisation of inter-sector meetings for the formation of YM co-ordinators, at the level of Inter-dioceses\regional committees;
- Offering of existing *on-line* systematic programmes of formation on YM;
- Guidelines for the practical application of the *priority strategies* indicated by the CBCI Commission for YM.

The themes for pastoral formation could be the followings:

- Presentation of outlines for further study of the CBCI *Guidelines for the Youth Ministry and education of the young*.
- Guidelines for the drawing-up of the National Youth Pastoral Project, with attention to the educational frames of reference: cultural, evangelisation, social communications, dialogue etc.
- Offering of reflection done by the different sectors of the Church ministry on the most recent documents of the Church.
- Together with the Social Communications sector, continuity of reflection on the relationship among education, evangelisation and communication in YM.
- Elaboration of an itinerary for the pastoral formation of young people.
- The YM sector's availability to accompany formative meetings organised by the Diocesan pastoral teams, through the use of new technologies and other means.
- Meetings and visits of National pastoral animation team or the consultants of the YM to the regions\diocese.

As for accompaniment of the Co-ordinators and other key persons of YM, the following aspects can be programmed:

- Clarification of the role and duties of the Co-ordinator\Director for youth ministry.
- Support to the animation of the YM Co-ordinators in order that they may: *improve the* evangelising education that promotes itineraries of vocational maturity; *evaluate* the vocational dimension of educative projects; *put into practice* the conclusions of national and inter-regional\diocesan meetings of YM; *identify strategies for the formation* of young people towards effective leadership; *activate reflection groups* within the region\province\diocese in order to accompany the local communities in giving quality response and to improve their presence among young people; *engage in a style of youth ministry animation* that is in line with the Church.
- Share with the YM Co-ordinators itineraries of *education to interiority*, to listening to the Word of God, especially through *lectio divina*, to prayer, to the sacraments, etc.
- Maintenance and updating of the *Youth Ministry* section of the diocese\region office, website and collaboration with the Social Communications Sector in the production of *video-clips* and in the section *news-online* by contributing information and news items.
- Regular *online* communication with the YM Co-ordinators and use of the website to suggest articles, study materials and experiences relevant to current reflections on YM and on the world of youth, especially those who are the *poorest*.
- Use of the *YM Blog* as a space where YM Co-ordinators can share projects, guidelines and studies that deal with youth, with evangelisation, vocation ministry, and formation courses for the animators.
- Communication and synergy with the Presidents of the Inter-regional Youth Ministry, the Bishops, the YM Co-ordinators and those responsible for the different commissions at the national\regional level, in order to accompany the different processes of YM.
- Accompaniment and meetings with the national Co-ordinators for YM in order to create a network of collaboration that is capable of responding to the challenges of the context, and to reach and strengthen the local communities.
- Seminarians, future priests must be trained to accompany, listen and handle the challenges of young people.

19.3. Organisation for the Formation of Youth

In a multicultural and multireligious society the educational process of YM requires a new sense of affiliation of all the young people of the territory. To bring the youth to face the challenge of dialogue, and social and communitarian responsibility, it requires a certain maturity in the integration of faith-life through an organized YM that involves each social and ecclesial reality within the particular cultural context. In

a special way it needs to encourage the organisation and the programs of formation⁶¹ of youth living in particular situations (unorganized youth, youth workers, students, youth in critical condition) and the associations and youth groups already existing at the national and regional level.

The organised YM must help the young people to take substantial form, to engage in interventions, initiatives and services, considering their reality with seriousness in order to strengthen the missionary and spiritual dimension of the YM; collaborate with catechetical and varied other youth groups of the diocese for the education to faith and dialogue; strengthen the critical conscience of the youth beginning with the study, critical reflection and the analysis of the social religious, economic, cultural and political reality, and of the social doctrine of the Church; accentuate the principle, the reason and the objective for the choice of a spirit, style, method of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The young people, therefore, must be invited to be a part of the organisation for the formation of mentality and for the activity at the diocesan and vicariate level, like active subjects for the re-projection of the YPP.

For a more systematic YM that is faith-oriented, missionary and vocational, the following action plans could be taken up:

- *A Holistic vision of YM* that encourages personal and communitarian witnessing, focuses on direct proclamation of Jesus and assures an experience of Christian life in all educational environments; a move from *event-oriented* to a *systematic YM* which forms youth animators; promotes a *shared-project*, through discernment, co-responsibility and networking with youth as protagonists; makes all educational environments places of education to the faith and of evangelisation, through *experience, group action*, and a qualified *method*.
- *Creating a vocational culture* through reflection, sharing and evaluation of experiences on the *pastoral dimension of YM*; an explicit emphasis on the *vocational dimension of YM* in all educational environments; promotes programmes of education to the faith through national and regional youth meets and seminars.
- Attention given to all the educational environments through deliberate ministry of presence for personal and group accompaniment;
- Strengthening the YM, through already existing structural bases; the Identity Card of the Youth Movement; a minimum and flexible structure of co-ordination; experience of Christian life, missionary commitment and volunteering; making youth as protagonists and specifying the important role of the adult; continuity of proposals undertaken so far.
- Accompanying *youth* (workers and college students), towards a synthesis of culture, faith and life.

⁶¹ Cf. *FABC on Youth Ministry*, pp. 5-6, https://www.academia.edu/35768331/FABC_on_Youth_Ministry, 21.3.2019; See also, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Office of the Laity and Family -Youth Desk. 2nd Bishops' Institute on Lay Apostolate (BILA) on Youth (2007): *Youth Ministry in Asia: Reliving the Emmaus Story*, FABC-OLF-Youth Desk, Taytay Rizal 2008.

- The parish's youth-ministry council, which is meant to help, advise and support the Youth Director, will comprise of both adults and youths (at least 5 youth on the council),
- To see that more youth obtain leadership positions.
- The Youth Director will rely on the core team, - a group of parish adults that works directly with the youths. This core team leaders will assist the Youth Director with newest idea: making a presentation to all the youth-group members, then dividing them into small groups for further discussion.
- Each discussion group will be led by one core team member, along with high-school youths who will hopefully serve as mentors for the middle-school youths.

Therefore, vocational promotion and guidance are an essential element of an YM which helps every young person to make life choices in a responsible manner, in the light of faith. The Church promotes a culture of vocation through YM which is decidedly evangelizing and generous commitment to the service of others, fostering apostolic commitment through faith education and in collaboration with the local community. Thus the youth can witness with courage and joy the beauty of being a Christian.

19.4. Socialisation and Celebration within the Inter-Religious Cultures

To build the unity in diversity, it requires sharing, participation and complimentary co-responsibility of varied roles. It needs to think of the interpersonal structures for meeting and creating "relational space" of reception for an active, responsible and creative sharing among the youth; create a surrounding of socialisation of the youth where, with sympathy, respect and positive rapport, they open to others in a productive manner through a mutual acquaintance, reception and constructive dialogue; build collective resources to face and recognise their problems and have cultural and religious mediators as reference (persons with a social function of intermediation among the cultures and religions) in the multireligious and multicultural complexity.

It needs also to encourage and consolidate spaces in which one can celebrate, revitalise and incarnate personally and as community, the spirituality of following Jesus, beginning with the youth situations (family, youth group, educational reality, recreational and work-oriented); translate the faith in the light of actual life situation and train the young people to live at all levels of human experience with this profound choice: literature, dance, theatre, music, movie, mobile, internet and painting; celebrate a liturgy incarnated in the life of the youth with a cultural vision that helps them towards an integration of faith and life.⁶²

We find some youth to be aggressive, violent, drug addicts and non-religious. Against such habitual behaviour they need to be more *proactive and synergizing*. We need

⁶² Cf. L. Meddi, *Integrazione fede e vita*, p. 150.

to develop the celebrative youth⁶³: enjoy the company of God and of others to celebrate life-moments. The youth animator, therefore, helps the youth relish life, relax and experience the serenity that surrounds them. The secular and religious celebrations prepared, participated and lived, provide the youth with a satisfaction.

The youth see through the dichotomy between preaching and practising. In this context the youth are helped to actualise what they believe in. This way the youth can witness to today's society by being the 'good Samaritans' themselves turning the youth movements to visible, tangible activities. In short, they become the sign and bearer of God's love and joyfulness by cultivating the sense of the sacred, integrating life and faith within the family/community living in happiness. To do this, certainly the YM project must help them to be more decisive and reconciled with themselves and with the world, through their usual tendency of friendship, fun, enjoyment, valuing family, society and community. They mostly need to be empowered to be bearers of Good News to the World with their lively youthfulness by experiencing the love of God in others, in their own life and in the nature.

The Church needs to engage youth for community service. Youth development cannot be achieved without ecumenical and inter-faith solidarity. They should be engaged consistently, where in youth are engaged in policy formulation along with the executive. This will have a greater impact, as they will come up with policy ideas that work for all. Youth specialists are to be sought after to head youth-linked organizations. They will ensure that set goals are achieved, targets are met and the mission is accomplished. Through education and engagement of their youth, the Church can transform itself and the society.

Ecumenical, interreligious and intercultural meetings are to be planned for the second-generation young adults, offering regular opportunities to share and reflect on the diversity of faith practices, traditions, and spirituality with their peers in similar stages of life (e.g., single or married). Besides, relationships with neighbours can be built up by sponsoring ecumenical, interreligious and/or interethnic events (e.g., major feast, holiday celebrations, art shows, etc.) during which religious, cultural, or ethnic traditions could be shared, honored, and celebrated.

19.5. The Option for the Poorest

The Church in India is missionary by nature, and evangelical. There exists, therefore, an urgent need to evangelise the youth especially those who are more in need as precedence in respect to others. As "young missionaries" they must live their own life with a missionary zeal, for the integral liberation, in solidarity with all the young people, above all, the most destitute who live in the territory. Youth must be engaged with responsibility and coherence in the preferential option for the poorer ones and the less privileged in the society (marginalized and the Dalits), by means of creating concrete forms of sharing and formation of pastoral personnel, beginning with the experience of groups for the human promotion, respecting the youth-differences for an integral maturation. The YM, therefore, tries to create and encourage with

⁶³ Cf. Gilbert Choondal, *Seven habits of highly effective Catholic youth, Identifying spots for a facelift to youth ministry today* in "New Leader" 123(2010)21, pp. 25-26.

urgency, plans of economic self-reliance for the poorer young people, for the programs of formation (socio-cultural and socio-political), for the evangelisation and for the correct use of free time at diocesan and parish level.

Attention to the poor, the marginalized and the unorganized youth with special concern for those at risk should be the priority target of YPP. As it has already been delineated by the existing NYPP, there needs to be: an openness to and concern for situations of poverty, exclusion and marginalization, identifying those aspects that produce discrimination and exclusion, and efforts needed to change them; fostering the presence, the participation and the protagonism of the most needy and at-risk youngsters in the activities, in the groups, in positions of responsibility; focusing on the change of mentality and of destructive tendencies, promoting a culture of solidarity; developing the religious and human dimension of the individual.

In order to respond positively to the *educative and formative* needs of the poorest youth and their integral development in view of a society that is more humane and in solidarity, the following actions can be undertaken:

- The ongoing processes will be geared to: promote and strengthen *educative-evangelising significance of vocational training centres*; give continuity to the present forms of co-ordination of YM in collaboration with other Religious congregations; strengthen the *co-ordination* of the higher educational environments; realise a *Plan of Action* drawn up by the Commission for Indian Catholic Youth Ministry (CCBI); bring in concrete projects in *educommunication* with special attention to the critical use of new technologies; improve the works for *young people at risk*; promote education to *human rights* especially of youth and children.
- As for the new processes it will try to: reflect on multi-faith education, *catechesis, teaching of religion*, giving attention to formation to ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue; reflect on the integral formation of the unorganized youth by reaching them where they are; creating an alternative space for youth aggregation and as a bridge to non-formal and virtual places.

19.6. The Shared Vision in Educative Perspective

The criterion of the educative perspective characterised by a progressive process, looking at the ideal values overcoming the limits of the present, requires an acquaintance of the impulses and rhythms of the individual persons, of the community and of the society in its concrete situations. To create this new mentality of "perspective" with a new thrust to interreligious and intercultural dialogue, it requires a coscientizing process through discernment in prayer and with the dynamic spirit of apostolate. The exterior sensitizing and awareness comes through the discourses in the individual groups, educational centres, Parish and in the youth centres for a formation in perspective.

To have a holistic vision of the YM, the YM Team will respond to the current challenges in the following ways:

- They will have a shared mission by committing themselves to promote the evangelisation aspect of youth projects and the formation of Christian youth by animating the *core group*; promote the *Youth project* proposed by the CBCI (2010) and CCBI (2015); *formation of youth animators* so that they may commit themselves to the ethical formation of conscience; reflect and study for a developed YM with a spirituality and method that can enter into dialogue with contemporary expressions (reciprocity, resilience, empowerment, intercultural relations, educommunication); acquire a *planning mentality* so that YM processes may be supported by a budget and provide financial resources for YM projects.
- The educative challenges would lead to: provide spaces and times for *reflection* about present-day challenges to education of the young in the different contexts; start and support *works that respond to youth poverty* (child abuse, youth violence, migration, AIDS among youth, etc.); launch *networks among educators* for the sharing of experiences and educative itineraries on education to solidarity, ecology, development, justice and peace using the resources that new technologies offer; provide formative programmes for young people on *education to love* and *formation to family life* in the light of Christian anthropology.

19.7. The Social Communication and the Centre of support

With the advent of internet, smartphones, digital technologies and easy access to information, the youth are now living in a globalised world. All these can be empowering resourceful tools in their hands, if planned and executed well. It is important to understand the digital world and its pitfalls such as ‘fake news’, education, and the plight of so many migrants facing war and persecution. Alarming the young generation on internet that habitually leads young people to use images as a communicative vehicle the Church is called to reflect on how to transmit a faith that is based on listening to the Word of God.

Youth have a mission in the digital world with its lights and shadows which has become an integral part of the daily life. Besides, access to information, socio-political participation and active citizenship, it leads to solitude, manipulation, exploitation, violence, cyberbullying, pornography. Church invites youth to inhabit the digital world, promoting its communicative potential in view of the Christian announcement, and to "impregnate" its cultures and dynamics with the Gospel.⁶⁴ Offices for digital culture and evangelization (e.g. National Institute of Social Communications, Research and Training, NISCORT) are to be set up to promote dissemination of good practices, manage certification systems of Catholic sites, counter the spread of fake news with “policies and tools for the protection of minors on the web”.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Synod's final document, the Church's responses to the challenges of young people*, Vatican City (AsiaNews), <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Synod's-final-document,-the-Church's-responses-to-the-challenges-of-young-people-45324.html>, 19.2.2019

The YM will have to provide quality and inclusive education with the use of digital, mobile and internet technologies, in order to make them employable and empowered citizens. Focus should be on skill development for the unskilled and unemployed youth. No youth wants to remain unemployed in this age of technologies. They want to progress - economically and socially in this digital age. We need to equip youth for innovations and entrepreneurship for creating jobs even in the agricultural fields. One should not forget that 99% of the students (MBA, MIT, IIT, etc.) don't work in agriculture anymore.

The educative YM, with the criteria of ecumenical and interreligious collaboration, has the task of developing processes of education critically and of using the means of social communication⁶⁵ as actual and effective tools to bring the evangelical values to all the people (agents, recipients, members of other religions) in their own context and in the territory of the diocese; it needs to have an abiding spokesperson who is able to present in discursive and dialogical way the objective identity of the young people, at least through the television, social media and the press.

The urgency exists to open a centre of support for the young people of the territory affiliated strictly with the youth centre: it will be attentive to the young people, to their spiritual life, to their difficulty of interpersonal relation, to the vocational discernment and to furnish experienced persons in the different aspirations that the life of the young people foresees (health, educational appointment, presence in legal field, work, administrative and psychological support).

A Christian youth is basically a communicator of Christ. Keeping the faith education as central focus, the priority to the heart of Church's mission in the midst of structural expansion of social communications has to be kept in mind based on the religious values and faith motivations within the materialistic youth culture. Therefore, an YPP will help discover the driving force of youth pastoral praxis with missionary communicating passion. It will aim at an evangelisation *fully inserted in the field of education of the young* inspired by faith and gospel value with emphasis on cultural contents offered in the daily activities, ensuring a meeting point between present culture of communication and faith, between methods and values. As it has already been said, it needs to adapt to the evolving condition of the young person, developing the fundamental human attitudes with openness to the religious dimension inspired by the Gospel of Jesus, the social teachings of the Church and the means of social communications.

Therefore, there needs to be a more inter-linked and coordinated YM, with specific and practical relationship to the missions and with family commissions within the inter-religious context. The YM has to collaborate with the department of social Communication and secular media. It requires a clearly missionary approach in which priority is given to the first proclamation of the Gospel among the people of other faiths. It has to assume more and more the new culture of social communication in order to improve the quality of human and Christian communication.

19.8. Youth, YM and Family

⁶⁵ Cf. Pontificio Consiglio Delle Comunicazioni Sociali, *Etica nelle comunicazioni sociali*, in "L'Osservatore Romano" 140(9 giugno 2000)23, nn. 25, 30.

The family is a privileged place of reference for formation, unity, friendship and relationships (YS -36), and there the youth grow in affectivity and in moral consciousness (YS 32-40). Family is an integral part of every Church/societal community. For many, the cultural value of acknowledging generations, past and present, parallels an understanding of the Church's tradition. Many youth in the parishes find themselves caught between two cultures: their family's particular ethnic culture - to which they often wish to remain loyal - and the larger mainstream world/western culture. As many view the parish as a trustworthy foundation, the YM have the unique opportunity to collaborate and support them. The Synod on youth strongly emphasizes on the importance of involving the family in the process of youth formation through the appreciation of family values, traditional cultures and other religions.⁶⁶

The role of the parents and the elderly has a key element for education and formation of personal identity of the young generations (YS 34). Through careful guidance, the family as a whole help the young "discover the living richness of the past, treasuring its memory and making use of it for their choices and opportunities (YS 35). YM has to promote intergenerational dialogue among families. For example, identify a core family value, and describe ways in which that value is passed on from one generation to the next; expand resources for marriage preparation programs. With the increase of inter-ethnic, ecumenical and interreligious marriages, faith forums or events can provide dialogue on sensitive topics that may not be addressed successfully in domestic settings, such as live-in together, or interracial and interfaith marriages.

20. Evaluation of the YPP

The success of the YPP depends on its constant adaptation, assimilation and execution as per the deliberations of the CBCI and CCBI, aiming towards an holistic development of youth through peace and harmony; focusing on the youth's vocational dimension with special attention given to the poorest; through a linked coordination between various commissions (Youth Ministry, Missions, Education and Culture, Dalits and marginalized, Family, Social Communication, etc.).

The present YPP has to respond to the new needs and expectations of the young, with openness to new schemes, programs and practices, through practical application of structures, objectives, principles, and *a planning mentality* within various contexts and situations. It has to adopt a *unified and organic vision* of YM, centred on the person, at the same time strengthen *the community dimension of pastoral activity*.

We hope that these above proposals and guidelines have put in clear evidence, schematic and precise way, that all individuals who are in search of an "inculturized" YM in the Indian context, must take into consideration the orientative elements proposed, and the problems of the concrete context of the cultural and religious

⁶⁶ Cf. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy, Colloquium of Asian Catholic Chaplains (1994): *Accompanying the Youth*, Lucky Press, Manila 1996, p.16.

pluralism. Additionally, it is important to analyse the actual youth situation and proceed "together" with a spirit of dialogue and with a hope towards the future. With the new criteria of YM, the validity of the plan could be examined in perspective and in comparison to the existing challenges and its flexibility for re-projection. It is essentially a problem of mentality and methodology; it is a challenge to face and not to give up.

The YM is not just a "doing" activity for the youth and for forming future youth animators for such "recipients." Therefore, an evaluation of the indicated YM, helps to establish its validity to improve it in the context of the cultural and religious pluralism. It affirms that within the diversified cultures and religions, an inculturized YM in a socio-cultural and non-Christian surrounding, should take into account the concrete religious and cultural elements; that the YM should be anchored to the dialogue on different fronts, and in a peace-filled and harmonious ambient in particular.

An evaluation of the functioning YPP, therefore, is an essential criterion in the pastoral mission. It will have the following dimensions: a permanent system of evaluation in order to acquire and grow in this mentality; self-evaluation as an educative praxis; evaluations in the light of the criteria and methods proposed, and in the light of main focuses of YM within the five-year term.

In consultation and collaboration with the Co-ordinators of diocesan/regional YM within the different contexts, one can identify criteria for the evaluation at the end of the five-year period.

As a follow up to the *objectives* and the *focus of attention*, the following success indicators are proposed to show whether the elements have been realised:

- ✓ Programmes for the formation of YM Co-ordinators towards a *systematic youth ministry* and with a *clear vocational proposal*.
- ✓ Constant communication *with the co-ordinators and other key persons* according to what has been agreed upon and in relation to some priority themes.
- ✓ Criteria, elaborated by the YM department and proposed to the YM Co-ordinators, for the translation of the *guidelines for YM given by the CBCI and CCBI* in the light of the Synod on Youth (2018).
- ✓ Formative programs, elaborated by the YM department and proposed to the YM Co-ordinators for the consolidation and growth of the animating core group.
- ✓ Plan of action for the YM in higher educational environment.
- ✓ A working and autonomous Commission for the co-ordination of youth in Schools/Vocational Training Centres.
- ✓ Programme for the further study of Social and *Educommunication*.
- ✓ Modules for the formation of Youth Animators and youth in general, especially for the poor youth and those at risk.
- ✓ Educative proposal for the unorganised youth.
- ✓ Formation of animators, consolidation of the ICYM: formulation of the ICYM at the regional/national level, the identity of other Catholic youth movements and associations in the country and their participation in common youth meetings and programs.

21. Problematic aspects of YPP

To 'do' YM in the context of the Indian cultures, it is necessary to know the varied cultural settings and the problems of the youth well. In the present proposal an effort has been made to explain the motivations and the convictions to insert the YM within the varied cultures of India. The main attention to the youth problems finds its place in an interreligious context that demands a new program of YM within a complex society. It also has noted the context of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in which it necessitates an authentic evangelization through the process of building peace and harmony. The discourse sets the limits of the program of YM that accentuate a common problem in the multireligious and multiethnic context, enabling to unite all the Churches to meet in different cultural and religious contexts.⁶⁷

The acquaintance of the contemporary youth culture and the function and structure of the YM, do not indicate automatically as to how to do the YM in a multireligious and multicultural context. It is a specific task of the Church, which must be studied, invented, tried out and verified. This is a binding challenge, difficult but not impossible.

The indicated plan is a step towards a contextualised planning of YM in the actual reality of the diverse dioceses. Besides the proposals along with analysis of the project, there have been some critical reflections, stating objectively the ambient of the YM, using the criteria of youth accompaniment, vocational discernment, evangelisation, missionary spirit, social media, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, in order to confront and to orient towards a renewal of the content, criteria, method and lines of actions. But, in a complex situation as in India, it is difficult to re-launch the YM program, starting with the cultural anthropology and at the end to give concrete pastoral orientations in view of the intercultural and interreligious dialogue.⁶⁸ The present model, therefore, seems not only vast but also complex, in the sense that the affirmations are interim. It is difficult to explain "oriental" thoughts (philosophical-mystical) in a precise term through a purely a systematic project without betraying them, as they are different from the western thoughts (pluralistic dualism) and with their varied facets found with the present generation of youth.

A projective orientation, without the active participation by the youth, is not worthy of being an YPP. It still remains a challenge, that this plan has an able methodology that would enable to form co-responsible animators of YM, to help towards a life of faith of the young people in the context of the religious and cultural pluralism. With the religious values put in light along with interreligious dialogue, in order to enrich the YM, all the young people must work together (Christians and others belonging to various religious traditions) collaborating together to realise the integration of faith-life.

What kind of YM, then, can we think of, in the multireligious Indian cultures? It is a very delicate and decisive question for the youth pastoral work of the Church

⁶⁷ Cf. J. Gevaert, *Catechesi e cultura contemporanea*, LDC, Torino 1993, p. 14.

⁶⁸ Cf. F. Vincent Anthony, *Generative themes of Inculturation* -2, in "Salesianum" 57(1995) 3, pp. 511-512.

today. Generally, problems don't exist as regards the truths to be transmitted, or the fidelity to the Revelation. The central problem is, how to communicate this truth to the young people in the multicultural context. The Church does not "organise" but she "generates". If one who tries to bring the Good News does not possess it within himself/herself and does not know how to transmit it in a comprehensive language to the young people, it is a pastoral failure, fatally arid, and barren, that ends up in emptying itself of any significant meaning.

The youth world in India also faces the challenges of the consumeristic world. A subsequent challenge is this: does the Church through the YM know how to give hope to the youth world? A plan of inculturation of the YM, without an awareness of this reality is only a hope of the animators that remains impersonal in interpreting today's youth. Consequently, the YPP runs the risk of distancing from life and becomes an "opera" of experts through a setup of 'dry' structural organism. It runs the risk of not making young people an integral part of the planning.

Again, which YM in the era of internet, with which modality of innovative communication to form a real and new culture? An inter-disciplinary dialogue is required with a revision of the 'language' of evangelisation, of the role of the educational institutions and of the pastoral plans of the dioceses. Before the multimedial forces and the present pluralistic situation, the YM seems to be inadequate. But the theme of inculturation of YM in the multireligious and multicultural context always and at each season, is actual.

22. Conclusion: Elements of Hope

"The fundamental attitude of hope, on one hand, pushes the Christian not to lose the final goal that gives sense and value to his existence and, instead, it offers him solid and deep motivations for the daily engagement in the transformation of the reality in order to conform it to the plan of God" (*TMA* 46). The repetition of the central idea that is the pressing necessity to develop an inculturated YM in the context in which one works, is the way of hope. To 'do' YM means to incarnate the faith in the culture that forms the centre of existence. One can not refuse or avoid the multicultural and multireligious reality, instead, it requires an understanding of this reality, accept and convert it through an evangelisation in context for peace and harmony. The so-called process of inculturation, therefore, is most decisive and necessary for an YPP in India.

This proposed orientation for YPP has tried to elaborate a plan of coscientization on the existing problem in the setting of criteria and methodology of the YP. It comes as a help to chart out an YM grafted in the culture and, at the same time, faithful to the grand tradition and patrimony of India. It takes into account that the sign of hope is to see how the YM in India is organised involving the young progressively: the whole nation is in search of a projectuality of language and common objective. It does not deal with bringing young people to the Church, but the Church accompanying them in their own settings and where they are in different ways (YS 91-100). The choice of the areas - listening, accompaniment, evangelisation, missionary, vocational discernment, social service, inculturation and interreligious dialogue for peace and harmony - is meant to motivate the young people to be conscious and to

engage themselves with the conviction that they are called to build the future of the human society.

Being minority in a multiethnic and multireligious country means ‘fighting’ continually in order to affirm the identity as citizens and as Christians as equal to the Hindus and Muslims and other religious groups. Without a profound engagement of interreligious dialogue the violence against the Christians will increase. It will be encouraging to see the Christian young people always in a peaceful co-existing with other young people, majority of whom are forbearing and hospitable through reciprocal dialogue and friendship. For the recognition of a better role of the Christians, the youth have the duty to incarnate the evangelical values through identification with the poor, tolerance, justice for the repressed and the human dignity of the underprivileged. In this way they could give witness to their faith in a society that lives off contradictory and inadequate values.

The present orientations have given attention to important themes in Indian context and it invites to renew the choices for the YM, giving attention to the cultural and religious problems, to formulate and testify with joy, goodness and enthusiasm, new hypothesis of co-existence in peace and unity, for the Kingdom of God. YM starts from the last, from the needs and from the hopes of the underprivileged youth. It requires, therefore, collaboration with all the available energies of the Church - movements, groups, associations, and the world of the lay and consecrated adults.

The intimate heart of the mission of the Church is the spirit of dialogue, a dialogue of human experiences of God, and of light and love of the message of Christ. The foundation of YM, therefore, is a hope not based on results, but on the intercultural and interreligious dialogue (of life and faith) for universal unity through accompaniment, careful listening, and through peace and harmonious living. Each person, putting at disposition his or her energy and his or her charism, can make the ecclesial community more dialogical and more Church of ‘hope’ with and for the young people, for the simple reason that, “(t)here are different operations, but God is the same that works all in all. And to each has been given a distinctive manifestation of the Spirit for the common use” (1 *Cor* 12: 6-7).