

GUIDELINES FOR THE PASTORAL OF VOCATIONS OF THE MISSIONARIES OF THE HOLY FAMILY

(2012-2016)

01. The pastoral of vocations has its roots in the Gospel and in the charisma that brings us together and gives us encouragement. The pastoral of vocations is necessary because of the diminishing number of members. It is also a service to the Church that has entrusted it to us and which the faithful expect from us.
02. The Constitutions say that “we consider the pastoral of vocations a serious task”, to realize our mission in the Church and in the world. It does not mean that we look for vocations for the consecrated life and for the priesthood only for our own Congregation (vgl. Konst. 3; DG 08). In principle it means to promote the various vocations for the Church and the world.
03. We take the changes in culture and in Christian life seriously. We have got to find new ways in the pastoral of vocations. We are convinced that this includes everything without exception. We are conscious that the example of our fraternal life and the enthusiasm, with which we work in the missions, will prepare the ground for the various vocations (vgl. Konst. 3; DG 07).
04. The General Government knows about the necessity of an authentic and ambitious pastoral of vocations that has to be made known in the whole Church. It serves to revive the Charisma of our Congregation. The recommendations that the conference of the Congregational Council made for the pastoral of vocations in Madagascar in October 2010, are the basis for these guidelines, which are valid for the pastoral of vocations in the whole of the Congregation until December 2016.

I – THE FOUNDATIONS

05. The foundations for our work in the pastoral of vocations come from our faith, which we receive in the Church:
 - a) The word of Jesus Christ is relevant: “The harvest indeed is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Pray therefore that the Lord of the harvest will send out labourers into his harvest” (Mt 9, 37.38);
 - b) Jesus Christ always calls to send men and women into his harvest: “Come after me, and I will make you into fishers for men » (Mark 1,17);
 - c) The Church consists of people that are called and sent. The various vocations complement one another and are equally important;
 - d) The vocations for a special consecration (consecrated life and priesthood) are also essential for the life in the Church in future;
 - e) The pastoral of vocations is a service, of which the people of God have a right;
 - f) A vital, dynamic and a missionary Church arouses and prepares vocations;
 - g) Our concrete witness for a fraternal and missionary life gives credibility to the pastoral of vocations;
 - h) The service to the various vocations is an essential part of our Charisma.

II – THE MOTIVATION

06. The reason for the pastoral of vocations does not lie in the necessity, to fill up institutional vacancies or to keep up the ecclesiastical structure. We feel urged through our zeal for the Gospel, to lead people to a personal encounter with Jesus, who is our way, truth and life. We also see the importance to respond to his call.

07. In addition:

- a) Fr. Berthier was an enthusiastic animator and competent formator for various vocations. He drew attention to the way of life of the Holy Family, in which vocations can grow, also the vocation for lay-people and in marriage like Mary and Josef;
- b) Co-operation is not a burden, but a favour and a privilege. We do it that God may continue to call youths for the mission or another serious service;
- c) The universal Church and also the local churches have need of various vocations;
- d) Youths are generous also in our time. However we need persons that encourage young people and who accompany them to their vocation;
- e) As we want to continue with our mission and as the number of members is decreasing, we have got to address young people and to draw their attention to our specific mission.

III – THE PRINCIPLES

08. The movement of the spiritual and ecclesiastical renewal, which was wanted by the Second Vatican Council, expects from us a new pastoral of vocations. The pastoral has to become up-to-date (cfr. *Nuove Vocazioni per una Nuova Europa*, 26):

- a) The original perspective and forming power of general pastoral of vocations has to be: gradual and convergent, general and specific, universal and constant, personal and communicative;
- b) It lies in the responsibility of the whole ecclesiastical community. It has to organize an organic pastoral and has to inspire the whole apostolate of the Church;
- c) It is to be done in accordance and in a strict co-operation with the pastoral of youths and families;
- d) It has to be done in confidence and in dialogue with young people. It has to respect cultural pluralism and specific aspects of youths in cities;
- e) It has to find lay-people as animators for the pastoral of vocations. It has to be conscious of the dignity and the values of every single vocation in the Church;
- f) It has to change the houses of formation into centres for vocation. It has to accept those who are called, and has to avoid simple propaganda.

IV – THE CHANGES

09. The Church seriously respects the cultural changes that came up at the end of last century. She asks to bring the pastoral of vocations into line with these changes (cfr. *Nuove Vocazioni per una Nuova Europa*, 13). This is not only said to the new churches or provinces, but also to the old churches and provinces. A few steps have to be tried, among others:

FROM A PASTORAL OF VOCATIONS ...	TO A PASTORAL OF VOCATIONS ...
a) In a situation of need, in connexion with the crises and lack of vocations ...	As an expression of a continuous and consequent motherhood of the Church, open and without obstacles towards God;
b) that appreciates and fosters one's own vocation ...	That appreciates and fosters all vocations in the Church;

c) that restricts oneself to a few categories of people ...	That has courage to address all and to speak about vocations;
d) that comes from anxiety to have to continue certain fields of work ...	That lives from hope and Christian faith and that is open to something new and to the future, to which God encourages;
e) that is often insecure and anxious and feels inferior to those who proclaim a culture against vocations” ...	<i>That gives encouragement that every person has gifts from God that have to be detected and fostered;</i>
f) that looks for new members in the first place and in surroundings of competition...	That aims at serving a person that he may understand the plan of God in his life for the benefit of the Church;
g) that is inclined to take to doubtful means, to get vocations from outside...	That is lead by the conviction the Lord will continue to call vocations in the Church and in every country;
h) that acts from temporary experiences and with lonely animators, that improvise ...	That begins a process of education of animators of vocations and that observes a prudent method of accompanying;
i) That is sick and tired from resignation about temporary youths, which is the only reason for the crisis of vocations ...	That has the courage to ask the correct questions in order to understand probable misunderstandings and to get a new creative zeal;
j) that is only looking for vocations ...	That prepares animators that are always educators of the faith and formators of vocations.

V – THE ORGANISATION

10. It is clear that this cannot be the task of a single confrere. All members and the province as a whole have continually to evaluate the pastoral of vocations and have to elaborate a comprehensive and serious project. The pastoral of vocations is a task of the whole Church and religious communities. We have got to create elementary structures on various levels:

- a) A group for vocations in all parishes, we are working in;
- b) A confrere in every religious community who is responsible;
- c) A confrere or even some confreres who are responsible in every province;
- d) A group of the province of those responsible in the communities;
- e) A confrere who is responsible in the whole Congregation.

V – COURSE OF STUDY

11. The traditions and initiatives of the various provinces and regions have to be respected. The pastoral of vocations is always inculturated and put in line with the situation. Inspired by the disciples of Emmaus (vgl. Lk 24,13-35), we will organize a common way with the following stages:

TIME	MEANS	THOSE RESPONSIBLE
1) to sow and motivate (always and everywhere, especially among scouts, altar boys and youths);	Preaching of the Gospels of vocations in normal pastoral work for youths and families; retreat and courses;	All members of the community and the province; Lay-people in parishes;
2) to address personally (youth visiting a community);	Various means of organic pastoral of vocations;	All members of the community and the province; Lay-people in parishes;
3) accompanying and educating (young people looking for their vocation, voluntaries);	Programme and concrete activities of animation and formation of vocations; spiritual direction;	Groups in parishes, those responsible in communities and the group of the province;
4) Accepting and giving advice for decision (for youths who want to have experiences among us);	Visits to families, retreat, temporary reception in our houses, conversations, help through specialists, etc.;	Those responsible in the communities, group of the province and a responsible confrere.

VI - ACTIVITIES

12. The concrete activities are different in various regions. Therefore every province has to elaborate and realize a pastoral plan every year. We can suggest some common activities that have priority in the whole Congregation:

- a) Prayer for vocations in all communities and parishes;
- b) Prayer and Bible groups in every community and in parishes;
- c) Meetings for reflexions, regular animation and talks with youths;
- d) Retreat that are directed to vocations;
- e) Sport, cultural and religious events for youths;
- f) Presence in modern media and social networks;
- g) Preparing and publication of special material, calendars, maps, T-shirts, brochure, etc.);
- h) Days and courses for formation for lay-formators;
- i) Common days with youths in our communities and houses of formation;
- j) Visits in families and communities of vocations.

VII – DECISION

13. We offer assistance for decision to youths who feel called to religious life and missionary work in the spirit of the Holy Family that they may find out, whether their vocation is genuine:

- a) Good physical and mental health;
- b) Free, convinced and independent to take decisions;

- c) Open to the grace of God that is effective in one's own life;
- d) Mature faith and personal decision to follow Jesus Christ;
- e) Firm and conscious desire to serve brothers and sisters;
- f) Wish and capacity to live in a community;
- g) Appreciation of the missionary charisma of the Congregation;
- h) Intention to participate in the activities of the Missionaries of the Holy Family.

VIII – THE OLD PROVINCES

14. Our pastoral of vocations has not the only aim to find young people in order to fill up apostolic gaps or to save the ecclesiastical structure. It is our mission to accompany and to educate faithful people that they can find and live their vocation in the Church and in the world. The pastoral of vocations is not only a privilege and responsibility of the young provinces alone. The old provinces can and must realize the apostolate of vocations according to their possibilities, of which the Church and the Congregation has a need. They can do it through their fundamental attitude and own activities:
- a) Through the conviction that God continues to call workers for his harvest;
 - b) By building up and accompanying groups that pray in the communities and parishes;
 - c) Through daily prayers for vocations in the communities;
 - d) Through giving a direction to pastoral of vocations in every apostolate;
 - e) Through fostering vocations of lay-people in the Church and in society;
 - f) Through making known news about vocations in the Congregation;
 - g) Through support (spiritual and financial) of a young province, through communication and prayer;
 - h) Through preparedness to accept those who are called and to accompany them (young people and those who are not any more young).

IX – THE ANIMATOR OF VOCATIONS

15. We do not want to draw too ideal a profile of an animator for the pastoral of vocations. However, those who have been nominated for animation of vocations, have to be prepared to foster some preconditions and essential qualities:
- a) He must have found himself and satisfaction as a fruit of his own vocation. In this way he will be able to show a positive picture of a religious, priest and missionary;
 - b) He has to do his service that was entrusted to him for the benefit of the Church and society with happiness;
 - c) Open to all vocations and services in the Church that complete mutually;
 - d) He has to have a basic training for the pastoral of youths and of vocations to recognize the realities in society and also the cultural tendencies and problems, which might come up when accompanying young people.
15. The animator of vocations has to let mature some qualities that qualify him to work in his mission with simplicity and enthusiasm. Some fundamental qualities are mentioned here below.
- a) *A contemplative attitude or capacity to detect the presence of God in one's concrete life;*
 - b) *Hearing and openness to the voice of God, who speaks through the sign of the time, especially through youths, to whom the service of discernment and animation is dedicated;*

- c) *A broadminded heart and spirit, to witness the community of the Church and to co-operate in the programmes of the dioceses and to appreciate the various vocations in the Church;*
- d) *Human beings who are able to live in a community, who have a sense of belonging for the Congregation. Persons who appreciate Fr. Berthier and who identify themselves with our charisma and spirituality;*
- e) A sincere interest in youths, and love that is expressed more through life than through words; a beauty of life which is completely dedicated to God and his kingdom.

X – A PRAYER

Sower on the field and shepherd of the flock!

You see the world in our time and your heart is moved:

So many people are tired and exhausted
and live like sheep that have no shepherd.

The harvest is plentiful but there are only few labourers.

Ask the Father of the harvest to send labourers who serve:

Men and women with a wide heart to love and to fight;

Magnanimous, to give themselves to you and to the people;

Prepared to live fraternity, without commitment to relationship and home country:

With the desire to be close to those who are far off.

Arouse the same passion in our communities
that burnt in Fr. Berthier.

Let us be untiring apostles for our vocation;

Create in our communities an atmosphere of acceptance and inner growth

For those you have called that they may serve your and our brothers and sisters.

Amen.

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