

# AUTHENTIC ACCOMPANIERs

*Reflections for ourselves as we  
work with the young*



***SYNOD FRUITs***

Extracts from the 2018 Synod Final Document taken from synod2018.va

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# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource is intended to help you think more deeply about your ministry and work with the young by engaging with extracts from the 2018 Synod on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment final document.

This can be used as a standalone resource for contemplation or reflection, or can be built into more regular times of prayer on a daily or weekly basis.

This booklet is one of a pair, both of which hope to enrich our ministry for and with the young. While this booklet looks more at ourselves as individuals, the other booklet looks more to our ministries themselves.

**Spend some time reflecting on these extracts, using the questions as prompts for your reflections.**

**On the inside of the back cover is a prayer from Pope Francis about the synod.**

## I. On the road to Emmaus

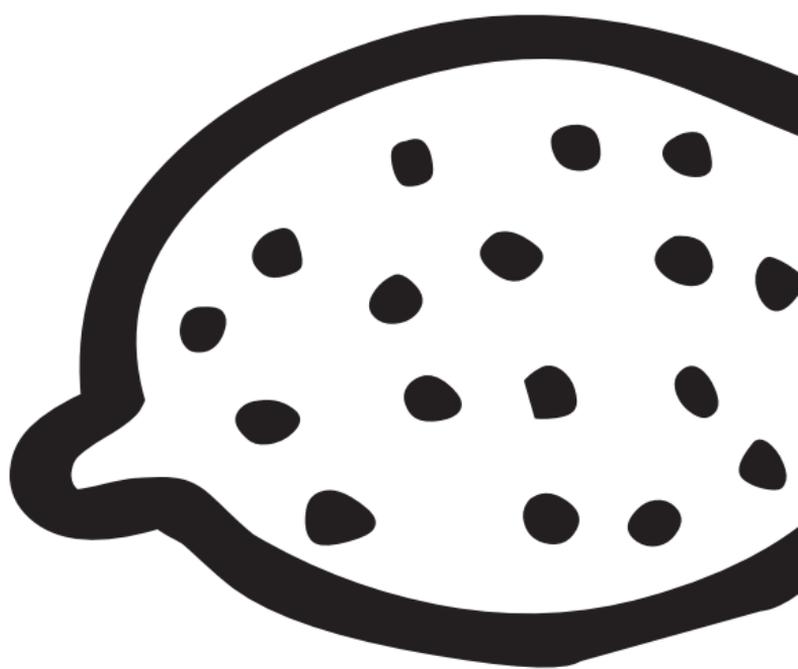
We [the Synod Fathers] took the account of the journey to Emmaus (cf Lk 24:13-35) as a paradigmatic text for understanding the Church's mission to younger generations. This passage expresses well what we experienced at the Synod and what we would like every one of our particular Churches to be able to experience in relation to the young. Jesus walks with these two disciples who have not grasped the meaning of what happened to him, while they are moving away from Jerusalem and from the community. So as to be in their company, he walks alongside them. He asks them questions and he listens patiently to their version of events, so as to help them recognize what they are experiencing. Then, with affection and energy, he proclaims the Word to them, leading them to interpret the events they have experienced in the light of the Scriptures. He accepts the invitation to stay with them as evening falls: he enters into their night. As they listen, their hearts burn within them and their minds are enlightened; in the breaking of bread their eyes are opened. It is they who then choose to resume their journey at once in the opposite direction, to return to the community, sharing the experience of their encounter with the Risen Lord.



- Is our desire to work with the young born of an encounter with the Risen Lord, as it was with the disciples he met on the road to Emmaus?

## 2. True authority

In order to undertake a true journey of maturation, the young need authoritative adults. In its etymological meaning, *auctoritas* indicates the capacity to cause to grow; it does not express the idea of a directive power, but of a real generative force. When Jesus encountered the young, in whatever state and condition they might find themselves, even if they were dead, in one way or another he said to them: "Arise! Grow!" And his word brought about what he was saying (cf. Mk 5:41; Lk 7:14). In the episode of the healing of the possessed epileptic (cf. Mk 9:14-29), which evokes so many of the forms of alienation experienced by young people today, it seems clear that Jesus stretches out his hand not to take away freedom but to activate it, to liberate it. Jesus fully exercises his authority: he wants nothing other than the growth of the young person, without a trace of possessiveness, manipulation or seduction. #71



- **How does authority manifest itself in your ministry? Is it one which inspires freedom, rather than based on what is safe or comfortable?**

### **3. Accompanying the whole person**

Accompaniment cannot limit itself to the path of spiritual growth and to the practices of the Christian life. Equally fruitful is accompaniment along the path of gradual assumption of responsibilities within society, for example in the professional sphere or in socio-political engagement. In this sense, the Synodal Assembly points to the importance of the Church's social teaching. In society and in ecclesial communities that are ever more intercultural and multireligious, there is need for accompaniment that focuses specifically on relationship with diversity, that sees it as a mutual enrichment and as a possibility for fraternal communion, against the twofold temptation of retreating within one's own identity and relativism. #94



- Does our way of working risk looking only to the spiritual rather than engaging with ‘the whole of the young person’?
- Do we allow young people to accompany us, especially in regard to difference and diversity?

## 4. Open to the Spirit

In many ways, the young ask us to describe the qualities needed in an accompanier. The service of accompaniment is a genuine mission, which requires apostolic availability on the part of those who provide it. Like the deacon Philip, the accompanier is called to obey the call of the Spirit, going outwards and leaving behind the safe area enclosed by the walls of Jerusalem, a figure of the Christian community, so as to set out towards an inhospitable desert place, perhaps a dangerous one, in which he makes the effort to pursue a chariot. Having reached it, he must find a way of entering into a relationship with the foreign traveller, so as to elicit a question that perhaps would never have been formulated spontaneously (cf. Acts 8:26-40). In brief, 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. #101



- **Are we open to experimenting, leaving the safety of our normal programs and strategies by placing ourselves at the disposal of the spirit?**

## 5. Spiritual rootedness

A good accompanier is a person who is balanced, a listener, a person of faith and prayer, who has the measure of his own weaknesses and frailties. Hence he knows how to be accepting of the young people he accompanies, without moralizing and without false indulgence. When necessary he also knows how to offer a word of fraternal correction.

The awareness that accompanying is a mission that requires a profound spiritual rootedness will help him to remain free in his dealings with the young people he accompanies: he will respect the outcome of their journey, supporting them with prayer and rejoicing in the fruits that the Spirit produces in those who open their hearts to him, without seeking to impose his own will and his own preferences. Equally he will be capable of placing himself at their service, not taking centre stage or adopting possessive and manipulative attitudes that create dependence rather than freedom in others. This profound respect will also be the best guarantee against any risk of domination or abuse of any kind. #102



- **Do we give ourselves the time and appropriate support to ensure we retain our spiritual rootedness and balance?**

## 6. Avoiding fragmentation

While recognizing that planning for pastoral activities is necessary, in order to avoid improvisation, on several occasions the Synod Fathers voiced their disquiet over a certain fragmentation of the Church's pastoral approach. In particular, they spoke of the multiplicity of pastoral approaches to the young: youth ministry, family or vocational ministry, school and university chaplaincy, social, cultural, charitable, free time activities, etc. The multiplication of offices that are highly specialized, but sometimes working independently of one another, does not make the Christian message any more accessible. In a fragmented world, the young need to be helped to unify life, interpreting their daily experiences and discerning deeply. If this is the priority, it is necessary to develop greater coordination and integration between the different spheres, passing from a work for "offices" to a work for "projects". #141



- Do we always have an awareness of how other ministries who engage the young operate, whether it be in family or parish settings, or at previous or next on the journeys of young people?

## 7. The risk of minimalist proposals

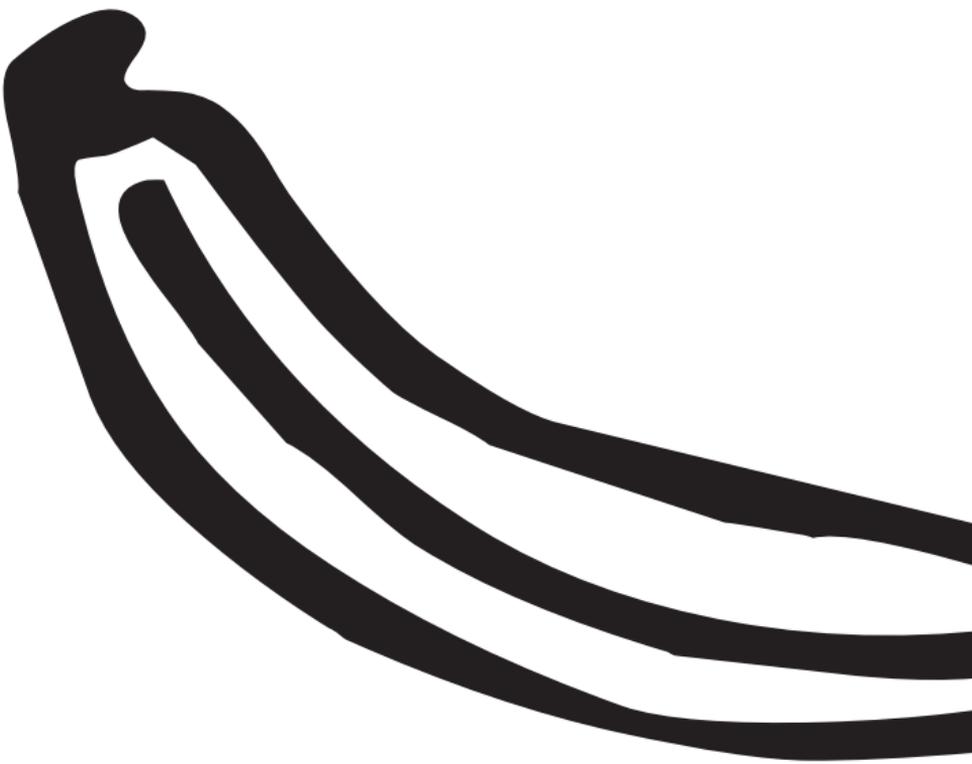
Mission is a sure target for life's journey, but not a "satellite navigation system" which lays out the whole route in advance. Freedom always entails a dimension of risk which needs to be evaluated with courage and accompanied wisely, according to the "law of graduality". Many pages in the Gospel portray Jesus inviting us to be daring, to put out into the deep, to pass from the logic of following commandments to that of generous and unconditional gift, without concealing the requirement to take up one's cross (cf. Mt 16:24). He is radical: "He gives all and he asks all: he gives a love that is total and asks for an undivided heart" (Francis, Homily, 14 October 2018). Without misleading the young through minimalist proposals or overwhelming them with a corpus of rules that give Christianity a reductive and moralistic image, we are called to invest in their fearlessness and to educate them to take on responsibilities, in the sure knowledge that error, failure and crisis are experiences that can strengthen their humanity. #70



- **Can our faith become sanitized, either comfortable and ordinary, or a mere rulebook?**
- **How, in the midst of our day to day of our ministry do we keep an undivided heart?**

## 8. Patience

Spiritual accompaniment is intended to help people integrate step by step the various dimensions of their lives so as to follow the Lord Jesus. In this process three elements can be identified: listening of life, encounter with Jesus and mysterious dialogue between God's freedom and that of the individual. Those who accompany should be welcoming and patient, they elicit pertinent questions and recognize the signs of the Spirit in the replies of the young. #97



- **Are there times when distraction or business might prevent us from hearing the signs of the spirit from young people?**

Lord Jesus,  
inspired by the Synod,  
your Church turns her attention to  
all the young people in the world.

We pray that they might boldly  
take charge of their lives,  
aim for the most beautiful  
and profound things of life  
and always keep their  
hearts unencumbered.

Accompanied by wise and  
generous guides,  
help them respond to the call  
you make to each of them,  
to realize a proper plan of life  
and achieve happiness.

Keep their hearts open to  
dreaming great dreams  
and make them concerned  
for the good of others.

Like the Beloved Disciple,  
may they stand at the  
foot of the Cross,  
to receive your Mother as  
a gift from You.

May they be witnesses  
to your Resurrection  
and be aware that you  
are at their side  
as they joyously proclaim  
you as Lord.

Amen.

Pope Francis' Synod Prayer  
(slightly adapted)