



Itaara, 10 September 2017

Dear Holy Father and bishops gathered for the youth on "young people, faith and vocational discernment,"

We are the Schoenstatt Boys Youth of Brazil, one of many groups belonging to the Apostolic Schoenstatt Movement. We wrote this letter during our Ninth National Forum, where the leaders of our youth met to make decisions and define the direction of our work for the coming year. With our National Marian Year drawing to a close and the 2018 Synod on the horizon, we felt motivated to collaborate by writing this letter, in addition to participating in the collection of data through the questionnaires.

We are very happy that the Synod will be held, because we can feel the love and maternal care that the Church has for us. We know the importance of this moment for the future of the Catholic Church in the world, and we recognise that our participation is essential to provide a good understanding about the reality of the Brazilian youth.

We want to share our own experience as young people living our faith in the society we live. The Schoenstatt charism encourages us to find sanctity in our daily lives and to be New People (cf Eph 4:24) whose lifestyle is coherent with our faith. The centre of our spirituality is the Covenant of Love with Mary. Within this attachment, she educates us to be like Christ and, with her, we commit ourselves to develop a Christian personality that is free, firm and apostolic, according to the desire of our founder, Fr. Joseph Kentenich.

One of the key elements we strive to emphasise are fraternal bonds in our groups and apostolic activities. The joy and enthusiasm of the members of our youth result in a very intense missionary practice, taking us along the path of formation and the aspiration towards sanctity. We live the culture of encounter by searching for a deep experience of authentic human attachments, driven by a supernatural religious experience: interior communion in our community makes our communion with God visible.

For well over a decade, our missionary awareness has grown significantly. We have many activities throughout the year that develop this awareness, such as missions dedicated to visiting a parish community (with a strong experience of community, proclaiming the *kerigma* and the Word, and liturgical celebrations to draw more people to the Church (and local projects with a social and religious dimension (deeds of solidarity, visits to poor communities, etc). In this regard, we identify with the missionary current of a Church that strives to reach out, in which the young people themselves become protagonists in evangelising the youth.

We believe that this fraternal and missionary environment in our groups promotes vocational discernment, as a result of the atmosphere of the friendship, trust and religiosity that exists among the youth, as well as in their relationship with those who are responsible for the groups. We have also observed that our formation, aimed at holistic growth, leads us to a spiritual and human process so that that each member of our youth feels invited by God to

discover and follow a personal ideal. In this process, vocational discernment is fundamental. In this way, the issue of vocation emerges naturally in each one's journey of formation, according to his uniqueness and interior development. Discernment, in fact, happens in a personal and particular way, through spiritual accompaniment.

It is from this experience of faith that we also look at the wide reality of Brazilian youth in today's society. It is not easy to talk about this because there are great regional, cultural and socio-economic differences in our country, the fruits of great diversity and inequality that is part of our history. Nevertheless, it worries us that our society is increasingly marked by the poor use of technology, in its excessive use, by socio-political and cultural conflicts and personal relationships that are based on interests.

In addition to all these factors, our country is going through a time of great political crisis. In light of this very complex reality, it concerns us that Catholic youth are not always engaged in political issues, often because they are unable to defend our faith or out of a lack of interest. On the other hand, those that are engaged often abandon the principles of the Gospel. We also note that very often the youth of the new generation allow themselves to be guided by their feelings, which leads them to make decisions without a solid foundation, because they only have superficial concepts. In this context, when they encounter situations that contradict the faith, they take the easy route by abandoning it.

We realise that in places of academic university formation, a time where young people are more likely to express their opinions and involve themselves in political and social issues, religion no longer plays a prominent role, and in many contexts, it has completely lost its importance. This results in debates on the national and global socio-political reality that are divorced from Christian values. Ours is the conviction that today's Catholic youth needs to be motivated to participate in political and social issues, offering the wealth of their ideals and looking to build a culture of tolerance and dialogue. Catholic youth can thus find the mission to create a Cenacle atmosphere, where the Holy Spirit can guide these discussions on the basis of the love of Christ.

During this time in which our society is going through rapid changes, we believe that the evangelisation of the youth should look for new ways that take into account the concerns and real needs of the youth. We hope that the conversations held during this Synod are successful in recognizing the reality of youth today, and can therefore increasingly draw young people from various backgrounds, so that each one is active in the missionary life of the Church. We also hope that the youth respond to the fruits of the Synod with enthusiasm.

We are united in prayer for the Synod in our Shrines, imploring on the intercession of our Mother and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Schoenstatt Boys Youth of Brazil