

**AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECT ITINERARY**



ST. AUGUSTINE  
**FOR VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT**



# VOCATION MINISTRY

**"If you love Christ, follow Him!  
*I answer: I love him, but **where do I follow  
him?**"***

(St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34,8-9)

## Augustinian itinerary for *vocational discernment*



Order of Augustinian Recollects  
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## USE OF MATERIALS FOR VOCATIONAL MEETINGS









## USE OF MATERIALS FOR VOCATIONAL MEETINGS

*To vocational promoters and animators,*

We put in your hands seven outlines of vocational encounters, which we hope will be useful in your work as a vocational discernment process companion.

These materials are intended to cover the basic itinerary that every disciple of Jesus, the Lord, should follow in order to mature a specific option of Christian life.

They are based on the spiritual experience of vocational discernment of St. Augustine. All the themes have as a transversal axis the invitation made by the saint to follow Christ, as a consequence of having encountered him and having a friendship with him.

The sequence of the themes tries to follow the same process of the human and Christian life of St. Augustine. And the development of the content corresponds to the concrete aspects of Augustinian spirituality.

The outlines are a set of tools, resources and contents around the themes that, in principle, would cover a comprehensive discernment process. However, they are flexible materials that can be adapted or adjusted to the different realities of the groups being accompanied.

The outlines have a simple pedagogy with the purpose of facilitating the didactic development of the contents. These materials will surely be enriched with other pedagogical proposals as they are applied.

Throughout the different outlines for the vocational encounters, the personal work cards suggested by the Order of Augustinian Recollects are incorporated. The appearance of the cards in the outlines is not of numerical order, but rather thematic. However, for the sake of practicality, the cards are identified with a number.

Together with the outlines of vocational encounters and these recommendations of use that you are reading, you will also have at your disposal a material that intends to gather the spirit from which you have to work. It is the "*Letter of Identity of the Augustinian Recollect Vocation Ministry Agent*". Along with the outlines of vocational meetings and these recommendations for use that you are reading, material will also be made available to you that aims to capture the spirit from which they must work. This is the "Identity letter of the Augustinian Recollect vocational pastoral agent."

An important aspect to take into account is that the outlines for the vocational encounters focus mainly on the contact with the Word of God, especially the Gospels and the Psalms. Likewise, according to Saint Augustine, it is kept in mind that the Word of God is the safe route in the discernment of the call. For this reason, we offer a *“Practical Guide for the Augustinian lectio”*.

It should also be noted that devotion to Mary, the model of every Christian vocation, is present in the outlines; it is also an important element of Augustinian Recollect spirituality.

In the various outlines, with regards to Morning Prayer, it is at the discretion of the accompanier whether or not to introduce the recitation of Lauds. And, whether or not lauds are prayed, such a decision does not interfere with the development of the content of the materials as presented in the outlines.

As for *“popular devotions”*, such as the holy hours, the rosary, the chaplet, etc., they are hardly present in the materials of the outlines. The reason is that an attempt is made to consolidate those aspects more proper to the Augustinian Recollect charism, since they should be configuring elements in the process of discernment. However, if, at the discretion of the accompanier, it seems opportune to introduce some of these practices of Christian life in the meetings, go ahead.

The outlines for vocational encounters insist a lot on sharing in the group. The reason is that in the process of vocational discernment, besides being personal, the community aspect is also important. In this sense, it is fundamental to initiate in the Augustinian pedagogy of sharing from the heart one’s own experience of God, which is what makes the bonds of fraternity strong.

We hope that these materials will be useful to you in accompanying the people God puts in your path, to sow in their hearts a living encounter with Christ and to help them discern their particular vocation.

*Inquietar.com Project Coordination Team*

**Essential elements of identity  
of *vocational animators*  
Augustinian Recollects**







## Essential elements of identity of vocational animators Augustinian Recollects

The following material is intended to help you understand some of the elements that define and configure the profile of the Augustinian Recollect vocation animation agent, whether they are lay people, priests or religious. The material is organized around the data that is usually collected from people in the official documents of personal identity, which have different names in different countries: personal identity card, voter's card, or national identity card. It is an image that, as a pedagogical resource, will allow us to deepen our understanding of the most important aspects that define the identity of the Augustinian Recollect vocation animator.

Continuing, then, with the comparison, the data to be included in the letter of identity are: name and surname, nationality, address, unique personal code, life situation -single or married-, etc. Each of these data will be matched with an essential note of the identity of the Augustinian Recollect vocation minister. And, as colophon, some examples of diverse citizens of the Augustinian Recollect family -the saints- are proposed, who saw in depth this identity and are suggested to us as an example and stimulus in the effort of configuring one's own identity.

### 1. Augustinian **name and surname** for discernment and accompaniment

St. Augustine says: *"If you love Christ, follow him"* (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9). Vocation can only be understood as a radicalization of the following of Christ according to the Gospel.

- a) The *main commandment* of vocation ministry is: *"Come and follow me"*. *"Let us follow the Lord"*, *"If you love him, follow him"* (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).
- b) Offer *alternative environments* in which we try to break away from attachments, dependencies, distractions, attachments, bad habits, etc. *"Let us break the shackles that prevent us from following the Lord"* (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).
- c) The pastoral care of vocations, basically and fundamentally, *must inspire faith*. *"Let us be enlightened, brethren, by the eyesalve of faith"* (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).

- d) Accompaniment and vocational discernment *enliven the awareness* of the beauty of the common Christian vocation, which has its origin in baptism. "*Jesus mixed his saliva with dirt to anoint the one who was born blind. We too were born blind from Adam and need to be born again by water and the Spirit*" (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).
- e) The Incarnation is the fundamental criterion of the process of vocational discernment, and it has to do with bringing the good life of the Gospel closer to the *concrete reality of people* - life history, shadows, fears, needs, desires, affectivity, etc. - "*He mixed saliva with dirt: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*", "*because he clothed himself with flesh, he became the Way*" (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).
- f) To accompany in order to respond to a vocation is a service of *education*, in other words, to help the deep truth of the person, already inscribed in his heart, to emerge. "*Truth has sprung from the earth*" (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).
- g) The vocation agents raise *the great questions* of human and Christian life, so that people set out on the path of searching for their own answers. "*I love him; but where do I follow him?*" (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).
- h) The pastoral ministry of vocations helps to awaken in the human heart the desire, the longing; it prepares us to let ourselves be restless for the Lord. "*Desire for truth, long for life*" (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).
- i) The process of discernment is accompanied by the awareness that it is a *path of seeking what the Lord wants* for each person. "*Would you seek the way by which you might come to these [the truth and the life]*" "*Seek where? First hear him say: I am the Way. Before telling you where, he has presented the way: I am the Way, says the Lord*" (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).
- j) The pastoral care of vocations is a modest intervention that aims to help awaken every heart to the *dream of God*. "*Lazy man, get up! The Way in person has come to you and, you who were sleeping, he has awakened you from sleep, if he has awakened you; get up and walk!*" (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 34:8-9).

## 2. Augustinian **citizenship**: *Enlightening* the vocation from the Word of God

St. Augustine says: "*You have burned my heart with the fire of your love, O Lord, and your words have pierced my heart*" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 9:3). Vocation is a constant letting oneself be wounded - affected - by the Word of God, for it is the Word that sets us on fire with love.

- k) We believe the Word in order to understand the mystery of our own vocation, and we understand the mystery of our vocation when we give credit to the Word. "*Wonderful is the depth of the Scriptures*" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 12:17).



- l) The Scriptures are the sure path in the search for one's own vocation, *"In you I begin to live: you speak to me, you lecture me. I have given faith to your books, but their words are deeply secretive"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 12:10).
- m) Vocation is the call that impels us to give shape to the project of a new life in Christ, starting from the Scriptures. *"Let the Holy Scriptures be to you as a mirror"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon* 49,5).
- n) The Word of God is the nourishment for the search path of the missionary disciple. *"And let not only the mouth receive nourishment, but also the ear hunger for the Word of God"* (St. Augustine, *The Rule* 3:2).
- o) That to which God calls you is a project beyond your control; it is up to you to welcome it and embrace it with all the strength of your heart. *"I am terrified to fix my eyes on the Scriptures, but it is a horror of respect and a fear of love"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 12:17).
- p) Vocation is understood as a response of love to that love with which God wounds us with his Word, *"You wounded my heart with your Word and I burned with your love"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 10:8).
- q) To learn to savor the Scriptures is to learn to savor the call that is directed to us through them. *"Let your Scriptures be my chaste delights"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 11:3).
- r) Vocation is resolved as an encounter of two freedoms, the infinite and merciful freedom of God, and the finite and restless freedom of man, *"Your prayer is a conversation with God. When you read the Scriptures, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm* 85:7).
- s) The Scriptures prepare the response to the divine call in simplicity and humility, for they open us to an encounter with the humble God, Jesus Christ. *"The Scriptures caress the little ones"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 12:17).
- t) The vocation is a constant praise of the one who is in love with God, *"Your praises, contained in your Scriptures, should have suspended the vine shoot of my heart"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 1,27).

### 3. Direction: Augustinian style accompaniment

*"As for my life in this world, all was hesitation, and I had to purify my heart of the old leaven, and I even liked the way - Christ Himself - but I was lazy to walk through its narrowness. You then inspired me with the idea - which seemed to me excellent - to turn to Simplicianus, who appeared to my eyes as a good servant of yours and in whom your grace shone"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:1). I had heard from him that from his youth he had lived devoutly, and since he was then already an old man, it seemed to me that for such a long age, spent in the study of the things of God, he would be very experienced and very learned in many matters; and indeed he was. That is why I confided my concerns to him, so that he might indicate to me which path would be the most suitable in that

*state of mind in which I found myself to walk in the path of the Lord*" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:2).

- a) *It is done from heart to heart, that is, from Jesus Christ, from my truth, from my own limitations and vulnerability; connecting from my vital center with the one accompanied. "The souls of many men are many also; but, if they love one another, they are one soul"* (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of St. John* 14:9).
- b) *It is based on the fact that the companion has previously traveled the path that invites the companion to walk.* The orography is recognized because the companion has already been there. Certainly, the companion has not traveled all the existing paths, nor the possible ways of being lived, but has reached goals and, for this reason, knows how to orient towards them. *"Since we speak of the way, let us behave as if we were on the way: the lighter ones, wait for the slower ones and walk together"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon* 101,9).
- c) *The companion is attuned to the vital moment of search and encounter of the person being accompanied.* From the deepest desires of his or her heart, the companion comes to represent "meaning of life for the other". Special attention is given to the spiritual and psychological dynamisms of the person accompanied, which place him or her in a concrete moment of his or her faith journey. *"God is our possession and we are God's possession"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm* 36,s.1,4).
- d) *The companion perceives the direction of the deep desire of the person accompanied.* The companion follows the path of the person accompanied from the uncertainty and the sublimity of his or her own desires, which sometimes excite, but also sometimes frustrate. The companion recognizes the presence or absence of God in these desires. *"Go on, then, in your race and persevere, running to the goal; and by the example of your life and by the word of your exhortation draw as many as you can into your race"* (St. Augustine, *On the Happy Life* 23:28).
- e) *The companion helps to make the qualitative leap (conversion) that the person accompanied seeks and needs.* In this sense, orientation towards the qualitative leap that one senses that the person accompanied needs and that God asks of him/her. *"The conversion of the heart must be polarized towards God"* (St. Augustine, *Annotations on the book of Job* 28:11).
- f) *The accompaniment is given in the relationship of friendship, and that shows a pilgrim walking with another pilgrim, like Jesus Christ himself. "We do not go to Christ by running, but by believing; one does not approach Christ by the movement of the body, but by the affection of the heart"* (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of St. John* 26:3).
- g) *The companion is with the person accompanied from humility and happiness.* This path must be marked by the attitude of humility: *"first, humility, second humility, third humility; and as often as you ask me, I will answer you the same"* (St. Augustine, *Letter* 118:22; cf. *Confessions* 10:68).

- h) *The companion proposes the Word of God as the intense light that illuminates the outlines of the path. The process of maturation and vocational decision must be crossed by the biblical sense of life. "You wounded my heart with your Word and I burned with your love" (St. Augustine, The Confessions 10,8).*
- i) *The companion loves the person being accompanied in Christ. Yes, he loves him! Love that translates into care and attention, into concern for the person and his happiness. "There is no true friendship except among those whom you bind together through charity" (St. Augustine, The Confessions 4:7).*
- j) *The companion pedagogically leads the person being accompanied to the experience of living in community, to feel that he is a living stone in the Church of Christ. "We are, in fact, all at once and each one in particular, temples of his, since he deigns to dwell in the concord of all and in each one in particular" (St. Augustine, City of God 10,3,2).*

#### **4. Identification number: Augustinian-style discernment**

These few words of St. Augustine tell us about the marvelous and passionate journey he made, until he became certain of what God was asking of him in his heart: *"I was busy for a long time in many and diverse matters, and trying hard for many days to know myself, what I should choose and what I should renounce, suddenly a voice came to me, I do not know if from myself or from another, from outside or inside; it said to me: to whom will you entrust yourself to go forward" (St. Augustine, Soliloquies 1,1).* The Christian vocation is a constant journey of discernment: *"Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but be transformed by being renewed within yourselves, so that you may discern what is the will of God" (Romans 12:2).*

- a) *Keep the objective reference of faith, that which is firm and stable: the Word of God and the Magisterium of the Church. "Take into your hands with strength the venerable Scriptures of the Spirit" (St. Augustine, The Confessions 7:27).*
- b) *As long as there is no medium clarity about the path, it is recommended not to make decisions. "I determined to remain a catechumen in the Catholic Church, which had been recommended to me by my parents, until there was something certain to which I could direct my steps" (St. Augustine, The Confessions 5:25).*
- c) *For St. Augustine, discernment is the act of ordering a given reality in order to be able to see clearly what each thing is. And it has to do with differentiating and seeing clearly the differences between things. "But what is it really - who can teach me but he who enlightens my heart and discerns its shadows - what is it that comes to my mind and I wish to find out, discuss and meditate on" (St. Augustine, The Confessions 2:16).*
- d) *Good discernment requires the ability of thought to distinguish the truth from what may be secondary; freedom inclines toward the truth. "I knew how to distinguish eloquence from the truth of things, which was what I was trying to know" (St. Augustine, The Confessions 5:3).*

- e) It is discerned to love more and better. *"Do you love the earth? Do you love God? Who says they will be gods? They will not hear it from me, the Scriptures say it: they will all be gods and sons of the Most High"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of John 2:14*).
- f) To know the quality of your love, question your heart. *"He loves his brother who in the sight of God - where he alone can see and persuade the heart - questions his heart to know if he does this out of love for his brothers"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of John 6:2*).
- g) It is important to discern the conscious and unconscious motivations of our choices. *"There are many who, moved by boasting, give much, donate a lot, and seek only human praise and popular glory, full of wind without any solidity or stability"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of John 6:2*).
- h) Vocation is always a gift of God for his People on the way; and it is lived in the Church and for the Church, through charity. *"If I distribute all my goods to the poor and give my body to the flames, if I have not charity, it profits me nothing. Can anyone do this without charity? Yes, he can. But those who do not have charity break unity"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of John 6:2*).
- i) Vocation is a matter of the heart, which tends towards love. *"Love is my weight, by it I am carried wherever I am carried"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions 10:13*). *"Do you want to know what kind of love you live? See where it leads you"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 121:1*). *"Each of us should test our works, to see whether they proceed from the wellspring of charity, and whether the branches of good works blossom from the root of love"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John 6:2*).
- j) Responding to vocation is a sublime exercise of freedom. *"We are not exhorted to love nothing, but we are exhorted not to love the world, so that we may freely love and follow him who created the world"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 121:1*).

### 5. Condition of life: Augustinian recollection

The condition of the Recollect Christian life, according to the *Way of living* of the Discalced Augustinians is **charity**: *"For the goal of the Christian is charity"* (*Way of Living, Prologue 1*).

- a) *Educating for a free love.* The condition of the Christian life as the following of Jesus Christ consists basically, according to the Gospel, in renouncing oneself, taking up one's daily cross and following the Lord (cf. *Matthew 16:24*). Hence, *"he does not attain charity with perfection who neither denies nor mortifies himself"* (*Way of Living, Prologue 1*).
- b) *Educate for detachment from things.* *"In order to live charity better, the heart of man must break free, must be detached from everything"* (*Way of Living, Prologue 1*).

- c) Educate to take care of love with delicacy. "Our care must be that charity be guarded with purity and perfection" (Way of Living, Prologue 1).
- d) Educate for a living charity. "For the perfect guardianship of charity, two things are necessary: a ready and well-disposed spirit and well-ordered laws" (Way of Living, Prologue 2).
- e) Educate to access the source of charity: God. "Leaving the promptness of the spirit to God, who is the one who inspires and encourages it, we deal with the laws" (Way of Living, Prologue 1).
- f) Educate to respond to the vocation from love. "Just as our aim is to love God, so our concern must be to love all that is closest to Him" (Way of Living, 1,1).
- g) Educate for the love of others. "From the love of God comes love of neighbor" (Way of Living, 2,1).
- h) Educate for a love that is disposed for peace. "The peace of the brothers among themselves is a sure sign that the Holy Spirit lives in them" (Way of Living, 2,1).
- i) Educate for a community founded on love. "Love is best preserved among a few, and grows more with equality, because naturally one loves one's fellows" (Way of Living, 2,2).
- j) Educate for a love based on equality and attention to the weakest. "We wish that the treatment of all be equal, so we charge those responsible for the community to take into account the weak and to provide for them according to their weaknesses" (Way of Living, 2,3).

## 6. Citizens of the *city of God*: the saints

### *St. Augustine*

Augustine of Hippo was born in Tagaste (Numidia, today Algeria) on November 13, 354, the son of a pagan father and a Christian mother (St. Monica).

After studying the Greek and Latin classics in Madaura, in Carthage, around 370, the university awaited him, where he manifested a clear intellectual vocation. He devoted himself to teaching at Tagaste and Carthage. From there he went to Rome where he held the chair of Rhetoric. Seeking promotion, he competed for and won a chair in Milan.

Augustine's religious itinerary went through different beliefs moved by his continuous restlessness, which led him to situations of uneasiness and experimentation. The reading of the Bible, the advice of his mother and the sermons of Saint Ambrose, bishop of Milan, led him to a paradigmatic path of conversion in 386.

He was baptized on the night of April 24-25, 387, at the Easter Vigil, by Bishop Ambrose himself.





Faced with the needs of the Church, he was ordained a priest in Hippo in 391 and in 397 he became the bishop of that see. However, he always sought to live the faith in community, a subject of which he was a specialist in theory and practice. In fact, he was the founder of numerous communities and his influence continues to this day in the wider Augustinian Family.

His sermons, letters, and books such as *The City of God*, among many other works, have gone down in the history of Catholic literature and spirituality. Some of them are still on the bestseller lists, such as *The Confessions*, where he narrates his conversion journey.

He died in Hippo on August 28, 430, after having founded monasteries, preached the word of God with ardor and left many works that are a source for current thought and science.

### **St. Mónica**

Monica was born in Tagaste (today Algerian territory) in the year 332. As was the custom at the time, her parents arranged her marriage to Patricius, a hard-working but ill-tempered man, a gambler, without religion or spiritual zeal.

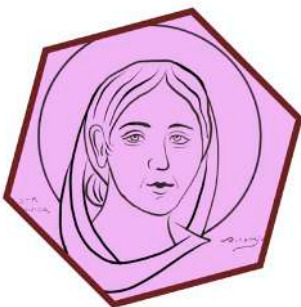
For 30 years Monica lived a life she had not wanted. They had three children. The two youngest were her joy and comfort, but the eldest, Augustine, was the cause of many anxieties due to his erratic life.

Those were times of great institutional, social and family violence, with regular physical punishments, and although Patricio had earned his reputation of bad temper, Monica never suffered them. She explained the reason to her friends: when Patricio was angry, she tried to calm down with good humor: two don't fight if one doesn't want to.

Patricius criticized Monica's much praying and her generosity to the poor, but he did not oppose her dedication to these good works. Monica prayed and in 371 succeeded in converting both her husband and her mother-in-law to the Catholic faith.

A year after being baptized, Patricio died. And Monica directed all her efforts towards Augustine, her eldest son.

After much prayer, advice, conversations and, above all, much affection, Monica influenced Augustine until his definitive conversion and baptism. Once he was baptized, he suffered from fevers that led to his death in 387, at the age of 55. But he died happy to see that he had achieved the happiness of his son.



Thousands of mothers and wives have since entrusted themselves to St. Monica. The Christian Mothers of St. Monica is an association of the Augustinian Recollect Family that brings together mothers who want to pray especially for their children and support each other.



### ***Saint Nicholas of Tolentine***

Nicholas was born in Sant'Angelo in Pontano (Italy) around 1245. He joined the Augustinians in his hometown as a student and novice at a young age.

Ordained a priest around 1273, he was assigned to Tolentino, where he spent thirty years of his life.

He was not illustrious for his writings or his science. But he did stand out, already in the society of his time, for his preaching, his pastoral dedication as a confessor and his attention to the most needy.

The spirit of charity led him to visit the poorest neighborhoods, to visit the most seriously ill and to care for both material and spiritual misery.

Contemplation and apostolate, dialogue with God and sensitivity to human problems converged in him. Austere, mystical, he found happiness in the common life from a deep love for St. Augustine and a fervent following of his Rule.

He died on September 10, 1305 with a great reputation for holiness.

Through Nicholas, God performed numerous miracles during his lifetime and after his death. He is therefore considered the intercessor of the souls in purgatory and, throughout history, his devotees sought protection against plague, fires and stuttering.

Nicholas has been for the Augustinian Family the saint who knew how to live the charismatic fidelity and put into practice the Augustinian teachings. For this reason he was proclaimed the patron of the oldest Province of the Augustinian Recollection: the Province of Saint Nicholas of Tolentine.

His iconography usually depicts him with a star on his chest for a vision the saint had of his life and holiness.

He also often appears with a partridge on a plate to reproduce a miracle in which he made a partridge fly that was presented to him roasted. It represents his penitent life.



### ***St. Rita of Cascia***

Rita was born under the name of Margherita Lotti in Roccaporena (province of Perugia, in the Italian Umbria), very close to Cascia, on May 22, 1380 or 1381.

At the age of 16 she was united by her parents in marriage to Fernando Manzini, with whom she had two children. Her spiritual life influenced her husband's conversion.

The circumstances of her time generated struggles that ended in the assassination of her husband. Despite the difficulties and the fact that the thirst for revenge was common in that society with the famous law of vendetta, she forgave her husband's murderers and became a true promoter of peace and forgiveness.

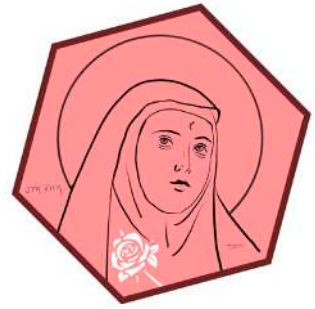
However, hatred did find a place in the hearts of her children, who were ready to avenge their father's death with more violence. Rita then humbly told God that she would rather see her sons dead than stained with murderous blood. Both became ill and died young.

Widowed and childless, she entered the Augustinian monastery of St. Mary Magdalene of Cascia, where for 40 years she served God and the community with fidelity, dedication and generosity, after adopting the name Rita in her profession.

A model wife, mother, widow and religious, devotion to St. Rita has been deeply felt by the people of God on all five continents.

Her holiness was born of a relationship based on Christ that made her live in a surprising way her daily life in exceptional circumstances.

The fame of her intercession before God has made her worthy of the title of advocate of the impossible, as well as one of the saints with the greatest devotion within the Augustinian family. This is attested to by the large number of temples dedicated to her.



### ***Saint Juan of Sahagun***

Born in Sahagún (León, Spain) in 1430, Juan González del Castrillo was the eldest of seven children of a wealthy couple. He did his early studies at the monastery of San Benito de Sahagún, but it was the bishop of Burgos, Alfonso de Cartagena, who, after seeing his worth, supervised his education, took him to Burgos and appointed him secretary canon of the cathedral of Burgos.

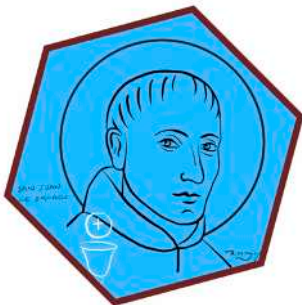
After moving to Salamanca to study, he met the Augustinians and finally decided to join the Order of St. Augustine.

The Salamanca of that time was a state of unhappiness, with two sides of noble families that had been disputing the command of the city for four decades with the continuous practice of murders and violence. The entire population lived under terror.

Juan de Sahagún intervened, pacified the city and its inhabitants always respected and loved him for it. In fact, he was named patron saint of the city in 1868.

In Salamanca you can visit two streets whose names recall two miracles attributed to the saint; in Pozo Amarillo Street, Juan saved a child from drowning in a well; and in Tentenecio Street, Juan stopped a raging bull that, after escaping, was causing havoc and panic in the city. The friar stood in its way and shouted at the animal: "Tente, you fool! He immediately tamed it and they were able to take it back to the pens.

However, the angel of peace of Salamanca died a violent death, possibly poisoned at the age of 50 by people scorned by his sermons and the conversions and life changes he caused.



The Church of San Juan de Sahagún, in Sahagún, is built on the site of the family home. Next to it is the headquarters of the Brotherhood of San Juan de Sahagún. In the Cathedral of Burgos there is a chapel dedicated to the saint, and in Salamanca, very close to the Plaza Mayor, there is also a temple dedicated to the saint.

### ***Saint Thomas of Villanova***

Tomás García Martínez was born at the end of 1486. He spent his childhood and youth in Villanueva de los Infantes (Ciudad Real, Spain).

From a wealthy family, he studied Arts and Theology at the University of Alcalá de Henares. But his vocation led him to become an Augustinian in Salamanca in 1516. In 1518 he was ordained a priest. He was prior, visitator general and prior provincial of Andalusia and Castile and professor, as well as counselor and confessor to Charles I. As provincial, he sent the first Augustinian missionaries to Mexico in 1533.

Despite such charges, his fame came from his austerity and unquestionable love for the poor, especially orphans and the sick. He was a pioneer in his modern conception of charity and almsgiving, far removed from welfare and dependence on the poor; thus, he structurally attacked the root of poverty by using resources to provide a working and professional future: "Almsgiving is not only to give, but to bring the needy out of need and free them from it whenever possible," he said.



Much to his regret, his consistency and commitment, as well as his reputation as an excellent manager and leader, earned him the appointment of archbishop of Valencia in 1544; a diocese that for a century had not had an efficient government and was suffering from administrative and pastoral chaos.

In Valencia, he organized a specific training plan for priests, a model social assistance program that gave tangible results in local society, a special school for converted Moors, comprehensive care for orphans....

His sermons, preaching and biblical commentaries never went unnoticed even by the Emperor himself. He died of angina pectoris in 1555 and was canonized in 1658. Authors such as Francisco de Quevedo wrote about him, and he is the patron saint of universities, educational centers, one of the Provinces of the Augustinian Recollects and cities in Spain and Colombia. His feast day is celebrated on October 10 and a campaign calls for him to be granted the title of Doctor of the Church.

### ***Saint Magdalene of Nagasaki***

The daughter of noble and fervent Christians, Magdalena was born in 1611 near the Japanese city of Nagasaki. At a very young age, she saw her parents and siblings condemned to death and executed for being Catholic.

In 1624 she met the Augustinian Recollects Francis of Jesus and Vincent of St. Anthony. Attracted by their deep spirituality, she consecrated herself to God as a secular Augustinian Recollect.

From that time on, she wore the habit of a tertiary, and dedicated herself to prayer and spiritual reading. She catechized children and begged alms from Portuguese merchants for the poor.

Emperor Yemitsu's persecution of the Christians became more and more systematic and cruel. In 1629 she took refuge with the two Recollects and several hundred Christians in the mountains. In November the two missionaries were captured, and she remained in hiding, enduring suffering and hardship with serene joy.

She instilled courage in everyone so that they would stand firm, she encouraged so that no one would renounce, she visited the sick, she baptized the newborns and she had a word of encouragement for everyone.

To give an example to Christians terrified by torture, Magdalene defied the tyrants. In September 1634, she appeared before the judges with her tertiary habit and a small bundle of books to read in prison and pray.

The promises of an advantageous marriage did not bend her will and she was subjected to the torment of the pit, suspended by her feet, with her head and chest placed in a cavity covered with boards.



She resisted 13 days until a heavy rain flooded the pit and the martyr drowned. They scattered the ashes in the sea so that the Christians would not keep her relics.

Today she is the patroness of the 3,500 members of the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity in 113 communities around the world.

### ***Saint Ezekiel Moreno***

Ezequiel Moreno Díaz was born in Alfaro (La Rioja, Spain) on April 9, 1848. Following his vocation from an early age, he entered the seminaries of the Order of Augustinian Recollects following in the footsteps of his brother, and was professed in 1864 as a religious of the Order.

After completing his studies, he was sent on mission to the Philippines, where he was ordained a priest in 1871. A renowned missionary, he soon became famous for his dedication to the People of God and his continuous search for the good.

After returning to Spain for some time to be a formator of missionaries in Monteagudo (Navarra), he was called to the important mission of revitalizing the Order in Colombia.

His impeccable and dedicated performance earned him the title of Vicar Apostolic of Casanare after his episcopal ordination in 1894. He continued to serve the Church in the Diocese of Pasto.



These were not easy times for the Colombian Church, due to political divisions and the existence of great anticlerical forces in society. Despite suffering several smear campaigns, the people of Pasto recognized his affection and his continued work for the underprivileged.

Sick with cancer, he returned to Spain, although little could be done for his health. He decided to retire to Monteagudo, where he had made his novitiate, professed religious life and formed new missionaries. On August 19, 1906, he died of the disease.

Ezekiel is an example of a religious, a priest, a bishop and, at the end of his life, a sick person. In 1992, John Paul II proposed him as a model evangelizer and canonized him in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) during the V Centenary of the evangelization of America and the meeting of the Latin American episcopate.

His life and his intercession have earned him the title of special protector of cancer patients, a disease he suffered with great strength of spirit.

*And many others...*



## *Explanation of Lectio Divina with St. Augustine*







# Explanation of Lectio Divina with St. Augustine

*"Ad Ierusalem caelestem allegorica praefiguratione referatur"*  
(St. Augustine, *The City of God* 17,3,2).

## Introduction

The Word of God was always the nourishment and foundation for St. Augustine. The various conversions that he underwent throughout his life were always inspired by prayerful and meditative reflection on the Word of God. Therefore, the Word of God should be the compass of the Augustinian man, to guide him in his prayer and in his life towards the encounter with God.

We propose five simple steps for you to do *Lectio divina* with St. Augustine and, like St. Augustine, prepare yourself to adjust your life to the will of God, for outside of him we will not find happiness, for *"you have made us Lord for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 1,1).

## 1. Lectio

The first step is to read the Word of God, for as St. Augustine said: *"Your prayer is a dialogue, when you read [the Bible], God speaks to you, when you pray, it is you who speaks to God"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 85:7*).

### a. Reading from the heart

But it is not a superficial reading, just to see what it says. You have to read from a special place. Not only because you must choose a quiet, serene place where you feel at peace. But also because this reading must be done from the heart. *"When you want to pray, go into your room"* (Matthew 6:6). St. Augustine will comment: *"What is this chamber if not the heart itself"* (St. Augustine, *The Sermon of the Lord on the Mount* 2:11). Read not only outwardly.

### b. Read a short text

It is not the time for spiritual reading, prolonged, but meditative. Choose a short text. A text: *"Brief for the number of words, but great for the importance of its content"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 86:1*).

### c. Read with a welcoming disposition

The attitude with which you should read is from the desire for God, recognizing with humility that everything comes from God and that we are only beggars before him:

*"He knew that you were his beggar, and as the father of a family enormously rich in spiritual and eternal riches, he exhorts you and says to you: Ask, seek, knock" (St. Augustine, Sermon 61,4).*

*d. Reading from silence*

It is necessary to silence all the voices within the heart in order to hear the voice of God. We can live deaf to the voice of God because of the many distractions of our life. St. Augustine said: *"You called me, you cried out and broke my deafness"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 10:38); *"In silence I sought you earnestly, and the voices of my soul's contrition I raised to your mercy were loud"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 7:11).

*e. Tolle, Lege (Take and read: cf. St. Augustine, The Confessions 8,29)*

It is time to read your own life in the light of the Word of God, as St. Augustine did, and let yourself be enlightened by it. To come to know yourself in the light of God. As St. Augustine said: *"May I know me, may I know you"* (St. Augustine, *The Soliloquies* 2,1).

## **2. Meditatio**

*a. Meditar es: Darle vueltas al texto, "rumiarlo".*

St. Augustine says that those who belong to God are like the pure animals that were in Noah's Ark, for they *"ruminated"* (cf. St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm* 141:1).

*b. To meditate is: To let myself be challenged by the word of God, so as not to resist God's will. "What does 'thy will be done' mean? Let it be done in me so that I do not resist your will"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon* 56,7).

*c. To meditate is: To know that the text is addressed to me in my own circumstance. It is a letter from God to me. The Bible is "the letters that the Father who is in heaven sends us"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm* 64:2).

*d. To meditate is to let the Spirit: "put his fire in you, that you may receive his motion, enlighten you and raise you to his love"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon* 128,4).

## **3.Oratio**

*a. It is the moment to respond to the Word of God with the affection of the heart: "When we pray to God (...) we must always cry out with the heart. The cry of the heart is a vehement thought which, when it is given in prayer, expresses great affection"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm* 118, 29:1).

- b. It is the moment to respond to the Word of God, speaking little and loving much: *"To speak much in prayer is as much as to treat a necessary matter with superfluous words (...) prayer consists in knocking with all the constancy and affection of an ardent heart at the door of the One to whom we pray"* (St. Augustine, Letter 130,20).
- c. It is time to respond to the word of God, considering whether Christ is the center of my life and I love him with my whole being: *"When I adhere to you with my whole being, there will be no more pain, no more toil for me, but my whole life will be alive and full of you"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 10:39).
- d. It is time to respond to the Word of God, remembering that I am a pilgrim in the city of God and with my desire to reach God: *"Your desire [for eternal life] is your prayer; if the desire is continual, the prayer is continual"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 37:14*).

#### 4. Contemplatio

- a. My inner eyes are opened to see the beauty of God: *"There is a certain beauty that we see with the eyes of the heart, and we love it and become enraptured by it"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 64:8*).
- b. My inner being opens to contemplate how my life and being are embraced by God and how I embrace God: *"To embrace the love of God and to embrace God with love"* (St. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 8:12).
- c. My inner being is built up by God in contemplation: *"We speak outwardly. God builds within"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 126:2*).
- d. My inner being contemplates and trusts in God: *"I so belong to the Almighty (...) who enlightens and saves me, that I fear no one besides him"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 26, 2:3*).

#### 5. Communicatio

- a. The encounter with God leads me to: Share with my brothers the joy of the encounter with God: *"We cannot remain silent (...) raise the ineffable voice of joy"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 102:8*).
- b. The encounter with God leads me to: Communicate God's love: *"If you love God, draw all who are with you to God's love"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 33:2, 6*).

- c. The encounter with God leads me to: Recognize the presence of Christ in all those around me: *"Christ who is rich in heaven, has willed to be hungry in the poor"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 75:9*).
  
- d. The encounter with God leads me to: Recognizing God's presence in all things: *"Lord I love you (...) but also heaven and earth and all that is contained in them behold, they tell me from everywhere to love you"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions 10:8*).

*"I invoke You, my God, my mercy, who created me and who did not forget me when I had forgotten You. I invoke You to come to my soul which You are preparing to welcome You with the desire You have inspired in it. Do not abandon the one who now invokes you. You who, before I invoked you, forewarned me and insisted on your calls in various ways, so that I might hear you from afar, turn and call you, who called me"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions 13:1*).

Enrique A. Eguiarte B. OAR

Outlines of vocational retreats  
*Steps for discerning a vocation with St. Augustine*







## Outlines of vocational retreats

### *Steps for discerning a vocation with St. Augustine*

#### **Introduction**

The following are seven outlines of vocational retreats, which seek to closely follow the path that St. Augustine took to discern his vocation. They are seven outlines with different activities, dynamics and resources designed to be carried out in the course of a weekend. Nevertheless, it is a sufficiently open proposal so that the time can be extended or reduced, according to the possibilities and eventualities of each vocational encounter.

In the vocational outlines, some tools are suggested to facilitate vocational discernment, such as the *lectio divina*, vocational cards, some in-depth readings, videos, etc. However, if the vocation agent handles other types of resources such as the life project, vocational circles, vocational workshops, etc., these can also be adapted to the development of the retreats, as long as the basic theme is maintained and the Augustinian pedagogy is followed.

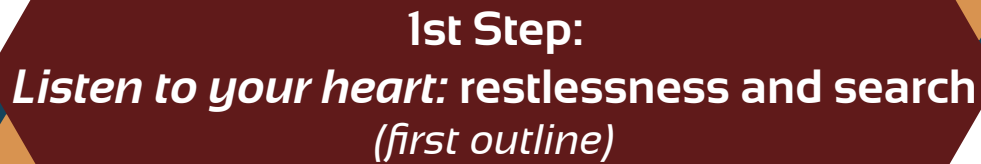
The last material of the whole project does not correspond to the sequence of the steps that are developed in the vocational retreats, but it is rather a transversal theme of the whole discernment process. It would be a vocational retreat scheme that proposes to address the inner disposition with which one has to walk the path of vocational search and discernment. And although it is located in the final part of the materials, it can be carried out at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the process; at the moment that is considered more opportune.

Finally, it should be noted that these materials are designed to be worked on over the course of an entire school year. Given that eight different meetings are convened and a particular amount of personal work time is requested between each meeting, it would be difficult to fit them into a period of less than eight months. In this same sense, given that each step of Augustinian pedagogy follows a progressive sequence, frequent absence from the meetings would make it very difficult to enter into the dynamic of discernment that they suggest. Therefore, it is advisable, if possible, not to miss any of the meetings.

**1st Step:**  
*Listen to your heart: restlessness and search*  
*(first outline)*







## 1st Step: *Listen to your heart: restlessness and search* (first outline)

### Objective

To enable the participant to situate himself before the path that he will begin to travel for vocational discernment, from two fundamental attitudes of Christian life and Augustinian spirituality: *restlessness* and *search*. To cultivate these attitudes, various activities are proposed that help the person to connect with his or her own vital center: *the heart*.

### Proposed schedule

#### Day 1

Prayer.

10:00, Complete Tab O.

10:20, Dynamic presentation of the participants.

10:40, Theme 1: *"Listen to your heart"*.

11:30, Break.

12:00, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 1*.

13:00, Time for group sharing.

16:30, Theme 2: *"Having a restless heart"*.

17:30, Break.

18:00, *Lectio divina*, *"The call of the first disciples"*.

#### Day 2

08:00, Prayer.

10:30, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 7*.

12:00, Time for group sharing.

13:00, Eucharist.

16:00, Topic 3: *"Searches and the search"*.

17:00, Closing of the encounter.

## Day 1

### Morning Prayer

For this moment, we can pray Lauds, do an Augustinian prayer workshop, or accompany this moment of prayer with a biblical text that speaks of the heart. It is suggested to base this prayer on some biblical psalm -Suggested Psalms: 27; 118; 131, 139-.

For this moment it can be helpful as a didactic resource to present **the inner workings of a wall clock**, so that later we can talk about the mechanics of the human heart: emotions, feelings, needs, desires, etc. This activity can help to recognize the importance of the dynamics of one's own heart in the path of vocational discernment.

The following are some ideas about the restlessness of the heart and the search for truth in St. Augustine.

- In order to walk the path of vocational discernment, it is important to have a restless heart and to start searching for answers. St. Augustine, at the beginning of *The Confessions*, says: *"Lord, you made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 1,1). This *"inquietum est cor nostrum"*, our heart is restless, corresponds to one of the necessary dispositions in the spirit of every person to set out on the path of discovering his vocation. It helps to welcome the questions that inevitably urge the human heart to seek answers.
- And the restlessness of the heart moves the missionary disciples to seek those realities of life that help to walk in pursuit of happiness, *"It is to you that one must ask, it is to you that one must seek, it is to you that one must call: thus; thus one will receive, thus one will find and thus one will open happiness"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 13:53). These are also words of St. Augustine: *"I seek you in order to find you, and I find you in order to continue seeking you with greater ardor"* (St. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 15:2).
- It will be difficult to connect with the concerns of the heart if one does not first listen to the heart. And much less will one begin a path of search if one does not discover within oneself the inner call to find answers to the crucial questions of life: who am I? where do I come from? where am I going? what is the meaning of my life? for what purpose do I do the things I do?
- To learn to listen to the heart is to enliven the dreams and longings that are treasured there, in order to then undertake the inner call of freedom. The greatest invitation we are given in life is to become what we are called to be. Whether or not we will be happy depends on this. Therefore, let us begin with the exercise of listening to our own heart.

## THEME 1

### *Listen to your heart*

A **stethoscope** can be very helpful in this theme. The exercise consists of asking them what "listening to one's own heart" means to them. After the spontaneous answers that may be given, a practical and direct way of listening to one's own heart is presented to them, and the stethoscope is shown. The idea is that one by one they can listen with the stethoscope to their own heart and comment on the sensation or emotion that is aroused. This will help them to be more open and attentive to understand the deep meaning of learning to listen to one's own heart, heartbeats, emotions, feelings, deep longings, etc.

#### **Content of the theme:**

For St. Augustine it is very important to learn to listen to one's own heart. Even more, on the path of vocational discernment it is important to learn to listen to the voice of God in the depths of one's heart. But it is difficult to listen to the voice of God in one's heart if one does not first learn to listen to one's own heart. Why, then, is it important to listen to one's heart? St. Augustine gives a simple and convincing answer: *"because in the heart I am what I am"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 10:4).

**Seeds** are fascinating. One of the most surprising experiences is to see how a simple and small seed is born and grows so much, until it produces flowers and fruits. Jesus of Nazareth also saw the wonder that is a seed. He used the image in a parable, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man takes and sows in his field. It is the smallest of seeds, but when it grows it is taller than other vegetables; it becomes a tree"* (Matthew 13:31-32). He also used it to refer to faith, *"if they had faith the size of a mustard seed, they would tell that mountain to move there, and it would move"* (Matthew 17:20).

What is the most surprising thing about a seed? That whatever type it is, it keeps inside all the information that will be required to be born and develop according to its species, when the right conditions are given. Likewise, the seed contains within itself the sufficient force to set in motion a process of unfolding of the life that it guards, when it finds in the exterior the favorable signals to initiate this phase. A simple seed harbors in its heart the greatest promise of life.

In the path of vocational discernment, the information inscribed in the depths of the heart of the human being can be of great benefit. When St. Augustine invites us to turn inward, he proposes a journey to the center of the heart where the profound truth of the human being and the sufficient strength to detonate a marvelous process of life are kept. Therefore, to learn to listen to the heart is to learn to recognize that which is lodged there, deep inside, as the most essential truth and the most powerful germinal force.

The first step in vocational discernment is precisely that of learning to listen to one's own heart, because it is in the heart that people rediscover their deepest identity; it is there that we are what we are. And how can we learn to listen to our heart? The exercise



of listening to the heart is a challenge. Normally people, in the effort to adapt to the reality and circumstances of the environment, distance themselves from their most genuine center. The same culture favors paying much more attention to the external, superficial aspects of image and appearance. The message is: *"if you are not a reflection of what society itself dictates you to be, then you are nobody"*.

The way to access the depths of the heart is to recover the deepest longings, those that spring from the essence and originality of each person. Thus, listening to one's own heart has a lot to do with recovering those childish but grandiose and inspiring dreams: to travel around the world, to be an astronaut, to drive a submarine, to pilot a plane, to be the captain of a great ship or to be a model of fashion products, to exercise some kind of profession, etc. Those dreams that someone may have stopped in their tracks by mocking them or labeling them as illusory and unrealistic fantasies.

It is important, then, to listen to one's own heart because there are stored the deepest longings, those that are born of the essence that is each person. And the core of discernment does not lie in materially recovering those childhood dreams to realize them as they are, but in recovering the capacity to dream, which may have been extinguished. In the vocational path the deepest longings of the heart, the most genuine dreams of the soul, indicate the best direction for life, freedom and happiness.

### **Interiorization exercise on "listening to your heart"**

- **STORY:** *The apple that wanted to be a five-cornered star* (the information is inscribed in the heart, it all depends on how we look inside ourselves). The story is given to them to read it personally or it is sent as a document to the WhatsApp group. And then it is discussed in the group if there are few, and if there are many, in smaller groups.
- **EXERCISE:** *"I have a Dream"*. Have them search their hearts for the dreams they had as a child. On one side of the sheet of paper they write their dreams and on the other side, the advice they would give to that little child to make them come true.
- **THINKING ROUTINE:** *"I see", "I think", "I wonder"*. They have to share what they have seen of their life with this activity, what they are thinking and what they are wondering... If the group is small, in the same group they share. And if it is large, smaller groups are made.

## THEME 2

### *Having a restless heart*

As an introduction to the theme, it may help to physically contact the heartbeat through the pulsations. It consists of asking them how they would do it to know the heart beats without having to use the stethoscope. After the various answers that can be given. They are taught to take their pulse in the wrist of the hand or in the carotid vein of the neck. The idea is that they spend some time palpating themselves and measuring their pulse with the watch. From this exercise, we can talk about learning to connect with the restless heart as St. Augustine did.

#### **Content of the theme**

What is it to have a restless heart? I often wonder what St. Augustine would do between the ages of 16 and 20 today, in this globalized and interconnected world in every way. It seems to me that he would live his youth as almost all young people do: he would probably study, have his Instagram account, do some tik-tok, laugh watching memes, etc. It is true that these are conjectures, but there is no doubt about a particular aspect of his life, which perhaps would make him different from many young people: it is the restless search for the truth.

We cannot say that all young people today are committed to the passionate search for truth, but it is true that there is no lack of those who are. I believe that St. Augustine would find himself in this group. His unsatisfied heart impelled him to seek answers to great questions, no matter where he was (Tagaste, Madaura, Carthage..., just to mention the important places of his childhood and adolescence). He was always searching, surely because his heart was asking him to know more, both about the important questions for all human beings - who are we, where do we come from, where are we going, where are we going? -as well as about those questions that have to do with oneself -who am I? who do I want to be? where is my life going?

In this sense, I believe that, beyond the things that could be seen from the outside, that is, beyond what Agustín did or did not do today in social networks or in his University, he would be looking for the truth of his own life. Well, undoubtedly this may be suggestive for you, today's restless young man. Because, ultimately, there are examples like those of St. Augustine that drive young people to be somewhat nonconformist, critical of the world around them, dissatisfied with the limited options given by society, where everyone must fit into the big gear of the consumer society. Why does it have to be this way? Why does it have to be this way for you? In fact, Pope Francis, relying on St. Paul VI, when speaking of this healthy restlessness or unsatisfied restlessness, used St. Augustine as an example:

"God's love and our relationship with the living Christ do not deprive us of dreaming, they do not demand that we narrow our horizons. On the contrary, this love encourages us, stimulates us, launches us towards a better and more beautiful life. The word "restlessness"

sums up many of the searches of young people's hearts. As St. Paul VI said, "precisely in the dissatisfactions that torment them [...] there is an element of light". Unsatisfied restlessness, together with amazement at what is new on the horizon, opens the way to the daring that moves them to assume themselves, to become responsible for a mission. This healthy restlessness, which is awakened especially in youth, remains the characteristic of any heart that remains young, available and open. True inner peace coexists with this deep dissatisfaction. St. Augustine said: "*Lord, you created us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you*" (*Christus vivit*, 38).

Jesus himself was a nonconformist. And St. Augustine realized the novelty of his message: Christ wanted to change the relationship between God and human beings, to restore it, and in the same way, to help recompose the relationship between them. Novelty and truth, these are two words that express very well the path taken by St. Augustine. Both the novelty of the message of Jesus in his life, as well as the truth that opened his eyes, made him dedicate his life to the service of others, provoking in his life a 180° turn. A change that modified his life plan or project.

However, after making the decision, there was no room for regrets, as can be seen from the testimony of his life. Pope Francis expresses it very well: "*There is no need to regret spending our youth being good, opening our hearts to the Lord, living differently. None of this takes away our youth, but rather strengthens and renews it: "Your youth is renewed like the eagle"* (Ps 103:5). That is why St. Augustine lamented: "*So late have I loved you, O beauty so old and so new, so late have I loved you*" (*Christus vivit*, 17).

Here are some questions so that, in the Augustinian way, that is, returning to the heart, you can reflect and interiorize your own path of search; that which you decide to do, with greater or lesser awareness, when you wake up every day: what are your true concerns? Augustine, in fact, said: "*Return to your conscience and question it*" (St. Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 8:9). Now, ask yourself about the "real" ones, which sometimes are not the ones we think they are. What are the questions that move your life today (not yesterday or the day before yesterday, but today)? And if there are no questions, why do you think that is? Have you given yourself time to think and delve into your inner world?

### Internalization exercise on "the restless heart"

- **CONTENT.** *The search for happiness.* For St. Augustine the greatest search was to know God because the truth is God, but for young people their greatest concern, desire or search is happiness. They are invited to reflect on the question: Are you happy? And if you are, why is that? If not, why do you think you are not happy? After sharing some answers spontaneously, they are told that the fullness of Christian life is happiness, to live the fullness of love; to be saints.
- **EXERCISE:** Make a summary in the form of VISUAL THINKING (mixing drawings, key words, diagrams... summarize what has been worked on). They are given a sheet of paper and are invited to represent graphically how they understood the content of the theme.

- THINKING ROUTINE: 3, 2, 1; 3 questions to ask, 2 ideas you have come up with, and 1 image/metaphor that sums it all up.

## Lectio divina

### *the call of the first disciples*

### *John 1,35-42*



#### **Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

Lord, we praise and bless you for this time that you give us to listen to your Word. We often do not know how to listen, we do not know how to be silent and we do not know how to dialogue. We are aware that prayer is a dialogue with you, that you speak to our hearts. Give us your Holy Spirit who speaks in us, who prays in us. O Holy Spirit, you who are the source of light and life, open our eyes and our hearts. Enlighten our minds and help us to welcome, as true disciples of Jesus, your life-giving Word. Instill in us an open and generous spirit so that in dialogue with you, the interior Master, we may know and love Jesus and bear witness to the beauty of the Gospel among those with whom we share our lives. Amen.

#### **Biblical text**

*The call of the first disciples (John 1:35-42)*

*"The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. He noticed Jesus passing by and said, "Behold the Lamb of God. The two disciples heard him speak this way and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and, seeing them following him, he says to them, "What are you looking for?" They answered him, "Rabbi-which means 'Teacher'-where do you live?" He answered them, "Come and see." So they went and saw where he lived and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.*

*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who had heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" - meaning Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And Jesus looked at him and said to him, "You are Simon, the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" - which means, 'Stone'".*

#### **a) Lectio**

The testimony that John the Baptist gave with conviction about Jesus as the Messiah, at the beginning of his manifestation to the people of Israel (1:19-34), triggers some of his disciples to follow Jesus. Those two restless disciples begin the discovery of the event of Jesus of Nazareth, entering into personal contact with him and confessing that he is the Son of God.

In these few verses, we are before a double vocation story with three elements that are repeated in each one: a qualified witness who gives testimony of his faith in Jesus - the Baptist before his disciples (v. 36) and Andrew before Simon (v. 41). Then comes the encounter in which the future disciple has a personal experience of Jesus and the newness of God in him (vv. 39 and 42); and, finally, the newly called pronounces his own confession of faith (v. 41).

First of all, we have the Baptist as the qualified mediator between the one who seeks definitive answers and the fascinating answer of the Messiah. Jesus enters the world and history as an ordinary man, going to listen to the Baptist, confused among the people. But there are those who have the sharpness of spirit to recognize him, identify him and point him out as the Christ, just as the Baptist did: *"This is the Lamb of God"* (v. 35).

The biblical text does not indicate the place where the scene takes place, nor where Jesus comes from or where he is going, or even why he is passing by; for the evangelist John *it is already the time of the Church*; Christ walks through our world and our humanity... who recognizes him? And who points him out as the one sent by the Father?

The Baptist's words disturb two of his disciples, and they set out to follow the Messiah. The word follow means to become a disciple, to follow the master... But why do they really follow him; they do not know, they will have to discover it by coming into contact with him. And Jesus is transparent, he turns his loving and penetrating gaze and asks them: what are you looking for? The disciples are invited to answer freely, especially by clarifying to themselves what it is that they are really looking for in life.

This question indicates the process of conversion that must take place in the deepest motivations of the human heart. Each disciple must clarify the ultimate meaning of his inner journey and feel the fundamental need to place himself before the Lord, before whom he commits his whole life.

The response of the disciples is with another question: *"Master, where do you live?"* That is, where can we get to know you, experience you. In short, they want to go to the Master's school to learn personally from him a way of life that gives meaning to their lives. And Jesus' answer is not long in coming: *"come and see"*, that is, look for, take advantage of... the opportunity to talk and dialogue and be with me. To come to Jesus and to see where he lives in order to stay with him are expressions that contain the invitation to have a direct and personal experience with him, they describe the itinerary of faith that the disciple of Jesus of all times has to follow.

Finally, the disciples now follow Jesus, not because they were told to do so by someone else, but because they have been fascinated by their personal experience of the Master, the Son of God, the King of Israel. From that moment on, they become, in turn, witnesses of a life-changing encounter.

### **b) Meditatio**

Those who approach this account are struck from the outset by the mystery of the person of Jesus and his great humanity, which fulfills and satisfies the fundamental aspirations of the human heart. Therefore, the first attitude of those who read this Gospel text is to seek who Jesus is in their own lives and to recognize him in the witness of those who call themselves his disciples.

It is important to realize that Jesus, like any other man, can be known by the dealings and relationships that other disciples establish with him. To penetrate the mystery of Christ entails observing the world around us and discovering the way in which he himself is speaking to us, especially through others.

Jesus, who comes from the Father and dwells in the Father, calls each one of us personally, as he did his first disciples. He passes through the concrete history of the life of every human being. And he does so, above all, through the witness of those who recognize him, confess him and proclaim him.

The following questions may help you in your meditation:

*Who in my life has been "John the Baptist" or "Andrew"?*

*Which character in the text do you most identify with: Andrew, Peter, John the Baptist?*

*Be brave enough to listen to the question that Jesus addresses to the disciples of all times: what are you looking for? what is the meaning and the horizon of your life?*

*Ask yourself at what stage of the journey in the following of Christ you are:*

*At the time of hearing the testimony of "some" Baptist?*

*At the stage of going after the Master to find answers?*

*At the time to accept the invitation to go with him and spend time together?*

*At the stage of a direct and intimate experience with Jesus?*

*At the moment of the mission: to proclaim Christ to others by the witness of your life?*

### **c) Oratio**

I can't keep quiet,

Don't ask me to shut up!

I could not obey...

I testify: your forgiveness and your love, Lord,

have burned me like a fire in my heart

and I have to tell everyone all the time,

even if you don't believe me; even if you don't believe me...

It's true, we can have a lot of everything,

but we will always be poor in love,

maybe because we think too much of ourselves.

Therefore, I will say that you are the wealth of all and for all,

and that you are simply like that: generous, overabundant.

I will announce that your love does not depend on us,

that you love us all the same, even if we do not love you.  
 I would even go so far as to say that  
 the more we sin, the more you love us,  
 because you know that is when we need you the most.  
 You are the voice that always knocks at every door,  
 with its own name, precise, unmistakable.  
 And you give yourself and wait for as long as it takes  
 awaiting our fragile response;  
 do not force people's rhythms,  
 you don't get tired, but you don't get tired of attracting us either,  
 for your love is new every day.  
 Your condition of being in love  
 makes your heart ache  
 when we don't look for you.  
 That is why I will shout at the top of my lungs:  
 that it is enough for me to look at you with the eyes of a child,  
 and with looking to You in those whom You love most,  
 the poor, the hungry and the needy;  
 only in this way will I regain my status and dignity  
 of son, of brother, of blessed..  
 Lord, make my heart burn  
 with the spark of your love,  
 and that I do not get tired of turning on others  
 the same fire of charity. Amen.

#### ***d)Contemplatio***

Lord, when I am with you, face to face, alone, I feel you present in the depths of my heart and I experience your warm presence. I close my eyes and feel your gaze..., and that is enough for me, for to perceive, in faith, your close presence makes my heart beat again with strength and emotion. You love me, Lord, I perceive it without a doubt in my heart. What would become of me without you? I have been mercifully cared for by you. Why, my God, why, I don't know why? Simply, thank you for loving me so much. Today that question resounds in me again, on the shore of the lake of my life, with that penetrating gaze of yours, full of tenderness: what are you looking for? And, once again, my answer is: Where do you live? Where can I find you? Your answer, Lord: *"come and see"*.



## Day 2

### Morning prayer: what is your deepest dream?

The atmosphere is set with quiet and soft music. They are accompanied by breathing exercises and contact with one's own body, to help prepare oneself for prayer. We insist on the senses as channels for the encounter with God: the hearing of the heart, the eyes of the heart, the mouth of the heart, the smell of the heart and the touch of the heart.

Then, Psalm 61 is handed out in print and recited in a quiet way all together: "*Hear, O God, the cry of my heart...*". It is left to echo about expressions of the psalm after reciting them.

At some point in the prayer we insist on the phrase of St. Augustine that from the heart springs the most genuine of the person: "*because in the heart I am what I am*" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 10,3,4).

At the end of the prayer, time is given to share a spontaneous prayer.

### Sentence content

1. **Return to the heart.** To return to the heart is to make that passionate journey to the center of life, to the very heart of the human being inhabited by God. It is about going through one's innermost recesses until reaching the sanctuary, the place of the presence of the intimate Master. The adventure of traveling to the interior is the key to recognize the true dreams, those that were buried among fear, insecurity and cowardice. Undoubtedly, going back to the heart requires courage and daring to leave aside the comfortable superficiality and false securities.
2. **I prepare the heart.** It is a matter of preparing the interior of one's own consciousness so that the fundamental questions may emerge; those that move forward and activate true paths of search. It is important that you make silence inside and outside yourself, because only in silence can the whisper of your own heart be heard. In order to present to God the cry of your heart, you must first discover what it is that your heart longs for the most, at the rhythm of what it beats? Think, what is the cry of your heart?
3. **I open my heart.** It is a matter of opening your whole being before the presence of God, that is, of manifesting yourself before him in your most personal and intimate reality. The heart-to-heart encounter takes place when you accept the beauty of my inner reality, including your own vulnerability, and you place yourself, in faith, before a Presence that you know sustains you in life and fills you with its blessing. Do not be afraid to manifest yourself with your lights and shadows before the radiance of his mercy.
4. **I elevate the heart.** The process of interiority does not end when one reaches the center of the heart. One reaches the center of the heart in order to rise in the heart

to meet God. How do I know that I rise in the heart? When your supplicant cry, your most intimate desire, your most genuine request rises before his Presence. The human heart is a capacity for infinite desire and only the infinite of God can fulfill it. The greater your desire and the more authentic is the cry of your affection, the more your interior widens and the more you open yourself to the dream that God manifests to your heart.

*Ask yourself:* what is God's dream for you? how does he dream you?

## THEME 3

### *Searches and searching*

For the development of this theme, the following dynamics can help. The participants are shown a wooden cross of sufficiently visible and recognizable dimensions at a certain distance. They are invited to take a good look at it, observe the characteristics it has, and they can even pass by each of the people participating so that they can see it, touch it and become familiar with the cross or crucifix. It is then hidden outside the house and they are given 15 minutes to find it. If they are unable to find it, the facilitator shows it to everyone. Afterwards, a dialogue about the search experience takes place.

#### **Content of the theme**

*"Jesus turned and, seeing that they were following him, he asks them, "What do you seek?" They answered him, "Rabbi (which means Teacher), where do you live?" He said to them, "Come and see." So they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day; it was about four o'clock in the afternoon" (John 1,38-39).*

Jesus' challenging question to these two disciples of John the Baptist, who upon hearing about him were interested in knowing him, also leads us to think about what we are looking for when we seek God? Undoubtedly, our whole life is made up of small quests: economic and job security, health, well-being, prosperity, stability and as human beings we know that the meaning of our life is not reduced to the merely biological, so we seek personal fulfillment, the fulfillment of our dreams and ideals. And as we are "nonconformists" we always want to look for more.

What do we really seek with our work, with our money, with our family and social relationships, etc.? What do we really seek when we present ourselves before God? It is important to ask ourselves these questions to find the meaning of our searches, let us not forget that when we search for something deep down we know what we want to find, otherwise our search would be empty or sterile; it would be something like turning us into unconscious animals that only move by instinct.

To Jesus' question "What are you looking for?", they responded by saying that they wanted to know about him, to know where he lived, so that they could talk to him personally; they wanted to know everything, they were captivated by his presence. But if the question was disturbing, his answer was even more so: "Come and see him". And the Gospel goes on to say that "then they went and saw where he lived and stayed with him that day". Only Jesus can present himself as the answer, because he is the way, the one who gives meaning to any search, the one who fulfills the expectations of the human being, the one who grants true happiness.

And they went, they saw and stayed a night, a day, a week, a month, a lifetime. What were those men looking for and what did they find? Perhaps the curiosity to meet the Master led them that afternoon to ask him for a place "where do you live?". But they did not imagine that the experience of that afternoon would forever transform their existence. Their search was transformed into an encounter; an encounter that gave meaning to their small searches. Moreover, not only did they stay, but later they went and told what they had experienced, so that others could also experience the same.

It is said that today there is a generation called "seekers", "seekers", who are looking for a religion. They are looking for a truth that gives meaning to life, that satisfies, that frees them from the dissatisfaction of small truths, of small and empty satisfactions; above all, they are looking for Someone to trust, to be a reference for their own life.

The young person is a seeker by nature, he is not satisfied with the first thing he finds, but always wants more; his passion for life leads him to trace horizons of search, to set goals that generate illusions, dreams that are more than fantasies. But it is necessary that in this search he has a clear path, otherwise he can get lost in false illusions that only leave dissatisfaction, unhappiness and loss of the meaning of life. The young person needs to have all his senses ready and oriented in the search for what is truly important in his life and what he wishes to find, so that it does not remain simply the satisfaction of his craving for power, pleasure and possessions.

Vocation is precisely that: to seek, to call, to find, to stay; to be before God who has a life plan for each one of us, who fulfills all our expectations. But it must be a conscious search because he is the one who takes the initiative, who inspires those desires to seek and find him, because he has a magnificent plan for each one of us. Something that will totally transform our life to the point of staying with him forever, as the first disciples did.

Even today Jesus continues to ask us, "What are you looking for?" when we approach him, and he continues to offer himself as an answer: "Come and see". As missionary disciples we are called to follow Jesus from the day of our baptism. But existentially, there comes a point when we become aware that only in him do we find the happiness that we seek so much. This is our vocation as Christians, that which gives meaning to our existence.

Therefore, let us not allow the cares of the world, the shrill voices of those who offer vain assurances and false promises of happiness, disguised as shining illusions, to distract us from the path that leads to God. Let us seek God with a sincere heart, not as a religion, but as the One who fills everything, who gives meaning to existence. And let us always desire to be with him because only in him do we find what we seek so much.

### Interiorization exercise on “the search and the searches”

- **INVENTOR’S METAPHOR:** Ask the participants: if I have made an invention and I give it to you, what would you do to find out what it is for? They will answer: manipulate it, if I don’t discover it at the first time, throw it away, search the Internet... Only the most clever will say: ask you, who are its creator. So it is with life. They have given answers that correspond to what people do with life. If we really want to know what our life is for, the best option is to ask our inventor: God.
- **ACTIVITY:** Brainstorm those existential questions that we all ask ourselves and that we find difficult to answer. Then, in pairs, they have to elaborate a VIDEO (short of *youtube*, *tik-tok*..., evidently without publishing) with the answer to one of those questions. It must be a Christian answer.
- **GAME: PROVOCATION.** It is a game of questions and answers that serves to reflect, search and share (<https://gcloyola.com/productos/4063-pro-vocacion-juego-de-mesa-9788427146907.html>).

### Closing of the encounter

It is recommended to play some Augustinian song that speaks of the heart, to set the mood for the moment. It is explained that for the closing of the meeting, each one will freely open his heart to share what has helped him the most in his discernment during the course of the meeting.

Once everyone, or the vast majority, has shared, the second dynamic is explained. After a brief moment of silence, each person chooses one or two words that express the experience of the meeting. The person who accompanies the sharing can close with the words: *restlessness* and *search*.

### Personal activities to deepen at home

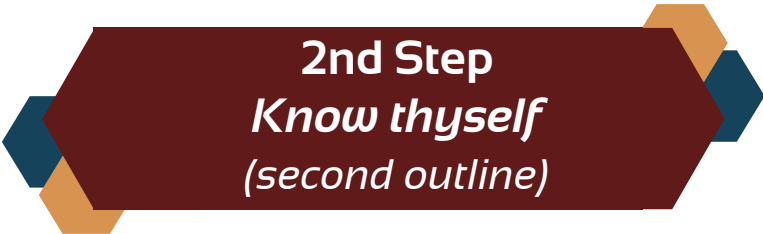
1. Meditate one hour a week on one of the biblical texts suggested at the end of worksheets 1 and 7.
2. Read the material “*El árbol que plantó Agustín*” (*The tree that Augustine planted*) or other similar material.
3. Spend half an hour a week browsing the Order’s web pages and [Inquietar.com](http://Inquietar.com) and the social networks associated with this vocational website.
4. Write down the things that are awakened, and then share them personally with the companion.

**2nd Step**  
*Know thyself*  
(second outline)









## 2nd Step

### *Know thyself*

*(second outline)*

#### **Objective**

To make possible, among the participants of the encounter, an encounter with themselves, with their deepest truth; with their inner lights and shadows. Through the different activities, they will be helped to become aware of the referents of their personal identity, their character and temperament. And they will be accompanied to have a shallow approach to their own shadows and to the world of their conscious and unconscious motivations.

#### **Proposed schedule**

##### **Day 1**

08:00, Prayer.

10:00, Theme 1: *"Who am I?"*

11:00, Personal time to work on Worksheet 3.

12:00, Theme 2: *"Why am I the way I am?"*

12:40, Time for personal reflection.

13:30, Time for group sharing.

16:30, Personal time to work on Worksheet 2.

18:00, Lectio divina, *"Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life"*.

##### **Day 2**

08:00, Prayer.

10:30, Theme 3: *"Knowing ourselves as God knows us"*.

11:30, Sport or walk.

13:00, Eucharist (give space to share the Word).

16:00, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 4*.

17:00, Closing of the encounter.

## Day 1

### Morning Prayer

For this moment, it is suggested to lead a meditative prayer based on Psalm 139.

If it were possible to project in the oratory, it could be very helpful to show them the video of the formation of the human fetus up to the moment before its birth.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFS3zVGqII>.

Then, Psalm 139 is given to them on a sheet of paper, recited together, and time is allowed for them to read aloud some of the verses they liked best.

Ample time is allotted for meditation, ending with a hymn related to this psalm.

## THEME 1

### *Who am I?*

For the development of this theme, it is suggested to show the following video, which talks about the reasons why it is important to know oneself:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IOIJ\\_7N\\_Vc&t=26s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IOIJ_7N_Vc&t=26s).

It can be an opportunity to share what has struck you most or what has moved you inside. At the end, the five reasons for knowing oneself are collected, and we move on to the content of the theme, now applied to the experience of St. Augustine.

### Content of the subject

It is interesting that, for St. Augustine, knowing oneself is already part of the path we travel to know God, for: *"Lord, you created man in your image and likeness, he who knows himself recognizes you"* (St. Augustine, *The Soliloquies* 1,4). And what does it mean to know oneself? There is no easy or direct answer, but rather it is a path of search. This is why St. Augustine says: *"Let us get down to work and trust that God will help us. Let us trust that this will be possible if he helps us with his strength. And let this be your prayer: O God, who are always the same, may I know me, may I know you"* (St. Augustine, *The Soliloquies* 2:1).

We usually read in the headlines at the beginning of dramatic movies, *"based on true events"*. The following story could be true and could refer to the movie of many young people from any of our families, schools, neighbors, etc. Luis or Luigi, as he is also called by his high school friends, is in a very bad way. After many sleepless nights and long

periods of sadness and loneliness, he finally decides to find someone to talk to, because he feels that no one around him understands him, not even his parents.

He reports that his grades in school dropped a lot. He was thinking that, when he finished his basic studies, he would fight to get into medical school. But with the average grades ahead of him, he has already given up on his dream. He says that he feels under a lot of pressure and stress, and that he uses marijuana cigarettes to relax. In addition, the same group of friends procures the drug for him. They usually talk to each other about their problems, although Luigi has the feeling that when he pays attention to them, his life gets more complicated.

On weekends he consumes a lot of alcohol; he has even solicited sexual services for money. He lies a lot at home to get away with his late arrivals and his smell of marijuana. When he is in his room he feels so lonely and seeks to avoid that feeling by taking refuge in social networks. He also comments that he consumes a lot of pornography. He shares that he is in a worse and worse mood; even his friends begin to fear him because he reacts very aggressively. He has the impression that a wall has been erected between him and his parents, which prevents sincere dialogue. He often tries to relax with quiet music, but thoughts come to him that make him anxious about an uncertain future and a guilt that torments him.

Luigi is looking for answers, but he always hits a wall. He feels he cannot escape from this vicious circle that plunges him into tremendous despair. He no longer knows what to do or where to go from here. He says he doesn't like psychologists at all. And he shares that as a child he went to mass and participated with pleasure in the things of the Church. But he hasn't been to one for a long time. He believes that going back to the things of God may be the best way to find the peace he longs for.

Question: How can we help Luigi? The least we can do for Luigi is to listen to him, to create an environment where he feels that he is understood and not judged for his mistakes; that he feels that he is safe when he opens his heart and shows his frailties and miseries.

A good alternative to get out of this impasse, as St. Augustine indicates, is the arduous path of self-knowledge. For Luigi there are no direct or easy answers that will get him out of his deep crisis; but there are better alternatives. It would be a matter of encouraging him to get down to work in self-knowledge and to trust that God will help him, and that he will never be alone in this journey to the depths of the truth of himself. In fact, trying to narrate his difficulties and the feelings that accompany them is already a way of helping himself, as he begins to be more reflective.

Perhaps Luigi will also need a proposal of interpretation of some elements that are in his unconscious; what he does not manage to see of himself but that is conditioning his life a lot. For example, to identify what he is afraid of, to recognize the strong need he has to be loved, understood and accepted by others; perhaps he needs to reconcile himself with his vulnerability in order not to live all the time on the defensive. And, above all, perhaps Luigi needs to review the image he tries to project of himself to others, to recompose his personal identity and work to be more authentic, to be more himself, to be freer?

Through the path of self-knowledge, Luigi will surely recover the strength of his dreams, which will motivate him to give the best of himself. And, most importantly, a marvelous path will open before him for a reunion with God. Encountering his mercy, that is, the light that God shines on his mistakes and errors with his kind, understanding and loving gaze, will surely change his life. You may discover that to know yourself is already to know God. God alone knows the depths of the human heart, much more than anyone knows himself: *"Lord, know me and search my heart"* (Psalm 139:23).

### **Interiorization exercise on who I am**

From the video that talks about the five reasons to know oneself ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IOIJ\\_7N\\_Vc&t=26s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IOIJ_7N_Vc&t=26s)), propose, for personal reflection, the following points:

- Personal shadows (unmet inner needs),
- The lights that would illuminate the dark areas of one's own heart (the light makes the darkness - our needs - disappear),
- And to think about which paths - choices and decisions - can lead us to turn on/ encounter the light we need.

## **THEME 2**

### ***Why am I the way I am?***

To develop this theme, it is suggested to hand out the sheet with the outline of the fundamental wounds, and to explain them one by one calmly, so that during the development of the topic, interventions, questions and clarifications can be made. At the end of the theme, it is important to leave personal time for this reflection to help them connect with themselves and with their life story.

### **Content of the theme**

In the complex workings of the emotional world, what is often referred to as the fundamental emotional wound occurs sooner or later. Even if the basic needs of a young child are met - for in fact he is still alive - it is precisely the interpretation of how and under what circumstances they were met that gives rise to emotional conflicts. Curiously enough, the basic needs are never met according to the emotional demands of the child, for not even the mother herself, with all the intuition that characterizes her, is able to understand them always and completely. The child is assisted as the caregivers can and never as the child would like.

Therefore, it is not possible to always and absolutely satisfy the needs of a young child. However, since an emotional filter is already in place, frustration is designed as an interpretation of an absence or lack that is intensely suffered, thus giving rise to the fundamental emotional wound. Normally in the interval of the first three years of life, the satisfaction of material needs is filtered through emotional needs, and they are defined fundamentally in relation to the family bond or bonds. Thus, the need for food, protection and security acquire a very particular emotional coloring, depending on the person's own character and the different relational experiences in which they take place.

The Canadian psychologist Lisa Bourbeau (1941) talks in her book *The Healing of the Five Wounds* about these fundamental emotional wounds: abandonment, rejection, humiliation, betrayal and injustice. The young child interpreted in his emotional register that his inner world was threatened because the satisfaction of an important need -protection, affection, security, affection, etc.- was not being met. For the author, we all harbor within us a "*wounded child*", who interpreted that he was not loved as he would have liked and, therefore, needed a new strategy of protection against emotional pain.

The fundamental wound has a very intense emotional charge and is experienced as a deficit in the unconditional acceptance expected from the bond. Therefore, a personality profile is created based on the perception and interpretation of this experience of lack. The excess of emotional pain in the face of frustration is hidden behind a protective shell, and behaviors and ways of being that are more or less acceptable are rehearsed. This is a synthetic outline of the fundamental wounds.

Fundamental wound	What could have caused it	Mask	Manifestations
1. Rejection An invisible barrier to physical contact is created.	Birth of another brother; they don't want me anymore; get out of my way, don't be in my way; because of you we won't be able to travel; leave, I'll do it on my own...	The fugitive evasive ( <i>activism</i> )  (recurrent thought: " <i>I do not deserve</i> ").	Avoidance, flight forward or regression, constant agitation, a thousand commitments, projection mechanism, anxiety; hyper apprehensive.
2. Abandonment  (suffers from loneliness)	They didn't come to pick me up; we left the child with you; I'll be back soon, you go and play; we won't be able to take you....	The clerk emotional (expectation-fulfilling).  "I leave you, before you leave me"; "if you leave, don't come back".	Seeks to meet expectations, expects confirmation, poor self-assertiveness, needs to be noticed, insecurity; jealous.
3. Humiliation  It is born out of public disapproval or criticism.	You peed yourself again; you can't do this; you still can't talk; you've been exhibited in your phobias; "are you stupid or what"; you're not going anywhere like this...	The masochist  <i>The problematic</i>  (recurring thought: " <i>someone has to suffer</i> "). o " <i>better for others to suffer</i> " (tyrant).	Always in trouble, no respite or rest; nervousness; sacrifices must be made; or others suffer as I suffer; deep anger and sadness.
4. Betrayal  ( <i>fear of trust</i> , which turns into <i>envy</i> ).	When the child claims: "you promised me and you didn't deliver".	The controller  (recurrent thought: " <i>they don't fool me</i> ").	Calculating, measures the consequences, keeps time to the letter, super orderly, hyper vigilant, anticipates, does not tolerate lies, distrustful.
5. Injustice  Feelings of ineffectiveness and worthlessness ( <i>perfectionist</i> )	Cold and authoritarian parents. "Him yes and me no"; you are punished, "but I didn't do it, it doesn't matter, you are punished".	The rigid  (recurrent thought: " <i>I have to be important</i> ").	He never shows his feelings, intransigent, obsessive, inflexible, vindictive; fear of failure; spiteful.



## Prayerful reading of the Word –*Lectio divina*– Ezekiel 37,1-14



### Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Divine Spirit, send your light from heaven. Loving Father of the poor; gift, in your splendid gifts; light that penetrates souls; source of the greatest consolation.

Come, sweet guest of the soul, rest from our toil, respite from hard work, breeze in the hours of fire, joy that wipes away tears and comforts in mourning.

Enter into the depths of the soul, divine light, and enrich us. See the emptiness of man, if you are lacking within him; see the power of sin, when you do not send your breath.

Water the land in drought, heal the sick heart, wash away stains, infuse warmth of life into the ice, tame the indomitable spirit, guide the one who twists the path.

Give your seven gifts, according to the faith of your servants; by your goodness and your grace, give to effort its merit; save him who seeks to be saved and give us your everlasting joy.

Amen.

### Biblical text

*The breath of life came and entered into them, and they lived again (Ezekiel 37:1-14).*

*"The hand of Yahweh rested upon me. Yahweh brought me forth by his spirit. He deposited me in the midst of a valley, which was full of human bones. He made me go through the valley in every direction; the bones scattered on the ground were very numerous, and they were completely dry.*

*Then he said to me:*

*"Son of man, will you be able to revive these bones?"*

*I answered, "Yahweh, you know."*

*He said:*

*"Prophecy concerning these bones, you shall say to them: Dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh! This is what Yahweh says to these bones: I will cause a spirit to enter you, and you shall live. I will put sinews in you, I will cause flesh to sprout in you, I will spread a skin on you, I will put a spirit in you, and you shall live: and you shall know that I am Yahweh."*

*I did as I was commanded, and while I was prophesying, there was a great upheaval: the bones drew near to one another.*

*I looked: I saw how they were covered with nerves, the flesh sprouted and the skin spread over them. But there was no spirit in them.*

Then he said to me:

*"Prophesy, son of man, call the Spirit! You shall say to the Spirit, 'This is what Yahweh says: Spirit, come from the four winds, breathe on these dead, that they may live!"*

*I prophesied according to the command I had received, and the Spirit entered into them; they came to life and stood on their feet: it was a great multitude, an immense multitude.*

Yahweh then said to me:

*Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.*

Now they say:

*"Our bones have dried up, our hopes have died, we have been rejected."*

*That is why he prophesies.*

You shall speak this word of Yahweh to them:

*"I will open your graves, O my people, I will cause you to rise from your graves and bring you back to the land of Israel. Then, when I have opened your graves and caused you to rise up, you shall know that I am Yahweh.*

*I will put my Spirit in you and you shall live; I will establish you in your land and you shall know that I, Yahweh, have said it and done it -word of Yahweh-".*

#### **a. Lectio**

*"The Lord laid his hand on me, brought me out full of his power, and placed me in a valley that was full of bones. The Lord made me pass through them in all directions; the bones covered the valley, they were very many and completely dry. He said to me, "Do you believe that these bones can come to life again?" I answered, "Lord, only you know. Then the Lord said to me, "Speak in my name to these bones. Say to them, 'Dry bones, listen to the Word of the Lord. The Lord says to them, 'I will put the breath of life into you, so that you will come to life. I will put sinews on you, stuff you with flesh, cover you with skin, and give you the breath of life, that you may live again. Then they will recognize that I am the Lord.' So I spoke to them as he had commanded me. And as I spoke to them I heard a noise: it was an earthquake, and the bones began to knit together. And I saw sinews and flesh appearing on them, and they were covered with skin. But they had no breath of life.*

*The Lord said to me, "Speak in my name to the Breath of life, and say to it, 'Thus says the Lord: Breath of life, come from the four corners of the earth and give life to these dead bodies.' I spoke in the name of the Lord, as he commanded me, and the Breath of life came and entered into them, and they came to life again, and stood upright. There were so many of them that they formed an immense army."*

*The Lord said to me, "The people of Israel are like these bones. They go about saying, 'Our bones are dry; we have no hope, we are lost.' Well then, speak to them in my*

*name. Say to them, 'This is what the Lord says: My people, I am going to open their graves; I will bring them out of them and bring them back to the land of Israel. And when I open their graves and bring them out of them, they shall know, my people, that I am the Lord. I will put my breath of life into their hearts, and they shall come to life again; and I will settle them in their own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have said it and done it. I, the Lord, affirm it'.*

### **b. Meditatio**

*Psalm 12:7 says: "The words of the Lord are pure words, like gold purified in the crucible, seven times purified".* Try to repeat the following verses at least seven times. You will soon realize that repeating them with the intention of understanding them, after having asked for the light of the Spirit, will help you to enter into the unfathomable richness of the Word.

*"The Lord laid his hand on me, brought me forth full of his power and placed me in a valley that was full of bones";* what mission does God entrust me with for my life?

*"Do you believe that these bones can be brought back to life?";* are there signs of death in you or around you that can receive the life of God; do you believe in the healing and transforming action of the Holy Spirit?

*"Speak in my name to these dry bones and say to them..."* What do you announce with your life?

*"Breath of life, come from the four corners of the earth and give life to these dead bodies."* Do you rise the presence of the Holy Spirit where there are signs of death; do you receive life from God and give life to others by your presence; are you a blessing to others?

*"They go about saying, our bones are dry; we have no hope, we are lost" [...]. "I will put my breath of life into their hearts, and they shall come to life again."* What does this Word awaken in me?

### **c. Oratio**

Holy Spirit, enlighten me, strengthen me, guide me, console me. Let me know what the eternal Love of the Father desires in me; let me know what I must accomplish; let me know what I must live; let me know what, in silence and prayer, I must accept, bear and endure. Yes, Holy Spirit, make known to me the will of the Father. Holy Spirit, perfect the work that Jesus began in me. Hasten for me the time of a life filled with your Spirit. Mortify in me presumption.

I want to be simple, full of God's love and constantly generous. May no human force prevent me from honoring my Christian vocation. May no interest, through my carelessness, go against justice. May no selfishness reduce in me the infinite spaces of love. May everything be great in me. Even the search for truth and the promptness in my duty up to the surrender of my life, of my hours, of my days. May

the effusion of your Spirit of love come upon me, upon the Church and upon the whole world. Amen.

#### **d. *Contemplatio***

Learning from one's own history and healing the wounds of the past is the first journey of the heart. To frequent the past, to elaborate with meaning one's own experiences, allows the person to become wise. "Sapere audere", dare to know yourself. Wisdom or sapience is a knowledge that gives flavor; knowledge to get taste and meaning to life from what has been lived. And the wounds of the past? In the biblical accounts of the apparitions of the Risen One, after leaving them the gift of peace, he shows them his hands and feet. He even invites them to touch him; to touch the wounds of the nails and the spear (cf. Luke 24:36-40). To "show the wounds", now healed; scars of a self-giving out of love. The journey into the past can become a time of grace when we participate in the paschal experience of Christ. To open oneself to the encounter with the Risen One from the wounds of life is always a healing event, which makes it possible to give meaning to one's own wounds in love.

## Day 2

### **Morning Prayer: Who am I to You?**

The atmosphere is set with quiet and soft music. They are accompanied by breathing exercises and contact with one's own body, to help prepare oneself for prayer. We insist on the senses as channels for the encounter with God: the hearing of the heart, the eyes of the heart, the mouth of the heart, the smell of the heart and the touch of the heart.

The moment of prayer is introduced by alluding to the expression of St. Augustine: "*This is my prayer: O God, who are always the same, may I know myself, may I know you*" (St. Augustine, *The Soliloquies* 2,1). The questions: "*Do I know myself, do I know Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, do I know Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit?*" A pen is given to the participants so that they can answer them as the prayer unfolds.

At the end of the prayer, time is given to share a spontaneous prayer.

### **Sentence content:**

1. **Return to the heart.** Knowing oneself is a courageous bet on a better future. It takes time and has its difficulties and stumbling blocks, but it frees the heart to make the right decisions. Go back to the heart because on this journey into your inner self you will gather a lot of valuable information about yourself, which will later be very useful for your life. Keep in mind that going back to the heart will enable you

to recognize your most genuine essence as a human being and will help you to grow in freedom.

2. **I prepare the heart.** Prepare your heart to recognize the truth of your life; you are what you are, in great part, because of what you have lived, chosen and guarded as valuable within yourself. Ignorance of yourself is not compatible with assertiveness in the search for the meaning of your existence. Ignorance of your inner world will be the greatest obstacle for you to take your own life in your hands and make the best possible investment with it to be happy. Therefore, make up your mind today to know yourself, to love yourself and, of course, to improve yourself.
3. **I open my heart.** The path of interiority has a lot to do with knowing oneself, but, above all, with knowing oneself in God. Getting to know yourself as God knows you is one of life's most wonderful experiences. Remember that your deepest identity has to do with your life story and that God, as a provident Father, has accompanied that little story from the beginning. If you open yourself to recognize God in your heart, you will realize that this is already knowing yourself, for you are his image and likeness; you carry his signature inscribed in your DNA.
4. **I lift up my heart.** The prayerful supplication of the prayerful person in Psalm 139 can serve as an impulse to raise your heart to God: *"O God, probe me and know my heart, examine me and know my thoughts. See if my way is wrong, and lead me in the path of good"*. Recreate within yourself the certainty that God knows you and knows you in your "personal" history, for he accompanies your history; a history of love and salvation. Lift up your heart and be grateful for the gift of God's presence in your life. And learn to look at yourself, as God looks at you, with tenderness.

## THEME 3

### *Knowing ourselves as God knows us*

For the development of this theme, the following dynamics can help. Participants are given several lenses with different magnifications and are invited to look through them. If any of the participants wear glasses, they are asked to provide them so that others can try to look at things as they look at them. It is important to help them understand that we have a very personal way of looking at life and that, most of the time, we see things as we are. This will help them understand that God looks at things as he is, love. Then the content of how God looks at the human being is presented.

#### **Content of the theme**

What is man as seen from the point of view of faith? The believing vision of man takes for granted that human beings do not have the origin of their existence in themselves, but that Someone - God - thought of them and loved them, and because He thought of them

and loved them, it was possible for them to exist. Moreover, by the simple fact of existing, he has an important and non-transferable mission to discover and embrace, as he travels the path of life. It must also be said that the human being does not reach total fulfillment here, in this life, until he reaches the place of his definitive rest, there where God constantly invites and attracts him: the happy life together with him. Therefore, faith and trust, origin and meaning of life, vocation and happiness, love and passion always go hand in hand.

Biblical wisdom, the wisdom proper to the believing human being, presents a very successful image of what the human being is for God. The origin of the human being, created in the condition of man and woman, is in the "*adamah*" mixed with "*ruah*"; clay kneaded with spirit, earth that welcomes God's own life (cf. *Genesis* 2:7). Adam and Adamna are the most accomplished work of art of God the Creator, coming from the tender hands of a Father who models from a self-contemplating Presence. Adam and Eve are the reflection of the best of the Creator God, embodied in his most beautiful work of art. Adam and Eve are, in short, the expression of a Breath of life that fills everything, to the point of filling it completely (cf. *Genesis* 1:27).

The person in biblical thought is also "*nefesh*", is "*neshamah*" and is "*ruah*". The whole person is body, instinct, impulses, self-possessed energy that guards the call to encounter that generates life (*nefesh*) (cf. *Psalms* 42,5). The whole person is thought, reason, intelligence, self-awareness, always open to a creative dialogue with oneself, with others, with creation and with the Creator (*neshamah*) (cf. *Genesis* 2:7). And the whole person is emotion, feelings, affections, free spirit called to love, listening, service and self-giving (*ruah*) (cf. *Genesis* 6:3). To be a person is a gift, a life constantly received from God, a reality called to be a gift for others in self-giving and blessing.

The Christian journey that entails, in general, knowing oneself in God, acquires a greater concreteness in Christ. To know oneself in Christ, the fullness of humanity, is to know the dream of God the Father for each of his children, in the Son. To know oneself in Christ is to know oneself in truth and to know oneself in Truth. Man is constituted by participation in the personal love of God. Love as the truth of man, of his intelligence, of his psyche, of his spirituality and also of his body. Love understood as ecstasy of the self, of the subject who realizes himself fully as a person by recognizing the other not only as objective existence, but also as a sphere of perception of himself. I recognize you means also that I live your being as my own and in your being I know myself more truly.

Since God became man, the humanity of God in Jesus Christ is the most worthy way to know oneself in God. Christ, perfect man, manifests full humanity to man himself and reveals to him the greatness of his vocation (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). The full humanity that God wishes to bestow on every human being is diminished by evil, sickness and sin. Hence the commitment of Jesus of Nazareth to make present the Kingdom of God through the healing of illnesses, the expulsion of demons; above all, by creating life and hope in the hearts of men. Because he, who has compassion for all, wants to and can heal us from selfishness, sadness, despair; in short, from sin. He is the one who helps us to walk towards the light of the new project of full humanity.

God's plan, therefore, is that "*man should not be alone*". His dream is to make of the multitude, a people, of the dispersed, a fraternity; that every reality "have Christ as its head" and reach communion, in the image of the unity and communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Now, because of self-sufficiency - pride - the human being, even the closest, has ceased to be the "adequate help" and has become the enemy: man-woman, Cain-Abel, poor-rich, slave-free, Jew-gentiles, etc. From then on, man's reaction is towards enmity and hatred, and his instinct is fueled by the desire for revenge. This occurs when he indulges in *adamah*. On the other hand, when he seconds the action of the *Ruah*, he flows towards encounter.

Therefore, who is man, the human being, the person? St. Augustine communicated it thus by way of prayer: "*And what am I to you that you command me to love you [...] Woe is me! Tell me by your mercies, O Lord and my God, who you are to me. Say to my soul: "I am your health". Say it in a way that I may hear it. The ears of my heart are before you, Lord; open them and say to my soul, "I am your health." May I run after this voice and overtake you. Hide not thy face from me. Let me die so that I may not die and so see you*" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 1:5). It could be said that man can experience God, because God has experienced man in Jesus Christ. As a contemporary mystic would say, the end of man is not simply to "accept" himself, but to welcome God in himself, to welcome himself in God and to welcome others in the love of God.

### **Interiorization exercise to try to know ourselves as God knows us**

- With plasticine, represent how God sees us, thinks of us, loves us. Then, try to describe on a piece of paper what God's plan for your life would be and what image of God you feel called to reflect with your own life.

### **Closing of the encounter**

It is recommended to play an Augustinian song that speaks of knowing ourselves as God knows us, to set the mood for the moment. It is explained that for the closing of the meeting, each one will freely open his heart to share what has helped him most in his discernment throughout the sharing.

Once everyone, or the vast majority, has shared, the second dynamic is explained. After a brief moment of silence, each person chooses one or two words that express the experience of the meeting. The person accompanying the sharing can close with the words *identity* and *truth*.

### **Personal activities to deepen at home**

1. Meditate one hour a week on one of the biblical texts suggested at the end of worksheets 2, 3 and 4.
2. Read and deepen in the material "*The five wounds of being*" by Lise Bourbeau, or another of the same kind.




3. Spend half an hour a week browsing the Order's web pages and [Inquietar.com](http://Inquietar.com) and the social networks associated with this vocational website.
4. Write down the things that are awakened, and then share them personally with the companion.

**3rd Step**  
*Focus on the essential: love*  
*(third outline)*







## 3rd Step

### *Focus on the essential: love*

*(third outline)*

#### **Objective**

To accompany the participant in the encounter so that he/she may discover that the main nucleus of the Christian vocation - and of any specific vocation - is love. The vocation to which God calls is that which, in principle, enables the person to love more and better. It is a matter of helping the participant to connect with this unrenounceable intuition that is embedded in his or her heart, in such a way that it inspires him or her and suggests the path by which he or she must live the fullness of love.

#### **Proposed schedule**

##### **Day 1**

08:00, Prayer.

10:00, Theme 1: *"To love and to be loved"* (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 3.1).

11:00, Personal time to work on Worksheet 5.

12:00, Theme 2: *"Love and do what you will"* (St. Augustine, *1 Cor. s. John* 7:8).

12:40, Time for personal reflection.

13:30, Time for group sharing.

16:30, Personal time to work on Worksheet 8.

18:00, Lectio divina, *"The vocation of Mary of Nazareth"*.

##### **Day 2**

08:00, Prayer, *"For the love of your love"* (St. Augustine, *Conf.* 2.1).

10:30, Theme 3: God, the ultimate goal of our love.

11:30, Walk/ hike.

13:00, Eucharist (give space to share the Word).

16:00, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 12*.

17:00, Closing of the encounter.

## Day 1

### Morning Prayer

It is a matter of delving into the deep motivation of why we do things - to fulfill expectations, to seek prestige or a status vivendi, for recognition, for evasion...? The illegitimate and insufficient motivations and intentions to embrace one or another option of life are part of the disciple's path. It is important, then, to enter into a sincere dialogue with Jesus in order to allow him to bring his liberating Word to the claim of our selfish interests. It is a matter of letting Jesus evangelize the depths of our heart.

A quiet prayer is suggested, in which there is ample space for silence and personal meditation. The prayer time can be accompanied by soft music, except when the songs are played. At the end of the prayer, it is proposed to leave a space for the participants to briefly share a spontaneous prayer.

### Prayer: "Abide, Lord"

Stay, Lord, do not pass by, for if now all is light, without You and when You leave, it will be darkness again. If now I see your greatness, without you and when you leave, I will only touch my poverty and weakness.

Stay, Lord, do not pass by, because, with your Word, my doubts will become sure answers. For my flighty and sorrowful path becomes a path of hope, a cry to your real and risen presence.

Stay, Lord, do not pass by, that, with You and for You, it is worthwhile to wait and wait. That, with You and for You, there is no great cross, but strength to face it. That, with You.

Stay, Lord, do not pass by, because, with You and through You, my path is hope. Because, with you and through you, illusion dawns. Because, with you and through you, I feel the sky closer. Because, with You and through You, I see more brothers and I feel that I have fewer enemies. Because, with You and through You, disenchantment disappears and the firm faith of those who know that You, Lord, are the beginning and the end of everything, springs forth. Amen.

*From the Gospel according to St. Matthew 20,17-28*

*"As Jesus was going up toward Jerusalem, he took the Twelve [disciples] aside and on the way he said to them:*

*-Look, we are going up to Jerusalem, and this Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the learned men, who will condemn Him to death. They will hand him over to the pagans to be affronted, scourged and crucified. On the third day he will rise again.*

*Then the mother of the Zebedee's came to him with her sons and prostrated herself to make a request.*

*He asked her:*

*-What do you want?*

*She replied:*

*-Command that, when you reign, these two sons of mine sit one on your right and one on your left.*

*Jesus answered him:*

*-Are they able to drink the cup that I shall drink? They replied:*

*-We can.*

*Jesus said to them:*

*-My cup shall they drink, but to sit on my right and left is not mine to grant; it shall be for those whom my Father has appointed. When the other ten heard this, they were angry with the two brothers.*

*But Jesus called them and said to them:*

*-You know that among the heathen the rulers keep their subjects in subjection, and the mighty impose their authority. It shall not be so among you; rather, whoever among you would become great, let him become your servant; and whoever would be first, let him become your slave. Just as this Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for all”.*

Word of the Lord.

**Audio meditation:** *“Hello, I am Jesus”* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFIEZCXOXXs>).

**Song:** *“I knew you loved me”* ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AB2x\\_DII3W0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AB2x_DII3W0))

**Prayer:** *“Thank you, Jesus...”*

Jesus, I come today to thank you for all that you have given me. From the day I met you, my life changed completely, because from that moment I began to have a friend who never fails and who will never leave my side. I discovered all the love you could give me if I was willing to receive it. I also discovered that you guide me and accompany me on the path of my life. Thank you for the beautiful life you gave me, that you gave me without asking anything in return, without distrusting me and with the illusion that I would know how to use it in the best possible way. I know that in your steps are also mine, we go together hand in hand and in any stumble you will help me to get up to continue walking.

Something that I like very much about you, Jesus, is that not only are you always attentive to listen to my sorrows, but you also enjoy my joys and laugh at my antics. Thank you, Jesus, because now my heart no longer feels sad and lonely, for you are by my side.

Thank You, Jesus, for forgiving my sins when I am truly repentant. I ask You, Jesus, to show me the way each day so that I may walk it with hope and joy. Amen.

**Song:** *"Un cierto Galileo" (A certain Galilean)*

## Theme 1

### *To love and to be loved*

To begin this topic we can start with the following question: In general, what is the most important thing in life for people? And for you, what is the most important thing in your life? After some interventions, the following video is projected, which invites us to be a gift, a gift and a blessing for others. The song is entitled: "Tell me how to be bread", and it is by Salomé Arricibita: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQQRt4G9Zb8>.

#### **Song lyrics**

Tell me how to be bread, tell me how to be bread...  
 How to be food that satisfies inside,  
 that brings peace.  
 Tell me how to be bread, tell me how to be bread...  
 Tell me how to approach one who has no breath,  
 who believes that it is a story to laugh, to love.  
 Tell me how to be bread,  
 tell me how to let me eat little by little,  
 giving it all and filling me more.  
 Tell me how to be bread, tell me how to be bread...  
 How to be for others at all times food and manna (encore).

You who are the bread of life,  
 You who are light and peace,  
 You who drench the earth when you rain the sky,  
 tell me how to be bread.  
 You who make me your reflection,  
 You who embrace my weakness,  
 You who satisfy my hunger when I return from afar,  
 Tell me how to be bread (encore).  
 Tell me how to be bread that cures injustice,  
 Tell me how to be bread that creates freedom...



It can be an opportunity to share what has struck them most or what has moved them inside. The facilitator of the meeting helps the participants to see that the mystery of human life is resolved precisely in the love that is received and, above all, in the love that is given. And this ties in with the theme: the purpose of the Christian life and of Christian vocations is to love and to be loved. Vocation is a matter of the heart; it is a matter of love.

### **Content of the theme**

The driving force of Augustine's life, even in the most turbulent and convulsive moments of his youth, was love: *"I sought what to love by loving to love. To love and to be loved was the sweetest thing for me"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 3:1). The most useful and necessary thing in the life of a human being is precisely to experience the beauty of being able to love and to be loved.

What is the most useful? The most useful thing is the most necessary thing. And what is the most necessary thing? The most necessary thing in the life of a human being is love, that is, to fit in the heart of others and that others also fit in one's own heart. Put this way, it may sound a bit romantic, but it is not?

All forms of people's search for meaning in life, in the end, come up against the question: what is the point of this? The desire for success or prestige, of whatever kind, seeks the recognition of others, their approval; to fit into the hearts of others. The pursuit of wealth has as its background, above all, a strong need for security that is not fulfilled by money in itself, but by what is achieved with it, that others love me, even if it is by buying affection; to fit into the hearts of others. And what is the pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake, if not a way of begging for love, that is, the need to be significant for someone; to fit in the hearts of others.

To love and to be loved, as St. Augustine indicates, is the sweetest and most wonderful thing in human life. In this sense, one of the fundamental keys to the path of discernment of one's vocation and mission in the world has to do with unfolding the capacity to love.

Only that kind of love that brings a person out of his or her selfishness and leads him or her to see the suffering in the many faces around him or her is capable of generating value in the world. Vocation emerges as a response to the identification of that reality in which, from one's own capacity to love, a commitment is forged for the transformation of the same.

The process of vocational discernment begins, therefore, by making room in the heart for the question, what would be the path by which I would come to love God more and to love others more?

### **Interiorization exercise on loving and being loved**

DYNAMICS. Divide a sheet of paper into two parts. On the left side there is a place illuminated by the sun, on the right side, a dark area that needs to be illuminated. In the illuminated part write the names of the people by whom I feel unconditionally loved and

what that love brings me. In the dark part is written the name of the people I would have liked to be loved and how I compensate for the absence and emptiness of their love, i.e., what strategies I use to achieve their love.

## THEME 2

### *Love and do as you please*

We propose a debate based on what the participants understand from this phrase of St. Augustine. To provoke in the debate that topics such as love, freedom, choosing according to one's tastes, doing what one wants, etc. appear. Then give the broad meaning of the saint's expression.

Augustine's expression "*love and do what you will*" must be understood in the context of the beauty of Christian love. The saint is reflecting on a commentary on the First Letter of St. John, where it is said that "God is love". Therefore, it is not an invitation to moral anarchy, but to love well, in an orderly way, with the conviction that he who loves well, necessarily acts well.

This is the complete quote: "*Love and do what you will: if you keep silent, keep silent out of love; if you shout, shout out of love; if you correct, correct out of love; if you forgive, forgive out of love. Let there be within you the root of charity; from that root nothing but good can spring forth*" (St. Augustine, *Commentary on the First Letter of St. John* 7:8).

#### Content of the theme

St. Augustine was clear that what moved him in life was the search for love. Even in his adolescence, when he was at his most misguided, he longed for love. These are his words: "And what was it that delighted me but to love and to be loved? But I did not keep my way in it, going from soul to soul, as the luminous terms of friendship indicate, but from the mire of my carnal concupiscence and from the spring of puberty there arose like mists that obscured and obscured my heart until I could not discern the serenity of the direction of the tenebrosity of lust" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 2,2).

Later on he insists again: "I arrived in Carthage, and everywhere around me there was a hotbed of impure love. I did not yet love, but I loved to love and with intimate indigence I hated myself for seeing myself less in need. I sought what to love by loving to love, and I hated security and the path without dangers, because I hungered within me for the inner food, for yourself, O my God, although I did not feel this hunger as such; rather I had no appetite for incorruptible delicacies, not because I was full of them, but because the emptier I was, the more disgusted I felt" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 3:1).

It is surprising to see how St. Augustine opens his heart to tell us that "it was sweet for him to love and to be loved" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 2:1). He understood that he was created for love and for love. But he lived this love in a somewhat disordered way,

precisely because of the instigation of the passions. Until he did not reach, by a gift of grace, a certain order in love, he did not rest from the exhausting struggles against his impulses. Now, from an ordered love, Augustine says: "My weight is my love; it carries me wherever I am carried" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 13:10).

Human beings define ourselves, above all, by what we love and how we love. However, the path of learning true love is long and arduous. Human beings gradually move from the ego-centric tendency to the logic of gift. Therefore, the call that God makes to the human being is to walk in love, to demolish the selfish and possessive inertia that holds him hostage. And only the gift of God's Love makes us experience the satiety of desire.

St. Augustine says: "Two loves founded two cities. The love of self to the point of contempt for God, the earthly city. And the love of God to the point of despising oneself, the city of God" (St. Augustine, *City of God* 14:28). It could be said that love centered on self-interest, to the point of enjoying things and persons without concern for anything or anyone, gave rise to the sensual city. The love of others for the benefit it brings for oneself and for one's own, gives rise to the city society. And the love of God to the point of denying one's own interest, so that one's own life becomes a gift for others, gives rise to the civilization of love.

### **Interiorization exercise on loving with freedom**

**DYNAMICS:** Divide the sheet of paper into two parts. On the left side, draw a spider's web and write what the worldly spirit has trapped you and does not allow you to be free to love. On the right side, draw a compass and write where you want to direct your love and who or what will be your north.

## **Lectio divina**

### *The call of Mary of Nazareth*

#### *Luke 1,26-38*



### **Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

Holy Spirit, you have taught us that faith is born in the hearts of those in whom the Word and your loving presence dwell. We feel weak and fragile, and we often fear that we will not be able to continue on the path of following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Enlighten us with the Word; we desire to interiorize it and live it in our daily lives. Grant that we may not harden our hearts before your call. Gently push us to seek Jesus and listen to the echo of his voice that tells us in our hearts, what do you seek? Then, and only then, will a dialogue of friends take place.

**Biblical text**

*Vocation of Mary of Nazareth (Lk 1:26-38)*

*"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; the virgin's name was Mary.*

*And entering, he said to her:*

*"Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you."*

*She was troubled by these words, and pondered what the greeting might mean.*

*The angel said to him:*

*"Fear not, Mary, for you have found favor with God; you will conceive in the womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

*Mary answered the angel:*

*"How shall this be, since I know not a male?"*

*The angel answered her:*

*"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, He who is to be born will be holy and will be called the Son of God. Behold, Elizabeth also, your relative, has conceived a son in her old age, and this is already the sixth month of her who was called barren, for nothing is impossible with God."*

*Mary said:*

*"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy Word."*

*And the angel left her and went away.*

**a) Lectio**

St. Luke the Evangelist strives to narrate an uncommon origin for the great character of his work, Jesus. But he does not stop at the fictitious and extraordinary. He inserts the event of the incarnation in the simplest and most colloquial of the life of a people, taking into account their culture, beliefs, customs and expectations. In fact, the greatest and most extraordinary thing in the history of humanity occurs in the most ordinary and commonplace part of the life of a believing woman; this is how the God of Jesus Christ habitually decides to intervene. Mary's vocation takes place in time, in space, in a cultural tradition and in a very personal way of living the faith of an entire people.

*In time.* The text begins by saying that "in the sixth month God sent the angel Gabriel". In the sixth month of what...? Of the conception of Elizabeth, Mary's cousin. The hours and days go by, and that is where the God of life decides to act with his

saving presence. The same evangelist had said a little earlier that this happened “in the time of King Herod”. A vocation never happens apart from historical events, however trivial and anodyne they may seem to us. It is faith that gives us enough perspective to make a reading of the marvelous and surprising action of God in the ordinary of human life.

*In space.* The Evangelist Luke says that “the angel Gabriel was sent to a city of Galilee, called Nazareth”. Geography offers a soil in which the meaning of life takes root. We are talking about Nazareth, a small village on the outskirts of Galilee. God does not usually intervene in the center of political, economic and religious power; he intervenes where the harshness of life leaves a crack for trust and hope. The periphery is the center of God’s action, among the poor, the simple and humble of his people.

*In one culture.* The angel’s announcement reached “a maiden betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; the virgin’s name was Mary”. Time and space are accompanied by the anthropological subsoil, that is, the condition of human life in a family, with a very particular culture, values, traditions and customs. Mary is this woman in whom God’s action is concentrated for the good of an entire people. God’s call embraces the whole of life: personal history, one’s own references of meaning and significance, different experiences, freedom, values, projects, dreams?

*In the faith of a people.* Mary was a believing Jew, deeply immersed in the faith of a people, familiar with the Word and always eager to understand God’s plans in order to put them into practice. The biblical text states that the angel said to her: “You will conceive and bear a son, whom you shall call Jesus. He will be great, he will bear the title of the Son of the Most High; the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, that he may reign over the house of Jacob forever, and that his kingdom may have no end”.

### ***b) Meditatio***

In this story there are two protagonists, Mary and the Word. “Mary” is the symbol of the portion of humanity that, despite the historical situations of marginalization, rejection and abandonment by the socio-religious officialdom, trusts, hopes and is open to God’s action. “The Word”, God himself who speaks through the angel, who pronounces himself, but not in the “center” where everything is said and decided, because there is no room for him there. The Word that creates, that transforms, that gives security and, without violating the freedom of the believer, invites to a joyful adherence and acceptance of God’s will, finds in Mary all the doors open when it is pronounced.

The Word of life is incarnated in Mary’s womb by the yes that most sums up trust in the history of humanity. The fruitfulness of vocation has to do with the obedience of faith to God’s plans. Thus, vocation is the free response of the human being to

embrace the unconditional project of God's love. Mary is a teacher in this. When we consider the very personal vocation that the Lord gives to each one of us, the question arises: how does the Word of God make my heart fruitful so that I can engender the Christ that I give to others? How open is my heart to God's happening in history, in my history?

Keep in mind that God is waiting for your courageous yes. Your answer cannot be idealistic, but realistic and rooted in your reality. To do this, draw a tree with the following elements. In each root, place the characteristics of the time in which you live, the characteristics of the place where you live, the characteristics of your culture, and the type of faith and religious practices you live. You could add another root related to your family. That also has a trunk. And through the trunk represent the way in which God calls you to love concretely taking into account your reality, that is, what do you want to put your heart in? who needs to be loved? what testimony of love can you give? And finally, draw the top of the tree and place the fruits of love that you would like to give.

### *c) Oratio*

Mary of Nazareth, Mother of our Lord,  
 companion of our daily walk,  
 come and visit us, stay with us.  
 May our gaze not be clouded,  
 to the point that we do not see the light of the Lord,  
 that always accompanies us,  
 who walks beside us,  
 that sustains us in hard times.  
 Maria, you believed and you risked your life; and it was not easy for you.  
 You also went through times of uncertainty,  
 of not understanding the things that were happening,  
 of suffering and loneliness.  
 And you came through, with good spirits and dedication.  
 Mary, how hard it is to say yes to the Lord!  
 How hard it is to say yes beyond words,  
 to say yes with deeds, with attitudes, with gestures..., with life!  
 Teach us to hope in the Lord,  
 to trust in his Word, to let ourselves be guided by his Spirit,  
 to fill us with his good humor and joy.  
 Teach us to listen to his voice,  
 in everyday reality,  
 in the suffering of so many,  
 in the yearning for liberation and change,  
 in the thirst for justice of the majority.  
 Teach us to pray so that we do not lose hope.

and to give it solid roots.  
Teach us to pray in order to discern where to put our efforts.  
and discover our vocation and mission.  
Teach us to pray so that we will not be discouraged.  
in difficulties and setbacks.  
We trust in your hands  
that you may make us strong in faith,  
committed to solidarity  
and firm, very firm, in the Hope of the Kingdom.

#### **d) Contemplatio**

*"God, having a Son, made him the son of man so that the children of men might also become children of God" (St. Augustine, Sermon 139:1). Mary is the door that opens us to the embrace of God the Father in her Son Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us, and in whom we have been infinitely blessed, as was Mary, the full of grace. What a great gift: to become children of God out of pure love. To realize that so much blessing came into the world through Mary's YES, makes us realize that God continues to pour life into the world through the courageous yes of many other young and not so young people who, like Mary, say: "Let it be done to me according to your Word".*

## Day 2

### **Morning Prayer: For the love of your love** (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 2,1)

The atmosphere is set with quiet and soft music. They are accompanied by breathing exercises and contact with one's own body, to help prepare oneself for prayer. We insist on the senses as channels for the encounter with God: the hearing of the heart, the eyes of the heart, the mouth of the heart, the smell of the heart and the touch of the heart.

The moment of prayer is introduced by alluding to the phrase of St. Augustine: *"For the love of your love I do what I do"*. His words: *"I want to remember my past ugliness and the carnal filth of my soul, not because I love them, but because I love you, my God. For love of your love I do this, going over with my memory, full of bitterness, those most perverse ways of mine, so that you may be sweet to me, sweetness without deceit, blissful and eternal sweetness, and gather me from the dispersion in which I wandered divided into pieces when, separated from you, who are unity, I faded away in many things"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 2,1).

The participant is invited to ask himself what is most important to him in his life and to be aware of how much it matters to him to make room for love in his life.



Psalm 131 is handed out on a sheet of paper and recited together. After the exercise accompanied by meditation on the 5 steps presented below, the participants are invited to write on the second part of the blank sheet of paper an update of the Psalm from their own experience of God.

At the end of the prayer, time is given to share a spontaneous prayer.

### Sentence content

- 1. Return to the heart.** Go back along the inner path until you reach your innermost self, for there you will be able to identify what personal resources - gifts - you have to generate value in the world. In life, sooner or later, we realize that we transcend when we step outside of ourselves. Nothing empowers a disciple of Jesus Christ to realize the truth in love more than making this journey into the depths of himself and listening to the voice of God speaking to his heart and entrusting him with a mission. So, recognize the voice of God and decide to do your bit to make this world a better world.
- 2. I prepare the heart.** The most useful and necessary thing for human beings is love. To prepare your heart, begin by recognizing what moves you most in life: the search for success? the desire for recognition? to become someone important? to get a lot of money? If you really want to know a person, don't ask him what he thinks, but what he loves. Where is your treasure? Because that is where your heart is (cf. *Matthew 6:21*). Identify the underlying motivation that moves you to get fully into existence and that suggests to your heart a concrete life project to be happy.
- 3. I open my heart.** The only force capable of making us new as human beings and of committing us seriously to the transformation of this world is the revolution of tenderness; authentic love. This love is not produced by people, nor do we get it at the supermarket, but we receive it as a gift from God. Open your heart to the very Source of love, where you can quench your thirst. Only when you know that you are immensely loved, you discover that life is a gift received and that it is meant to be a good for others. Open your heart before God so that you may learn, as a disciple of Christ, to live the logic of gift.
- 4. I raise my heart.** To rise up in the heart supposes making an act of abandonment and trust in God, Father and Mother. Let us remember that it is to the humble and the little ones that the delights of the Kingdom are made known (cf. *Matthew 11:25*). By raising your heart to God, you are making a gesture of trust, which entails renouncing haughtiness and pride. It is precisely there, in the heart of your Father, that you will come to experience stillness and rest, joy and peace. Nothing like dwelling in the heart of God will open you to your vocation (cf. *John 1:38-39*).

## THEME 3

### *God, the ultimate goal of our love*

For the development of this theme, the following dynamic can help. Ask them to think of a story, a tale, an anecdote; whatever they like. They are given 1 minute to think about it. Then give them half a blank sheet of paper and ask them to write only the ending. It must be clear that it is important that they only write the end of the story or tale. They are given five minutes. Then some of the endings are shared. There are bound to be many types of endings (happy, tragic, unexpected, etc.); there will be those who don't get it right; and there will be those who take it as a joke and put in a word or two. The idea is to help them to keep in the present moment the final intention of the path, of the journey: to discern, to choose, to respond to the vocation, etc. Never losing the goal helps to take care of the path. And the goal only makes sense to the extent that it was sought along the way. They are reminded that the vocation is to become saints. This translates into reaching the fullness of the love that God offers us.

#### **Content of the theme**

It seems that in our society the only love that counts is the one that is made, not the one that is lived; and it is not the same thing. The ultimate goal of human love has to be something great, beautiful and worthy of being embraced wholeheartedly. We have a lot at stake in the kind of love we seek and the kind of love we live. I think that the ultimate explanation for so much dissatisfaction, anxiety, sadness and feeling of inner emptiness that many people experience, can be found in the love that we long for and that they cannot find. Worse yet, they do not know where to look for it or how to find it. The purpose for which we were created is to correspond in freedom to love with love. Where is this love to correspond to? In the love manifested to us by Jesus Christ, the Lord. "God is love," we are told in the first letter of St. John. God is the ultimate goal of our love.

Just as our relationships with others reveal the quality of our own affectivity, so it also happens in our relationship with God. The relationship with God is either truly from the heart, or it is transformed into ideology, a sublime morality, many dogmas, heavy commandments, endless liturgies and a spiritless social commitment. The heart of Christianity is to maintain a personal and intimate relationship of friendship with the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

What would be the journey that the restless heart makes towards the love of God? We could say that the restless heart makes an alliance with eros, which is modulated through the years by the love of filia, and which reaches its maximum possibility through the love of agape; the love that God offers us. Human beings are defined, above all, by what we love and by the way in which we love. St. Augustine says that *"there is no one who does not love, but we must ask what it is that he loves. Therefore, we are not invited not to love, but to choose what we are going to love"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon 34,2*).

However, the path of learning true love is long and arduous. The human being passes little by little from the ego-centric tendency to the logic of gift. Eros, philia and agape are the stages of this itinerary towards a great love. Each stage assumes the previous one, but transcends it in a different logic; the logic of gift. The call that God makes us to walk in love, necessarily takes us out of the selfish and possessive inertia in which we normally find ourselves. And the gift of his love makes us experience deep satisfaction in our hearts.

This is where the restless heart leads us: to review the quality and grade of the love we live every day. It is about walking through love, in love and towards love. St. Augustine says: *"Behold, we are wayfarers. You ask me: what does it mean to walk? I sum it up in a few words: to go forward, to progress. Go forward, my brothers; always examine yourselves without deceit, without flattery, without vainglory. Always dislike what you are in order to become what you are not yet. If you are satisfied with yourself, you have already stopped. If you say: enough is enough, you are lost. Keep always growing, always walking, always advancing; do not stop on the way, do not turn back, do not deviate. He who does not go forward stops; he who returns to the things he has already left behind goes backward; he who strays from the faith goes astray"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon 169:18*). The beats of a heart in love are, therefore, the steps of a restless heart that goes towards God.

### **Exercise of interiorization of the meaning of life**

**DYNAMICS.** *Listen to the beating of your heart.* On a sheet of paper, make three hearts. In the first one, explain what they spend their free time on, in the second one, what they spend or invest their money on, and in the third one, what they talk about with their friends? With these three criteria you will know what is in your heart.

### **Closing of the encounter**

It is recommended to play some Augustinian song that speaks about love and vocation, to set the mood for the moment. It is explained that for the closing of the meeting, those who want to open their hearts to share what helped them most in their discernment during the vocational experience.

Once everyone, or the vast majority, has shared, the second dynamic is explained. After a brief moment of silence, each person chooses one or two words that express the experience of the meeting. The person accompanying the sharing can close with the words *"essential"* and *"love"*.

### **Personal activities to deepen at home**

1. Meditate one hour a week on one of the biblical texts suggested at the end of worksheets 5, 8 and 12.
2. Read and study in depth the *third book* of *The Confessions* of St. Augustine.

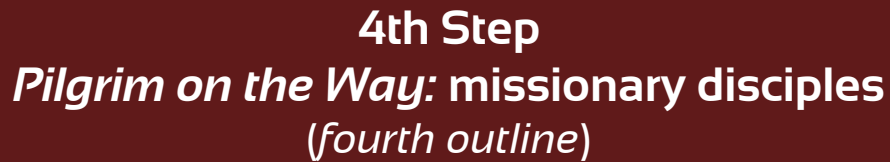
3. Watch vocational testimonies on the Order's YouTube channel and on the website of [Inquietar.com](http://Inquietar.com).
4. Write down the things that are awakened, and then share them personally with the companion.

## 4th Step

*Pilgrim on the Way: missionary disciples  
(fourth outline)*







## 4th Step

### *Pilgrim on the Way: missionary disciples* *(fourth outline)*

#### **Objective**

To accompany the participants in the meeting so that they may be able to situate their process of vocational search and discernment in the coordinates of the common itinerary of Christian life: that of missionary disciples. It is a matter of helping them to understand that any option of life in Christ has to do with the development of the baptismal germ. Therefore, the more one advances in the following of Christ, the more the mystery of one's own vocation is revealed.

#### **Proposed schedule**

##### **Day 1**

08:00, Prayer.

10:00, Theme 1: *"Personal Encounter with God the Trinity"*.

11:00, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 9*.

12:00, Theme 2: *"Conversion of the heart"*.

12:40, Time for personal reflection.

13:30, Time for group sharing.

16:30, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 6*.

18:00, Lectio divina, *"With the heart of a disciple"*.

##### **Day 2**

08:00, Prayer, *"The Word makes the community"*.

10:30, Theme 3: *"Discerning the mission"*.

11:30, Pilgrimage to a shrine.

13:00, Eucharist (give the possibility to share the Word).

16:00, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 10*.

17:00, Closing of the encounter.



## Day 1

### Morning Prayer

It is a matter of delving into one of the most beautiful pages of the Gospel, where we find the fundamental inspiration for living the condition of new life in Christ as missionary disciples: the beatitudes.

During the prayer time, each participant is given a sheet of paper with the beatitudes distributed evenly throughout the sheet of paper. The activity consists of translating the meaning of the beatitude in the path of vocational discernment and writing it in the blank space between beatitude and beatitude.

The prayer leader will read how the Beatitudes can be applied to Jesus, Mary, the self-sufficient and, in general, to all people from the sensitivity of our culture. Time is left for the participants to do the exercise of writing in the blank space the meaning of the beatitude for those who respond to the vocation. They can spontaneously read some of the beatitudes they have written.

Meanwhile, the activity is accompanied by quiet music in the background.

### Contenido

**1st** *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".*

**Jesus of Nazareth.** Blessed Jesus who, with the radical awareness of his poverty, lives all of God and for the things of God, his Father.

**Mary of Nazareth.** Blessed Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, for God fills her with his grace.

**The self-sufficient.** Unhappy are the self-sufficient, because they will never experience in their hearts the saving action of God.

**In our culture.** Blessed are the poor, humble and simple because God will not fill their pockets, but their hearts.

**Those who respond to their vocation.** Courage to those who, even in the midst of their poverty, respond to the Lord's call, for God will fill them with abundant life..

**2nd** *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth".*

**Jesus of Nazareth.** Blessed Jesus, meek and humble of heart, able to welcome all those burdened by the weight of life's difficult experiences.

**Mary of Nazareth.** Blessed is Mary, who understands that she is a humble servant of the Lord, for all generations will call her blessed.

**The oppressors.** Unhappy is he who needs to position himself above others, because he has before him only the inability to love and to let himself be loved.

**For our culture.** Blessed are those who make the value of their lives rest on goodness, for they will be able to live as beloved children of God and brothers and sisters of all.

***Those who respond to a vocation.*** We encourage those who, directing their lives towards God and trusting in him, commit themselves to a concrete vocation, because they will live the fruitfulness of love.

**3rd** *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted".*

**Jesus of Nazareth.** Blessed Jesus, at the mercy of hatred and lies; consoled by the Father in his loneliness and helplessness.

**Mary of Nazareth.** Blessed Mary because in hope she receives God's consolation in the hardest and most difficult moments of her son's life, to the point of becoming the Mother of Consolation.

**Those who evade.** Unhappy is he who rejects suffering, for he will never truly grow in inner freedom.

**For our culture.** Blessed are those who weep for suffering without ceasing to believe and hope in the love of God the Father, because He is already their consolation.

***Who responds to the vocation.*** Courage to those who, being faithful to the call that the Father has placed in their hearts, shed tears, because it is they who are serenaded by the Spirit of consolation.

**4th** *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied".*

**Jesus of Nazareth.** Blessed Jesus, impassioned for the glory of the Father and his reign; his obedience to the Father was his nourishment.

**Mary of Nazareth.** Blessed Mary, faithful doer of the Father's will, for the Lord has fulfilled the desire of her heart.

**The self-satisfied.** Unhappy are those who are satiated and self-satisfied, for nothing will truly fill their heart.

**For our culture.** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for a different world, for their desires will be fulfilled.

***Who responds to the vocation.*** Courage to those who accept the Lord's call and seek to fulfill his will, for they will share in the overabundance of the same table at the banquet of the Kingdom of God.

**5th** *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy".*

**Jesus of Nazareth.** Blessed Jesus, merciful in heart and deeds, always close to the least, with unconditional love.

**Mary of Nazareth.** Blessed Mary, full of compassion in her heart before the misery of the poor, because God remembers her with mercy.

**The insensitive.** Unhappy is he who has hardened his heart towards his neighbor, for he is condemned to live only of himself and for himself.

**For our culture.** Blessed are those who have pity on the underprivileged, for they shall obtain God's mercy.

**Those who respond to their vocation.** Courage to those who respond to the Lord's call and live their vocation as a path of service to the poor, because there they will discover how much they are loved by God in their poverty.

**6th** *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God".*

**Jesus of Nazareth.** Blessed Jesus, whole and free, giving way to the gaze and action of the Father.

**Mary of Nazareth.** Blessed Mary, with a clear and faith-filled gaze, because she sees God at work in the simple things of everyday life.

**The distrustful.** Unhappy are those who distrust God's love and selfishly use others to satisfy themselves, because they live tormented by their fear of being alone.

**For our culture.** Blessed are the pure in heart for they see God in everyone and everything.

**Those who respond to their vocation.** Courage to those who respond to God's call and live their vocation as the way to live love, because God will shine in the brightness of their gaze.

**7th** *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God".*

**Jesus of Nazareth.** Blessed Jesus, who brought the Good News to men, and whose source of peace was God, his Father.

**Mary of Nazareth.** Blessed Mary, who welcomed the gift of Peace in her womb and in her heart, because she is the mother of all those who in Christ build peace.

**The violent.** Unhappy are those who sow discord, for they create their own hell.

**For our culture.** Blessed are those who strive to build peace, for they will be known as children of God.

**Those who respond to their vocation.** Courage to those who respond to the Lord's call, because they carry the peace of the Risen Lord in their hearts and sow it in the heart of the world.

**8th** *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".*

**Jesus of Nazareth.** Blessed Jesus, who was persecuted and died for the mission that the Father had entrusted to him. No one could or will be able to take away from him the joy of conquering death.

**Mary of Nazareth.** Blessed Mary, who by her trust and fidelity to God's plan, saw her heart filled with joy when she found her son full of Life.

**The liar.** Unhappy are those who do not play fair and shun the truth, for their existence will be empty of meaning.

**For our culture.** Blessed are those who are persecuted for their fidelity, because they are opening space for the Kingdom.

**Who responds to the vocation.** Courage to those who are faithful to the way that Jesus opened for them to live the call to be missionary disciples, because their life will be fruitful in love.

**9th** *"Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you and speak all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven, for they persecuted the former prophets as they persecuted you".*

**Jesus of Nazareth.** Blessed Jesus, who was defamed, slandered and persecuted for making present the Kingdom of God, was filled with joy and gladness in the Holy Spirit because the little and humble opened their hearts. Therefore, seated at the right hand of the Father, he is the cause of our salvation.

**Mary of Nazareth.** Blessed Mary who understood that she was more blessed for being a disciple than for being the mother of Jesus, because her heart, even when pierced by pain, experienced the power of love that changes everything, makes it new, fills it with life.

**Those who cause suffering.** Unhappy are those who do not think about the suffering they cause to others, because they cannot bear that there are good, congruent, generous and helpful people; they will never experience joy and peace in their hearts, and their destiny will be absolute darkness and unhappiness.

**For our culture.** Blessed are you when, for believing in Jesus and in the Good News, you are rejected, mocked or harmed. Be overjoyed if this happens to you, for the trial will purify you and open wide the door to heaven; where there is persecution, there the life of God opens its way.

**Who responds to the vocation.** Courage to those who discover how to live their life as missionary disciples in this world, those who welcome the mission that Jesus entrusts to them to make this world a better world; any trial, any tribulation, any rejection for being friends of Jesus is a good sign that things are on the right track.

### Interiorization exercise on the Beatitudes

DYNAMICS. *"The Seven Wonders of the World"*. A history teacher took a class vote to choose the 7 wonders of the world. They chose: pyramids of Egypt, the Taj Mahal, Grand Canyon of the Colorado, Panama Canal, Empire State of New York, St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, the Wall of China. The teacher noticed that a girl was not voting and was thinking. She approached and discovered that she was writing on her paper other wonders. Describe what is meant by each of the seven beatitudes.

- *The cleansing of the heart.* To stand firm, not to think evil, to trust people.
- *To fight for peace.* Not to look away, to commit oneself, to give one's life for a cause.
- *The poor in spirit.* Do not be dominated by pride, arrogance, be simple, do not think you are the best, but be simple and put everything in God's hands.
- ...

## THEME 1

### *Personal encounter with God the Trinity (vocational kerygma)*

For the development of the theme, a spontaneous dialogue among the participants can be based on the reading of the following text from St. Augustine: *"If you see Love, you also see the Trinity"* (St. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 8:12).

It is important to create an environment that prepares the participants to receive the core of the Christian faith from the perspective of vocation.

#### Content of the theme

Ask the Holy Spirit today to open your mind and widen your heart to prepare you to receive God's love, a love that is the measure of God's own heart. If you are willing, you will be gifted with a special light that will help you see how God pours himself into your heart.

1. This is the announcement that we should never be silent about the God of Jesus Christ: *"God the Father, he loves you.* There are many biblical texts that speak of the beauty of the love with which God loves us. Here are some of them:

*"With human cords he drew you, with bonds of love, and he was to them as those who lift up a child against their cheek"* (Hosea 11,4).

*"Does a woman forget her sucking child, and not be moved with tenderness for the son of her womb? For though she forget, yet will I not forget you"* (Isaiah 49,15).

*“See, I have you tattooed on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:16).*

*“The mountains shall be removed and the hills shall be moved, but my love shall not depart from your side, my covenant of peace shall not waver” (Isaiah 54:10).*

*“I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have kept faithfulness for you” (Jeremiah 31:3).*

*“You are precious in my sight, you are dear to me, and I love you” (Isaiah 43:4).*

*“Your God is in your midst, a mighty Savior. He shouts for joy for you, he renews you with his love, and dances for you with shouts of jubilation” (Zephaniah 3:17).*

2. *Jesus, God’s solution to sin.* There is a reality of sin that we all carry within us. There comes a time when you cannot escape from your sin as something that is not yours (this is not mine, I am not like that, what happens is that...), or a mere matter of weakness and impotence. You are unable to overcome it, but it is yours, you feel it as a threat to your innermost freedom; you discover that you are not as free as you would like to be.

In fact, it is I who do not accept God as my Lord; it is I who take possession of his gifts to seek my success and my own glory; it is I who feel my neighbor as a rival; it is I who love myself more than his will; it is I who cling to my securities without trusting God; it is I who use others for my own advantage.

This is the second great news: *Jesus lives, Jesus is the Lord and saves you!* Jesus contains, concentrates and manifests the immense love of God the Father. His person, his words, his gestures and the moments of his life speak and manifest the infinite love of God for man. Jesus is alive and goes out every day to meet us.

From yourself, from the reality that surrounds you, from a universal vision of the world, from the dark light of history, you can hear the promise of salvation and the signs that show it: when Israel has felt most sunk in history, without horizon or future, the believing memory has sustained the call to hope, announcing a new world, a new creation, that is, salvation. The strength of hope is nourished by the certainty of faith that God is always faithful to his promises.

God the Father, in his Son, Christ the Lord, enables us to free ourselves from our enslaved freedom (dependencies, attachments, need for self-affirmation, etc.), gives us a peace we have never experienced before, the certainty that our sins are forgiven, the experience of being loved unconditionally and not because we are good, the conviction of being sustained by him in life, learning to love without interest, enlightenment about my deepest truth as a person, a new relationship with God based on trust, freedom from the fear of death. Here are some biblical texts:

*“If Christ has not been raised, our faith is vain” (1 Corinthians 15:17).*

*“I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).*

*“We must be united to Christ in order to know the power of his resurrection” (Philippians 3:10).*

*“He came to give you life, and life in abundance” (John 10:10).*

*“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not die but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16-17).*

*“He who loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end, even to the end” (John 13:1).*

*“I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).*

3. *The Promise of Jesus: the gift of the Holy Spirit.* We would never have imagined or even dreamed it: God raises us in our human condition to the point of giving us his own divine life through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Happy life comes to us as a gift. Pope Francis says that *“The Holy Spirit fills the heart of the risen Christ and from there pours into our life like a spring.”*

The Holy Spirit is in charge of giving us Christ’s own life to the full, according to the measure of the love with which we are loved. The Holy Spirit gives us a new freedom, that of the children of God. The Holy Spirit enables us to dance in the love of the Father and the Son. We are creatures and the Holy Spirit makes us participate in the glory of the risen Christ, the new life in God. Once again Pope Francis: *“when you receive the Holy Spirit he makes you enter more and more into the heart of Christ, so that you may be ever more filled with his love, his light and his strength”.*

Here is a fundamental biblical text for understanding the action of the Holy Spirit: *“The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5).*

### **Interiorization exercise on the main content of the Christian faith**

DYNAMICS. Make groups and give each group 5 or 6 words of the theme (vocation, love, Father, Son, Spirit, sin, etc.), and they have to relate them on a poster board by means of an example or a drawing. The drawing should contain the representation of all the words.



## THEME 2

## *Conversion of the heart (vocational identity)*

It is often said “my life took a 180-degree turn”, what does this mean? We propose to do a dynamic in which they consider a radical change of life. They are asked to think about what they would do in the month prior to entering the seminary, or getting married, or changing their country...

Spontaneous comments are made about what it has meant for their lives when they have undergone drastic changes. And it is said that the dynamics of the Christian life is a permanent conversion: leaving security, changing beliefs, starting new relationships, etc.

### Content of the theme

It could be said that it is difficult to respond to a vocation without conversion of the heart, of life... Conversion is the initial and daily response of those who have met the Lord.

For this step, it is very important to participate in the local Christian community and to lead a sacramental life that strengthens the initial call. This will allow the disciple to persevere in the Christian life and in the mission in the midst of a world that challenges him, aware that to die to sin is to attain life.

The Document of the General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops states the following: *“In our Church we must offer all our faithful a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, a profound and intense religious experience, a kerygmatic proclamation and the personal witness of evangelizers, leading to a personal conversion and an integral change of life”* (Aparecida, 226).

The encounter with Christ leads to conversion of heart. This is the condition of possibility for accepting his invitation to follow him in freedom. Personal conversion awakens in the disciple the capacity to submit everything to the service of the establishment of the Kingdom of life, beginning with one’s own being (cf. *Aparecida*, 366).

In the same Aparecida Conference, conversion was spoken of in these terms: *“It is the initial response of those who have listened to the Lord with admiration, believe in him through the action of his Spirit, decide to be his friend and go after him, changing their way of thinking and living, accepting the cross of Christ, aware that to die to sin is to attain life”* (Aparecida, 278).

In Christianity, it can be said that there is always an “updated version” of the condition of being a disciple. The best version of each one also has to do with a goal, with a dream. It has to do with the dream that God has for us. God *“in whom we are, in whom we move and exist”* (Acts 17:28), has always thought of us and loved us. And because he has thought of us and loved us, because we are important to him, he accompanies our life and directs it towards its best possibility; he dreams of us full, finished, fulfilled.

Therefore, the most enchanting and fascinating goal that has been given to us Christians and that brings into play the best of ourselves is to come to understand how God dreams of each one of us. And in order to discover God's dream in us, we count on the presence of his Holy Spirit who accompanies us; we feel impelled to the fullness of life because we first experience that we are loved by God.

St. Augustine is for us an example of conversion. It happened in an orchard of an estate in Milan in the year 387. He was in great distress because of his deep personal dissatisfaction, although he was rich and famous. With him was his friend Alypius, however, he withdrew to be alone to weep with sadness. While he was weeping, he heard the singing of some children who were on the neighboring farm, saying: "take and read", "take and read".

Then, Augustine opened the Bible at random and came across the passage of the Letter to the Romans 13:13: "*No more feasting and drunkenness, no more lust and licentiousness, no more envy and quarreling*". Those words gave him the light and strength he needed to change his life.

As soon as he recovered from the shock of the turn his life was taking, he went and shared with Alipio, his friend, the joyful news of his decision to change. Monica, Augustin's mother, was overjoyed that her son had decided not only to become a Christian, but also a monk. After a time of deepening his faith, he was baptized by Bishop Ambrose in the diocese of Milan on Easter night in 387.

### **Interiorization exercise on the conversion of the heart**

**DYNAMICS.** "*Concentric circles of questions*". Divide the two participants into two equal groups. One group will form the inner concentric circle (they face outward), the others the outer circle (they face the partners inside). The moderator will ask a question that the participants will share. Once the question is finished, those in the outer circle turn around to talk to another person. A battery of questions should be prepared:

- oA person who has had a positive impact on you.
- oAn unforgettable event.
- oPerson who is a reference for you and why.
- oA teacher who helped you.
- oA family member with whom you identify.
- oA beautiful sentence that resonates.
- oA song that motivates you.
- A catechesis, a sharing, a meeting that changed your life...

## Lectio divina

### *Educating the heart of the disciple*

#### *(vocational martyrdom)*

#### Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit, enlighten me, strengthen me, guide me, console me. Let me know what Jesus, the Lord, desires in me; let me know what I must accomplish; let me know what I must live; let me know what, in silence and prayer, I must accept, bear and endure. Yes, Holy Spirit, give me to understand the call to be a missionary disciple. Holy Spirit, perfect the work that Jesus has already begun in me. Hasten for me the time of a life filled with your Spirit. Rid me of false pride, selfishness and envy.

#### Biblical text

*With the heart of a disciple (Mark 3:13-34)*

*“Jesus went up on the mountain and called to his side those whom he wanted. They came to him, and Jesus ordained twelve to be with him, and to send them out to preach with the power to cast out demons. Thus he instituted the Twelve: Simon, to whom he gave the nickname Peter; James, son of Zebedee, and John, brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; then Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon, the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, the same who betrayed him”.*

#### a) *Lectio*

Jesus went up the mountain and...

- 1) *He called those He wanted.* The call is particular. The process of calling is to open the heart to listen to God. The call is not on a specific day or at a specific time. The call is a process that is developing and in which one opens one’s eyes and understands this little by little. Look at everything that has happened and look for that common thread that will surely lead you to a conclusion: a call to .....
- 2) *To be with him.* When God calls you, he does not make you his pawn. Nor is it that from the moment he chooses you, you mark a card. He calls you to be with him, to be formed in his image. That is why a Christian, when he feels the call to a vocation, knows that he begins in his presence. That is why the time of the seminary and the time of the novitiate is a time to be with him.
- 3) *To Preach.* The Master sends you to speak. To show the wonder that God does in life and invites you to be his disciple, his announcer. The announcement is not from a book or manual. The announcement is from what is experienced and lived with him.

### **b) Meditatio**

Jesus went up on the mountain to pray. And when he had called the twelve, he chose them. So Jesus went down with them from the mountain, and found a great multitude of his disciples waiting for him in the plain, whom he sent, and a great multitude of people who sought to touch him in order to be healed.

Jesus prays, Jesus calls, Jesus chooses, Jesus sends the disciples, Jesus heals the crowd. And within this temple Jesus, who is the cornerstone, does all this work: it is he who, in this way, carries the Church forward.

Precisely as Paul writes, this Church is built on the foundation of the apostles he chose. This is confirmed by this passage from the Gospel: the Lord chose twelve; all sinners, all of them.

Judas was not the most sinful and I do not know who was the most sinful. But Judas, poor thing, is the one who closed himself to love and therefore became a traitor.

It is a fact that all the apostles escaped in the difficult moment of the passion and left Jesus alone: they are all sinners. And in spite of this, Jesus himself chose them.

Thus, Jesus builds the Church with his prayer; with the choice of the apostles; with the choice of the disciples he then sends; with the encounter with the people.

Jesus is never separated from the people: he is always in the midst of the crowd that tried to touch him, because from him came a power that healed everyone....

(Pope Francis, *Homily at Santa Marta* on October 28, 2014).

### **c) Oratio**

"Lord Jesus, teach us again to say Our Father,  
so that our lives of dedication and service  
respond each day to the charge of Easter morning:  
"Go and tell my brothers."

Send us your Spirit, to break down the barriers that bind us  
and to engage in the construction of  
of the dream of a new fraternity,  
that our lives may be prophetic signs,  
who pour the best of themselves, so that this "wounded world" may be  
recover the sap of sincere love,  
the joy that we are all needed,  
the hope that You precede us  
and you dwell in the midst of pain  
and the pains of so many injustices.  
Help us to set our eyes on you,  
the Good Samaritan, to take charge and to walk humbly  
at your side as "brothers and sisters" to all.

**d) Contemplatio**

Jesus, I come today to thank you for all that you have given me. From the day I met you, my life changed completely, because from that moment I began to have a friend who never fails and who will never leave my side. I discovered all the love you could give me if I was willing to receive it. I also discovered that you guide me and accompany me on the path of my life.

Thank you for the beautiful life you gave me, that you gave me without asking anything in return, without distrusting me and with the illusion that I would know how to use it in the best possible way. I know that in your footsteps are my footsteps and in any stumble you help me to get up and continue walking together. I ask you, Jesus, to show me the way every day so that I can walk it with illusion, joy and hope. And, above all, allow me to be a transparency of your love in the world. Amen.

## Day 2

**Morning Prayer:** *The Word Makes the Community (vocational koinonia)*

It is set to quiet and soft music. It is accompanied by breathing exercises and contact with one's own body, which prepare for prayer. We insist on the senses as channels for the encounter with God: the hearing of the heart, the eyes of the heart, the mouth of the heart, the smell of the heart and the touch of the heart.

The moment of prayer is introduced by alluding to the phrase of St. Augustine: *"You wounded my heart with your Word and I burned with your love"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 10:8).

Participants are invited to ask themselves to what extent they allow themselves to be taught by Jesus, the Master; how much they go to the school of his Word to educate their hearts as missionary disciples. The Word shapes the heart of the disciple to live it in community.

After the exercise accompanied by meditation on the 5 steps presented below, the participants are invited to write the *Psalm of the community* that lives united around the Word and, therefore, united among themselves as disciples (*One Total Christ who prays: Christ the Head and all members of his body; living stones*).

At the end of the prayer, time is given to share a spontaneous prayer.

**Sentence content**

1. **Back to the heart.** St. Augustine is certain that he loves the Lord. How did he come to the deep conviction that his heart had clicked with the heart of God? Definitely by returning to the heart. In this regard, his words are truly expressive: "Being

admonished by You to return to myself, I went within myself guided by You; and I was able to do so because You became my help. And I realized that I was far from You, in the region of dissimilarity. You cried out to me from afar, and I heard it as one hears it inwardly in the heart, leaving me no room for doubt" (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 7:16). Return to your heart and listen interiorly to the voice of God so that you will not doubt that it is he who speaks to you, and so understand the mission that he entrusts to you in this life together with your brothers and sisters in community.

- 2. I prepare my heart.** In order to walk the path of vocational search and discernment with confidence, it is necessary to allow oneself to be touched by the Word of God. The Holy Scriptures guard and manifest the compassion of the Father, the passion of Jesus for the Kingdom and the burning fire of the Holy Spirit. Dispose, then, your heart to make the experience of dancing in the heart of the Trinity through the revealed Word. Keep in mind that here is the main key to the path of vocational discernment: the response to the call is configured and transfigured in the encounter with God through his Word.
3. What is the passion of your life? What makes you vibrate with emotion? What project do you dream of to make a difference in this world? The revealed Word is the ever-open window that gives us access, from the heart, to the heart of the Master. Open your heart to encounter the passion of the Lord's heart through his Word. In fact, the words of Jesus contain that invitation that seduces the heart to infinity; the words of Jesus place you before the utopia of the Kingdom. If you really want to embark on the adventure of your life, let the words of Jesus resound in your heart, so that they may enkindle it with the fire of the mission that he himself entrusts to you.
- 4. I elevate the heart.** The revealed Word is the elevator to ascend in the heart to the encounter with the living God. In faith, the very encounter with the Word is already an encounter with God, who speaks to the heart. The Word allows us to be with our feet on the ground, but also with our desire in the things of God, in the cause of Jesus: passion for God, passion for humanity. Responding to our vocation has much to do with going up in our heart to the encounter with God, who opens us to the understanding of his loving designs and his divine will. Raise your heart on high so that your life may shine like gold in compassion, charity and service to the poorest, according to the call you discover that God is making within you.

## THEME 3

## *Discerning the mission (vocational diakonia)*

For the development of this theme, a video on missions is projected. We suggest the Augustinian Recollects video *"Sin miedo a mojarnos"* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6epGZ58bY>).

### **Content of the theme**

The missionary cause is the first cause of the Church; she exists to evangelize, to bring the message of God's love to hearts, to bring about a living encounter with Christ. And in turn, mission renews the Church, helps her to mature in her faith, to grow in her Christian identity. Mission brings to the baptized new strength and new enthusiasm in the following of Christ; mission awakens a passion for God and a passion for his people. A Christian should hardly forget that Christ is the missionary of the Father, the Church, missionary of Jesus Christ, and the disciple, sent with the power of the Spirit to give birth to Christ in the world.

Any biblical account of vocation refers to an intervention by God in the life of a person for a specific purpose: to announce, to liberate, to defend, etc. Vocation is always for mission. Let us think, for example, of God's passage through Abraham's life: *"The Lord said to Abraham: Go forth from your native land and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great people, I will bless you, I will make your name famous, and it will be a blessing"* (Genesis 12:1-2). God breaks into Abraham's life, calls him and his call sets him in motion. The call includes the promise of being the father of a great people and, moreover, the recipient of a blessing that, through him, will reach all the races of the earth. Call and mission go hand in hand: *"Go forth from your land to the land that I will show you, and in your name shall all the families of the world be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3).

The case of Jesus' call to his first disciples also combines vocation and mission. We can read in Mark's Gospel: *"Jesus went up the mountain and called those whom he wanted, and they went with him. He appointed twelve [whom he called apostles] to live with him and to send them out to preach with power to cast out demons"* (Mark 3:13-15). In all the call narratives contained in the Gospels, Jesus' intention to bind his disciples to the proclamation of the Kingdom, and to perform the signs that make it present, is made clear. After the resurrection, the missionary sending is made explicit: *"Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to all creation. The disciples will be accompanied by these signs: in my name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will seize snakes; if they drink poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will be healed"* (Mark 16:15-18).



St. Augustine's way of life, his example and his doctrine, would give much to talk about vocation and mission. As an example, here is a button. In one of his writings he says: "*We are servants of the Church of the Lord, and we owe ourselves principally to the weaker members, whatever our condition may be among the members of this body*" (St. Augustine, *On the Work of Monks* 29:37). Augustine's understanding of the Church as the living body of Christ, the whole Christ, head and members, is evident. And, therefore, respectful and guarantor of the unity of the Church, he situates every vocation, every kind of Christian life, every ministry and service in the Church, for the edification in charity of the body of Christ. In the Church, every Christian is urged by charity. The mission proper to each vocation has to do with the exercise of charity. Thus, the vocation is for the mission and the mission is to exercise charity from the style that is proper to love of each vocation.

Vocation has to do, then, with love: a way of loving from a particular way of knowing that we are loved by God. For this reason, St. Augustine says that, in the exercise of charity, we owe ourselves above all to the weakest members of the body of Christ, which is the Church. Mission has its meaning in the concrete faces of poverty and suffering in which Christ is present, and in which he asks us to be charitable and to exercise mercy. Moreover, the vocation and mission of the friends of Christ does not stop only at the actions through which charity is exercised, but entails forgetting oneself to the point of giving one's life, giving oneself out of love. It is a matter of loving the poor with God's love, of loving God in the poor, of loving from poverty with God's richness.

The vocation is therefore for the mission. It is the mission that enlarges the gaze of the disciples to recognize Christ alive and present in the person of the poor (cf. *Matthew* 25:35-36). The greatest good that a missionary disciple can do is to give the Gospel to the people, especially to children and young people. The friends of Jesus are, without more, servants of an encounter with the living God. Christian charity urges the disciples of Christ to assume temporal responsibilities, both in the social and ecclesial order. In this sense, St. Augustine invites us to accept willingly any service when charity requires some kind of ministry for the good of the Church and the poor of Christ.

### **Discernment interiorization exercise**

DYNAMICS. Each participant (or in small groups) is assigned a mission or social project of the Order. They should do some research and then present it to the rest of the participants, so that everyone knows about it, can identify with it and in some way their hearts are moved. A small working script should be prepared:

- oBasic mission data.
- oSuffering reality that is attended to.
- oA way to humanize, to evangelize.
- What image do you project of the Augustinian Recollects?

### **Closing of the encounter**

It is recommended to play an Augustinian song that speaks about following Jesus (cf. *Ven y sígueme* by José Manuel González Durán).

It is explained that for the closing of the meeting, those who wish to open their hearts to share what helped them most in their discernment during the vocational meeting.

Once everyone, or the vast majority, has shared, the second dynamic is explained. After a brief moment of silence, each person chooses the words that best express the experience lived during the sharing. The person accompanying the sharing can close with the words *discipleship, conversion, community and mission*.

### **Personal activities to deepen at home**

1. Meditate one hour a week on one of the biblical texts suggested at the end of worksheets 6, 9 and 10.
2. Read and deepen the section on "*The joy of being missionary disciples of Jesus Christ*" of the Final Document of the V CELAM Assembly in Aparecida.
3. Watch vocational testimonies of missionaries on the YouTube channel of the Order and the page of [Inquietar.com](http://Inquietar.com).
4. Write down the things that are awakened, and then share them personally with the companion.

## 5th Step

*Know the different options in the following of Jesus Christ  
(fifth outline)*





## 5th Step

### *Know the different options in the following of Jesus Christ (fifth outline)*

#### **Objective**

To offer the participants a road map of what is understood by vocation, by Christian vocation and by specific Christian vocations, so that they can situate themselves in the broad territory of the forms of Christian life. In this way, those who go through the process of vocational discernment will have access to information that will help them to understand more deeply the mystery of God's call.

#### **Proposed schedule**

##### **Day 1**

08:00, Prayer.

10:00, Theme 1: "Let's talk about vocation in general".

11:00, Personal time for reflection.

12:00, Theme 2: "The common Christian vocation".

12:40, Personal time to work on Worksheet 11.

13:30, Theme 3: "Christian lay life".

16:30, Personal time for reflection (use the material on vocation biases - appendix).

18:00, Vocational Rosary.

##### **Day 2**

08:00, Prayer.

10:30, Theme 4: "Vocation to ordained ministry".

11:30, Time for personal reflection.

12:30, Theme 5: "Consecrated religious life".

16:00, Eucharist (time to share the Word).

17:00, Closing of the encounter.

## Day 2

### Morning Prayer

When the participants arrive at the space where the prayer will take place, an image of a piece of wood without carving is already projected.

As they arrive, they are given the following printed Bible text:

*"Then Moses said to the children of Israel, "See, Yahweh has appointed Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Jur, of the tribe of Judah, and has filled him with the spirit of God, and with knowledge, and with knowledge of intelligence, science and ability to create works of art and with understanding. This man knows how to work gold, silver and bronze and to carve both precious stones and wood. He is knowledgeable in all kinds of work. To him and to Oholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, Yahweh has given the gift of teaching. He has filled them with skill in all kinds of craftsmanship, in embroidering purple and scarlet, crimson and fine linen, and in all kinds of weaving. They are very able to execute all kinds of work and works of art" (Exodus 35:30-35).*

One of the participants reads the text aloud. A brief moment of reflection is allowed, accompanied by soft music. They are urged to reflect on how the Lord has made us true artists of our own lives.

The following anecdote is then read:

*"A sculptor was contemplating a trunk of hardwood in front of him and, squinting his eyes, he discovered in it, as if in the light, a perfect carving and then another and another... in an endless parade. They were not imaginary beings, no; they were real: they were in there. His job would be to rescue those creatures by freeing them from their wooden prison. But as he picked up the chisel he felt totally paralyzed. From the heart of that trunk, millions of beings were raising their arms clamoring for their liberation: to save one was to abandon many, but not to choose was to exclude all. And how could he give up saving that one creature that was possible for him? And he felt a shudder, because he suddenly sensed that the trunk was his own life; the hidden figures, the thousand possible ways of living it; and that he himself had to choose a single destiny and carve it with his own hands".*

They are asked to describe on the reverse side of the time what they would like to do with the projected piece of rough wood. They are given time to complete the exercise. While accompanied by background music. This video can inspire the exercise:

<https://youtu.be/OoRXI7qQuy4>.

At the end, there is a space to share one's own reflections.

## THEME 1

### *Let's talk about vocation in general*

This theme will be developed with two previous dynamics:

1. **Orientation.** It is important for young people to discern what concerns them, what excites them, etc. There are three very basic questions that can help them realize what is valuable to them:

What do you talk about with your friends?

What do you spend your free time doing?

What do you spend your money on?

The answer to each of the questions is shared spontaneously. If there are many participants, they are asked to write down the answers.

2. **Activity.** They are asked to write on a blank sheet of paper what each one of them understands by vocation. When they finish, they put their name on it and give it to the person who directs the activity. Afterwards, the participants are given the outline of the different ways of understanding vocation, and they are accompanied in a reflection through the different nuances presented in the material on vocation.

#### Content of the theme:

*Vocation understood as.....*

1. Personal realization ▢ ↓	2. Altruistic option ▢ ↓	3. A way of life ▢ ↓	4. Something sacred or a privilege ▢ ↓	5. Event of encounter with God ↓
<i>What am I good at?</i> ↓	<i>What moves me?</i> ↓	<i>What am I willing to commit my whole life to?</i> ↓	<i>How do I make my life special?</i> ↓	<i>Why me, Lord?</i> ↓
The aim is to develop personal skills and abilities to the maximum. ↓	It leads people to dedicate their lives to the service of others for a noble cause. ↓	It allows the person to choose an option that organizes, involves and encompasses his or her entire life. ↓	It brings the person to be in frequent contact with the sacred and with a reality that promotes it. ↓	It allows the person to undertake the journey of the disciple of Christ, according to the Gospel ( 3:13). ↓



Self-realization is sought, that is, giving oneself the opportunity to live from one's own capabilities. ↓	It would be about being a good person and serving others through a profession. ↓	It is about freely assuming a way of life that encompasses all that the person is, dreams and desires. ↓	It is about surrendering oneself to the things of the sacred because the person feels "specially" chosen for that. ↓	It consists in living life from a personal relationship with Christ; he shows us the way to an authentic vocation: <i>Matthew 5:1-10</i> . ↓
It allows the person to focus on developing his or her capabilities in the effort to achieve his or her goals. ↓	It allows the person to grow in generosity and solidarity with those who need it most. ↓	It helps the person to live in a stable way that option that gives meaning to his life. ↓	The person experiences his or her link to the sacred as a privilege and considers that he or she has been chosen for something very special. ↓	The person understands himself as a summoned conscience: Here I am, Lord ( <i>Isaiah 6:8</i> ). ↓
Normally the person makes a professional choice or stable occupation, with an economic objective. ↓	The person is professionally trained to serve the most disadvantaged in some field where help is needed. ↓	Marriage, singleness, motherhood or fatherhood, etc. ↓	The person is trained for the things of worship, celebrations, etc., through study and practice. ↓	The person tries to live his or her baptized condition to the fullest: from faith, hope and love. ↓
Vocational guidance consists of providing help in weighing up the various possibilities when choosing a profession according to one's own abilities. ↓	The orientation will consist of helping to know the deep inspiration, noble feelings and good wishes of the person. ↓	The person is guided to discern which life option is best for him/her according to his/her preferences and tastes. ↓	The person is guided to grow in the awareness of what it means to have been chosen to live with the sacred. ↓	The person is helped to discover what the Master is asking at each moment of life; to "discern". ↓
Its limit is that this way of understanding vocation is insufficient to organize all aspects of a person's life. ↓	Its limit is that there will always be something to do for others, but there is not always enough motivation to maintain the option. ↓	Their limit is that they are life options that can meet with failure and, when this happens, they force to review that fundamental option. ↓	Its limit is that it is an elitist understanding of vocation, since it defines itself in a privileged way with respect to other forms of life or vocations. ↓	Its limit is that it entails a radical demand beyond human strength; it is a Gift. The person is guided by the Gospel and service to others. ↓
A soccer player, an actor, an architect, an engineer, a professor...	A doctor, a volunteer, a psychologist...	Spouse, mother or father of a family, single...	Those who live and serve in a religion with the awareness of being special.	Lay people, priests and consecrated persons...

At the end of the presentation, they are given back the sheet on which they described what they understood by vocation. They are invited to review the definition they provided, correct it and elaborate another one with the new nuances assimilated in the presentation. When they have their new definition, they write it in the *WhatsApp* group of the participants, so that everyone is enriched by the different ways of understanding and approaching vocation.

## THEME 2

### *The Common Christian Vocation of the Baptized*

They are asked what exactly is meant when someone says “*tell me in Christian.*” What does it add or take away from what was said before? Then they are asked what makes a vocation a Christian vocation, what would be its essential elements. After a short discussion, we move on to the explanation of the content.

#### **Content of the theme**

The first word that God pronounced over the human being was “live! And the second word that God pronounced over the human being was another call: live with others: “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them; and God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful’*” (Genesis 1:27-28). *And God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful’*” (Genesis 1:27-28). From the very beginning, human beings are called to encounter others and God. In this regard, a very beautiful text from the Second Vatican Council is in circulation: “*The highest reason for human dignity consists in man’s vocation to union with God. From his very birth, man is invited to dialogue with God. He exists purely and simply for the love of God, who created him, and for the love of God, who preserves him. And he can only be said to live in the fullness of truth when he freely acknowledges this love and entrusts himself entirely to his Creator*” (Gaudium et Spes, 19).

In the incarnation of the Son of God in the person of Jesus Christ, the mystery of a God who is family, a relationship of love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, was made known to humanity. The vocation to encounter God, in Christ, is revealed to us as a call to encounter and relate to three Persons. Thus, through baptism, Christians enter into the dance of Trinitarian relationships and into a dialogue of love with a God who is Love (1 John 4:8), and who first loved us. In this sense, the Christian vocation is a gift of grace that is given to be lived in the context of baptismal faith; this is the common and fundamental vocation of all Christians. Specific vocations are already a development of baptismal grace. Hence, if the baptismal vocation is not lived, it is difficult to understand the meaning and value of specific vocations.

The fundamental aspect of the baptismal vocation is the awareness that the Christian acquires of knowing himself to be a missionary disciple of Jesus Christ. Only the impulse of the Christian life helps to mature and choose one of the forms of Christian life or specific vocation. And the Christian vocation is essentially the following of Jesus Christ. This entails, on the one hand, a living and personal love for Christ and, on the other, a deep desire to be witnesses of his mercy and love in the world. Thus, Christ the Lord alone manifests to the heart of the believer the specific path by which he invites him to follow him and to opt for him.

### Interiorization exercise on the Christian vocation

DYNAMICS based on the Gospel of the Samaritan woman: "*Metaphor of water*". Water is essential for life. Without water we dehydrate and die. Water quenches physical thirst. But we all thirst for meaning, thirst for fulfillment, thirst for God, thirst for happiness. And for this spiritual thirst the only pure water is Jesus. Jesus proclaims himself to be the pure, living water of the spirit that quenches our thirst for God. They are given a picture of a well, and are invited to look into it and recognize what they are thirsty for. The answers can be written on the side of the well.

## THEME 3

### *Vocation to the lay life*

They are asked what they understand by vocation to the Christian lay life. And they are asked to give examples of lay people. They are asked about what is a lay ministry and what are the lay ministries. It is briefly clarified that lay is from the Greek "*laos*", which means people; those who belong to the people. And ministry comes from Latin and means "service"; a minister is a servant. After the discussion, the content is explained.

#### Content of the theme

According to what the Second Vatican Council indicated, it is up to the laity to live secular life to the full - in the century - both in each of their activities and professions and in the ordinary conditions of family and social life with which their reality is woven. It is there that they are called by God to fulfill a mission, guided by the spirit of the beatitudes, so that, like leaven, they may contribute from within to the transformation of the world, so that they may show Christ to others; shining, above all, with the witness of their life of faith, hope and charity. It is the responsibility of the laity to enlighten and organize all temporal affairs with which they are closely connected, so that they may be carried out according to the spirit of Jesus Christ and may develop and be for the glory of the Creator and the good of the Church (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 31).

The vocation of the laity is, therefore, to be missionary disciples who *seek the Kingdom of God and his justice* (Matthew 6:33) in the realization of their Christian condition, and seek to organize all the affairs of social life according to the spirit of the Gospel. The laity, whose vocation places them at the heart of the world and in the accomplishment of the most varied tasks, must exercise a singular form of evangelization. Their primary and immediate task is not the institutionalization and development of the ecclesial community - that is the specific task of pastors - but that of putting into practice all the possibilities contained in the Gospel within social life. The field of their activity is political, social, economic, cultural, scientific, artistic, media, educational, etc. (cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 70).

In the Order of Augustinian Recollects several specific areas of growth have been institutionalized for the lay life, which offer help in the realization of the secular vocation. These lay areas draw in their discipleship itinerary from the sources of Augustinian spirituality and the Recollect tradition, and are the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternities (FSAR), the Augustinian Recollect Youth Movement (JAR), and the Association of Christian Mothers of St. Monica (mothers who assume a commitment to pray above all for their children and husbands, in the style of St. Monica). Becoming part of these spaces of growth in the lay vocation also entails accepting God's call to be missionary disciples in the style of St. Augustine.

*Some examples of forms of lay Christian life:*

- Marriage-widowhood.
- Family-maternity-fatherhood.
- Single.
- Professionalism (education, health, politics, economy, culture, etc.).
- Consecrated virginity (consecrated lay virgins).
- Mission "*ad gentes*" (missions where the Church is not yet implanted).
- Community life (basic communities, secular fraternities, etc.).
- Etc.

### **Interiorization exercise on the lay vocation**

DYNAMICS. Each participant or group of participants is assigned a form of lay Christian life and must find a saint of that lifestyle and present him/her to the rest of the group. In their presentation they should answer the following question or others posed by the moderator: How do you live the Gospel and how do you serve God?

## ***Vocational Rosary***

### ***Mary courageously assumes God's Plan for her life***



#### **Introduction**

By the sign of the holy cross, deliver us from our enemies, O Lord our God, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*"What greater gift could God have given us? Having a Son, he made him the son of man so that the children of men might*

*also become children of God*" (St. Augustine, *Sermon* 185:3). Mary is the portal that opens us to the embrace of God the Father in her Son Jesus Christ, who loved me and gave himself for me, and in whom I have been infinitely blessed, as was Mary, the full of grace. What a great gift: to become children of God out of pure love. And to know that so much blessing came into the world through Mary's yes, makes us understand that God continues to pour life into the world through the courageous yes of many other young people who, like Mary, say: *"May it be done to me according to your Word"*. Through this rosary we want to walk Mary's path of faith, to understand her plans for our lives and to respond with joy and generosity to her call.

**1st Mystery:** *"God goes out to meet a young Nazarene girl"*.

*"In the sixth month God sent the angel Gabriel to a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1,26-27).*

Along the history, God makes a promise, a covenant relationship with human beings to begin, an unimaginable story of love: "God becomes the son of man". And he decides to do it in Nazareth, not the most important place for Judaism centralized in Jerusalem, but in the periphery, where no one expects anything, but where the simple-hearted expect everything from God. Mary, a young woman already engaged to be married, is the one most directly involved in this plan that God wants to carry out. And God continues to weave this same love story from generation to generation.

*"Mother, help our faith! Open our ears to the Word, that we may recognize God's voice and his call" (Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei, 60)..*

Our Father and ten Hail Marys

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...*

Mary, Mother of grace and Mother of mercy // *in life and in death protect us, Great Lady.*

**Song:** *"Anunciación"*, by José Manuel González Durán.

**2nd Mystery:** *"God calls by name"*.

*"The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28).*

Mary receives God's visit through the angel. Every word of the angel is a Word from God. The name of Mary in the mouth of the angel is also the name of Mary pronounced by God. When God says "Mary," he showers this young girl with the greatest blessing that will fill her whole life with joy: a heart filled with God's love. At this moment in history, God continues to pronounce names, continues to fill lives with joy and continues to fill hearts with love. Has your young heart heard how God pronounces your name? Have

you experienced the joy of having God as your Father? Do you feel how his love fills your emotional emptiness?

*“Mother, help our faith! Enkindle in us the desire to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, stepping out of our comfort and trusting in his promise. Help us to let ourselves be touched by his love, so that we may touch him in faith” (Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei, 60).*

Our Father and ten Hail Marys

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...*

Mary, Mother of grace and Mother of mercy // *in life and in death protect us, Great Lady.*

**3rd Mystery:** *“Fears and resistances are raised before God’s call”.*

*“When she heard it, she was puzzled and wondered what kind of greeting it was” (Luke 1:29).*

Faced with such an experience of God’s presence, Mary does not fully understand what is happening. Bewilderment is an important element in God’s call, because it makes us feel small and unworthy in the face of something tremendous and marvelous. And the question arises: why me? And we try to convince God that there are others in better conditions than us for his plans. But the Word of God pierces the believing heart, and gently stings it with love awaiting an answer. The matter of vocation has its rhythm and needs time until what God wants and dreams for each of his children is illuminated in conscience.

*“Mother, help our faith! Help us to trust God fully, to believe in his love, especially in moments of darkness and confusion, when our faith is called to grow and mature” (Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei, 60).*

Our Father and Ten Hail Marys... (Our Father and Ten Hail Marys)

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...*

Mary, Mother of grace and Mother of mercy // *in life and in death protect us, Great Lady.*

**Song:** *“Madre del silencio”, by José Manuel González Durán.*

**4th Mystery:** *“Vocation touches the depths of the person and changes his or her plans”.*

*“The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you” (Luke 1:30).*

Mary, a woman of faith, trusts and opens herself to God's will. It is the Word of God itself that finds an echo in Mary's heart; within her there is room, room and space for encounter, heart to heart. It is the creative Word of God that gives life, inspires confidence, opens us to hope. Above all, it is the Word of God that overcomes fears and resistances, attachments and comfort, and transforms the heart. Only the Word, God himself speaking to us, awakens a profound freedom to follow Jesus, the life that fills us with joy.

*"Mother, help our faith! Remind us that those who believe are never alone. Teach us to look with the eyes of Jesus, so that he may be light on the path of the search for our vocation" (Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei, 60).*

Our Father and ten Hail Marys

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...*

Mary, Mother of grace and Mother of mercy // *in life and in death protect us, Great Lady.*

**5th. Mystery:** *"Vocation is for the mission".*

*"Behold, you will conceive and bear a son, whom you will call Jesus" (Luke 1,31).*

Mary receives nothing more and nothing less than the mission to be "the Mother of Jesus". How will it come about, when will it take place, how will things be fulfilled...? The mystery will be revealed to Mary little by little; what she has to do is to trust, hope and love with all her heart the God of life who is now within her. Vocation is not a proposal of God that encloses the person in himself in "self-complacency", but it is related to something much greater than one's own plans and projects; vocation is related to the Church, to the people of God. Vocation is for mission.

*"Mary, star of the new evangelization, help us to shine in the witness of communion, service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love for the poor, so that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth and no periphery be deprived of its light. Mother of the living Gospel, source of joy for the little ones, pray for us" (Pope Francis, final prayer of Evangelii Gaudium).*

Our Father and ten Hail Marys

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...*

Mary, Mother of grace and Mother of mercy // *in life and in death protect us, Great Lady.*

**Song:** *"La doncella"*, by José Manuel González Durán.



## ***Vocational Litanies to the Blessed Virgin Mary***

Lord, have mercy on us.  
Christ, have mercy on us.  
Lord, have mercy on us.  
Christ, hear us.  
Christ, hear us.

Heavenly Father God,	Have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,	Have mercy on us.
God the Holy Spirit,	Have mercy on us.
Most Holy Trinity, one God,	Have mercy on us.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of Jesus Christ,	Enlighten our vocation.
Spouse of God, Holy Spirit,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of the Fiat to God,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of Hope,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of Love,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother docile to the Word,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of Light,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of the Church,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother, our role model,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of missionaries,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of the youth,	Enlighten our vocation.
Generous Mother,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of goodness,	Enlighten our vocation.
Our Lady of listening,	Enlighten our vocation.
Virgin, most faithful	Enlighten our vocation.
Vessel filled with God's love,	Enlighten our vocation.
Clay that allows itself to be shaped,	Enlighten our vocation.
Faithful believer,	Enlighten our vocation.
Queen of faith,	Enlighten our vocation.
Seed of hope,	Enlighten our vocation.
Star of salvation,	Enlighten our vocation.
Handmaid of God,	Enlighten our vocation.
Rock of faith,	Enlighten our vocation.
Model of surrender to God,	Enlightens our vocation.
Bearer of the Gospel,	Enlighten our vocation.
Ideal of holiness,	Enlighten our vocation.
Temple of the Holy Spirit,	Enlighten our vocation.
Queen and Mother of consecrated men and women,	Enlighten our vocation.
Queen and Mother of Consolation,	Enlighten our vocation.
Mother of the good Council,	Enlighten our vocation.
Virgin of Guadalupe,	Enlighten our vocation.
A woman who knows how to trust in God,	Enlighten our vocation.

## **Letter from Mary of Nazareth**

My son, how are you...? Every time I look at my son's face, I contemplate the face of all my children, and I am filled with feelings of tenderness and admiration... You are my beloved son...

Has the idea ever crossed your mind that we are not the fruit of chance, but that we are a thought of God; because he thought of us and loved us from the beginning, that is why we exist. We have an origin in love, in the love of God and in the love of our parents, and we have a destiny: full happiness with God, our Father.

As long as we are in this life, our condition is that of pilgrims: we walk towards the realization of our dreams - those that God places in our hearts - and we do so amid joy and hope, joy and sadness. And we never move forward alone, but we walk with many brothers and sisters and, most importantly, we count on the presence and help of the Holy Spirit who always guides us towards the encounter with God, towards the realization of the best of ourselves, towards love.

My son, your life has meaning... You have before you a marvelous horizon; the signature of its Author and the orientation of your heart are engraved in your being: to love and to be loved. Only in the experience of being loved by God do we come to love others and to love ourselves. Yes, you and I are pilgrims of love. And this love materializes in a life project, in a vocation of surrender, service and gift.

My son, my daughter, child of my soul, I invite you to set out on the road to respond to the invitation that my son Jesus makes to you, so that you may be happy. And always remember to choose and cultivate truth, beauty, tenderness, love..., for we are made for love and its measure is to love without measure.

(Mary of Nazareth, *your Mother of heaven*)

## **Day 2**

### **Morning Prayer**

The atmosphere is set with quiet and soft music. They are accompanied by breathing exercises and contact with one's own body, to help prepare oneself for prayer. We insist on the senses as channels for the encounter with God: the hearing of the heart, the eyes of the heart, the mouth of the heart, the smell of the heart and the touch of the heart.

The moment of prayer is introduced by alluding to the phrase of St. Augustine: *"Command and order, O God, I beg you, whatever you wish, but heal my ears to hear your voice; heal and open my eyes to see your signs; banish from me all ignorance so that I may recognize you. Tell me where I must direct my gaze to see You, and I hope to do all that You command me"* (St. Augustine, *The Soliloquies* 1,5). *Ask yourself*: what is it that inspires you most? what do you want to stake your life on? what is it that you must choose with courage and freedom?

Psalm 1 is given to them and recited in two choruses. The leader of the prayer emphasizes the importance of feeling accompanied by the Lord on the path that leads us to love more and better: *"the Lord watches over the path of those who love him from the heart"*.

The images of different projects of being a person are projected through the images of Prometheus (self-sufficient), Sisyphus (successful and unsatisfied), Narcissus (self-satisfied) and Proteus (a thousand faces). And they are presented with an image of Christ, a new human project, fullness of humanity; humanity well achieved.

At the end of the prayer time, time is given to share a spontaneous petition.

### Contents of prayer

- 1. Return to the heart.** The lifestyle we live in society imposes, without even realizing it, life projects based on interests that do not do justice to the totality and beauty of being a person. It is necessary to break with the inertia of a rhythm of life that does not help us to consider well the different options and to make good decisions. How? Once again by returning to the heart. He who returns to his heart and with serenity and lucidity measures himself there, inside himself, with the different possibilities and options before him, will be able to design the best life project for him. Return, therefore, to your heart, consider carefully the different possibilities and ask yourself which is your best option.
- 2. I prepare my heart.** In life you can do many things. Freedom consists precisely in the ability and the responsibility to choose the essential ones. The human heart can become solicited by so many demands and interests. For this reason it is important to prepare the heart so that it learns to interpret the value that what seduces it can have for its own life. The heart also needs to be formed so that it learns to organize the many interests that demand it, based on certain non-negotiable values: truth, friendship, goodness, generosity, freedom and love. Likewise, it is important to educate the heart so that it is capable of renouncing that which contradicts the beauty of the values you have chosen to walk with meaning in life.
- 3. I open my heart.** In this Augustinian path for vocational discernment, it is fundamental to open the heart, that is, to lower one's guard in order to reveal the deep intentions of the heart. To open the heart is the most genuine gesture of authenticity, because the real motivations - conscious and unconscious - that are leading you to consider this or that option for you are manifested before God, and perhaps before the vocational accompanier. In fact, many motivations can be identified, but not all of them are valid and sufficient to embrace one or another life option. In that respect, opening the heart helps to clarify the deep motivations and to enter, if necessary, in a process of purification from the same.
- 4. I raise my heart.** Every road has its crossroads, and these cannot all be traveled at the same time; it is necessary to determine to go through one in particular. But which one? Look, whichever one you decide on, it will have important consequences for

your life. For this reason it is important to raise your heart to God and ask for light, to weigh the different options well and to choose the one you consider to be the best for you. The faithful believer has the certainty that God takes care of the path of those who love him from the heart (cf. *Psalm 1*). With Christ it does not matter so much that the road on which you travel has many paths, as long as you move forward with him, who is the true Way. He who follows in the footsteps of the Master knows that united to him, whether he chooses one path or another, he will find the path to happiness.

## THEME 4

### *Vocation to ordained ministry (the sacrament of Holy Orders)*

What is a priest (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxIncqYQIU8>). You can begin this reflection by watching this video. The material can be used to share different impressions.

#### Content of the theme

Every baptized person receives the gift, through the sacrament of water and the Spirit, of being a child of God the Father in the Son. There is a common vocation for all disciples of Jesus Christ that opens us, in turn, to mission. Thus, in Christ, every baptized person is a prophet, a king and a priest. He is a prophet because he announces the presence of the living God who leads history; he is a king because he gives way with his life to the reign of God's love in the world; and he is a priest because he celebrates and participates in the sacramental signs that make possible his own sanctification and through which God is glorified. This priesthood is known as the common priesthood of the faithful. It differs from the ministerial priesthood in that it forms part, by a particular call, of the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Bishops have, by a gift of grace, the fullness of Christ's priesthood and are associated with the ministry of the apostles. In the course of the Church's history, the bishops are the successors of the first disciples whom Jesus linked closely to his life and mission, also known as the group of the Twelve. The presbyters - from the Greek "elders" - together with the bishop, exercise the priesthood of Christ; this is their mission. By the exercise of the ministerial priesthood, both bishops and priests live the pastoral charity proper to Christ, the Good Shepherd, who reflected with his words and signs the mercy of the Father. And deacons, whether permanent or oriented to the ministerial priesthood, manifest the charity of Christ who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life for others (cf. Matthew 20:28).

The ordained ministry in any of the three degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders - bishops, priests or deacons - is configured to Christ, head, shepherd and servant of the Church. The mission of the ordained minister is to practice pastoral charity, proper to one who accompanies the People of God in the manner of Christ, the Good Shepherd. And they feed the People of God above all through the preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and the animation of the service of charity. Through the sacrament of Holy Orders they receive the power of the Spirit to be witnesses before the world to the mysteries of the faith and servants of the human and ecclesial community.

- Some examples of Christian forms of ordained ministry:
- Celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.
- Marriage-widowhood-fatherhood and ordained ministry.
- Belonging to the presbyterate (bishop together with the priests).
- Common life (priestly fraternities).
- Mission "ad gentes" (missions where the Church is not yet implanted).
- Etc.

## THEME 5

### ***Consecrated Religious Life*** *(Religious)*

For this last topic, the short film "the way of life" will be of great help. Important elements of discernment are worked on (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phYQNIZg-Lk>).

#### **Content of the theme**

The Second Vatican Council gave a letter of citizenship to the consecrated life in the Church, taking for granted that the state whose essence is in the profession of the evangelical counsels, even if it does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, nevertheless belongs, in an indisputable way, to her life and holiness (*Lumen Gentium*, 44). Consecrated life is placed in the wake of the life and holiness of the Church; it is a form of Christian life for living the fullness of love for the good of the whole Body of Christ (*Lumen Gentium*, 43). In this sense, the vocation to the consecrated life consists in a loving response, from the human capacity, to the love with which a disciple of Jesus Christ has felt immensely loved.

Religious life, as another form of Christian life, finds its inspiration and foundation in Christ, the Consecrated One of the Father. In a special way, it can be said that consecrated

life has found in the text of the beatitudes the horizon of interpretation of the meaning of its vocation and mission. And the call to consecrated life guards this radicality: that the love of God is worth everything, even one's own life and all that is beautiful and marvelous in it. Therefore, beyond what religious do, because they certainly carry out many important tasks in the Church and in the world, their fundamental mission is to be a sign of belonging exclusively to God.

Consecrated life has sprung up in the Church as a gift of the Holy Spirit, like a prism that radiates the one light of Christ in different colors and shades. As Christian life, its purpose is to follow Jesus Christ according to the footsteps that marked his footsteps in history and which are recorded in the Gospels. And its horizon of life is to live the fullness of love in the daily encounter with the Lord. It cultivates, according to its own charism, a fraternal life in community or a life in solitude, but always serving the people of God through prayer, works of charity and works of mercy. Like all Christian life, its goal is holiness.

A specific element of religious life is that the person makes a gift of his or her own life to God, in order to allow the Lord to have exclusive control of his or her heart. And this gift of self is expressed through the profession of the evangelical counsels. What is an evangelical counsel? It is a value that is proposed in the Gospel and is worthy of being lived because Christ himself made it an important part of his historical lifestyle. The evangelical counsels are obedience, poverty and chastity. A religious, therefore, refers with his life something of Christ obedient to the Father, something of Christ poor in spirit and something of Christ who has the passion of his heart in God, his Father, and in the humanity he loves, to the point of giving his life for it.

- Some examples of forms of Christian life of consecrated religious:
- Community living (several living in the same house).
- Hermit life (in solitude).
- Contemplative life (monks and cloistered nuns).
- Active-apostolic life.
- Mixed life (combining contemplation and apostolate).
- Professionalism (in the field of education, health, communications, etc.).
- Etc.

### **Interiorization exercise on the priestly vocation and the religious vocation**

**DYNAMICS.** Make an outline with the different vocations in which the different vocations appear with their characteristics. Point out the points they have in common and the differences... The following question is answered: to what does the bishop, the diocesan priest, the religious, the nun, the consecrated person commit himself?

**VOCABULARY EXERCISE.** They are asked to define and explain who is the priest, the priest, the father, the friar, the religious brother, the nun, the lay person, the parish priest, the chaplain, the deacon, the permanent deacon, what is the active life, the consecrated,

the widower, the anchorite, the hermit. Each one can do one in particular or assign several to a group. And then explain it to everyone.

### **Closing of the encounter**

It is recommended to play a song that speaks of the call to follow the Master.

It is explained that for the closing of the meeting, those who wish to open their hearts to share what has helped them most in their discernment during this vocational encounter.

Once everyone, or the vast majority, has shared, the second dynamic is explained. After a brief moment of silence, each person chooses the words that best express what he or she has experienced during the sharing.

The one who accompanies the sharing can close with the words *vocation, Christian vocation and specific vocations*.

### **Personal activities to deepen at home**

1. Ask a committed layperson, a priest and a religious man or woman how they were called.
2. Watch vocational testimonies of missionaries on the Order's YouTube channel and on the website of [Inquietar.com](http://Inquietar.com).
3. Write down the things that are awakened, and then share them personally with the companion.

## **Annex**

### **Misconceptions about vocation**

*When a person considers a Christian vocation, he or she often faces prejudices that he or she has learned or heard within his or her closest circle, even within the Church. Here are some prejudices, false ideas or myths about vocation.*

**Vocation is something for privileged people (intelligent, good, with many capabilities, etc.).** There are those who think so and, what is worse, there are those who believe it and embark on a vocational path with the awareness of being "special". Normally this idea is more associated with priestly or religious vocations. And lay vocations are considered to be of lower rank or second class. This is a lie: each and every specific vocation is a worthy and beautiful way of walking a path that leads to the fullness of love, to holiness.



**I am not worthy of “that vocation”.** In Christianity, we can say that no one is ever worthy of anything; everything is a gift, an undeserved gift. God does not call those who are supposedly more worthy of one vocation or another. God chooses and calls those He wants for a plan that only He knows and that He will discover little by little if we truly open ourselves to His action in our hearts.

**With regard to vocation, I will not be able to do it, I will be able to...** No one is, by himself, able to assume, live and grow in a specific vocation. Every Christian vocation is only possible in the One who inspires, animates and accompanies it. At the present moment, considering all the implications, consequences and demands that a choice of life in Christ can have is indeed frightening. But it is precisely a matter of trusting that God will give us the capacity to respond to what he asks of us at every moment of our lives; it is he who sustains our yes.

**If others have failed in their vocation, the same thing can happen to me.** Certainly we all know “good Christians” who failed in their choice of life in Christ. In a specific vocation many things happen that you cannot foresee, like life itself... This is not the important thing. What is fundamental is how we nurture confidence in our choices. If you want to self-justify fear, comfort, incongruity or mediocrity, any excuse is good. But if there is a strong desire to grow, to assume and to face, even if it seems demanding, the person commits and takes responsibility for himself and for what he builds with his freedom.

**Why choose a vocation if I can live the best of each option without committing myself to anything in particular.** Life is much more than consuming pleasant experiences, enjoying freedom and never being tied to anything. With this mentality, certainly why make a choice. However, what is at stake is the love that is lived, that nourishes, that swells the heart. And for love to be truly real and concrete, it requires relationship, time, understanding and decentering... The question is therefore in the type of love we choose to live. And the specific vocation will be the one that enables us to guard and recreate this love.

**What is vocation for, self-fulfillment or self-transcendence?** It is by no means a matter of little importance. Most people, even Christians, think of vocation as a personal decision for self-realization. It is, until it ceases to be... it is precisely the failures, the difficulties, the routine, the insurmountable limits of the relationship that shatter this understanding of vocation. The Christian vocation and the different options of Christian life are either regulated by the personal relationship with God, who inspires them, or they end up in human projects that no longer give any more of themselves. Therefore, specific vocations are a call to go out of oneself and from oneself, to encounter the other and the Other; the vocation is to transcend.

**For many, vocation is an escape, something like an easy “refuge”** to avoid facing life and its conflicts. Specific vocations can be discredited by the ambiguous witness that Christians give in the living of their vocation. Where does the ambiguity come from? Sometimes from conscious motivations that betray at the root the spirit in which each vocation should be lived, such as the simple need for the approval of others. Also from unconscious motivations that little by little emerge in the conflicts and in the experience of one’s own vocation. For this reason it is important to follow a path of open, sincere and authentic discernment, in order to mature, in freedom, any project of life in Christ.

**Vocation gives some people access to the possibility of self-promotion.** Consciously or unconsciously, there may be people who choose a life option because it allows them to move up the ladder of prestige and social recognition. Of course, this can happen and, in fact, it does happen. No specific Christian vocation is mature enough to understand, not as a theory but as an experience, that the call it received has to do with serving, giving oneself, wearing oneself out, dying to oneself... Only those who live their vocation in a Christian way can understand these things and keep their choice.

**Vocation is just a life project without more.** In practice, being a Christian does not change anything. I agree that a life option without Christ has its value and can be lived as a vocation. But I completely disagree that following Christ in a life option does not change anything. It is possible that for many Christians a specific vocation is only a cultural formality without repercussions, beyond the cultural standards in which one lives one’s own option. However, for those who have matured a life option in Christ and wish to live it as an expression of a response to a call, as a way of seeking God’s will in their lives, it has very important practical consequences.

**The specific vocation is an option because I did not have a better option.** No one makes a good option in Christ if he does not have at least two real and possible, valid and good alternatives from which to make a decision. And no one makes a good option in Christ if what he renounces does not hurt; if what he renounces does not hurt, possibly it is because he does not understand the value of what he chooses. Evangelically it makes sense. We are talking about the one who finds a treasure, who goes and sells all that he has, in order to buy the field where the treasure is (cf. *Matthew 13:44-46*).

**The only thing that vocation does is to complicate your life even more.** Certainly the search for one’s vocation and mission in this world brings with it some complications. However, the question is not whether the search for and the living out of one’s vocation complicates our life, which perhaps it does, but why we want to complicate our life or why we do not want to complicate our life. Hence, the response to the interior call that God makes to us, asks to dialogue with the deepest desires of the heart. It is there, in the depths of the heart, where we find the necessary inspiration to risk our life and the

concrete way to do it. Therefore, the demands of one's vocation are either assumed freely and consciously, or they correspond more to the need for recognition and approval. Sooner or later one must discern this....

**Vocation is for cowardly, pusillanimous people,** who yield to God what they are not capable of doing by themselves. There are childish and irresponsible ways of assuming a specific vocation, such as those decisions born out of fear of freedom. It can happen, and in fact it does happen, that some people assume a specific vocation as an easy way out of guilt and anguish in the face of insecurity. However, the Christian vocation and the specific Christian vocation can never be understood as self-sacrifice pleasing to God. On the contrary, God wants us to take on our own history, wounds and fears, and invest it freely in something we feel satisfied with.

**To consider a vocation breaks the natural channel through which each person does with his life what he thinks best.** Each person resolves the meaning of his life as best he can. And certainly the human being is capable, with the lights of his intelligence, to undertake a project of free and responsible life. In this sense, the Christian vocation and the specific vocation in Christ do not bypass the natural causes in which the human vocation is also realized. Nevertheless, assuming the beauty and charm of freedom, God's intervention in the life of a person always makes possible and enhances the best of it. Rarely is there a contradiction between what the person wants and what he or she understands, in faith, that God is asking of him or her. And in case of contradiction, it is because God far exceeds the goodness and possibilities of one's own plans.

**Vocation is a choice that deprives you of the best of life.** There are those who consider that the Christian vocation is a constant limitation to the best of life. For those who reason in this way, certainly the Christian vocation and the specific vocation are a clear emasculation of the drives, instincts and desires that, on the other hand, are part of human nature. Now, what kind of life is possible when a person reduces existence to the simple satisfaction of needs. The Christian vocation and the specific vocation incorporate the world of needs and desires, but it orders them from other points of reference, and invites to satisfy them in a different logic, that of gift.

**Some vocations are more important than others.** This is one of the most terrible prejudices about the understanding of specific vocations. When a higher value is justified in some vocations, they are disfigured from the original source from which they sprang as paths to service, dedication and availability. The abuse of power in some specific vocations stems from the awareness of being special, a kind of scarce super-elite, to be cared for and overprotected. From the inspiration of the Gospel, it will never be possible to argue the superiority of anyone over anyone else. On the contrary, it projects a particular dignity on each type of vocation and places them with the same value as ways to live the fullness of love.

**Vocation is to fulfill God's expectations.** This prejudice about vocation is fed by a childish relationship of dependence on God. From this point of view, God is a kind of "super daddy" who must be won over by fulfilling his expectations and waiting for his approval. This has nothing to do with fulfilling God's will. Fulfilling God's will entails sufficient autonomy to make the person the master of his own life and, out of free love, to give it to a project greater than the limits of his own desire. God's approval is not a healthy concept in vocational discernment; at least it is not sufficient for a free and conscious choice.

**Vocation contradicts the deepest identity of the person.** Although in the Church the profound and evangelical value of each vocation is preserved, in the course of history some merely accidental additions have been added to specific vocations. Thus, in certain contexts, a standard vision of a specific vocation is presented, without which its inspiration would be betrayed. In this sense, certain presentations on the Christian vocation and specific vocations are indebted to their time and culture. In these cases, it can be said that the vocation does contradict the profound truth of the person, for "*the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath*" (Mark 2:27). Each person should find in one's vocation the sufficient space to be oneself and to accept the challenge to be the best of oneself.

**Vocation is to align oneself to a standard model assumed by society,** but which places the person in a role that, in the long run, alienates him or her. Vocation is always much more than a simple role or the exercise of a profession. The specific vocation should have the potential to touch and organize each and every aspect of human and Christian life, otherwise it is not a vocation at all. And most importantly, the specific vocation, as a style of life in Christ, is an itinerary that has to do with a process of constant growth and maturation in all directions of life. Vocation alienates when it does not assume its dynamism and its proposal of constant renewal.

**Vocation is a simple frustrated and sublimated feeling,** which makes life bearable. There are those who affirm that the Christian vocation and the specific vocation is an easy resource of sublimation of frustrated feelings, which make life more bearable. Sublimation, even as an unconscious resource, has its value in the organization of human life. However, maturing a life project in Christ obliges, sooner or later, to *rethink* the meaning of life and to recompose the motivations that define and mobilize it. When one lives one's vocation conscientiously, it always has a therapeutic dimension, which helps to recognize and heal one's deep inner self.

**Vocation is one more way of generating values in the world.** For every human being who comes into this world it is important, sooner or later, to transcend. There are many ways to transcend in life. Vocation is one of them. However, the meaning of one's vocation is not absolutely defined by its fruitfulness. Vocation is to give life, to generate value in the world, to commit oneself to a better world, yes. But, above all, vocation is to receive

life, to welcome the mystery of what we are and of the Mystery that inhabits us and, fundamentally, to be a cause of the Life that crosses us.

**Exercise of interiorization regarding the prejudices about vocation**

DYNAMIC: Prepare on a sheet of paper all the prejudices (*only what is in bold*) and put as a title: TRUE OR FALSE. The group should discuss whether these phrases are true or false. At the end of the dynamic, give them the sheet with the phrases and the explanation that they are all myths and the reason.

## Step 6

*Consider the testimony of those  
who are already living a vocation (sixth outline)*







## Step 6

### *Consider the testimony of those who are already living a vocation (sixth outline)*

#### **Objective**

To offer the participants some important support points for their vocational discernment process, such as: learning to read life and events in the key of faith, learning to pay attention to things more deeply, awakening self-awareness, and learning to listen and give value to the words of people who appreciate us.

#### **Proposed schedule**

##### **Day 1**

08:00, Prayer.

10:00, Theme 1: *"A new reading of life and events"*.

11:00, Personal time to work on Worksheet 13.

12:00, Theme 2: *"Making silence to learn to listen"*.

12:40, Personal time for reflection.

13:30, Time for group sharing.

16:30, Theme 3: *"To notice things in more depth"*.

18:00, Lectio divina, *"The Call of Samuel"*.

##### **Day 2**

08:00, Prayer.

10:30, Theme 4: *"Listening to whom and why"*.

11:30, Sport, walk, stroll...

13:00, Eucharist (give time to share the Word).

16:00, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 15*.

17:00, Closing of the encounter.

## Day 1

### Morning Prayer

The prayer can begin with the following text from St. Augustine. It is handed out to everyone on a sheet of paper, along with the story of the young man who dreams and Psalm 126.

### Prayer of St. Augustine

*"Now I understand the need to return to you; open the door for me, for I am knocking; show me the way to reach you. I have only will; I know that what is outdated and transitory must be despised in order to go in pursuit of what is sure and eternal. This I do, Father, because I only know this, and I do not yet know the way that leads to you. Teach me; give me the strength for the journey. If by faith those who seek you come to you, do not deny me faith; if by knowledge, give me knowledge. Increase my faith, increase my hope, increase my charity, O how wonderful and singular is your goodness" (St. Augustine, The Soliloquies 1:5).*

Vocation is the way that God gives us to bear fruits of love, life and joy; to sow the good life of the Gospel. In fact, that vocation that does not become fruitful ends up being neither more nor less than a frustrated vocation. Although vocation brings with it difficulties, stumbling blocks, resistance, etc., in the end it bears the fruits of life, service and dedication.

One of the participants reads aloud the following story:

*"A young man dreamed he walked into a newly opened supermarket and, to his surprise, discovered that Jesus Christ was behind the counter.*

*What are you selling here," asked the young man.*

*Whatever your heart desires, Jesus Christ answered. Not daring to believe what he was hearing, the excited young man decided to ask for the best thing a human being could desire:*

*I want to have love, happiness, wisdom, peace of mind and the absence of all fear, said the young man. I want the world to put an end to war, terrorism, drug trafficking, social injustice, corruption and human rights violations.*

*When the young man finished speaking, Jesus Christ handed him a "little package" wrapped in paper. The young man, surprised, said to Jesus, "Everything I asked for fits in this little package. Of course it does, Jesus replied.*

*And with a smile on his lips, he added: "my friend, we don't sell the fruits here; we only offer the seeds. And how much are they going to be, asked the young man. "They are free," Jesus answered.*

A time of silence is allowed for personal reflection and is accompanied by soft background music.

*Psalm* 126 is then read; each person reads a verse. At the end, time is allowed for resonances. Then a hymn is placed.

Finally, there is a space to share one's own reflections

## THEME 1

### *A new reading of life and events (confessio)*

To work on this theme, the content of the style of *The Confessions* of St. Augustine is briefly explained. Then they are given *Worksheet 13*, which is a practical guide for them to narrate their own *life story* from the point of view of faith.

#### Content of the theme

How important it is and how much good it does us to compose the story of what we are and who we are! This narrative includes the events that have occurred, the experiences that have most marked us in life, the experiences that have left a deep impression on us and the interpretation of the motivations for our behavior. Sometime in our lives, we should all dedicate some quality time to this exercise of narrating our own life history since we have been conscious. We should even ask for help from our parents or older siblings to get to know that part of our childhood that is hidden from our conscious memories.

The literary genre of the *Confessions* used by St. Augustine is of great help to us in making this conscious journey through our own life story. The book of Augustine's *Confessions* not only contains the narrative of the story of his life, but also combines the interior dialogue with himself, the recourse to memory, the interpretation in the present of the interior contents of the lived events, etc. And he certainly does it with art and skill, even if he has to bare his most modest intimacy. This is the courageous bishop who reveals his private life not out of morbid curiosity, but for a much more important reason: so that the action of God, his mercy and compassion, may shine forth in the life of a great sinner.

Thus, to the recourse to *memory*, *interior dialogue* and the *interpretation of the motivations* of conduct, St. Augustine adds to the narrative a gaze of faith. This is the complete picture of the Augustinian "*confessio*". Hence, *The Confessions* is an artfully embroidered piece based on the confession of sins, the confession of faith and the confession of praise to God the Creator. In this sense, the text with which St. Augustine opens the confessions of his life is very beautiful:

*"Great are you, O Lord, and very worthy of praise; great is your power, and your wisdom is beyond measure... And does man, a small part of your creation, seek to praise*

*you, and precisely man, who, clothed with his mortality, carries with him the testimony of his sin and the testimony that you resist the proud? Yet man, a small part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself excite him to it, making him delight in praising you, because you have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 1:1).*

The Bishop of Hippo wants to make his readers realize that, at the present moment of his life when he is dictating his confessions, he has gone through a long journey of changes and transformations. God’s mercy has changed his heart. At the moment in which he makes the narrative, he lives as someone who has been transformed and has lived a process of conversion. Therefore, it can be said that in dictating *The Confessions*, St. Augustine is fully immersed in an absorbing dedication, in order to keep always present the direction of his pilgrimage and the internal rhythm of his process of transformation that he is undergoing.

Finally, the use of the literary genre of “*confessio*” is used in an intuitive and suggestive way. Reason intervenes to arrange the events of her life in a certain order. However, there is an abundance of images that serve to recreate a new human and spiritual experience. Poetic language allows St. Augustine to give free rein to his affective experience in his relationship with himself, with others and, above all, with God. Feelings, affections, emotions, desires dance in all the directions in which St. Augustine longs to love and be loved.

### **Exercise of interiorization regarding a new reading of life**

DYNAMICS. “*The novelty of my life*”. There is no book more exciting than the book of one’s own life. Participants are given the necessary material for each one to write briefly the book of his or her life. It should contain the following elements:

- Title.
- The ending has to be open-ended.
- At the end of each chapter, stage or event, there should be a sentence that says: Thanks to... I learned, I understood, I know that....

## **THEME 2**

### ***Becoming silent to learn to listen***

The following question is posed: Have you ever been able to listen to silence? Various comments are made. Then, they are invited to perform an exercise of absolute silence. They are left for five minutes in absolute silence, with their eyes closed. And ask them what sounds they were able to capture. After the comments, the following poem is recited and they are prepared with the following reflection about the value of silence.

Attempting a reflection on the beauty of silence can be useful. But more useful and necessary is to initiate oneself in the experience of silence. Therefore, we let concepts give way to words that best express and communicate the beauty of silence. Poetry, precisely, contains a melody that thoroughly respects the chords of silence. Let us accompany the poet Jorge Luis Borges with his poem "*El silencio*" (*The Silence*). The beauty and depth of this poem is to introduce us to silence as an experience, as a paradox that recovers us for love and speaks to our heart.

### **Silence**

Say nothing, ask nothing,  
when you want to speak, remain mute.  
Let an endless silence be your shield  
and at the same time your perfect sword.  
Do not knock if the door is closed,  
do not cry if the pain is more acute,  
don't sing if the road is less rough,  
do not question except with your eyes.  
And in the deep and transparent calm  
that little by little and silently  
you will flood your transparent chest.  
You will feel the heartbeat in love  
with your recovered heart  
it will tell you everything, everything, everything...

### **Content of the subject**

In our society there is a real saturation of strident noises that constantly demand our attention. Everyone wants to be heard! And who listens? Pastoral work for vocations helps to silence all those voices that prevent every human being from hearing the voice of God in his or her own heart in silence.

A farmer discovered that he had lost his watch in the barn; very expensive and, above all, of great sentimental value. After an extensive search to no avail, he enlisted the help of a group of children hanging around the farm; he promised a valuable reward to anyone who could find his watch. Just as the farmer was about to give up, one boy asked him for a chance to try, since everyone else had failed. "Why not?" said the farmer; it would be one more try. And he authorized the boy to enter the stable.

After a while, the boy came out with the watch in his hand. Everyone was amazed. Then the farmer asked, "How did you find it?". The boy replied, "I did nothing but sit on the ground. In the silence, I heard the clock ticking and looked in the right direction." Being silent is very important to be able to listen. To know how to listen is elementary to be able to understand. And to be able to understand is a fundamental challenge in the life of every person in order to be able to orient oneself in life. Therefore, everything begins in silence. What is your experience of silence?

Vocational discernment needs to count on silence in order to learn to listen to the voice of God. It is not a matter of making silence for the simple fact of not producing noises, but as a strategy to silence external noises. There are a lot of noises that prevent us from listening to other very important voices, such as the voice of God and the echo of this voice in our own heart. There is no doubt that it is in silence that the voice of God can be heard. And only the voice of God contains sufficient luminosity to guide us in the right direction, the one that defines our own existence.

### **Interiorization exercise on making silence**

DYNAMICS. *"Active listening"*. The theme is focused on silence and the main activity should be that they practice silence, they can listen to their heart, their feelings, their fears... like the one who is alone in a forest and begins to hear the birds that he did not hear before.

In case the conditions for silence cannot be met, the following attentive listening exercise is suggested.

- Visualize a conversation and try to identify the feelings conveyed.
- Listening to a story and then paraphrasing it, that is, repeating it empathetically with other words so that the other feels understood. It is not repeating, it is reflecting what the other has experienced while listening to the partner.

## **THEME 3**

### ***To notice things in more depth***

There is a well-known phrase by the French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *The Little Prince*, which says: *"What is essential is invisible to the eye"*. This expresses that the true value of things is not always so obvious to people.

With this introduction you are invited to perform the following exercise. It is called, *"What do you see when you see what you see?"*. A box with a mirror at the bottom is placed in the center. They are told that it is a magic box that allows them to see what is most important in their hearts. And one by one they look into it. At the end of the exercise, the different reactions are discussed.

### **Content of the theme**

The real path of vocational search and discernment begins with the awareness of being in the presence of a Presence, that is, with the ability to perceive that God is present in all reality and, especially, in the interior of the human being, and wants to meet him and begin a dialogue of love. Vocational discernment consists in recovering the minimum ability to get in touch with oneself, to reflect and to concentrate on considering the important

things in life. It is about noticing things with a certain depth. This is another basic tool for putting aside the immediate and demanding demands of the thousand worries that fill the day, and distract attention from what really matters.

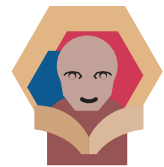
On the path of one's own vocational search, it is important to recover the mystagogy of the relationship with God, which speaks of process and progress. In this sense, the journey of the disciple of Christ starts from the human experience of wonder that moves the totality of the person, makes him or her become aware of self, provoking in him or her fascination, vertigo and admiration. Only then does life cease to be obvious and become marvelous; the ordinary takes on a more luminous hue. The experience of wonder allows us to constantly look at things in a different way. In the Christian spiritual experience, nothing arouses as much fascination as experiencing in the heart that *"it is not that we loved him first, but that God loved us first"* (1 John 4:9-10).

Now, in order to understand the call of the Lord, it is fundamental to be silent in order to listen, in faith, to the voice of God. The very vocational experience of St. Augustine has its origin in the ability to silence oneself and listen to God: You called and cried out, and broke my deafness (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 10:38). It is therefore essential to silence exterior and interior noises in order to foster interior silence.

### Interiorization exercise on noticing things

DYNAMICS. At the beginning of the subject, they have already been observed in a mirror. It is proposed to repeat the same dynamics, but instead of a flat mirror put a concave or convex mirror (*the important thing is that it is curved so that it deforms its image*). Silence is the crystal that allows us to see our inner self. If we are not silent we will not hear the voice of God. You can invite them to answer spontaneously the following questions: What things bend our image? What things prevent us from making silence to look at ourselves with more harmony?

## Lectio divina *The Call of Samuel*



### Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Lord, we praise and bless you for this time that you give us to listen to your Word. We often do not know how to listen, we do not know how to be silent and we do not know how to dialogue. We are aware that prayer is a dialogue with the One who speaks to our hearts. Lord, give us your Holy Spirit who speaks in us.

O Holy Spirit, you who are the source of light and life, open our eyes and our hearts. Enlighten our minds and help us to welcome, as true children of God and disciples of Jesus, the Lord, the Word that gives life. Instill in us an open and generous spirit so that in dialogue with you, the interior Master, we may know and embrace the cause of the Kingdom and witness to the beauty of the Gospel among those with whom we share our lives.



## Biblical text

Samuel's vocation (*1 Samuel* 3:1-21)

*"The child Samuel was in the service of Yahweh and lived next to Eli. At that time the word of Yahweh was rarely heard. Visions were not frequent. One day Eli was lying in his room, his eyes were growing weak and he could no longer see. The lamp of God was not yet extinguished, and Samuel was lying in the Temple of Yahweh, where the Ark of God was. Yahweh called Samuel. He answered, "Here I am," and ran to Eli, saying, "Here I am, for you have called me." But Eli said to him, "I did not call you; go back to bed. And he went and lay down again.*

*Yahweh called back: "Samuel." Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me. Again Eli answered, "I did not call you; my son, go and lie down." Samuel did not yet know Yahweh, for the word of Yahweh had not yet been spoken to him. When Yahweh called Samuel a third time and the young man came again to Eli, Eli understood that it was Yahweh who was calling him, and said to Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you again, say to him, 'Speak, Yahweh, for your servant is listening to you.'" Then Samuel went back to his room and lay down.*

*Yahweh went in and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel, Samuel. He said, "Speak, Yahweh, for your servant is listening. And Yahweh said to Samuel, "I am going to do a terrible thing in Israel, and every one who hears it will have his ears pricked up. For I am going to carry out against Eli all that I have spoken against his family. You shall declare to him that I condemn his family forever, because he knew that his sons offended God and did not correct them. By this I swear that Eli's family will never be able to erase his fault either with sacrifices or with offerings".*

*Samuel continued to lie down until morning, and then he opened the doors of the house of Yahweh. Samuel did not dare to tell Eli what he had witnessed, but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son, what has Yahweh told you? Do not hide anything from me! May God punish you if you hide anything from me of what he has told you." So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. And Eli said, "He is Yahweh; let him do as he pleases. Samuel grew up, and Yahweh was with him. And all that Yahweh said to him came to pass. All the people, from Dan to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel had given proof that he was Yahweh's prophet. Yahweh continued to manifest himself in Shiloh, where he communicated with Samuel."*

### a) Lectio

In this marvelous piece of Sacred Scripture, the contrast between the religious decadence embodied in the sons of Eli and the blossoming of a new era, embodied in the young Samuel, is presented. The triple call to which Samuel responds by addressing the elder Eli, shows the disorientation and uncertainty through which the people are advancing. Therefore, it can be rightly affirmed that the protagonists in this passage are neither Eli nor Samuel; the protagonist is the Word of God that bursts into the darkness, the darkness and the new life of the young Samuel.

It is, therefore, the Word of life that calls to his service; a service that is essentially oriented to life. Samuel, who had been at Eli's command, now goes on to serve the Word exclusively. It is God himself who appeals to this human instrument to do new things; and Samuel acquires renown in all Israel, from north to south, not by himself, but by his service to the Word; as an "accredited" prophet he knows the will of God, his purposes, and through him all Israel can know him".

### **b) Meditatio**

God provides light with his Word in the midst of our darkness. The biblical text accurately refers to this environment of darkness: "*visions did not abound*"; "*Eli's eyes began to fail and he could not see*"; "*Eli was lying in his chamber*"; "*Samuel was lying in the sanctuary of the Lord*". So, it is night, there is blindness, there is darkness. However, "the lamp of God had not yet gone out." In the midst of the darkness shines a light that does not go out. As *Psalms* 118 says: "*Your word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path*".

The Word calls and calling enlivens the fire of faith. The vocation of the believer is to be a hearer of the Word. The Word always resounds and calls, invites, summons, but who listens to it? The child Samuel listens to it and understands it little by little: "*Samuel did not yet know the Lord; the Word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him*". So it is with the mystery of vocation itself: it is something that is revealed, manifested at the rhythm of life and of the events that accompany it. The only adequate attitude to enter in tune with the Word is the availability of the heart to listen: "*Speak, Lord, for your servant listens*".

God's newness makes its way into human history through those who welcome the Word and obey it. "*Samuel, at the dawn of a new day, opened the doors of the sanctuary*". The response to the call opens the doors to the newness of God in the events of history, purifies intentions, unleashes freedom, uproots the evil that dwells in hearts and disposes to trust: "It is the Lord! Let him do what seems good to him. The person grows as much as he embraces and lives the call of the Lord: "*Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him; none of his words failed to be fulfilled,*" because they were an echo of the Word of God.

### **c) Oratio**

#### ***Stay, Lord, don't pass by***

Stay, Lord, do not pass by,  
that if now everything is light,  
without You and when You leave, it will be all darkness again.  
What, if now I see your greatness,  
without You and when You leave, I will only touch my poverty and weakness.

Stay, Lord, do not pass by,  
because, my doubts with your Word  
will become sure answers,  
because my flighty and sorrowful path  
becomes a path of hope,  
in a cry to your real and resurrected presence.

Stay, Lord, do not pass by,  
that, with You and for You, it is worthwhile to wait and to hope.  
That, with You and for You, there is no great cross,  
but strength to face it.  
That, with You and for You, the smile returns to my face,  
and my heart recovers its lively palpitation.

Stay, Lord, do not pass by,  
because, with you and through you, my path is hope.  
Because, with you and through you, illusion dawns.  
Because, with you and through you, I feel heaven closer.  
Because, with you and because of you, I see more brothers and sisters  
and I feel I have fewer enemies.  
Because, with You and through You, disenchantment disappears  
and the faith of those who know that You,  
Lord, you are the beginning and the end of everything.  
Amen.

#### ***d)Contemplatio***

The most wonderful things in life are those that are received as a gift. God, our Father, is an expert in practicing the logic of gift: he gives us his Presence, his Word and his blessing. He even gives us the gift of his Son, the Word of Life, wrapped in human skin, with the heart of man, with feelings of compassion, with bowels of mercy.

I open my heart so that the Gift of God may fit in it. The more the heart is enlarged and sponged, the more the Word of Life, Jesus himself and his Kingdom project, fits in it. Lord, may you enliven in me today the awareness of being a "hearer of the Word", for I know that from it comes to me the light, the newness of God and, above all, the revelation of my vocation and the meaning of my mission in this world.

## Day 2

### Morning Prayer

The atmosphere is set with quiet and soft music. They are accompanied by breathing exercises and contact with one's own body, to help prepare oneself for prayer. We insist on the senses as channels for the encounter with God: the hearing of the heart, the eyes of the heart, the mouth of the heart, the smell of the heart and the touch of the heart.

The moment of prayer is introduced with the following phrase from St. Augustine: *"The root is deeply rooted in the ground; where our root is, there is our life, there is our love"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 36:3*).

The guided meditation is accompanied by the following five steps.

After the exercise, they are given a sheet of paper with Psalm 28: *"The Lord is my strength and my shield: my heart trusts in him; he has helped me, and my heart rejoices and sings to him with gratitude"* (Psalm 28). And they are asked to think about the soil of their heart, where God sowed the seed of vocation. And the seeds are sprouting as a real love, but for the moment what matters most is what is not seen: the roots. They are asked to write down their roots. Quiet music is played in the background.

At the end of the prayer time, time is given to share a spontaneous petition.

### Sentence content

- 1. Return to the heart.** The process of interiority allows you to direct your attention to the intimate Master, to the one who educates you and manifests the truth in your heart. When you recognize his presence in the sanctuary of your consciousness, you understand that only he can show you the true path. But in order for you to consent to his showing you the way, you must grant him authority in your life. Only in this way will what you understand that he asks of you in your heart become for you unrenounceable, because you know that he is the ultimate ally of your happiness. Return, therefore, to your heart and experience yourself as a privileged disciple of Jesus. And identify around you brothers and sisters who have walked the path of faith - experienced teachers - and who can guide you in the choice of your vocation.
- 2. I prepare the heart.** Normally the teacher appears when the disciple is ready. To prepare your heart and understand the importance of accompaniment, sincerely ask yourself this question, *to whom do you grant authority in your life?* Whether you are aware of it or not, most of us give some weight in our decisions, for better or worse, to those people who are significant in our lives. Prepare your heart to identify to whom you grant authority. And consider who and why you consent to be affected by them, to the degree that they influence your decisions. And prepare your heart to allow God, the Lord of your heart, to show you the path of your vocation.

- 3. I open my heart.** Do you know the root of the word “*authority*”? It comes from the Latin word “*auctoritas*”, and indicates the capacity or ability of a person through which he or she helps others to grow. Far from supporting the idea of directive power, dominance or manipulation, it expresses rather a real generative force through which people are helped to bring out the best in themselves. When Jesus met young people, in whatever state or condition they were in, even if they were dead, in one way or another he said to them: “*Arise! Grow up! And his word fulfilled what he said*” (cf. *Mark* 5:41; cf. *Luke* 7:14). So open your heart to the Lord and let his warm and reassuring presence confirm you in that project that is brewing within you.
- 4. I lift up my heart.** When you lift up your heart and rest in the heart of God, sooner or later, as a blessing, the presence of someone who encourages you and pushes you in the choice of your vocation will appear. Never doubt it: God will place good friends and great guides on your path of vocational discernment. On the other hand, you will never regret finding and counting on the help of an older brother or sister in the faith, with whom you can share the bread of your discoveries as you walk your own vocational journey. So lift up your heart to recognize those people God has placed in your life and who serve as beacons for you, so that you can discern and respond to the call.

## THEME 4

### *Listening to whom and why*

The exercise consists of asking participants to write a list of people they listen to and briefly describe why they listen to them. The exercise is shared to draw out common aspects of why we listen to the people we listen to.

#### Content of the theme

St. Augustine himself says: “*As for my life in this world, everything was hesitation, and I had to purify my heart of the old leaven, and I even liked the way - Christ himself - but I was lazy to walk through its narrowness. You then inspired me with the idea - which seemed to me excellent - to turn to Simplicianus, who appeared to my eyes as a good servant of yours and in whom your grace shone*” (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:1).

Among the most popular white humor programs on Mexican television, even today, is “*Chapulín colorado*”. Comedian Roberto Gómez Bolaños plays the role of a rather atypical superhero, the “*Chapulín colorado*”, who always comes to the aid of those in need. In all the programs, the same scene is repeated: there is a person in danger who exclaims “*Oh, and now who can help me? And immediately the comic character appears saying “me”, and the person says “el chapulín colorado”; and he adds, “they didn’t count on my cunning*”.

St. Augustine, at the most turbulent and confused moment of his life, when he was no longer satisfied with his world of achievements, conquests and successes, but also could not find the way to determine himself for a better life, sought help; he sought a companion, Simplicianus. He granted authority to this man because *“he had heard that from his youth he had lived devoutly, and since he was then already an old man, it seemed to him that for such a long age, spent in the study of the things of God, he would be very experienced and well instructed in many matters; and indeed he was. Therefore, I confided my concerns to him, so that he might indicate to me which path would be the most suitable in that state of mind in which I found myself to walk in the path of the Lord”* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:2).

A very direct question, to whom do you grant authority in your life? Whether we are aware of it or not, all of us grant some influence in our lives, for better or for worse, to other people, ideas, proposals, initiatives... As prehistoric as it may seem to speak of authority, we can hardly exclude ourselves from the inner decision to allow someone or something to affect us and impact our life, even to the extent of defining or characterizing it.

To achieve a true path of vocational maturation, young people need authoritative adults at their side. It is therefore important for those who embark on a vocational search to use their astuteness and intelligence, their sensitivity and fine intuition, to recognize the person or persons who can help them grow. In short, companions on the road who exercise their authority in this sense: who want nothing more than the growth of those they accompany.

So, who do you ask for help? There are many life teachers around you: you can give authority to your parents, to teachers, to friends, to a group you belong to, to a writer you like, and so on. However, the question is much more direct: do you have someone to accompany you on the path of your vocational search? is there someone who knows your story, who knows about your successes and achievements, but also about your fears and self-deceptions?

You should know that there are several of these people out there, in your environment, to whom you can grant authority in your life. Your task is to identify, with sincerity, someone who will give you confidence and encourage you to grow, to give more of yourself, to seek your own answers. You will never regret finding and counting on the help of a companion, with whom you can share the bread of your discoveries.

### **Interiorization exercise on who we listen to and why**

DYNAMICS. *“Testimonies”*. Take two or three people to tell their vocational testimony. They should be people who can be references for the participants.

- It will help them practice listening to what a vocational process is like.
- Let those who give testimony share how they heard God’s voice.
- The people who provide their testimony could share who are their references or pillars in their vocation and why.

### **Closing of the encounter**

It is recommended to play a song that talks about silence and listening.

It is explained that for the closing of the encounter, whoever wishes to open his heart to share what has helped him the most in his discernment during this vocational meeting.

Once everyone, or the vast majority, has shared, the second dynamic is explained. After a brief moment of silence, each person chooses the words that best express what he or she has experienced during the sharing.

The one who accompanies the sharing can close with the words *silence, listening, awakening, confession, awakening, warning?*.

### **Personal activities to deepen at home**

1. Ask several people important to you what they think about the life choice you want to make.
2. Do practical exercises of silence and attentive listening in different scenarios: a forest, a shopping mall, the street, your room, etc.
3. Complete the exercise of narrating your life story from the Augustinian elements: memory, internal dialogue and the interpretation of the motivations of the behaviors; all of this from faith.



**7th Step**  
*Sing and walk with me*  
(séptimo esquema)







## 7th Step

### *Sing and walk with me*

*(séptimo esquema)*

#### **Objective**

To present to the participants the lifestyle of the Augustinian Recollect family, so that they may have sufficient elements to outline the option of life in Christ to which they feel called.

#### **Proposed schedule**

##### **Day 1**

08:00, Prayer.

10:00, Theme 1: *"St. Augustine discerned his vocation"*.

11:00, Personal time for reflection.

12:00, Theme 2: *"The Augustinian Charism and Spirituality"*.

12:40, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 14*.

13:30, Time for group sharing.

16:30, Theme 3: *"The spirit of the Augustinian Recollection"*.

18:00, Prayer prepared, *"For the love of your love"*.

##### **Day 2**

08:00, Prayer.

10:30, Theme 4: *"The Augustinian Recollect Family"*.

11:30, Projection of the video: *"The Augustinian Recollects in a global world"*.

13:00, Eucharist (give time to share the Word).

16:00, Personal time to work on *Worksheet 16*.

17:00, Closing of the encounter.

## Day 1

### **Morning Prayer, "The Lord always keeps his promises."**

A sheet of paper is handed out with the following printed biblical texts, and they are read in a calm and paused way. Background music is played. At the end, a song about the *faithfulness of God the Father* is sung. And there is time to share spontaneous prayers.

### **Introduction**

This all-accomplishing God is my Father. He loves me, he never deceives me, he never fails; he is loyal and faithful. Every time I trust his promises and believe his Word to be true, those promises are realized in my life. The promise becomes reality, becomes life, becomes the experience of salvation. This is the great hope of every vocational choice.

### **Election promises:**

- *"You are my servants whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me, that you may understand who I am" (Isaiah 43:10).*
- *"Fear not...I have called you by name...you are mine" (Isaiah 43,1).*

### **Promises of love:**

- *"You are precious in my sight, you are precious and I love you" (Isaiah 43:4).*
- *"With everlasting mercy I love you" (Isaiah 54:8).*
- *"My mercy shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace waver" (Isaiah 54,10).*

### **Promises of strength:**

- *"He gives strength to the weary, and increases the strength of the weak" (Isaiah 40:29).*
- *"Those who hope in the Lord renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31).*
- *"I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand" (Isaiah 40,10).*

### **Promises of mercy:**

- *"I am he, who on my own account blotted out your crimes and did not remember your sins" (Isaiah 43:25).*

- *"I have removed your transgressions like a mist, your sins like a cloud" (Isaiah 44:22).*
- *"Behold, I take away thy guilt from thee, and I clothe thee with a feast" (Zechariah 3:4).*

#### **Promises of His Presence:**

- *"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God" (Isaiah 41:10).*
- *"I myself will go with you and give you rest" (Exodus 34:14).*
- *"I will go before you, I will break down the hills, I will break the bars of copper, I will break the iron bolts" (Isaiah 45,2).*

#### **Promises about their fidelity:**

- *"I know my plans for you, plans to prosper you, not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:10-11).*
- *"My plans will come to pass and all my desires I will carry out" (Isaiah 46:10).*
- *"I have spoken it, and I will bring it to pass, I have appointed it, and I will perform it" (Isaiah 46, 11).*

#### **Promises of encouragement:**

- *"I will be with you, I will not leave you, nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5).*
- *"Even to their old age I will be the same; even to gray hairs I will sustain them" (Isaiah 46,4).*

#### **Accompanying promises:**

- *"I the Lord, your God, teach you for your good, I guide you in the way you go" (Isaiah 48:7).*
- *"I will pour out my spirit upon your offspring, my blessing upon all who are born of you" (Isaiah 44:3).*
- *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he feeds me in meadows of green pastures; though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 22).*
- *"Not one of all the splendid promises which Yahweh had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass" (Joshua 21,45).*

## THEME 1

***St. Augustine discerned his vocation***

A video on the life of St. Augustine is projected (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpnXH2erSU0>). The scene from the movie *"Augustine of Hippo"*, in which he is converted, can also be used.

**Content of the theme**

St. Augustine also discerned his vocation as a *"servant of God"* - a monk. In the words of St. Augustine himself: *"I was busy for a long time in many and diverse matters, and trying hard for many days to know myself, what I should do and what I should avoid, suddenly a voice came to me, I do not know whether from myself or from another, from outside or inside; it said to me: to whom will you entrust yourself to go forward?"* (St. Augustine, *The Soliloquies* 1,1).

Many people report that they came to discover their vocation thanks to the witness of someone who touched their heart. St. Augustine knows how to touch the heart because he speaks from the heart and shares with spontaneity his way of searching. With this series of publications, an itinerary for vocational discernment will be proposed based on the same experience of Augustine.

We will begin with a brief journey through some key moments in the life of the saint, in which he himself shares with emotion what led him to mature a choice of life in Christ. Then, based on the saint's experience, we will suggest some key aspects for discernment that will help to illuminate the paths of the search for one's own vocation.

Let us leave it to St. Augustine to tell us in his own words the journey of his journey, until he came to embrace with all his heart the call of the Lord to be a *"servant of God"* or monk. He says in the book of his Confessions: *"I had a lively desire for honors, riches and marriage, and you, Lord, laughed at me. And in these desires I suffered bitter struggles, for the closer you were to me the less you allowed me to find sweetness in what was not you"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 6:9).

St. Augustine, after a long journey of comings and goings, of falls and risings, of fulfilled dreams and painful failures, came to consider within himself, *"when I was deliberating about consecrating myself to the service of the Lord, my God, as I had long since disposed in my heart, I was the one who wanted to, and I was also the one who did not want to. Precisely because I neither fully wanted nor fully did not want to, I was struggling with myself and tearing myself apart"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:22).

And later, as Augustine himself shares with us in the book of his Confessions, he experiences a strong desire to make a decision: *"And I said to myself inwardly: Let it be now, let it be now! Let it be now, let it be now; and I almost passed from word to deed, I almost did it; but I did not manage to do it"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:25).

As if it were a duel to the death, inside him he debated and fought relentlessly. The echo of the voice of his old vanities seduced him, *"Are you leaving us? And from this moment we will not be with you forever and ever? And from this moment on will this or that never again be lawful for you? what, do you think you can live without these things?"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:26). On the other hand, other voices within him, coming from the tenacious witness of many Christians, resounded strongly, *"Can you not do what these can do, or can they do it by themselves and not in the Lord their God? Why do you lean on yourself, who cannot stand? Lean on him, do not be afraid, for he will not withdraw and let you fall; lean on him, for he will receive you and heal you"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:27).

Thus the interior struggle of St. Augustine intensified, *"but as soon as a high consideration brought out of the depths of his secret and piled up all my misery in the sight of my heart, an enormous storm burst in my soul, which enclosed in itself a copious rain of tears. And to unload it all with its corresponding thunder, I withdrew from the side of Alipius - for it seemed to me that solitude was more suitable for weeping - and I withdrew as far as I could"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:28).

Until the moment came for Augustine to give way to God in his life and to let go of the pretension of wanting to control life, *"throwing myself under the fig tree, I do not know how, I let go of the reins of tears, and two rivers flowed from my eyes. And I said many such things to you; and you, Lord, until when, until when, until when, tomorrow, tomorrow, why not put an end to my torpor at this very hour?"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:28).

Suddenly the brightness of a great light dispelled the darkness in Augustine's heart, *"but behold, I heard in the next house a voice, as of a boy or girl, singing and repeating many times: Take and read, take and read! And, repressing the impetus of tears, I got up, interpreting this as a divine order to open the codex and read the first chapter I found. So in haste, I returned to the place where Alipio was sitting and I had left the codex of the Apostle when I rose from there. I took it, then; I opened it and read in silence the first chapter that came to my eyes, and it said: "Do not eat and drink, do not lie down and be light, do not quarrel and quarrel, but put on our Lord Jesus Christ and do not care for the flesh with too many desires"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:29).

And finally, St. Augustine matured a choice of life in Christ, *"a light of assurance entered my heart and all the darkness of my doubts was dispelled"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:29). And he concludes by saying, *"because you so converted me to you that I no longer desired a wife nor harbored any hope in this world, being already in that rule of faith in which you had shown me to her (his mother Monica) so many years before. And so you turned her weeping into joy, much more fruitful than what she had desired and much more expensive and chaste than what she could expect from the grandchildren that my flesh (spiritual children) would give her"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 8:30).

Many people report that they came to discover their vocation thanks to the witness of someone who touched their heart. St. Augustine knows how to touch the heart because he speaks from the heart and shares frankly his journey of vocational search. This journey led him to embrace with all his heart the call of the Lord to be a "servant of God" or a monk.



And you, what is God calling you to? What is your mission in this world? What kind of fire burns in your heart? What is the passion of your life?

### **Exercise of interiorization regarding St. Augustine's discernment of his vocation.**

DYNAMICS. *"My conversions"*. The theme ends with some questions for reflection, to which can be added as an activity to write or meditate on their own conversions.

- PAST. Search and identify moments and experiences that have marked a before and after in your life.
- PRESENT/FUTURE. St. Augustine speaks of three stingers that pierce our hearts: power, money and pleasure. No one is exempt. Analyze your current situation and ask, through a written personal prayer, for conversion to God.

## **THEME 2**

### ***Augustinian Charism and Spirituality***

For the development of this theme, the metaphor of the *forest* and the *colonies of trees* in the different parts of the forest can be used. In this metaphor, the forest would be the Church. And the diversity of colonies of trees, the religious families. In the different parts of the forest, according to the families of trees found there, a different microclimate is created, which adds up to the whole ecosystem of the forest.

#### **Content of the theme**

##### **1. The Augustinian charism**

In the Christian tradition, charism is understood as a gratuitous and extraordinary gift, given by the Holy Spirit for the good of the community. The basic text to understand in this direction what a charism is or what charisms are, is found in the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, where he lists and describes some of them: *"One by the Spirit has the gift of speaking wisdom, another according to the same Spirit that of teaching deep things, to another by the same Spirit is given faith, to this one by the one Spirit is given the gift of healings, to that one to perform miracles, to one the gift of prophecy, to others the gift of discernment, to this one to speak in various tongues, to that one the gift of interpreting them"* (1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

In the reflection on the data of faith, charism would come to mean, in general, a gift of God and, in particular, a capacity or ability granted by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the Christian community through charity. Charisms are the gifts and dispositions that each Christian possesses as a gift of the Spirit, for the fulfillment of a mission within the

community. Therefore, it is a grace granted by which the Holy Spirit enables each Christian for the good of his brethren. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, whose protagonist is the Holy Spirit in the midst of the first Christian community, it is mentioned on several occasions that the charisms are for the service of charity (cf. *Acts* 13:1f).

In the case of the Augustinian charism, it is inserted within the same Pauline understanding of charisms. However, some clarifications should be made in this regard. There is nothing more dynamic in the Christian life than charisms, precisely because it is the Holy Spirit who gives rise to them and keeps them alive. Therefore, a charism is not something static that the Spirit raised up, for example, in St. Augustine, and that his continuators in history only reproduce it literally in their lives. On the contrary, a charism is an experience in the Spirit that has to be accepted, lived, deepened and developed in the course of history.

From this perspective, the Augustinian charism would be more than the charism of St. Augustine, although it would not be understood without reference to the writings of the saint. Hence, each generation of Christians must read St. Augustine - or St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila, etc. - and understand it from its own coordinates of space and time. Hence, the new generations will interpret it according to their own registers of meaning. And, in turn, they will read it according to the challenges presented to them. Thus, although the spiritual experience of holiness is something perennial, it is proposed and interpreted differently in each epoch of history according to the cultural models of holiness in force. From this point of view, a cultural transfer is necessary between what the experience of holiness communicates to one culture and what that same experience communicates to another, albeit in a different way.

## **2. Augustinian spirituality**

If Christian spirituality is the life of the Spirit in the spirit of the believer, Christian spiritualities manifest the color or shade with which the common spirituality is tinted. Within the Christian tradition there are many spiritualities: Ignatian, Dominican, Carmelite, Franciscan, Augustinian and a long etcetera. All of them are manifestations of the diversity with which the Holy Spirit enriches the Church; they are charisms for the life and holiness of the Church. Spiritualities, therefore, are inserted in the current of Christian spirituality and can never be understood apart from it. Therefore, we will now make the effort to deepen in a concrete spirituality: the Augustinian spirituality.

In this regard, it could be said that among the immense richness of the Christian spiritual current, St. Augustine, through a gift of the Spirit, accentuated the living out of some of its traits. We are talking about the Christian spiritual experience that the Bishop of Hippo had and that he captured in his writings. In this sense, the writings of the saint form what is called the sources of Augustinian spirituality and, of course, of Christian spirituality, from which they are indebted.

Among the traits of Christian spirituality emphasized by St. Augustine, we can enumerate some: the event of the incarnation, humility, listening to the Word, the process of interiority, the desire for God, the search and encounter, the condition of being pilgrims,

the love of friendship, the life of community, the dynamism of conversion, confession -of their sins, of faith, of praise-, among many others. All these traits give rise to what is known as "*the charism*". Therefore, Augustinian spirituality contains the proposal of a way to assimilate and incorporate into one's own life the characteristic notes of the Augustinian charism. It would be a matter of delving into the sources of Augustinian spirituality, in order to propose today the spiritual experience of Saint Augustine as a way of living and attaining holiness.

How does this come about? Through a series of experiences in the Spirit, inspired and motivated by the same spiritual experience of St. Augustine. By way of example, we cite some of these experiences of God that Augustinian spirituality encourages: the encounter with the interior Master through the process of interiority; the recognition of the truth of oneself (*radical identity*); the readiness to open oneself and go beyond the limits of one's own condition of being creatures; humility as the capacity to live the human condition to the full; to enter into the dynamism of the transformation of the heart, which is to die and to be continually being born in the Source; to become in oneself and to be the best of oneself beyond oneself (*transcendence*); to allow oneself to be inundated by the Spirit and to become a capacity for acceptance and a channel of life; to give life by giving one's own life out of love, etc.

### **Interiorization exercise on the charisma**

DYNAMICS. "*The shield*". On a piece of paper, a shield with four parts and a box to place a motto is handed out on both sides.

- On the one hand, they have to represent the coat of arms of their order if they were founders. What four values would they highlight and what would be their motto? It would be a good idea to find a drawing or symbol in addition to the value.
- On the other side, put the four most significant notes of Augustinian spirituality, representing them, if possible, with an image. And write the motto of the Augustinian Recollects.

## THEME 3

### *The spirit of the Augustinian Recollection*

The text of Act V of the Chapter of Toledo of 1588, which is the origin of the Augustinian Recollect family, reads: *“Because there are among us, or at least there may be, some who are so fond of monastic perfection that they wish to follow a more austere plan of life, whose legitimate desire we should favor so as not to put obstacles to the Holy Spirit, having previously consulted our most reverend father general and implored his venia, we determine that in this province of ours, three or more monasteries of men and as many others of women, in which a more austere form of life will be practiced, which, after mature reflection, the father provincial with his definitory will prescribe”.*

The following video will be shown, which may help you to understand a little more about the Augustinian Recollection: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhQvI78oDzI>.

#### **Content of the theme**

The Order of Augustinian Recollects arose in the 16th century, when some Augustinian religious, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, through a special collective charism, wished to live their consecrated life with renewed fervor and new norms at the service of the Church.

The Chapter of the Province of Castile, celebrated in Toledo (Spain) on December 5, 1588, determined that this new way of life would be lived in some houses. A few years after the beginning of the recollection, in 1605, the first missionary expedition left for the Philippines.

On August 12, 1604, the Augustinian Recollection began in Colombia and, therefore, in America. This event has left a deep mark in the history and life of the Order of Augustinian Recollects in America.

The Augustinian Recollects are heirs of the form of life inspired by St. Augustine (354-430) and assumed in the 13th century in a mendicant spirit by the Order of St. Augustine (Great Union of 1256). After more than three centuries of history, in 1912, they were recognized by the Church as an autonomous religious order.

The Augustinian Recollects, living fraternal life in community, want to follow Christ, chaste, poor and obedient; they seek the truth and are at the service of the Church; they strive to grow in charity according to the charism of St. Augustine and the intensity proper to the Recollection, a movement of interiority and evangelical radicality.

Much more data about the historical origin of the Augustinian Recollection can be found at this link: <https://agustinosrecoletos.org/actualidad/15378/y-la-recoleccion-nacio-en-torno-a-una-hoguera>.

### **Interiorization exercise on the Augustinian Recollection**

**DYNAMICS.** *“Research.* It is often said that you don’t love what you don’t know. They should search the internet and networks for information about -social projects, missions, schools, parishes, etc.- of the Augustinian Recollects, and explain them.

**Moment of prayer:** *Called to serve in the Kingdom*

*“For love of your love I do what I do” (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 2:11).*

The prayer space is decorated with fabrics, candles, soft lights and aromatic incense.

**Opening song:** *Christ Jesus, O fire that burns, may darkness have no voice in me. Christ Jesus, dispel my shadows, and may your love alone speak in me.*

**Psalm 119:** *I will run in your path, O Lord, when you enlarge my heart*

*“Blessed are those who walk the way without error and walk according to the law of the Lord.*

*Blessed are those who observe his testimonies and seek him with all their hearts, who, without committing injustice, walk along their paths.*

*You are the one who promulgated your ordinances to be fully observed.*

*May my conduct be firm in complying with your precepts.*

*Then I will not be ashamed to respect all your commandments.*

*I will give thanks to you with uprightness of heart as I learn your righteous judgments.*

*Your precepts, I want to keep them, so do not abandon me completely.*

*How does a young man purify his path? It is enough for him to observe your words.*

*With all my heart I have sought you, do not turn me away from your commandments!*

*In my heart I have hidden your word, that I might not sin against you.*

*Blessed are you, Lord, teach me your precepts!”*

*(Psalm 119,1-12).*

**Biblical text:** *John 21:15-19*

*“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.”*

*He asked him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter answered again, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Take care of my sheep.”*

*Jesus insisted for the third time, "Simon Peter, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was sad to see Jesus asking him for the third time if he loved him and answered, "Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you." Then Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.*

*I say to you, Peter, when you were young, you yourself put on the belt and went where you wanted to go. But when you grow old, you will open your arms and someone else will tie your waist and take you where you don't want to go."*

*Jesus said this so that Peter would understand in what way he was going to die and give glory to God.*

*And he added, "Follow me."*

**Silence** (quiet background music)

### **Reflection:**

I confess it awkwardly and sincerely, Lord, you know that I love you. My condition as your friend and disciple sometimes leads me to proclaim your condition as Son of God, but also to pretend that the things of the Kingdom, the things of God, are done my way.... Fortunately you are clear about your purpose, your mission: to serve and to give your life so that others may find life and hope in your surrender.

When I withdraw into myself, when I am overcome by laziness, when I give in to indifference, when I am selfish, when nothing matters to me..., I know that if you look at me, Lord, your love will be stronger in me, stronger than myself and my eagerness to try to control life and others; this is my hope. Allow me, Lord, to live by your love, allow me to love even a little as you love. That in all the projects and dreams I undertake I may say, "Lord, for the love of your love I do what I do".

My Lord, I know that you thirst for me to thirst for you, for your overflowing love. My human possibilities allow me to sense your love for me. The love that I share with the people you have placed at my side, helps me to discover you present in my life in a thousand and one details: in the beauty of friendship, in the joy of restlessness, in the enthusiasm of dreams....

When I am with you, face to face, alone, I feel you present in the depths of my heart and I experience your warm presence. I close my eyes and I feel your gaze..., and that's enough for me; to feel in faith your Presence in my life makes my heart beat again with strength, with emotion.

Thank you for the peace you give me when I come to you, just as I am; without defenses, without pretensions, without justifications; naked, open-hearted, heart to heart.

You know it, sometimes I get tired of fighting, of carrying my problems and the problems of others, of giving without receiving... and when this happens, you help me to open myself inside, and you make me taste your Presence within me, and that is enough for me, and I am once again filled with joy and hope.

You love me, Lord. It is enough for me to look at my life: what would have become of me without You, what would become of me without You? I have been cared for by You mysteriously, mercifully; even, although it annoys me to say it, I have been cared for by You in spite of myself, in spite of my lack of trust. Why, my God, why...? I do not know why, with love one does not argue, one only consents. Thank You for loving me so, without deserving it.

Today that question on the shore of the lake of my life resounds in me again, with that penetrating gaze of yours, full of tenderness: do you love me? And, once again, my answer is: "You know everything, Lord, you know that I love you".

In the strength that gives me the certainty of being infinitely loved, I dare to tell you: "*Here I am, Lord*", send me... Send me to the heart of the world, to the heart of your People, and let me know what I can do for others. I know that my life is for others and that nothing makes me happier than to give myself without measure, without calculation, without reserve....

Today I renew in my heart the decision to follow you, to follow in your footsteps. I contemplate and caress in my hands the beauty of such a precise gift: to be your friend, to be at your side, to walk together with you. Give me the strength of your Spirit to courageously announce your love to the four winds, to serve your Kingdom, to serve in your Kingdom.

**Song:** *Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you, he who has God lacks nothing. Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you, God alone is enough.*

**Prayer of intercession or praise:**

God creator and savior, source of peace on all the earth,  
(*everyone*) accompanies us on our journey.

O Christ, who calls to communion with all,  
(*all*) welcome us into your love.

Christ, who seeks those who are lost, visits the marginalized,  
(*all*) rekindle their hope.

Comforting Spirit, you place in us a hope,  
(*all*) fill us with your love.

Comforting Spirit, you awaken in us a love capable of forgiveness,  
(*all*) come to us, Holy Spirit...

(*intentions can be added spontaneously*)

***Our Father...***



### Concluding sentence

Father, I place myself in your hands. Do with me as You will. Whatever it is, I thank you. I am ready for anything. I accept everything, as long as your will is fulfilled in me and in all your creatures. I desire nothing more, Father. I entrust my soul to you, I give it to you with all the love of which I am capable, because I love you and I need to give myself, to place myself in your hands without measure, with infinite trust, because you are my Father (*prayer of Charles de Foucauld*).

**Final song:** *At night we will go, at night, to find the source, // only thirst illuminates us (2).*

## Day 2

### Morning Prayer

The atmosphere is set with quiet and soft music. They are accompanied by breathing exercises and contact with one's own body, to help prepare oneself for prayer. We insist on the senses as channels for the encounter with God: the hearing of the heart, the eyes of the heart, the mouth of the heart, the smell of the heart and the touch of the heart.

The moment of prayer is introduced with the following phrase of St. Augustine: *"I was not moved to do good until the Holy Spirit was conceived in my heart"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 13:53).

The following questions are asked: How do you put your capacity for discernment into practice? Do you allow the Holy Spirit to be your inner Teacher?

A song of invocation to the Holy Spirit is played.

The following text from the Letter to the Romans is then read: *"Do not conform yourselves to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may discern what is good, what is pleasing, what is perfect, the will of God"* (Romans 12:2).

Afterwards, soft music is played and a long period of silence is left. Then, the exercise of the five steps is accompanied.

At the end of the prayer time, spontaneous petitions are invited.

### Sentence content

1. **Back to the heart.** Without the help that God gives us with the presence of his Holy Spirit in our heart, how would we know where to advance on the path of vocational search? As you make this journey, returning to your heart you will identify the sweet guest of the soul, who will become the best help in the illumination of your vocation. Therefore, on the way back to your heart, as the restless seeker that you are, pause as long as necessary in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the true inner Master. His divine light will give you peace of heart and the strength to make the best decision.

- 2. I prepare my heart.** St. Augustine says: *“The house of my heart is too narrow for you to come into it: let it be enlarged for you. It is dilapidated: repair it”* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 1:6). What God gives to those who ask him is very great: it is the gift of gifts, the very life of God, the very giver of life. Thus, preparing the interior has to do with growing in the desire for God; this is what widens the heart the most so that such a marvelous gift can fit in it. And preparing the heart entails repairing the cracks in the interior; those fissures that prevent the greatness of God’s gift, the Holy Spirit, from being contained, harbored and maintained in the interior.
- 3. I open my heart.** The disciple of Jesus truly realizes the path of discernment when he allows the Holy Spirit to illuminate the vocation and mission in his own heart. This is precisely what it is about, to converse with the inner Master, the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who enables your heart to accept God’s very personal call to follow Christ and serve others in a concrete Christian way of life. Open your heart to his luminous Presence and let him harmoniously put together the different pieces that form part of your positive response to your vocation.
- 4. I lift up my heart.** *Psalm* 118 can help you to propel your steps in your vocational decision and to lift your heart on high: *“Lord, I will run in the way of your will when you enlarge my heart”*. Ask the Holy Spirit to come to your aid and trust that he will assist you in this incredible adventure. St. Augustine says: *“Charity has been spread in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us, and in order to spiritual things he teaches us and shows us the marvelous path of the vocation to love”* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 13:8). Surrender, then, to the action of the Holy Spirit in your heart, for only in this way will you embrace with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your being the call to fulfill a mission.

It ends with a prayer for the family of the Augustinian Recollects

### **Prayer for the Augustinian Recollect Family**

In this new era of history,  
 in which the Gospel forces to ignite  
 in the agitated heart of humanity,  
 we ask you, O Lord, that there may not be lacking among men  
 the gift of faith that enlightens and encourages their lives.  
 Our trust in You is sometimes timid,  
 and going against the tide, rowing out to sea, tires us,  
 and we can turn our gaze with interest  
 to the seductive offer of the easy and the comfortable;  
 but this blackmail of temptation chills our souls.  
 Therefore, sponge, Lord, our cowardly heart,  
 just as you dilated the courageous spirit  
 of the holy Augustinians and Augustinian Recollects,

so that your Recollect sons and daughters may respond with vigor  
in living the Gospel in the vicissitudes of history.  
Grant, O Lord, that the Augustinian Recollect family may  
shine with the luminosity of faith;  
blow warm encouragement into the embers of our hearts,  
so that I may burn with love for You and for my brothers and sisters,  
and to be credible witnesses of your living presence in the midst of humanity  
and to express it through gestures of compassion, service and dedication.  
Lord, may the winds of renewal blow through our family,  
so that *"the unity of hearts"* may grow and multiply in your Church.  
among those baptized who, inspired by St. Augustine,  
manifest the light of Christ in the world;  
Lord, may the harvest burn brightly!  
O Spirit of Love,  
grant to the Augustinian Recollect family  
the cherished gift of joy, interiority and conversion  
to be meaningful communities in your Church,  
bold pedagogues of the encounter with you in prayer,  
passionate seekers of your living Presence in the Word and events,  
builders of solid relationships and a dialogue that is always possible,  
servers available to others,  
especially the poor.  
Amen.

## THEMA 4

### *The Augustinian Recollect Family*

The participants are invited to express aloud the traits they have perceived in the Augustinian Recollect communities they know. They are asked the question: According to your own impressions, what is the Augustinian Recollect way of life like?

At the end of the theme, the video *"The Augustinian Recollects in a global world"* is projected.

#### **Content of the theme**

They have Saint Augustine (354-430) as their spiritual father and were born by decision of a chapter that the Augustinians of the Province of Castile celebrated in Toledo in December 1588. In the Order of Augustinians an atmosphere of reform had been created, promoted by the Council of Trent.

The Chapter of Toledo took up this desire for a more recollected life, with more dedication to prayer, greater emphasis on the common life and greater austerity, and decided that monasteries should be founded for those who freely wished to live in this way.

The first convent assigned for men was the one in Talavera de la Reina (Toledo), and the one for women was created in Madrid by Saint Alonso de Orozco. In 1605 there were already 17 convents scattered throughout Spain.

Another renewal of Augustinian Recollection sprouted in Colombia. In 1604 the first Recollects in Latin America began their journey around the Colombian hermitage of La Candelaria.

### **Missionary horizon and strong turbulences**

In 1605 the Augustinian Recollects arrived in the Philippines, which was the almost unique missionary horizon until the independence of these islands in 1898, and where the Augustinian Recollection has written many of its glorious missionary deeds.

If the War of Independence against the French in 1808 was a hard blow to religious life in general, the disentailment laws of Mendizábal in 1835 dealt a mortal blow to religious life in Spain.

The Augustinian Recollects lost 29 of the 30 convents they had in Spain. Only the one in Monteagudo (Navarra) remained, which the government left in the hands of the Order because it prepared religious and priests for the missions in the Philippines, which was a priority interest for the royal crown.

The danger of extinction of the Augustinian Recollects in Spain was serious. But political changes alleviated the difficulties and a new formation house was built in Marcilla (Navarra), and another one later in San Millán de la Cogolla (La Rioja), always with an eye on the Philippines, where practically all the religious were going.

Throughout the XVII, XVIII and XIX centuries, hundreds of Recollects evangelized the Philippines and gave their lives there, most of them without ever returning to Spain.

### **Expansion in Latin America**

The Philippine Revolution of 1898 was another litmus test for the survival of the Augustinian Recollects. Most of them had to leave the archipelago; a good number perished. Some survived.

These facts made it necessary to look for new missionary territories, which were found in Latin America: Brazil, Panama, Venezuela and Colombia, a country where a group of Recollects had also been living since the 17th century, but which experienced many difficulties caused in part by the political powers.

In spite of everything, the Recollection remained standing and there was no lack of providential men - Friar Enrique Pérez, Monsignor Toribio Minguella, St. Ezekiel Moreno... -

who had a special drive to keep alive the charism and convert the Augustinian Recollects into an autonomous religious Order, with juridical independence from the Augustinians, on whom, in practice, it never depended since the birth of the Recollection.

### **The Augustinian Recollects as a religious order**

Pope St. Pius X granted this autonomy by the bull “Religiosas Familias” in the year 1912. Since then, the Order of Augustinian Recollects has been reorganized in all orders and the number of religious and ministries served throughout the twentieth century increased, reaching 1,500 members in the 1970s. Today the Order is made up of about a thousand religious, with an uneven presence in 20 countries.

### **The Augustinian Recollect Family**

The Augustinian Recollects have certain traits that characterize them: interior life (prayer, liturgy of the hours...), missionary spirit -they go where the Church needs them-, the importance of common life, simplicity and the search for Truth.

Parallel to the history of the Augustinian Recollects, a very rich history has developed in the Order of the Augustinian Recollect Nuns of contemplative life, who have monasteries mainly in Spain and Mexico, but in recent decades have founded monasteries in the United States, the Philippines, Brazil, Kenya, Colombia and Costa Rica. The total number of Augustinian Recollect contemplative nuns is around 500.

Closely united to the Augustinian Recollects by their spirituality are the Augustinian Discalced Nuns of St. John of Ribera. Born in the shadow or under the influence of the Augustinian Recollect spirituality are the Augustinian Recollect Sisters, the Augustinian Recollect Sisters of the Heart of Jesus, the Augustinian Recollect Missionary Sisters and the Augustinian Recollect Sisters of the Sick, and the Commendatory Sisters of St. James,

But the Augustinian Recollect Family is not only made up of religious men and women, but also of lay people who live their Christian life animated by the Augustinian Recollect spirituality: the Secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity, the Augustinian Recollect Youth -ARY- and the Christian Mothers of Saint Monica.

### **Interiorization exercise on the Augustinian Recollection**

DYNAMICS. “Questions and Answers”. In pairs develop a question and answer on general topics of the Order, focusing on the following categories:

- History.
- Geography (places where the Order is present).
- Charisma.
- St. Augustine.
- Saints and Augustinian family.

- Vocation.

A quiz contest is held in two or three teams, based on what each pair prepared of questions and answers.

### **Closing of the encounter**

It is recommended to play a song of the Augustinian recollection.

It is explained that for the closing of the encounter, whoever wishes to open his heart to share what has helped him the most in his discernment during the vocational experience.

Once everyone, or the vast majority, has shared, the second dynamic is explained. After a brief moment of silence, each person chooses the words that best express what he or she has experienced during the sharing.

The one who accompanies the encounter can close with the words: *St. Augustine, Augustinian Recollects, charism, spirituality, a big family...*

### **Personal activities to deepen at home**

1. Share with your family and friends the decision you feel called to make after going through the vocational discernment process.
2. To deepen in the aspects of the charism of the Augustinian Recollects through the reading of materials found in the web pages: [www.agustinosrecoletos.com](http://www.agustinosrecoletos.com) and [www.inquietar.com](http://www.inquietar.com).
3. In case you have decided to enter the house of formation, write your letter of request to enter the process of formation to Augustinian Recollect life.



# Vocational Retreat







# Vocational Retreat

## *The fundamental step of any vocation: humility*

*"God, in Christ Jesus, became what he was not.  
so that we could become what he is"*  
(St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 7,24).

### **1. Prayer for the Year of Holiness in the Augustinian Recollect Family 2017**

Holy Father, all our hope is in your great mercy.  
We thank you and bless your name.  
May your Spirit open our hearts to conversion;  
a conversion that unites us more closely to Jesus,  
that transforms our way of thinking and living.  
Grant us the grace to be creators of communion;  
may we be transmitters of your peace in the Church and in the world.  
Make us sensitive to the needs of those who live without faith;  
that we be close to those who suffer and to the poor.  
*Give us humility* and readiness to follow Jesus.  
May he fill our lives with hope,  
may it fill us with love for you, Father.  
Infuse us, O Father, with your Spirit,  
to respond with joy  
to your call to holiness. Amen.

### **2. St. Paul to the Philippians 2,5-11**

*"Have among yourselves the same sentiments as Christ. Who, though he was in the form of God, yet did not eagerly retain equality with God. But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and appearing in appearance as a man, and humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him and gave him the name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and in the depths, and every tongue confess that Christ Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father".*

### 3. Some phrases of St. Augustine to understand humility in depth

*"Humility lifts up the heart and pride casts it down"* (St. Augustine, *The City of God* 14:1).

*"Be humble before your God; humble so that you may be exalted with your glorified God. If you are sprinkled with hyssop, the humility of Christ will cleanse you"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 50:12*).

*"The weakness that is given in humility is the greatest strength"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 92:6*).

*"It is in humility that all justice is fulfilled"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon 52,1*).

*"Are you looking for ladders to climb up to him? Seek the wood of humility and you have arrived"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon 70A,2*).

*"Everyone likes heights, but humility is the stepping stone to reach them"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon 96,3*).

*"Man's humility is his confession, and God's highest elevation is his mercy"* (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of St. John 14:5*).

*"The simulation of humility is the greatest pride"* (St. Augustine, *On Holy Virginity 43,44*).

*"Humility is the greatest of Christian teachings, for it is through humility that charity is preserved, and nothing else corrupts it more quickly than pride"* (St. Augustine, *Exposition of the Letter to the Galatians 1:5*).

### 4. The path of humility with St. Augustine

St. Augustine is a teacher of humility because he is a teacher of humanity. "Why do you seek, in your eagerness to stand out, the highest place you can reach by wanting to keep yourself at all costs in humility? If you elevate yourself, God knocks you down; if you knock yourself down, God elevates you. The affirmation is the Lord's: nothing can be added to it or taken away from it" (St. Augustine, *Sermon 354,8*). For St. Augustine, humility means embracing your humanity and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in it in order to recreate it. The Christian vocation is the actualization of the new project of humanity in Christ. And the particular vacation is the concrete way of unfolding the germ of Christian life through love, faith and hope.

#### A. Notice to pilgrims:

*"This is the way to God: first, humility; second, humility; third, humility; and as often as you ask me, I will tell you the same thing"* (St. Augustine, *Letter to Diocetus 118:22*). One walks to God, then, through humility; this is the indispensable attitude for the disciple of Jesus, *"Such is the way: walk through humility to reach eternity. God-Christ is the homeland to which we go; Christ-man, the way by which we go"* (St. Augustine, *Sermon 123,3*).

Now, if the attitude is humility, the question is: What would be the content of these steps? St. Augustine's answer: the affection of the heart. *"We do not come to Christ by running, but by believing; we do not come to Christ by the movement of the body, but by the affection of the heart"* (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 26:3). Therefore, it is a displacement of the heart by love.

We already have the attitude of the seeker of God -humility-, we also have the content of the steps -the affection of the heart-, but what would be the sure way to go to God? St. Augustine's answer: *interiority*. The steps of humility and charity are steps towards interiority. And interiority is that journey to the center of one's own life, and then up into the heart. *"Do not to pour yourself out; go within yourself, for within man dwells the truth; and if you find that your nature is changeable, transcend yourself"* (St. Augustine, *On True Religion* 39:72).

### **B. The steps of humility and charity are the steps of interiority:**

It is a matter of descending to one's innermost self in order to ascend to the best of oneself. As St. Augustine would say, *"No one is good when he can be better"* (St. Augustine, *On True Religion* 41,78).

#### **1st step: "Know thyself"**

One walks in humility when one advances towards the truth of oneself.

*"And I realized that I was far from you in the region of dissimilarity"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 7:16).

*"I distanced myself from you and wandered, my God, far off the path of your stability, back in my adolescence, and became for me a region of barrenness"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 2:18).

*"I, who was not humble, did not have Jesus humble for my God, nor did I know what his humility could be a teacher of"* (St. Augustine, *Letter* 7:24)..

#### **2nd step: "Know thyself in God"**

*"If we turn away from God we are deformed; but he did not permit our perdition. He is the beginning to which we return, the model we are to follow and the grace that saves us: the only God by whom we were created, and his likeness that restores us to unity, and peace that keeps us in harmony"* (St. Augustine, *On True Religion* 55,113).

*"All humility consists in your knowing yourself in God"* (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 25:16).

**3rd step: "Turn to your heart"**

*"And, admonished by You to return to myself, I entered into myself guided by You; and I was able to do so because You became my help. [...] And I saw, O Father, that I was far from You [...]. You cried out to me from afar, and I heard it as one hears it inwardly in the heart, without any doubt"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 7:16).

**4th. step: "Discover how God dwells in your heart"**

"God is within; there He dwells. Pray before him; do not try to make him hear you from afar [...] Then within, in you and before him, pour out your prayer; that is where his ears are" (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalms* 141:4).

**5th. step: "The path to God goes through your heart"**

*"O Truth, light of my heart, let not my darkness speak to me! I bowed to these and remained in darkness; but from them, yes, from them I loved you with passion. I erred and remembered you. I heard thy voice behind me, that I should return; but I scarcely heard it for the tumult of the peaceless. But behold, now, burning and yearning, I return to your fountain. Let no one forbid me: let me drink from it and live from it. Let me not be my life; I lived badly of myself; I was death to myself. In you I begin to live"* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 12:10).

**6th. step: "Lift up your heart" (sursum corda)**

*"What does it mean to go up in the heart? To profit in what concerns God. [...] everyone who makes progress in this, goes up"* (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm* 122:3).

*"Humility lifts up the heart and pride afflicts it"* (St. Augustine, *City of God* 14:1).

**C. The steps of humility and charity are the steps to transcendence:**

For every human being that comes into this world it is important, sooner or later, to *"transcend"*. As long as we have life, it is always possible to be a better version of ourselves. There is something more and better about us that we are reaching little by little; we are the best of ourselves, from ourselves, but beyond ourselves.

This is transcendence: becoming what we are called to be as a dream in the heart of Christ. The path of transcendence has much to do with becoming what we are called to be. However, the human being is not the measure of himself. The best version of ourselves is contained within ourselves, but beyond ourselves; we find it in Christ, the new and full project of humanity.

To move in this direction, we suggest reviewing five aspects of the interior life that allows one to *"be oneself beyond oneself"*: the search for truth, the delight of love, the strength of passion, the beauty of vocation and the sublimity of mission.

## 1. The search for truth (*logos*)

In every mind and heart there is plenty of room for truth. Nothing like the search for truth takes us out of ourselves, out of our measured and calculated world, and shatters those false securities that prevent us from growing and moving forward.

In this sense, the greatest commitment to truth consists in making it possible for the profound truth of what each one is in essence to emerge. This is called “educate”; *educere*, to bring out what is within. The truth of oneself comes as that fulcrum which, as Archimedes said, “moves the world”. The world moves from within the world, from within oneself.

For those of us who have received the gift of faith, the search for truth becomes concrete in giving birth to the new project of humanity in Christ Jesus, which the Holy Spirit designs in each of his disciples. The project of being a person in fullness for the friends of Jesus is to have the same mind of Christ, the same feelings, the same freedom, the same heart.

In Christianity, to be true is to be authentic, open-minded, dialoguing, free, affable and magnanimous; happy. In fact, for St. Augustine, a happy life is to enjoy the truth. *“The happy life is the joy of truth, because this is the joy of You, who are the Truth. O God, my light, health of my face, my God! Everyone desires this happy life; everyone wants this life, to be happy; everyone wants the joy of truth”* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 10:33).

## 2. The delight of love (*agape*)

Human beings are defined, above all, by what we love and how we love. St. Augustine says, *“There is no one who does not love, but we must ask what it is that he loves. Therefore, we are not invited not to love, but to choose what we are going to love”* (St. Augustine, *Sermon* 34,2). Without love, everything is nothing. On the other hand, with love, even if something seems little, it becomes everything. However, the path of learning true love is long and arduous.

The human being has to pass little by little from an *ego-centric tendency to the logic of gift*. Eros, philia and agape are the stages of an itinerary towards the sweetness of free and genuine love. Each stage assumes the previous one, incorporates it into its own dynamism, but transcends it in a different logic. The final result is that the call to love takes us out of the selfish and possessive inertia, to widen our heart in a greater love; that of God and, in God, to oneself and to others.

St. Augustine has an expression in his work *The City of God*, which is marvelous in regard to love. He says: *“Two loves founded two cities. The love of self to the point of contempt for God, the earthly city. And the love of God to the point of despising oneself, the city of God”* (St. Augustine, *City of God* 14:28). Without wishing to correct the saint, we could reformulate his expression by saying that three loves founded three cities.

Love centered on self-interest to the point of enjoying things and people without concern for anything or anyone, gave rise to the *sensual city*; love for others for the benefits

it brings for oneself and one's own, generated the social city; and love for God to the point of denying self-interest, so that one can dispose of one's own life to give it in service, gave rise to the civilization of love.

### 3. The power of passion (*pathos*)

There is an expression of an existentialist philosopher who says that "Whoever has a why, finds a how" (Nietzsche). St. Augustine, for his part, had said: "Give me a heart that loves, and it will understand what I say. Give me a yearning heart, a hungry heart, someone who feels like a pilgrim and thirsty in this desert, a heart that longs for the source of the eternal homeland, and he will understand what I say" (St. Augustine, *Treatise on the Gospel of John* 26:4).

Passion for something or "someone" is always a source of inspiration for freedom, for the great, the beautiful and the good. The gift of freedom is defined by that which inspires it. The greater the passion that guards the human heart, the more determined it will be to achieve what it desires.

### 4. The beauty of vocation (*vocatio*)

Vocation is a path that sets the human heart on fire, "Did we not feel our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us on the road" (Luke 24:32). The journey of searching and discerning one's vocation becomes the most successful fruit of the sense of transcendence; becoming what we are called to be. Vocation brings out the best inner energies of the person to design the project of being a person in fullness, beyond oneself, in Christ.

The call is that dream of happiness that God sows in every human heart, and that puts it on a path that transforms it, enabling it to love. Vocation is, as St. Augustine says, to follow, praise and love God with all one's heart, "What should your occupation be, but to praise the one you love and to get lovers to love him with you?" (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalms* 72:34). This could be a description of "vocation".

"Vocation" is a Christian spiritual experience that takes place progressively in the heart of the person in the form of an invitation from God, like an unrenounceable intuition that is embedded in the heart, which puts the person on the way to becoming what he or she is called to be.

Life itself possesses a vocational grammar, because at its origin there is a call: Live! This "vocational condition" of human life and of Christian life unfolds and manifests itself little by little, in the same deep desire for meaning and happiness.

And the last call that is made to us is death, precisely in order to begin the good life that has no end; the beatitude of the just. Thus, vocation would be a *way of loving* as a response to that love with which we have discovered that we are deeply loved by God.



## 5. The sublimity of the mission (*missio*)

The most sublime transcendence, that which brings us most out of ourselves and which, in turn, brings out the best in us, is mission. Nothing like mission defines what we are called to be in this life. St. Augustine, when presenting the mission, affirmed: *We are servants of the Church of the Lord, and we owe ourselves principally to the weaker members, whatever our condition among the members of this body may be* (St. Augustine, *The Work of Monks* 29:37).

Hence, mission acquires its full meaning in the concrete faces of poverty and suffering in which Christ is present and in which he asks us to be charitable and to exercise mercy (*Matthew* 25:31-46). It is a matter, then, of loving the poor with the love of God, of loving God in the poor, of loving them from their own poverty with the richness of God. St. Augustine says: *“Charity has been spread in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us, and in order to carry out our mission, he teaches us and shows us the marvelous path of the call to love”* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 13:8).

## Conclusion

The source of authentic life is not outside, far from the reach of the believer, but within himself, in his inner self. And the key to enter within oneself and receive the abundant life that emanates from there is humility. Humility leads us to recognize with simplicity that in order to live the Christian life authentically, we need to constantly receive the life that God gives us through his Word.

Now, it is not enough to know the source of life, but it is necessary to live one's own life in the light of this encounter with the Word, which is Jesus himself speaking to us. Therefore, it is not necessary to spread out, but to go within to discover the truth that dwells in us and thus raise our hearts to God, and to be able to open them also to our brothers and sisters.

*“Transcend yourself with all your heart”*. Transcending is a journey of self-recognition, of exploration of one's own territory, and of much self-acceptance. We are what we have been and will be from what we already were. Therefore, it is necessary to heal in God to walk in freedom towards the best of oneself; to become what we are called to be.

*“Now I understand, Lord, that I must return to You. Open the door for me, for I am calling you. Show me how to come to you. I do not lack good will, nor am I flattered by the vanities of this world. But I still do not know how to reach you. Show me that way, show it to me, and give me strength for the journey. If faith is the way to you, give me faith. If by virtue, give me virtue. If with knowledge, give me science. Increase my faith, increase my hope, increase my charity, O admirable and unparalleled goodness of God”* (St. Augustine, *Soliloquies* 1,5).

Transcending is a path that ends with the realization of the deepest longing of the human heart: *“Lord, You have made us for Yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in You”* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 1,1). St. Augustine also refers to it in this other

way: *“O my God, my Father, my cause, my hope, my possession, my honor, my home, my homeland, my health, my light and my life”* (St. Augustine, *Soliloquies* 1,4).

The destiny of the new man in Christ is eternal life. *“Far, Lord, far from the heart of your servant, who confesses himself to you, far from me to consider myself only happy for whatever joy I enjoy [...], the blessed life itself is nothing other than to enjoy you, for you and because of you: that is it and no other”* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 10:32). In short, as St. Augustine says: *“Only in you is the supreme rest and undisturbed life. He who enters into you enters into the joy of his Lord and will not fear and will find himself in the highest good”* (St. Augustine, *The Confessions* 2:18).



