

# Youth Ministry and Family: Animation by Fr. Fabio and Team

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resource persons for the programme.

A three day animation of fifty five Salesians was organized by the Youth Ministry National Team of South Asia under the leadership of Fr. Maria Charles at the Salesian Provincial house, Mumbai, from 1-3 of November 2016 targeting the same group gathered for the strategic planning of Salesian Youth Ministry. Fr. Fabio Attard, the General Councillor for Youth Ministry and his team member, Fr. Patrick were the

The animation programme was the second part of the national meeting of the Youth Pastoral Teams of the region. The day began with *Lectio Divina* which placed the participants in a spiritual space to enter into the Eucharist where the *Lectio Divina* found its final moment in personal self-offering and sharing in micro groups.

In the initial session Fr. Fabio spoke of the importance of the Youth Pastoral Team in the province. Referring to the need of equipping the Youth Pastoral Delegates of the Provinces he presented the first timer, "Youth Ministry School" organized in the Generalate, a moment of intense study of "Salesian Youth Ministry - Frame of Reference" (FoR) for the congregation for its mission to the young.



There was also time set aside to share the experience of each province in disseminating the FoR to Salesians, Youth Pastoral Teams, Provincial Councillors and other groups.

The intellectual intensity of the sessions was supplemented with family moments, the best expression of which was the football game after dinner where even Fr. Fabio could not resist from finding himself in the position of striker. Naturally "Boogie, Boogie" too found its place making the day long concentrated work a little light. Fr. Fabio dwelt intensely on the FoR, proposing ways and means to take forward this great tool at hand. He insisted that the Youth Pastoral Team of the province must be familiar with FoR, know the content of it, and as a team find time to reflect, pray and listen. It is also equally important, he said, to set in motion processes giving space for people to discuss, share, involve and even to object. Taking further his proposal he invited the Youth Pastoral Teams to work with rectors, commissions and formation personnel.



Fr. Patrick presented the making of the Youth Ministry Manual, a handbook in preparation by Fr. Fabio's team to assist Youth Pastoral Delegates of the provinces to have certain common criteria of engaging everyone involved in the mission to the young. He presented the dynamics of the preparation of manual and suggested that the province teams be actively involved by way of making proposals in compiling it.

The next part of the animation took the participants to see for themselves the need to bring family into the Salesian youth ministry. Fr. Fabio led the group to see how family becomes an integral part of the youth ministry and hence it has to find its place in SEPP and OPP. He led the participants through group sharing to focus on the challenges that families face today. The findings of the group were brought to the assembly where he appealed to the emotional response of the participants to the current scenario of the family and how one can respond to it.



As a response to the present challenges faced by families Fr. Fabio presented *Amoris Laetitia* from a Salesian perspective, linking its proposals and guidance to a pattern seen since the Vatican II. The pattern consists in the process of documentary guidance and its consequent three moments of foci on family through three separate documents: *Familia et marriage in Gaudium et spes*, *Familiaris Consortio*,

and *Amoris Laetitia*. In situating *Amoris Laetitia* within the response of the Church in the past fifty years he brilliantly showed how it is closely linked to the present challenges and needs of the family.

Presenting the salient points of *Amoris Laetitia* Fr. Fabio paused at certain chapters looking at it from a Salesian perspective and providing possibilities for a Salesian reading of these sections. He insisted that *Amoris Laetitia* has not changed the doctrinal teaching of the church, but is asking for an attitudinal change. To give a realistic approach to the proposal of Pope Francis, Fr. Fabio shared his own personal experience of spiritual accompaniment of couples engaged in same sex marriage. He was sowing seeds of hope that the proposal of the Pope in *Amoris Laetitia* is not a utopia but a possibility.

On the last day the participants were involved in finding a road map by looking at some concerns based on three questions proposed by Fr. Fabio concerning the model presented by Pope Francis and its interpretation in Salesian Youth Ministry, the blocks and difficulties encountered in daily pastoral ministry and the urgent pastoral needs in Salesian presences. By way of concluding the animation Fr. Fabio proposed certain practical guidelines to the participants as how to take forward the fruit of the animation to the provinces. Appreciating the intense participation of the members his final words were, "Your province is the place of the commitment and hence we do not have commitments here. Here we do not decide on pastoral objectives. You need your provincial team to make that commitment. I encourage you; I open the mind for it is within the provinces that processes are initiated."

The three day programme came to a conclusion with the words of appreciation extended by Fr. Maria Charles to Frs. Fabio and Patrick. He said, "I appreciate in Fr. Fabio his commitment to Youth Ministry, his ability to communicate and animate people." As he thanked the participants he also said, "We have a process in place and we need to learn how to make this process known". Before the assembly dispersed Fr. Fabio released the Youth Ministry Report



of the year 2015-16. As the evaluation was in progress everyone had words of appreciation for the wonderful Salesian family environment created by Fr. Glenford Lowe and his team.