
Young people and catechesis: sons or engineers?

Who knows if, in today's Pelagian obsession with activism and corporal works of mercy (which, for better or worse, are works of mercy and therefore have an inherent source in God's love - enterprise and initiative aren't enough), the time has come for us to return to the primacy of the Word? That which is human is meaningful, life is a text, it is a dialogue in which we enter into dialogue with our Father in heaven, as children. If life is not a text, it is not human life, it has no meaning, and so the facts do not involve growing, maturing, internalising and understanding, but only practice and solutions. Either man is a son, or he is an engineer, tapping his foot, waiting for the next comfort, the next domotics, by which he will become more and more childlike. On the contrary, to be a man, and a fortiori a Christian, means to know how to interact, to dialogue, to express oneself, to listen, to allow oneself to be challenged by the difference of the other in order to grow and to learn to love.

If the young people who take part in WYD do not understand what God is saying to them through these days, what is the point?

What will remain of what they experience? The various World Youth Days have taught us one thing, and that is that they leave a deep mark on the lives of those who experience them, including myself. The risk is that it might become important to offer young people only games, dances, parties and songs, a Catholic kindergarten. This is how Italian youth ministry often presents itself. In Rome, we often say 'let the child play', stressing the importance of the entertainment that children often need in order to cope with their lively temperaments.

But there is no greater hunger for meaning than that of a young person, who needs a purpose, a goal, a direction that gives meaning to everything.

Like a sick person who desperately needs to make sense of his illness, more than just physical relief, whereby a visit to a sick person, if it does not become the consolation of the afflicted, remains only a topographical coincidence with the person visited... Young people, whose lives are full of expectations, need catechesis, the Word that gives them meaning, to escape the platitudes of 'influencers'- crass peddlers of clichés and psychobabble, as a comedian brilliantly put it. If we fail to offer catechesis to young people, we will have interrupted the flow of the "traditio" necessary for the next generation of God's children to experience everything in dialogue with the Father, because we too will have made the mistake of many fathers of solving their children's practical problems without reaching their hearts. Perhaps young people will say of us too (as of their biological fathers): "My father gave me everything I needed, but he didn't teach me anything important, and I learned about life elsewhere. Perhaps on Instagram or Tik Tok....

Marco Calvarese