



CCEE SYMPOSIUM

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HE WALKED BY THEIR SIDE (Luke 24:15)

Accompanying young people

to freely respond to Christ's call

28 – 31 MARCH 2017

INTRODUCTORY

H. Em. Card. Vincent Nichols
CCEE Vice-President
Archbishop of Westminster

1. Thank you all, on behalf of CCEE: Barcelona; all who have come here; the team which has prepared this Symposium. I speak about Europe which is not the same as the European Union. This is important to me as a person from England!

Young people in Europe –maybe most young people- do not live in comfort, in affluence; most are not secure; most are not safe. Thousands of young children are moving across Europe without any accompaniment, at risk of all the dangers of trafficking. Please do keep these realities in view as you have your discussions during this Symposium.

2. This Symposium takes place at a very significant time, as preparation for the next Synod of Bishops, in October 2018 gets underway. The importance of this Symposium for the Synod is indicated by the presence here of H.E. Cardinal Baldisseri, who leads all the work in this Synod in the Holy See. It is worth remembering that the proposed theme sent to Pope Francis –one of three- was “Faith and Young People”. It was Pope Francis himself who added “and vocational discernment”. So on theme here, of “accompaniment” and “discernment” is exactly in – line with the thinking of Pope Francis. CCEE looks to this Symposium as a basis for reports to the Synod from the Bishops’ Conferences of Europe. We believe that the work of this Symposium will be both important and formative.

3 I would like to – before you two phrases which be useful as a context, or points of reflection, for the work of this Symposium. The two phrases are these: the grammar of our nature; and the drama of our salvation. One of the tasks we face is that of trying to understand the ‘grammar’, the underlying patterns and logic by which we are made. Often we try to help each other work this out: what makes for our happiness? What are our deepest yearnings? How do we express our deepest selves?

The answer is quite simple in abstract. The grammar of our nature is the grammar of gift. We receive life as a gift. We find our fulfillment when we give our very selves as a gift, in faithfulness and love. However we know we are flawed beings. We stand in need of help and healing. This brings us to the drama of our salvation. So this drama we receive the light and grace by which we can live out the fulfillment for which we have been created. The grammar of our nature; the drama of our salvation: these two phrases are the two focal points of an accompaniment of each other on this pilgrim journey.

4. Again I thank our hosts here in Barcelona. I am sure that this hospitality, this setting, will help us to achieve outstanding work during these next few days.