



## 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

#### **THE PATH TOWARDS THE SYMPOSIUM AND PRESENTATION OF PROGRAMME**

Fr Michel Remery  
CCEE Vice Secretary General

At the beginning of this Symposium, I am glad to reiterate briefly the steps that led us to the European event we are starting today. The idea for this Symposium was born two years ago during a meeting of the CCEE commission for Catechesis, School and University. The importance of continuity in the accompaniment of young people was recognised, together with the fact that this continuity goes beyond the specific contribution of the various pastoral sectors. This was the start of a truly European path of preparation, which involved the delegates from all the members of CCEE for the pastoral sectors of Catechesis, School, University, Youth and Vocations.

In September 2015, a committee representing the five sectors convened in Malta and drafted a document, which was discussed during the first half of 2016 at separate meetings with the national delegates from all five sectors. Many of you have participated in one of these meetings. The result was a reflection aid document, drafted in Madrid and Rome on the basis of your reactions by another committee representing the five sectors, together with the bishops responsible for these fields in Europe. Hopefully the document has been of help in preparing yourself for this Symposium!

Another result of the Europe-wide consultation was a great amount of suggestions for the programme, which we have tried to incorporate as much as possible. This has led to the present programme, which consists of three main parts.

- First, we will look at *the person being accompanied*. This part will be introduced by the president of the CCEE Commission for Catechesis, School, and University, His Grace Marek Jędraszewski. And then we will see a video made by young people from Barcelona, giving an insight into the challenges, problems and joys of young people today in Europe.
- Second, we will study *accompaniment* itself. Four young people will speak about the theme on the basis of their personal experience of receiving accompaniment. This section will be introduced by the person who organizes the World Youth Days, Fr João Chagas. With the help of His Grace Jean-Claude Hollerich and five expert delegates, we will think about what it means to accompany a person throughout their entire life.

- Third, we will reflect on *the person who accompanies*. The contribution of Sr Lola Arrieta, who herself has great experience in accompanying young people, will be further illustrated by three brief video testimonials about accompaniment.

In order for the Symposium to be as beneficial to you as possible, we invite you to make use of the opportunities provided, to intervene during the moments of dialogue with the assembly. Furthermore, there are two planned moments of dialogue in smaller groups. Another way of exchanging among yourselves will be the market of “best practices”, which intends to be more than just a moment of marketing, inviting you to also look beyond the actual projects presented towards the fact that there are many ways to work on evangelisation and that this work is very much worth the effort.

Knowing that in the end the fruits of accompaniment do not depend on our own doing, but on God, prayer will be given an important place in the programme, with a prayer vigil with young people, and votive Masses for vocations and the family. The apex of our liturgical journey during this Symposium will be the celebration of Mass in the basilica of the Sagrada Família.

Indeed, Barcelona is the home of this very precious example of sacred architecture, which was designed by Antoni Gaudí. Our visit to this masterpiece will serve as an example of alternative ways of accompanying young people, in casu through beauty, art, architecture and liturgy.

The announcing in October last year by our Holy Father, Pope Francis, of a Synod of Bishops in 2018 on “Youth, faith and vocational discernment” has been a further stimulus in the development of the programme of our CCEE Symposium. The General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, will inform us about the preparation of the Synod.

Please allow me to express my gratitude to you, the participants in this Symposium. Your reply to our invitation to participate was literally overwhelming. With some 275 delegates present, from almost all the members of CCEE, this is a great witness to our European continent that the Church takes the questions regarding the accompaniment of young people very seriously. It is our hope that you will return home with new ideas and new enthusiasm to continue to accompany young people to freely respond to Christ’s call. I ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and wish you all a very fruitful Symposium.