



VIATOR WEB No. 59
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A Word from the Superior General

The Challenge has been issued: A Better-adapted Viatorian Vocation Program

The last issue of *Viator Web* echoed the second priority of the 2012 General Chapter: promoting and participating in social justice efforts. The concrete experiences of five of us were shared in that issue. Now, we will close the 2012-2013 publication year of our newsletter by attempting a first application of what the 2012 chapter members considered to be the first challenge to be met: *making a commitment to a vocation program that is better adapted to these new challenges*. Those challenges include: the situation of present-day Local Churches; the situation of our Community; and, of course, the situation of our societies, whose points of reference have changed considerably.

If we were an industrial company – which, thankfully, we are not – our questions would center on marketing. Is what we are offering to people sufficiently attractive? Do we know everything that there is to know about the real lives and the needs of our target clientele? And, in fact, what precisely are they? Do we employ the best means and the best strategies?

Additionally, sooner or later the fundamental question will arise: are we sufficiently convinced about the quality of the product that we are offering?

Leaving aside that commercial universe, let us concentrate on the one that more directly concerns us: the mystery of God's personal call addressed to every person. That is where an entirely different process, radically contrary to the deficient marketing of a product, is undertaken. The urgent character of what the General Chapter asks of us reverses the dynamic.

**Those offering something, we Viatorians, must go forth
not in order to convince, but in order to discover and
to let ourselves be convinced, with others,
by a God who is active
beyond the limits of our own security.**

**Why? Because the world has changed,
with different cultures and "today's young people"
no longer fitting into our universe, our way of living,
our language, our way of understanding and celebrating
the spiritual beings that all of us are.**

**Viatorians convinced that God is calling us to go forth
in order to make space in our lives
for always rediscovering the charism, the gift of God,
that is active in our world.**

**Why? Because the adaptations that the General Chapter asks of us
call for conversion and faith in the ever-acting Spirit of God.
Because the difference that our world displays remains the breeding ground of God.
Because the charism that justifies our "being together"
reveals to us facets of God's face that must be constantly rediscovered.
Our charism must convince us to open up welcoming and creative spaces where,
at the heart of our world's challenges,
faith can take root –
faith that is expressed and lived out
with others, in community.**

**Viatorians convinced of the uniqueness of each person
in the eyes of God will commit themselves to a fearless vocation program
because they believe that, in so doing,
they are not pointing to an already well-established path
but are committing themselves, along with others,
to follow an unknown route until they discover a God
whose love and creativeness are all around us!**

**Why? Because we must dispossess ourselves
of the assurances of the progress that we have made
if we desire to run the risk of following,
along with our contemporaries, the path that is offered to us.
The vocation program spoken about by the General Chapter
invites us to go elsewhere ... and we are already convinced
that that “elsewhere” calls out to us in the name of faithfulness!**

Is this a beautiful dream? Is it still possible in our places of activity that, for some time now, have been experiencing a vocational drought, especially with respect to the consecrated life? How does this sound in other places, in our foundations and our vice-delegation, where young people are still responding to the invitation to join the Community?

This new beginning commits all Viatorians to act in solidarity. The two specific vocations that bring together the Viatorian Community are inspired by the same charism and should produce the same great dynamic: believing in a God who is still at work at the heart of our world, ceaselessly calling forth workers for his vineyard and asking us to be more attentive than ever to the women and men to whom our mission directs us.

Let the Charter of the Viatorian Community move us forward toward our new beginning:

The reciprocity of discussions that is established among us creates for us a complementarity between our different vocations and invites everyone to be constantly renewed under the inspiration of the Spirit (No. 1).

Thank you to all of our collaborators as you continue with your reflections. From all appearances, the challenge that is being offered to us is much richer and more complex than any “marketing” undertaking!

Brother Marius Caron has returned to Rome to assume the duties of local administrator. His principal task consists in overseeing the good order of the General House. He is assisted in his responsibilities by Brother José Luis Ízar de la Fuente Salazar.



Two of our institutions of learning are celebrating their golden anniversaries this year. Saint Viator School in Ovalle (Chile) and Saint Viator School in Madrid (Spain) are both justly proud of marking a half-century of excellence in educating young people. These two Viatorian standard-bearers offer Christian education programs of which our Community can be very proud.

The General Council wishes to congratulate all of those who are part of those two educational institutions and to offer them best wishes during their jubilee years. May you always remain faithful to that beautiful educational mission!



Pastoral Letter of the Superior General

Last June 5, Father Alain Ambeault sent his first pastoral letter to the Viatorian Community. That letter is available on the General

Confided to our prayers: Brother Víctor Gómez Gómez [Spain] died on June 13, 2013, at the age of 86 and in his 70th year of religious profession.

In treating of vocation programs, our four collaborators were asked two questions:

- **What are those new realities, where you live and work, that prompt us to renew our Viatorian vocation program?**
- **What, in your opinion, are the elements that are essential for a Viatorian vocation program for today's world?**

Vocation Programs



Robert Lachaine, C.S.V.
Canada



Vocation Programs for the Future

Some New Realities

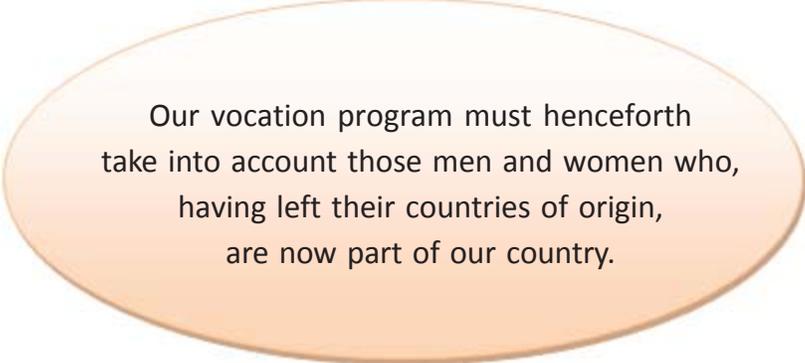
Since the 1967 Montréal World's Exposition on the theme of "Man and his World," immigration into Canada has increased in an exponential way, transforming our social, geographical, cultural, economic, and religious environments from top to bottom. It is even said that, in Montréal's French-speaking School District, the number of students speaking other languages is higher than the number of French-speaking students! Our worship centers, even though they are frequented by fewer people, also are increasingly bringing together a population composed, in certain places, of immigrants from more than thirty-six countries! Certain parishes offer sacramental services in Spanish, Vietnamese, and numerous other languages.

Our two institutions, Champagneur School and Bourget School, continue to welcome more and more young people from different cultures and do not hesitate to offer exchange sessions in the different countries where we have foundations. Our young peoples' program (Service of Preparation for Life) and our vacation camp for young people and adults have, for dozens of years, been opening their doors to people who have come to be integrated into our country and its values. Some of our parishes are situated in multi-cultural neighborhoods.

Necessary Adaptations

All of that should lead us to adopt a vocation program that is adapted to this reality that is henceforth ours. While continuing to serve those to whom our mission is especially addressed, the young and those accounted of little importance, our vocation program must henceforth take into account those men and women who, having left their countries of origin, are now part of our country.

What does that mean? It means that we must learn more about these younger generations, what they have in common outside of their different cultures, as well as what makes them different from one another. In today's secular world, what kind of life, of meaning, of faith are they searching for? How can we adapt to the realities of their lives and find a place for them among us? We will have to once again learn to call upon Viatorian life (religious and associates) by our presence at those places and events that count, by the witness of our lives, by the values by which we live, by our openness of spirit, and by our readiness to listen. Therefore, in a word, by making ourselves visible! We will have to be capable of responding to new expectations, while maintaining



Our vocation program must henceforth take into account those men and women who, having left their countries of origin, are now part of our country.

those schools and apostolic endeavors that we still have, since they are fully orientated toward the future of our Viatorian Community. That does not mean that we will not have to “mourn” over some of the places where we have traditionally been involved. Like Abraham, we must set out on the road to a new land!

The publications of our Canadian province (*Viatorians in Mission* and *Canada Viatorians*) have been combined into a single magazine under the name of *Viatorian in Mission*. Since all of us are involved “in mission,” the “s” has disappeared. Our magazine will have to learn, as with all other publications destined for a foreign audience, how to express itself in the three languages of our Community, as will also be the case with the Web Site of the Canadian Viatorians (www.viateurs.ca) and the Web Site of our Catechetical Service (www.catechese-ressources.com).

There are many challenges for a province that is growing older, but they are not impossible to overcome. Taking into account our age and our state of health, we must put special emphasis on those new projects where every man and woman will be able to share their lives and their experiences.

Vocation Programs



Claudio Ríos Saavedra, C.S.V.
Chile



What are those new realities, where you live and work, that make it possible for you to see how to renew our Viatorian vocation program?

The profound cultural changes that have been experienced by our peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean bring forth even more questions, not only with respect to the future of society as a whole and of the knowledge that we presently have about the behavior of our world, but also about our presence and our future in that reality in which we must live out our vocation. *As disciples of Jesus Christ, we feel that we are called upon to discern the signs of the times in the light of the Holy Spirit in order to place ourselves at the service of the Kingdom announced by Jesus, who came so that all might have life and might have it in abundance* (Aparecida, 33; John 10:10). [“Aparecida” refers to the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean held in the city of Aparecida (Brazil) in May, 2007.]

According to the thinking of certain sociologists, our country of Chile has experienced an accelerated process of cultural change. The growing presence of various media of mass communication, the explosive importance of consumerism, and the rapid emergence of new technologies have been leaving a distinct imprint on Chilean society over these past years. At the present time, images of societies and of families, as well as the identities of those who compose them, are not as clear. Nor are the values and the orientations that they offer much clearer either.

It is obvious that *this new world dimension of this human phenomenon*, which affects not only Chile but the entire world, *brings with it consequences in all the domains of the social life, influencing culture, the economy, politics, the sciences, education, sports, the arts, and also, naturally, religion* (Aparecida, 35).

All of that, far from discouraging us, has taught us to look at reality with humility, knowing that it is greater and more complex than the simplistic way in which we habitually see it. We need to return to our origins, to our roots, as Aparecida said so well: starting anew from Christ, we are to become contemplative men and women who rediscover their own vocation; we are *to become obedient disciples* who offer the witness of a life-giving experience with the Master. We are to rediscover the call that God addressed to us at a given moment in our history and to permit in ourselves a rebirth of apostolic zeal in order to carry, to the heart of culture, that human fullness that we only find in Christ and that neither science, nor politics, nor any means of communication can bring to us. (Aparecida 41).

As the Holy Father said in his inaugural discourse at the Aparecida General Conference: *Only the person who recognizes God knows the reality and can respond to it in an adequate and truly human manner* (Aparecida, Holy Father's inaugural discourse, 3).

What are the elements that are essential for a Viatorian vocation program for today's world?

First of all, I would like to emphasize the responsibility of the entire Church, People of God; the vocation program is the responsibility of everyone and is for everyone. The specific ecclesial dimension of the vocation of missionary disciples, based upon baptism and their common priesthood (ordained ministers, consecrated life, Christians, and lay men and women), is posited in terms of co-responsibility. Consequently, its integration into the ordinary pastoral program – that is, the total pastoral program – becomes a priority.

- We must pay special attention to those places where vocations are awakened and developed: families, Christian communities, Catholic schools, and other ecclesial institutions.
- Those immediately responsible for vocational leadership must all be members of our ecclesial community. If the components are fragile, the entire entity will also be fragile.
- It is necessary that there be a process of vocational leadership that consists in helping to discover the meaning of life and the vocation that God has in his plans for each and every one of us.

Finally, we cannot ignore the fact that the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean, *in spite of the deficiencies and ambiguities of certain of its members, has provided a witness of Christ, has announced the Gospel, and has offered its service of charity, especially to the very poor, with a view to promoting their dignity; the Church has also worked tirelessly on promoting human values in the domains of health, shared economy, education, employment, access to land, and support for others* (Aparecida, 98). Nor can we forget that the key that gives meaning to all that has gone before us is necessarily transmitted by the witness of our lives. Christ has called us to be much more than simply transmitters of knowledge.

Vocation Programs



Maxime Gomez, C.S.V.
Ivory Coast



A Vocation Program with Greater Autonomy and Responsibility

Here in the Ivory Coast, within the framework of the vocation program that we are using, we are now dealing more and more with young people who began attending school at a very young age, with the result that, when they arrive at the university level, they often face concerns about their future and the meaning that they should give to their lives. Once reaching university age, young students leave their families to continue their studies in the big cities, where social controls are weaker. The anonymity of the big city leaves an individual alone with his or her conscience. That is when we can see to what extent a faith acquired as a child depended upon the family that supports the individual. In such university settings, individuals are free to be themselves. In that context, the person who wishes to remain a believer must develop a faith that is more personal, more autonomous, and more reasoned.

Changes ... and New Ways of Belonging

The requirements of our modern society call for another type of believer who is different from those of years past. Today, people continue believing in the same God, but they believe differently. They insist on different points in response to the particular needs that they encounter after more than ten years of a socio-political crisis, which was further accentuated by the post-electoral crisis of 2011. Those crises occasioned the dislocation of numerous young people, with the result that today it is no longer one's neighborhood that is most important. Rather, people feel closer to those with whom they work or with the members of their socio-cultural surroundings. Those are the ones who help them make their judgments. Hence the current attempts to put young people who are searching for their vocation in contact with groups that better espouse those possibilities.

Within the framework of the human and Christian gatherings organized for vocation groups, we bring in men and women religious, priests, Viatorian Associates, committed lay people, couples representing Catholic Christian Home Associations, and others. All those persons

share their life experiences while encouraging young people to question themselves. Afterwards, they are given time to reflect on those questions in the spirit of the Gospel: what particular light does faith provide for resolving the questions arising in me through the intermediary of the Brother, the Sister, the father, the mother, the couple? What supplementary reasons does faith provide?

Absolutely Necessary Formation

Experience proves that those reflection groups are successful in our local Viatorian communities. Participants are aware that they can better appreciate themselves and learn more about the modern world in which they live – a world in which so many suggestions are made to them that they have neither the courage nor the time to make a choice. Oftentimes, at the last minute, they will opt for the easiest or the most tempting solution, while others simply remain stationary without responding to the call. To avoid that latter case in our vocation groups, we encourage young Christians to educate themselves, believing that that is the best service that we can provide for young people, for our Church, and for our country as it seeks justice, reconciliation, and peace. By handing over the keys of knowledge to the lay Viatorian members of the association, as well as to young men in religious life, we are treating them all as adults. For, as the axiom says, “with knowledge comes power.” Their knowledge will later permit others to listen to them wherever decisions are made.

We are planning to publish brochures and to set up vocation, formation, and reflection camps, which should provide favorable opportunities for training young people to look at their lives, to observe the forces at work in their lives, and to choose the influences that they wish to accept. Such training sessions are not limited to helping young people gain more knowledge; they are also directed toward making decisions and taking action. In that way, these young people will become accustomed to living and to acting on real situations rather than ending up with sterile regrets and ineffective wishes.

Our actions in our Viatorian vocation program are aimed at forming competent young adults (whether or not they become religious or associates) who are passionate about serving their brothers and sisters. Little by little, they will come to understand that development is not limited to the material domain (money, food, lodging, and leisure), but that it also includes the moral domain (professional conscience and the like) and the religious domain (reflections on reasons for living and on the meaning to be given to life).

Vocation Programs



Philippe Arnal, C.S.V.
France



What are those new realities, where you live and work, that prompt us to renew our Viatorian vocation program?

In spite of a pronounced movement toward secularization, certain persons are still being called to place God at the center of their lives in accord with their particular vocations. That process can begin, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, through contemplating on Christ, meditating on the Gospel, reflecting on events that affect them, meeting other people. They oftentimes make a commitment much later than people were able to do twenty or thirty years ago. After obtaining intellectual formation and having certain professional, personal, and social experiences not precipitated by events but made conscientiously, they can then decide to add their name to the list of those who are following Christ. Should not the Viatorian vocation be lived out at the heart of the world and within earshot of its heartbeat, its desires, and its doubts?

Deeply influenced by the French School, our Community promotes a Christocentric spirituality. The image of the poor and suffering Christ is the subject of contemplation and the source of Love and Mercy. When we challenge our contemporaries to enroll in the School of Father Querbes, in his missionary movement at the service of education and of the liturgy, are we not in a special way inviting Christians to kneel down before the image of Jesus to have their feet washed?

Would not a Viatorian vocation program necessarily include a pressing invitation to serve by announcing the Good News to our world, which is so much in need of it?

The harvest is ready! The Lord now needs workers for his vineyard.

What, in your opinion, are the elements that are essential for a Viatorian vocation program for today's world?

Every invitation is issued in a spirit of discernment and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In order for that to happen, our communities must continue being places of prayer and of brotherhood and sisterhood. Those requirements, it seems to me, are absolutely necessary for bearing witness to the life that we are trying to live as followers of Christ. They are the tangible signs of the Love and Mercy that all of us are capable of showing.

Our communities must be Life-giving! That is the only way in which a vocation program can be possible.