

THE YOUTH MINISTRY: A FIELD TO RESTORE

The issue of 4th November 2013 of the 'Outlook' had short interviews of 18 youth from various parts of India. 14 of them were asked a direct question: "What does religion mean to you?" 7 of them replied either, 'Religion should not be given importance' or, 'Religion is a vehicle of destruction' or 'I don't pray.' One of them even said, '(The) Church has done nothing for me.' Two or three said, 'We believe in God.' And the rest did not give any clear answer.

Then I read the 'Jivan' issue of 'October 2013'. The article by Varkey Perekatt SJ read, 'when I joined the Society in 1962, we were more than 36000. Today we are 17287 (as on 1st January 2013).

No doubt, the youth of today and the youth in 1962 are quite different. But still, what is our impact on them? Are we forming the youth of today, We, the well known 'School Masters of Europe'?!

Our Jesuit ministry of education has brought many vocations to the Society. It still brings, but sadly, we lack something somewhere.....

'Now' is the time when we must think, in this changed age, where we lack, and where we need to restore...

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE YOUNG:

"The youth of today, shamefully, is like this!" this exclamation is integrated into our daily lives. A small mistake by a boy or a girl, and these words come in a fraction of second.

Was this attitude there in the past also? At least, I believe it might not have been, even though, the young people must have surly made mistakes.

Why do we not regain our spirit and accept the youth as they are, and then challenge them?

OUR GOVERNANCE AND OUR IMPACT ON THE YOUTH:

As far as I know, there were not many commissions in the past as we have today. Commission for ministries, Commission for education, Commission for higher education, Commission for youth, Commission for pastoral apostolate, etc., etc....

They are good, in a way, to organize our men in various ministries according to their talents and charisms. But then, do all of them, in various ways, have any impact on youth? Do they help the youth to grow spiritually? I doubt.

In the past, even a door keeper like Br.Garrate had influence on the youth of the college. And today, some of the old Jesuits do not even know the scholastics of their own Provinces, not to speak of the youth!!

OUR WITNESS:

Jesus said, 'Do as I have done, and let your life be a witness of mine.'" St. Ignatius speaks of 'Exemplary Behavior'; he insists on this even during sickness. GC 35 also reminds us of this in its decree 'A fire that kindles other fire'. Do we really fulfill this? Do the young of today get inspired by our way of life? By our commitment? Especially by our vows of 'Poverty and Chastity'?

Let us have a simple example: How many youth do you know in your place of work? Now, think, has anyone told you 'Father/Brother, I like the way you live.' (I do not mean 'The way you live and have food and other entertainments!') If someone has, Praise be to God, if not you and I really need to 'restore' and 'rethink'.

As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the restoration, this is a burning issue which needs to be rethought. I am convinced 'Now' is the time to restore, and thus make them understand the value of God in their lives. Just knowing them having friendships with them, and working 'for' them is not enough. We need to have a healthy influence on them.

THANK YOU.

