

Book Review

Jerome Vallabaraj SDB, *Empowering the Young towards Fullness of Life*, Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2003, pp.267.

As the author mentions in the introduction, the purpose of this book is not to propose a particular model of youth ministry but to present some pastoral pedagogical non-negotiable principles, which should guide the youth ministry. He intends to do this in order to promote an adequate paradigm for ministering to the youth in the Indian context. The author's purposeful intention is highly commendable.

In chapter one he points out how theology and human sciences are involved in youth ministry and hence such a ministry has to move from a uni-disciplinary towards a trans-disciplinary approach. This chapter also deals with the two domains of reflection and action implicit in the youth ministry praxis. Moreover the chapter highlights how the double interpretative laws of pastoral theology and human sciences and the domains of reflection and action seem to suggest three perspectives such as the criterial, the contextual and the strategical needed at the level of planning and ministering to the youth. Chapter two spotlights the need to view the youth as persons seen in their relationship with themselves, with others, with the world at large and with God. Hence the youth ministry has to move from a quasi-mechanical to an auto-poetic perception of the youth and their world.

Chapter three starts with the youth context of India which is a multi-faith context and highlights the invitation of youth ministry to make a shift from an ecclesio-centric to regno-centric ministry in which kingdom of God is the symbol of fullness-of-life-for-all and becomes the motive and the ultimate goal. Taking into consideration the multi-faith situation of the youth in India this chapter advocates advaitic approach, which affirms unity in pluralism. Chapter four deals with empowering the youth through daily experiences to become agent-subjects of their own life in relationship through triple dialogue with other individuals, the social context and the multi-faith context. In this dialogue, the youth enter into a reciprocal relationship of mutual learning and growth. This chapter spells out four conditions such as fullness-of-life-all, accountability, self-impression and helpful systems and structure, which supply the framework for empowerment.

Chapter five starts with the correlative relationship among education,

evangelisation and youth ministry, which needs dialogue and then points out that the youth ministry is a task to educate by evangelising and evangelise by educating. This also means to educate by ministering and minister by educating. Chapter six, while talking about animating a process-oriented youth ministry, presents the meaning of animation along with the goal, principal elements, task and styles of animation. This invites the minister to move away from a mentality of dominance to an animating mentality supporting growth through change and participation in the central values of one's life. Chapter seven spells out the need for becoming a pastoral educative community, its implications and the required skills and practices to promote this community. The chapter invites the ministers to move from individuals-centred ministry to community-centred one.

Chapter eight expresses the need for visionary planning and highlights the characteristics, principal moments and invisible dynamic fields of such youth ministry planning. The chapter also indicates that it is the educative-pastoral community that plans and shares its responsibility in the ministry planning. While chapter nine speaks about the milieu and the setting for youth ministry as well as the criteria for the choice of a setting in youth ministry, chapter ten spells out a plan for youth ministry in India and highlights the salient features and an appraisal of the national youth ministry plan.

Though it is praise-worthy that the book gives an appraisal of a plan for youth ministry in India in the last chapter, the entire book is not adequately contextualised so that the pastoral pedagogical non-negotiable principles offered for the youth ministry may be concretely and culturally applicable in the Indian context. Moreover the urban, rural and tribal contexts of the Indian youth should have been taken into serious consideration while working out the pastoral pedagogical principles of youth ministry because the subculture of the rural and tribal Indian youth plays an important role in the pastoral pedagogy. The author of the book seems to keep in mind to a large extent the urban context of the youth.

While dealing with education, evangelisation and ministry in chapter five, the essential link between evangelisation and inculturation should have been highlighted with reference to the multi-religious context of India because faith-education, evangelisation and inculturation should be an integral part of youth ministry in India

Though the topic of empowering the young towards fullness of life is well dealt with, the presentation does not seem to be well focussed on the topic. The titles of various chapters do not seem to flow one from the other with an inner coherence needed for focussing well on the topic. However, the pastoral and pedagogical insights presented in the book are highly valuable.-

Lorenzo Fernando

Emilio Alberich SDB and Jerome Vallabaraj SDB, *Communicating a Faith that Transforms*, Bangalore: Kristu Jyothi Publications, 2004, pp315.

This book is envisaged as a Handbook of Fundamental Catechetics. The intention of the authors is to create and form the mind-set of catechists and those responsible for catechesis, and to provide useful and key elements for understanding and responding to questions that underlie catechetical ministry. The book contains eleven chapters.

Chapter one deals with new challenges of today's catechesis and analyses its relationships to the general ecclesial practice as a part of a holistic plan in which it is inserted and from which it receives its significance. Chapter two situates catechesis within the renewed pastoral project of evangelization and chapter three articulates the identity of catechesis in relation to the diverse forms of the ministry of the word.

Chapter four deals with catechesis as the service of the word and proclamation of Christ. Catechesis is considered an illumination and interpretation of life, which is the action of the Spirit in the journey towards complete truth. This chapter highlights the relationship of catechesis with inculturation as well as religious experience.

Chapter five presents catechesis as initiation and education in faith and spells out the three dimensions of the mature attitude of faith as well as the link between catechesis and popular religiosity. This chapter makes reference to the various sects and new religious movements and spells out the need for dialogue with other great religions in the catechetical context.

Chapter six highlights catechesis as an ecclesial action and as an experience of the church. Catechesis as an ecclesial action builds the church and the church in turn fashions catechesis. This ecclesial catechesis is unique but differentiated service rendered by the community, the pastors, the religious, the catechists and the families.

Chapter seven deals with catechesis as the ecclesial diakonia having operative and promotional dimensions leading to political options for commitment to transformation. Chapter eight highlights the community dimension of catechesis and spells out the socio-cultural roots of and the theological and pastoral motives for the revival of the community dimension with special reference to the revival of small communities. The same chapter brings out the importance of school catechesis.

Chapter nine clearly articulates the essential links between catechesis and liturgy with reference to the renewed liturgical perspective of Vatican II. While spelling out the evangelizing dimension of liturgical catechesis, this chapter shows how catechesis and liturgy mutually need each other especially in the context of sacramental liturgical celebration. *(Contd p. 107)*

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