Here I Am Because You **Called** Me!

Vocational Culture, Vocational Work, and Vocation Promotion in Regnum Christi

REGNUM CHRISTI

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Introduction

The ultimate purpose of Regnum Christi—to give glory to God and make the Kingdom of Christ present in the hearts of all people and in society by our sanctification in the state and condition of life to which God has called us (cf. SRCF 7)—makes it clear that it is essential to discover and embrace one's own vocation.

For this reason, accompaniment to help one achieve vocational fulfillment will always be central to the Regnum Christi member's experience: "The Regnum Christi spiritual family should be fertile ground for people to find their vocational fulfillment. Therefore, [they] seek to collaborate in creating an environment that fosters the understanding of life as a vocation and enables vocation discovery and acceptance. They must know, value, and foster all the Christian vocations" (SRCF 48 § 1).

Called, therefore, to discover our unique vocation, to care for it, and to live it to the end, we feel moved to value and promote all the vocations that God raises up within Regnum Christi and the Church since they all have their origin in the same God and contribute to the common mission.

We committed to making courageous missionary choices at the end of the first Ordinary General Convention of the Regnum Christi Federation. One of the priorities

we set for ourselves in this regard is to promote a renewed vocational culture.

With this essay, we want to contribute to a better understanding and a shared vision in Regnum Christi about vocational culture, ministry, and promotion, according to the current mentality of the Church.

Chapter I

Here I Am, Lord, Because You Called Me

Throughout salvation history, the voices of men and women have been heard who, having received a call from God, respond to his invitation: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:9); “Here I am, send me!” (Isa 6:8); “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your Word” (Lk 1:38); “Then they abandoned their nets and followed him (Mk 1:18); “And he got up and followed him” (Mt 9:9); “What shall I do, sir?” (Acts 22:10).

The scriptures bear witness to numerous generations of those “called” by God and, later, by Jesus, to follow him, serve him, and carry out a concrete mission.

The book of Genesis recounts how man and woman are called into existence, into communion with God, and into the mission of giving life to all humanity (cf. Gen 1:26-28). Starting from this first and indispensable call to life, God invites men and women to a specific mission. The purpose of this vocation is to fulfill a task in salvation history. The Old and New Testaments present different vocational frameworks that serve as a reference for us Christians who feel called by God.

Vocational Frameworks in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, we find four types of call-and-response frameworks.

The first is an order-response framework. God gives a command to a character in salvation history, and this character responds by executing the command that God proposes to him. One of the clearest examples is the call of Abraham (cf. Gen 12:1-4). The author relates how the Lord orders Abram to leave his land and his homeland for the land God will show him. Without objection, he sets out on his journey immediately.

In this vocational framework, God is the one who takes the initiative. He calls a man who is outside the Promised Land and asks him to leave his land, his relatives, and his father's house. Abram has to break with all previous ties and leave his family, his ethnic group, his land, and all his securities to have his only security in God. Before this renunciation, ordered by God, a promise is presented. God does not leave Abram in a void but makes a covenant with him, freely promising him land and offspring. God will bless him with a land flowing with milk and honey (cf. Dt 26:9) and make him the Father of a great nation. Abram will be given a new name indicating his vocation-mission: Father of a multitude of nations (cf. Gen 17:5); in him, all the families of the earth will be blessed. Faced with the call, Abraham responds by adhering to God's plan without question or objection and leaves his homeland.

In the second vocational framework, the person, at the prompting of the Spirit, perceives a need and offers himself to place himself at God's service and fulfill whatever he asks of him. This is the case of Isaiah. In the account of his vocation (cf. Isa 6:1-13), the prophet narrates the vision of God's glory in the temple that he received, and he hears the voice of God saying: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" At that moment, without hesitation, Isaiah answers God: "Here I am; send me" (Is 6:8).

Isaiah is a prophet aware of the plight of his people. He prophesies in the time of the monarchy in which the kings and many others commit injustices, dedicate themselves to idol worship, and do not trust in the power of God to free them from their enemies. Isaiah himself, full of holy fear, confesses that he, too, is a man of unclean lips, dwelling amid a people of unclean lips. However, the recognition of his frailty and sin does not stop him from giving an answer to God. He allows himself to be purified by the Lord with the symbol of the flaming coal that burns his lips. This sign prepares the prophet to be the Lord's messenger to the people. Now, purified, he can respond to the Lord: "Here I am; send me" (Is 6:8).

The third framework takes place in stages. The person somehow perceives that someone is calling him. God has manifested himself to him at different times until the person finally realizes that God is calling him and responds. The most paradigmatic case is that of the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 3).

Samuel served the Lord under Eli, the priest, in the Tabernacle of Shiloh. One night, God calls him, but he cannot identify who is proclaiming his name in the darkness. Samuel thinks it is Eli the priest, and three times he appears before him: “Here I am. You called me” (1 Sam 3:5,6,8). The third time, Eli realizes that it is the Lord who calls the boy and tells him what he should answer: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam 3:9). At God’s insistence, Samuel finally responds. Thus, Samuel becomes the prophet who makes the transition from the period of the judges to the monarchy.

The last vocational framework recorded in the Bible is that of objection. In this case, the person receives an order from God, but, in one way or another, the person does not feel capable of fulfilling the entrusted mission and, therefore, presents one or several objections until they finally surrender to the Lord. We have the example of Moses, who, sent by God to save his people, profusely presents to him all the reasons why, in his opinion, he is not the right person for the mission (cf. Ex 3-4).

Moses had met the Lord on Mount Horeb in the vision of a bush that burns without being consumed. In his conversation with him, God calls him by name and reveals his own name to him. God has decided to visit his people and bring them out of the land of slavery, and he wants to accomplish this miracle by the hand of his chosen one, Moses. The former shepherd of men in Egypt, now a simple and happy shepherd of animals, is overwhelmed by the call and tries to sidestep

the issue: “If you please, my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and tongue.” (Ex 4:10). But these are childish excuses, and God brings him back to reality: “Who gives one person speech? (...) I will assist you in speaking and teach you what you are to say” (Ex 4:11-12). It is God who will sustain the mission of the prophet and liberator.

The Call to Follow Jesus in the New Testament

We find the same vocational frameworks in the New Testament. God, incarnate in Jesus, directs his gaze towards some people to invite them to follow him. Jesus, through the sovereign power of his divine word, calls his disciples to be with him and with him to participate in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

We could say that Christ’s call takes place in two moments. In the first moment, Jesus takes the initiative, as when he invites Peter and Andrew to follow him in order to make them fishers of men (cf. Mk 1:16-18), when he calls James and John (cf. Mk 1:19-20), or when he says to Levi: “Follow me” (Mk 2:14).

In this first moment, Jesus calls them to dedicate themselves totally to him and to his mission. It presupposes a radical change in the life of those invited, that is, to leave their homes and occupations. This call

is made in daily life while they are carrying out their profession as fishermen or tax collectors. The first disciples respond promptly and with absolute readiness. They always decide to accompany Jesus, listening to his words, adopting his way of life, and being sent to carry out the same mission as the Master.

The first moment of the call is complemented by a second moment: when, having lived with the Master, having listened to his teachings, and having seen the power of God at work in him, they must now decide to follow him to Jerusalem, to his passion and death. This is the moment that St. Mark narrates in the context of the journey to Jerusalem, for example (cf. Mk 8:31-35). It is not easy for the disciples. In fact, when Jesus announces his Passion, Peter wants to dissuade him (cf. Mk 8:32). But Jesus rebukes him: "Get behind me" (Mk 8:33). Jesus' response to Peter has a clear vocational intent. Peter wants to place himself in front of the Master to block his way and prevent him from continuing on to Jerusalem. But Jesus does not want Peter in front of him, but behind: "Follow me" (Mk 8:33): "You follow me" (Jn 21:22). The disciple must take on the Master's destiny. Then, addressing everyone, he confirms this doctrine: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mk 8:34). This is the second moment of the call. The disciples must decide if they are willing to give their lives "behind" their Master.

The two moments of the call complement each other. The first moment is found in the context of the immi-

nent arrival of the Kingdom of God, and the response implies a change of life: leaving family and work to follow Jesus. Yes, it is a radical demand, but an external one. The context of the second moment is the imminent Passion of Jesus, which implies a response of conversion: denying oneself, being willing to lose one's life (like Jesus) in order to gain it (cf. Mk 8:34-37; 10:5). This second moment of the call does not cancel out the first, but instead deepens it by inviting the disciple to a closer following.

Throughout salvation history, God's call has resounded in the hearts of men and women, inviting them to follow him and to accept a concrete mission in his plan of salvation. The initiative always comes from God. However, from the stories of Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and Samuel to the vocation of the Apostles in the New Testament, there has always been a spontaneous response to the loving God who calls us to participate in his mission.

Each vocational framework reveals to us a unique dimension of this call: immediate obedience, a generous disposition, the gradual process of recognition, and objections overcome by the grace of God. In Jesus, this call reaches its fullness, requiring a radical adherence that implies not only leaving behind a merely natural existence, but also actively taking up Christ's cross and sharing his fate.

These biblical experiences illuminate every baptized person's vocation, including each Regnum Christi

member. God continues to call each person to a life of communion with him and of mission in the world. The invitation remains open: to listen to his voice and to respond generously, like so many before us who have said: “Here I am, Lord; you have called me.”

Chapter II

A Renewed Vocational Culture and Ministry in the Church and in Regnum Christi

As we have seen in the previous chapter, salvation history is a tapestry of calls and responses between God and man. The personal history of each person is also a vocational history: a journey of calls and responses.

The Second Vatican Council strongly emphasized: "Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect."[1]

At this moment, it is necessary to rethink the vocation and vocations: vocational culture, vocation ministry, and promoting or proposing vocations.

1 *Lumen Gentium*, 11

Personal Vocation: How do we Understand the Call to a Specific Vocation Today?

Vocation (from the Latin vocare, to call) finds its foundation in Sacred Scripture. God, who reveals himself as Love in a Trinity of Persons, calls human beings, created in his image and likeness, to incarnate this same Love in communion with him and among their brothers and sisters. This is the essential and common vocation of every human being. And this vocation is embodied and realized in the specific vocation of each man or woman.

We can describe the personal vocation as the specific way each one is loved by God. One could describe vocation as "God's dream" for each person. In a document titled New Vocations for a New Europe, the Pontifical Work for Ecclesiastical Vocations described God's call in this way:

> "The vocation is the providential thought of the Creator for each creature, it is his idea-plan, like a dream found in God's heart, because the creature is found in his heart. God the Father wants this to be different and specific for each living person" (NVNE 13, a).

The personal vocation is how each person lives as an image of God in a unique and unrepeatable way, in full freedom. The same document cited above states:

> "The human being, in fact, is "called" to life, and how he comes to life, carries and finds in itself

> the image of He who called him [...] Vocation is the divine invitation to self-realization according to this image, and is unique-singular-unrepeatable precisely because this image is inexhaustible. Every creature expresses and is called to express a particular aspect of the thought of God. There he finds his name and his identity; he affirms and ensures his freedom and originality" (NVNE 13, a).

Finally, vocation is the personal way in which each one is called to participate in Christ's mission:

> "Vocation and mission constitute two faces of the same prism. They define the gift and contribution of each person to God's plan, in the image and likeness of Jesus" (NVNE 19, c).

How do we understand the different vocations within the Church, and how do they relate to one another?

The awareness of having a vocation received from God underlines the unrepeatable individuality of each person and, at the same time, the fact that every human being is fulfilled in contact with others. Every vocation in the Church arises within the community of believers, is validated by it (cf. Acts 13:1-2), and is at the service of the common mission. As a community of the called, the Church is the mother of vocations, constantly

generating vocations, taking into account both the needs of the Church and the signs of the times.

With regard to the topic we are dealing with, the ecclesiology expressed in the Second Vatican Council, principally in the dogmatic and pastoral constitutions Lumen Gentium and Gaudium et Spes, has some characteristic features. First of all, understanding the Church as **the people of God on a journey** and as a **community of the baptized** allows us to understand the communal nature of vocation, which the individual does not give to himself but is a loving gift of God to his people. On the other hand, the universal call or vocation to holiness allows us to understand the essence of vocation as a path of holiness that unites us all rather than as a task or an aspect that differentiates us from others.

Vocation, therefore, is the call shared by all believers, since the fundamental vocation of the Christian is the fullness of a holy life in Christ. At the same time, however, the different specific vocations are complementary to one another: n fact, each Christian, carrying out their particular calling, serves their brothers and sisters in the Church and benefits from the gifts that the different vocations provide.

Vocational culture flows from this way of understanding the personal vocation and the relationship between the different vocations in the Church.

What is a Vocational Culture, and How do we Understand it?

When we speak of culture in any field, we think above all of three components: a mentality, a sensitivity, and a lifestyle. The mentality (intellectual component) is how we interpret life and its experiences. Sensitivity[2] (affective component) is the way we engage with others. Lifestyle (behavioral component) is what generates choices and commitments.

The "vocational culture" comprises these three components. First of all, it is necessary to go deeper into vocational theology: What is the vocation? What does God reveal to us about it? Do I understand vocation as the Church understands it? As we have seen in the previous pages, it is necessary to think about the vocation as an essential component of the human being, called by God from nothing to being, to be an image of the Trinity and a member of the Mystical Body of Christ: the Church.

2 "Sensitivity" is understood here as "the inner organ of the person that evaluates and makes one experience something as pleasant and therefore attractive, or unpleasant and therefore threatening" (A. CENCINI, Construir cultura vocacional [*Building a Vocational Culture*], Paulinas 2013)

For further reflection

We can summarize the three elements of vocational culture using three questions, which in turn help us as a guideline to analyze whether or not and to what extent a vocational culture exists in our sections, works, and apostolates:

- Vocation mentality: How do we think about the vocation, God's call, the personal mission, etc.? What do we think about these terms? Are they similar to what the Church and the Gospel propose?

- Vocational sensitivity: How do we live vocational values? Do we live our life as a vocation, as a mission?

- Vocational pedagogy: How do we organize ourselves? What are we doing to promote this vocational culture?

If sensitivity is a component of every culture, vocational culture is made up of the convictions that are born of the truths of faith. As the principles of faith become convictions, they become vocational spirituality. It is the passage from theology to personal experience, that is, the assimilation that each believer makes of the certainties of faith. Do I live my life as a vocation, as a mission? Do I experience my specific vocation as a necessary and complementary service for the whole Church?

Vocational culture presupposes an attitude of discernment and an interpretation of experiences based on God's initiative, from which options and commitments flow.

Finally, vocational culture implies a lifestyle. For convictions to become decisions and inspire commitments, vocational pedagogy (practice, lifestyle) is necessary, understood as the educational process that allows theology and sensitivity to be translated into coherent actions in daily life. Vocational apostolate springs from this: How do we organize ourselves? What are we doing to promote this vocational culture?

Vocation is not a private matter; it is a gift that God gives to every human being in the bosom of the Church. The promotion of vocational culture leads each one to feel not only responsible for their own vocation but also co-responsible for each vocation.

It is necessary, therefore, to promote a culture of vocation which will recognize and welcome this profound human aspiration, which brings a person to discover that Christ alone can tell him the truth about life. He who "penetrated in a unique and unrepeatable way into the mystery of man" (Redemptor hominis, n. 8) "fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling" (Gaudium et spes, n. 22): life is a totally gratuitous gift and there is no other way to live which is worthy of man than that of the giving of oneself. Christ, the Good Shepherd, calls every person to recognize himself in this truth. Vocation is born from love and leads to love, because, "man cannot live without love" (Redemptor hominis, n. 10). This culture of vocation is at the base of a culture of new life, which is a life of gratitude and

> *of gratuity, of trust and of responsibility; at its roots, it is a culture of the desire for God, who gives the grace of esteeming man for himself, and of incessantly defending his dignity in the face of all that could oppress him in body and in spirit.*
>
> Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the XXX World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 8 September 1992, n. 2

What About Vocational Work?

A deeper understanding of the mystery of vocation has greatly impacted how vocation ministry is lived. In fact, the Church has devoted numerous congresses and even a synod to reflection on this theme.[3] As a result of these meetings, a broader vision of vocational work has been achieved, defined as "the conscientious and coordinated action of the ecclesial community so that each of its members may recognize the call that God makes to him and to which he must respond with generosity. It seeks that each person may discover the path to the realization of a life project according to God's will and the needs of today's world."[4]

The Church knows vocational work is not a practical strategy to improve recruitment and increase the number of pastors or religious. The work of seeking the vocational fulfillment of each Christian is born of the Church's mission and is at her service (cf. NVNE 25). Hence, there is a call to "vocationalize" all ministry.[5]

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3 Congresses in Latin America in 1994 and 2011; congresses in Europe in 1997 and 2009; an international congress in 2016; a Synod of Bishops on "Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment" in 2018

4 *Concluding Document of the 2nd Latin-American Continental Congress on Vocations*, 2011, n. 79.

5 cf. *Concluding Document of the 2nd Latin-American Continental Congress on Vocations*, 2011, n. 78-80.

This situation represents a “qualitative leap” in vocational ministry, which should provoke some changes in attitude:

- To motivate vocational work by the negative situation of the decline in vocations, especially consecrated vocations, out of fear of the decrease or disappearance of religious families is extremely reductive. The Church’s interest in the vocational fulfillment of its members should never lose sight of Christian hope, which is born of faith and projected towards the newness and future of God, who always generates life in the Church.

- Vocational work can no longer be focused exclusively or almost exclusively on a few vocations (priestly and consecrated); it must look to the promotion of all vocations, which grow together and benefit each other.

- It is necessary to not restrict the scope of action to the few groups of people most familiar with the Church environment or to those who would immediately seem to show some interest in knowing about a specific vocation but to announce and courageously extend the vocational proposal to all, in the name of God, who shows no partiality.

- We must move from an insecure and timid vocation ministry to an activity born of the conviction that every person is an original gift of God waiting to be discovered.

- In addition, it is essential to move away from recruitment and propaganda, which can force an individual's freedom, to be clear that the goal is to help the person to discern God's plan for their life, for the edification of the Church, and to recognize and fulfill their own truth in themself.

- It is vital to move beyond programming episodic initiatives and experiences and promote vocational education inspired by a proven method of accompaniment to provide appropriate assistance to those who are searching.

- Finally, it will be necessary to pass from individual and isolated vocational activity to community activity.

The relationship between vocational culture, vocational work, and vocation promotion

Emphasizing vocational culture as a starting point responds to the pedagogy emerging in the Church, as reflected in the most recent documents on this topic.[6] In the 1st General Convention of Regnum Christi, this vocational culture is expressed in this way:

> "*Promote a vocational culture*. We want to implement all of our apostolic activity rooted in the personal call God gives to all people, infusing it with

6 These documents include those resulting from the continental assemblies, such as "New Vocations for a New Europe"; the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Christus vivit*, which develops the theme in the context of youth ministry; and the conclusions of the various congresses of different scopes that have been held, such as the "Concluding Document of the 2nd Latin American Continental Congress on Vocations," among others.

> an authentic vocational pedagogy that fosters the understanding of life as a vocation and helps each person discover and enable vocation discovery and acceptance (SRCF 48). Our goal is that in the different areas of Regnum Christi, processes of deepening in vocational fulfillment can be undertaken naturally and can thus mature vocations to marriage, consecrated life, and the priesthood"[7].

It is essential to understand and live well what each of the following concepts means and how they relate to each other: vocational culture, vocational work, and vocation promotion. *Vocational culture* fosters the understanding of life as a vocation, as the fruit of God's personal call to each person, from which they feel called to act accordingly. *Vocational work* helps each person discover, accept, and fulfill their vocation. Finally, *vocation promotion* proposes the various specific vocations—to married life, consecrated life, and priestly life—in a natural way, offering the means for each person to discover their own and to flourish in it.

It is a matter, therefore, of creating a culture that starts from the conviction that life is a vocation and that every vocation entails a mission. Pope Francis expressed it even more radically: "*I am a mission* on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world" (EG 273, cf. ChV 254; emphasis added).

Finally, the renewed understanding of vocational work implies not taking a vocational culture for granted but contributing to creating it, initiating profound proces-

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7 *Communique from the Regnum Christi Ordinary General Convention* (May 4, 2024), 25

ses, and accompanying people in freedom. It is promoted through formators who are patient educators in the faith and accompany the person to find their path through discernment.

Chapter III

Dimensions of a Vocation

To speak about vocations is to enter into the heart, from where the essential questions arise: Where do I come from? Where am I going? Who am I? (and even more profoundly: Who am I for?) How can I fulfill my deep desire to love and be loved? What is my mission in life? In short, Where can I find my fulfillment? What is my particular vocation?

This search is a gradual process. In a sense, the vocation is experienced as a continuous, daily reality throughout life because God constantly comes out to meet us and calls us every day to take a step toward him. This constant call of God implies a constant exercise of freedom. In another sense, it is also true that there are precise moments in life when we are invited to make decisive choices in response to the personal call that God makes to us.

Each one of us has a particular vocation rooted in our own history. Through discernment, we accept it, knowing that God is the protagonist, who speaks clearly so that we may know what he is calling us to and how we can respond to this path of fullness and fruitfulness.

The Human Vocation, a Vocation to Life and Love

We can never forget that the starting point is that we are loved. The key to being called is being loved. It is love that brings us into existence and gives us life unconditionally. No one gives life or earns it based on personal merit or ability. Life is a gift. And that is the first vocation we receive: existence.

Therefore, the first call we all receive is life. Coming into existence is not a personal choice; someone else has chosen it for us. From here, the question arises: Why did God create me? What is the purpose of my life? What is expected of me?

The answer that faith gives us to this question is love. God is love; he creates us out of love and for love, and we perceive that the key to happiness can only be found in welcoming God's love and responding to it by giving ourselves to our neighbors out of love for them. This truth is also sensed by those who have not received Revelation.

Furthermore, we know that God has placed in the human heart certain universal principles or values beyond each person's beliefs, which are known as natural law and contained in the Decalogue. We call it natural law because it derives from our nature and, therefore, from God, who imprinted his image on us.

In a process of discernment and maturation in one's vocation, the first question is whether the person is living their human vocation, loves the life they received from God, and is fulfilled in justice and love.

"The vocation of humanity is to show forth the image of God and to be transformed into the image of the Father's only Son. This vocation takes a personal form since each of us is called to enter into the divine beatitude; it also concerns the human community as a whole" (CCC 1877).

The Christian Vocation

The Christian accepts a second call, faith: Through baptism, they are inserted into Christ and become part of the Church.

"The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ" (CCC 1279).

"The baptismal seal enables and commits Christians to serve God by a vital participation in the holy liturgy of the Church and to exercise their baptismal priesthood by the witness of holy lives and practical charity (cf. LG 10)" (CCC 1273).

"The baptized have become 'living stones' to be 'built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood' (1 P 2,5). By Baptism they share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission. They are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood,

> *a holy nation, God's own people, that [they] may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvelous light' (1 Pet 2:9). Baptism gives a share in the common priesthood of all believers" (CCC 1268).*

Through baptismal consecration, Christians are called to be the visible presence of Christ in the world. Christ lives and acts today through his Church, that is, through each of the baptized. The Holy Spirit accomplishes the work of configuring us to Christ in synergy with our free response until we share the same sentiments as the Son, for we are "sons in the Son."

By being inserted into Christ, every baptized person shares in his being priest, prophet, and king.

Through the common priesthood, Christians can offer their daily lives, prayers, and service, uniting them to the offering of Jesus Christ and the whole Church in the Eucharist as a sacrifice pleasing to the Father. Through prophecy, they are called to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven with their witness and words, making it present in the world. Through their participation in Christ's kingship, they are children of God by adoption and heirs of the Father, worthy of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Baptism is a daily call to concretely live according to the love of God, "[who] has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rm 5:5).

This is why John Paul II invited the participants in the Jubilee of the Laity in 2000 to ask themselves: What have I done with my baptism and confirmation?[8]

If we are temples of the Holy Spirit and the body of Christ, and his grace lives in each of us, what do we do each day with this treasure we carry within us?

Beginning with their baptismal consecration, Christians find their fullness in living the Gospel, the summit of which is the Sermon on the Mount. Therefore, living charity, humility, meekness, purity, and justice are at the heart of every Christian vocation.

A baptized person considering their vocation must begin by consciously embracing their baptismal consecration (as priest, prophet, and king) and the Gospel (the Beatitudes) amid temporal realities, milestones on a clear and beautiful path of growth toward their vocational fulfillment.

The Vocation to a Specific Charism

Throughout the history of the Church, God has opened paths of growth toward holiness, with distinct features, spirituality, and mission, which highlight some aspect of the mystery of Christ. Even today, God continues to call people to live their faith in the light of a common charism. We are speaking of various ecclesial realities—movements and spiritual families—that of-

8 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Message to the International Congress of Catholic Laity* (21 November 2000)

ten embrace diverse vocations under a single charism. This is the case of Regnum Christi. When God calls someone to be part of Regnum Christi, he reveals a path of Christian fulfillment based on their own charism, spirituality, and mission.

How each person is drawn by God to Regnum Christi can vary. Usually, it begins with a secular life within the movement, but it could happen that someone, feeling drawn to lay consecrated life, religious life, or the priesthood, first encounters one of the institutions of consecrated life. In any case, each person called to one of the specific vocations in Regnum Christi will find in the common charism a source of light for discerning their own vocation, whether as a lay person, as a consecrated person, as a religious, or as a priest.

The Personal Vocation

A community charism does not exhaust the richness of God's call, for each person is called to incarnate it in a personal way, according to the gifts and talents they have received. An attitude of constant listening and discernment, and the certainty that God continues to call, lead the person to a unique relationship with Christ and to a particular way of self-giving. In this way, a specific personal vocation comes together, and the development of this awareness in the soul is one of the most apparent signs of spiritual maturity.

An authentic journey of faith gives Christians a sensitivity to various aspects of the Christian message or a

particular mission, always leading to greater fidelity to their vocation because God does not contradict himself but builds on what he has already revealed. Such a deepening requires a serious and definitive commitment to God, docility to the Holy Spirit, and a careful gaze on the Lord Jesus—all aspects that an experienced spiritual guide will help distinguish from temptations to evasion, self-seeking, or other deceptions.

In moments when deeper vocational discernment becomes necessary, it is of great help:

A. To intensify the spiritual life and spaces of silence and encounter with the Word of God so as to encourage listening and learning to identify the voice of Christ that speaks within each one and invites us to follow him;

B. To observe and delve into all those elements that are part of a specific vocation: to get to know it, spend time with it, participate in experiences with people who live it;

C. To know oneself: one's talents and qualities, one's interests, fears, and desires, one's history, one's way of living relationships, and finally one's attitudes, convictions, and motivations... That is, what God has placed in one's life as preparation for a vocation. Those who grow in self-knowledge and observe their own history, talents, and experiences can better understand where all this is leading.

The processes of discernment of one's vocation often alternate between moments of great light and moments of doubt, insecurity, and obstacles. Maintaining

trust in the one who calls and invites us not to be afraid is essential.

In conclusion, our entire life is a process of discernment and maturation of our vocation, although there are moments along the way when we are called to make crucial decisions. Every time a person says "yes," as Mary did, new paths to God open in their hearts, and new rivers of blessing are poured out upon the Church and the world.

Chapter IV

A Vocational Culture that is Expressed and Lived in the Elements of Regnum Christi Life

If a vocational culture consists of understanding life and living it as a call and a response in love, everything that happens can be lived "vocationally," learning to discover God in events as he comes to meet us and allows us to make him present in a particular way.

Every apostolate in the life of Regnum Christi must lay the foundations for a vocational culture that proposes this vision of humanity, the world, and God in which vocation is a central reality: the starting point and fundamental goal of human existence.

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for (CCC 27).

When we understand the vocation as something that touches our life, we can affirm that "every form of pastoral activity, formation, and spirituality should be seen in the light of our Christian vocation." (ChV 254)

In Regnum Christi, we therefore aspire to live a vocational culture based on the five elements that sustain our life (cf. RL 2) as communities of apostles in which each person, based on their calling, helps others to

discover their life as a vocation-mission, encouraging one another to grow towards our fullness in Christ.

The Spiritual life, an Encounter with Jesus Christ who Calls Us

The spiritual life is an encounter with Jesus Christ, who calls us.

We understand spiritual life as the progressive development of the Trinitarian life, which leads us to be configured with Christ, that is, "a dynamic relationship of love with God, nourished by the sacraments, the Word of God, the liturgy, prayer, and the exercise of the moral and theological virtues" (RL 3).

> *"Prayer itself, born in Catholic families, nurtured by programs of Christian formation, strengthened by the grace of the sacraments, is the first means by which we come to know the Lord's will for our lives. To the extent that we teach young people to pray, and to pray well, we will be cooperating with God's call. Programs, plans and projects have their place; but the discernment of a vocation is above all the fruit of an intimate dialogue between the Lord and his disciples. Young people, if they know how to pray, can be trusted to know what to do with God's call."*
>
> (Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the bishops of the United States, 16 April 2008)

The spiritual life permeates and harmonizes all spheres of life and is **the fruit of a personal encounter with Christ, who loves and calls.** In discovering one's vo-

cation, a prayer life is indispensable for a profound encounter with a God who knows us, calls us, and longs to speak to our hearts to answer our most profound questions.

> "To discern our personal vocation, we have to realize that it is a calling from a friend, who is Jesus. […] This sort of discernment that takes place among friends is what I suggest you take as a framework for trying to discover God's will for your lives" (ChV 287).

It is essential to **form one's prayer life** and to foster spaces that allow for an intimate dialogue with God so that he can communicate and make known his loving plans and so that each person, by listening to his call, can respond to it:

> "As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation" (CCC 2567).

Sacramental life is the foundation and strength for discovering and following one's vocation since each sacrament is a personal and transformative encounter with Christ. Confirmation reinforces baptismal grace with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and empowers Christians to bear witness to the Lord based on their specific vocation. In the Eucharist, we are nourished by the very Body of Christ and configured to him, strengthening the desire to make his Kingdom present. Through Reconciliation, we experience God's mercy and forgiveness and find the strength to respond faithfully to

his call. Thus, in Regnum Christi, sacramental life not only sustains the personal relationship with Christ but also illuminates and guides the path of one's vocation, constantly renewing the commitment to be witnesses of his love in the world.

The Apostolate, an Encounter with Jesus who Sends Us Out

Every baptized person is also sent out. In giving oneself to the mission, one's vocation is discovered and strengthened as a mission. Discovering Christ through the needs of people, allowing ourselves to be sent out, and realizing that we are the hands, the mouth, and the feet of Christ in the apostolate—these are elements that powerfully contribute to discernment.

> *"God's call, we said, includes a 'sending'. There is no vocation without mission. There is no happiness and full self-realization unless we offer others the new life that we have found […] By being a neighbour, like the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25-37), we come to understand the heart of our Christian vocation: to imitate Jesus Christ, who came to serve, not to be served (cf. Mk 10:45)."*
>
> (Message of Pope Francis for the 60th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, April 30, 2023)

Giving a vocational meaning to apostolic life means having concrete experiences of self-giving and experiencing the joy of giving; helping people discover what resonates in their own hearts, what they feel called to; teaching them to look at the world as Christ sees it and not to remain indifferent to its needs, so that, from the depths of their hearts, they can respond: "Here I am; send me!" (Isa 6:8)

Giving a vocational meaning to apostolic life means helping each person discover that they are called and sent to collaborate with Christ in his mission, discovering his gaze and listening to his voice, which says to each person in a very personal way: "Follow me! I am sending you to evangelize, bringing people to experience the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!"

Accompaniment, an Encounter with Jesus who Walks Alongside Us

In Regnum Christi, we seek to receive and offer accompaniment that helps us grow in holiness. This accompaniment is necessarily vocational because its purpose is to help us discern our vocation in the light of the Holy Spirit at every stage of life. It is a process in which the person is helped to grow in freedom and capacity for self-giving, in self-knowledge, and in the integration of the different experiences and dimensions of their life, finding the meaning of their existence based on the personal call God makes to them.

> *«One thing is clear in youth ministry: it is necessary to accompany young people, walk with them, listen to them, provoke them, move them so that they go beyond their comfort zone, awaken desire, interpret what they are living, take them to Jesus, always favouring the liberty to respond to the call of the Lord freely and responsibly (cf Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly, Young people, the faith and vocational discernment, Preparatory document, 2017, III, 1). It is necessary to create an atmosphere of trust, to make young people feel that they are loved as they are and for what they are. The text of the disciples of Emmaus can be a good example of accompaniment (cf Lk 24: 13-35).»*
>
> Pope Francis, Message to participants in the International Conference "Vocational ministry and consecrated life: prospects and hopes" (Rome, December 1-3, 2017)

To accompany is to walk alongside others, teaching them to live with a sense of vocation and mission, helping them ponder the various aspects involved in discernment, and encouraging them to fully trust God and his plans. In other words, it involves being a sign and mediator of the loving presence of a God who embraces, illuminates, and strengthens.

It is important that the simple and authentic life accompanier bear witness to their own following of Christ, raising meaningful questions in those around them and pointing others to Christ as the one they can turn to because he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Those who accompany know that "God continues to call young people; it is up to all of us to encourage a generous and free response to that call."[9]

9 BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the Bishops of the United States* (April 16, 2008)

Accompaniment is always vocational because it seeks to keep alive the most essential call, holiness, that is, communion of life with Christ in love, which each person will live in their state of life. In listening attentively to the Holy Spirit and to the person seeking light, it is necessary to encourage the young person to reflect on the different paths so that they may analyze the attraction or rejection they feel toward them. There is no need to fear explicitly proposing a specific vocation to the person when sufficient signs point in that direction.

Ultimately, accompaniment seeks to offer a personalized path that aims to "encourage and accompany processes, without imposing our own roadmaps, because those processes have to do with persons who always remain unique and free" (ChV 297). A path of discernment provides tools and spaces to pray and reflect on life choices, considering the desires and inclinations of the heart.

"To respond to our vocation, we need to foster and develop all that we are. This has nothing to do with inventing ourselves or creating ourselves out of nothing. It has to do with finding our true selves in the light of God and letting our lives flourish and bear fruit […] Your vocation inspires you to bring out the best in yourself for the glory of God and the good of others"[10].

10 *Christus vivit*, 257

Formation, an Encounter with Jesus that Transforms Our Minds and Hearts into His

Formation must be oriented to "help us discover the full meaning of our lives in Christ, be configured to him, and fulfill our mission" (SRCF 30 § 1).

> "God the creator who gives life, is also *the Father who 'educates'*, who draws out of nothing what does not yet exist to bring it into being; he draws forth from the heart of man what He himself has placed there, so that he may be fully himself and what God has called him to be, in His way" (NVNE 16).

Thus, both in apostolic work and in formation programs, it is necessary[11]:

- To present a conception of man as a being called by God and capable of responding;
- To reject a subjectivist conception that considers the individual as the center and measure of all things;
- To reflect on the meaning of life as a gateway to the transcendence of the mystery of the person through the fundamental questions of existence;
- To be a support for defining one's existence as a gift and a calling, lived in responsibility and freedom;

11 Cf. M. LLANOS, *¿Cómo crear una cultura vocacional entre los jóvenes?* (*How do we create a vocational culture among young people?*)

- To point out the essential elements for living existence as a response, as an covenant of friendship and a project offered to man.

Vocational formation is a collaboration with God, the formator. It must offer the necessary means to enlighten minds, enflame hearts, and strengthen wills so that each person can live out the vocation the Lord calls them and help others do the same.

Team and Community life, an Encounter with Jesus who Gathers Us Together

In Regnum Christi, we are a spiritual family and apostolic body. We do not live our faith alone, but always as part of teams and communities.

> *"Only in relation with all the others, does any particular vocation in the Church fully disclose its true nature and richness. Viewed in this light, the Church is a vocational 'symphony', with every vocation united yet distinct, in harmony and joined together in 'going forth' to radiate throughout the world the new life of the kingdom of God."*
>
> (Message of Pope Francis for the 60th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 30 April 2023)

It is important to form communities of apostles in love with Christ, communities who pray, live in communion and fraternal charity, and witness to the experience of

Christ's love. This spreads the desire to follow Christ and find happiness in Him. We have a deep desire for our communities to remain joyful and enthusiastic, to be environments in which we help one another grow in holiness, vocational fulfillment, and mission.

In such communities, vocations to the different states of life within Regnum Christi will emerge, including vocations to the consecrated life.

> It is also important that there be an ecclesial community which will help each person called to discover his own vocation. The climate of faith, prayer, communion in love, spiritual maturity, courage in proclaiming, of intensity in the spiritual life all contribute to making the believing community into terrain that is appropriate not only for the flowering of particular vocations, but also for the creation of a vocational culture and a readiness in individuals to receive their personal call. When a young person recognises the call and decides in his heart the holy journey for realising it, there is normally a community there that has created the premises for this openness and obedience (NVNE 19, b).

Vocation promotion involves presenting the various vocations and asking each young person about their specific vocation as an experience of God's love: "Lord, what do you want of me?" Esteem for the members of our teams and those close to us, as well as knowledge and appreciation of the various vocations, enable each person to be an instrument of God in vocation promotion.

Within the Regnum Christi team, being companions on the journey and a family united in Christ makes us feel responsible for our brothers and sisters. It allows us to let ourselves be helped by those who know and love us and help us discover and accept God's call.

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Chapter V

The Different Vocations Within Regnum Christi

Within Regnum Christi, God has created different vocations: three of them within lay life, and three within consecrated life.

- What the lay vocations have in common is their secular character, understood in light of the creative and redemptive act of God, who has entrusted the world to men and women so that they may participate in the work of creation, free it from the influence of sin, and be sanctified in marriage or celibacy, in the family, in their profession, and in various social activities, and dedicate themselves primarily to the evangelization of temporal realities and live their baptismal consecration in the world.

- What the consecrated vocations have in common is Christ's invitation "not only to welcome the Kingdom of God into their own lives, but also to put their lives at its service, leaving everything behind and closely imitating his own way of life" (VC 14). From this springs an affective and effective availability to fulfill the mission with an undivided heart, a prophetic witness, through fraternal life in common and the acceptance of the evangelical counsels through vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Next, we will present each of the vocations within Regnum Christi and their contribution to the charism and mission as expressed in the Statutes of the Regnum Christi Federation.

The Lay Members Associated to Regnum Christi

"The associated faithful contribute their secular nature and their apostolic action. The laypeople extend Christ's presence in the midst of the world and seek to transform temporal realities with the message of the Gospel, especially family life, professional life and life in society" (SRCF 5 § 4).

The Lay Consecrated Men of Regnum Christi

"The members of the society of apostolic life called the Lay Consecrated Men of Regnum Christi contribute the gift of their lay secular consecration by the prophetic witness of being in the world without being of the world; by the evangelization of temporal realities; by availability, charity, professional abilities and joy in the service of Regnum Christi, the Church and all people; by promotion of fraternal communion among all, and by prayer. They live the mystery of Christ consecrated to the Father and close to men and women, his brothers and sisters, as just another member of his People, proclaiming the Kingdom to them by the offering of their life, their words, and their work" (SRCF 5 § 2).

The Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi

"The members of the society of apostolic life called the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi contribute, from their feminine identity, the gift of their lay consecration in a total and exclusive self-giving to the love of Christ. They are signs of the Kingdom in the midst of temporal realities; they promote and safeguard communion; they go out to encounter people in the concrete realities of their life; and they undertake the actions that most contribute to establishing Christ's Kingdom" (SRCF 5 § 1).

The Legionaries of Christ

"The Legionaries of Christ, by their religious consecration, contribute the testimony of their self-giving to Jesus Christ and their complete availability for the fulfillment of the common mission. By their condition as priests, they make present Christ the Priest and the Good Shepherd through preaching, administering the sacraments and spiritual guidance. In communion with all, they collaborate in the integral formation, direction and apostolic projection of the associated faithful, promoting the fullness of their baptismal vocation and Christian leadership; and they establish institutions and initiate actions that can most contribute, in depth and in extent, to building the Kingdom of Christ in society" (SRCF 5 § 3).

Conclusion

Vocational Culture, Vocational Work, and Vocation promotion in Regnum Christi: A Mission Shared by All

As the Regnum Christi family within the Church, we are called to live the mission of **vocational work and vocation promotion** based on an authentic and renewed vocational culture.

We want to live the Good News that God comes to us and reveals his mystery of Love, the ultimate reason why he calls his creatures into existence. He loves each of us unconditionally and personally, with the gifts and talents he gave us, hoping that we will respond in freedom to be shaped in the image of his Son, sharing his mission.

A life that originates and ends in Love develops and reaches its fullness in self-giving lived out of love. Such a life has meaning!

Let us pray for one another that we may live the vocation we have received from God in fullness and fidelity. May we always see the vocation the Lord has given us with new eyes, without ever believing we are done discovering it, but instead allowing ourselves to be amazed by the boundless riches it contains, which we will never exhaust in the course of our lives. At the same time, may we value the other vocations, marve-

ling at the richness of the gifts God adorns his Church and with which he has also enriched this small portion of it, Regnum Christi. In this way, we will become convinced promoters of a vocational culture, opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit to help others discover and accept the gift with which he wishes to lead them to their fullness and fruitfulness.

Let us ask the Blessed Virgin that Regnum Christi may always be a place where young people can encounter Christ, discover their calling, grow in friendship with him, and be sent out by him on a mission.

Abbreviations

CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

ChV FRANCIS, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (March 25, 2019)

SRCF *Statutes of the Regnum Christi Federation* (May 31, 2019)

EG FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (November 24, 2013)

NVNE PONTIFICAL WORK FOR ECCLESIASTICAL VOCATIONS, *New Vocations for a New Europe* (January 6, 1998)

RL *Rule of Life of the Lay Faithful Associated to the Regnum Christi Federation* (September 17, 2019)

VC JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* (March 25, 1996)

Thy Kingdom Come

regnumchristi.com