

Youth Ministry in the General Delegation of Anglophone Africa

ROME - *Father Peter MAKINA, Malawian, after completing his youth pastoral specialization at Università Pontificia Salesiana (UPS) in Rome is preparing to return to his entity of origin, the GDAA. We interviewed him about his studies and his future mission.*

What did this training consist of?

The training consisted in helping students (helping us) on how to accompany young people, especially, by looking at the fact that many young people have potentials, strengths and gifts that, if well used, can contribute to the well-being of the Church and to the development of the society. The studies also looked at the fact that many young people face a lot of problems and challenges that, if not well accompanied, they lose hope and direction. They aimed at accompanying young people in their choices of life. In other words, the studies aimed at finding better ways of accompanying young people.



Which aspects have you worked on particularly and which ones will you still need to work on?

The scope of the course was very wide. As a class, we worked on many areas, such as, analyzing the current conditions of young people, understanding or interpreting the conditions of young people and the ability to plan for youth ministry. This has helped us, particularly myself, to be able to do research and plan for youth ministry. In other words, the program enables students to know and discern the condition and reality of the youth as well as to plan, coordinate and promote activities in the various sectors.

On a personal level, I worked on leadership. I believe that a good leader has to learn to be with young people (incarnation) and be able to lay down his or her life for the sake of young people (the Cross). I believe that a good leader has to take the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus was not only with the disciples, but also, he laid down his life for them. That means, it is not enough to be with young people or to make programs for them. It is also important to lead them to Christ and to help them become good citizens, otherwise, youth ministry will only become a field of entertainment. That calls for the sacrifice and avoid different kinds of abuses that some leaders put on young people.

There are also some areas that I need to work on in the future, such as, on the models of youth ministry. Due to the complex issues concerning young people, there is a need to develop more models of the youth ministry that can help the Montfort Missionaries and different people who are interested in the youth ministry, to come close to the young people and help them to be good disciples of Jesus Christ. I believe that models of the youth ministry are important because they can help, in one way or another, the Congregation to come close to the young people or to detach itself from the young people. It is from this that the life and the writings of Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort can help to form different models of the youth ministry.

Since your research is about "The Formation of Youth Leaders, with special reference to the situation of young people of Malawi", how the Montfortian spirituality could contribute to the formation of Youth Leaders?

The way I did the research for the formation of youth leaders is centered on the mysteries of the Incarnation and of the Cross, which are fundamental in the spirituality of Montfort. The Incarnation is a mystery of love and proximity. It was through the Blessed Virgin that Jesus Christ came into the world, and it is also through her that he must reign in the world (TD 1). The presence of a leader, following the Incarnation of Jesus, must give hope to young people and help them to be disciples of Jesus. That is in line with True Devotion numbers 55-59, where Saint Louis calls for servants who will give love and hope to the people. In other words, authentic youth leaders will realize that they have to be with young people, but at the same time, lay down their lives for them.

This understanding is very important in the modern times where many youth leaders have been involved in abusing young people. Many youth leaders know how to be with young people, organizing programs, but they fail to lay down their lives, which is a call for the Cross. Youth leaders have to make sacrifices.

How do you evaluate these two years spent in Rome?

These past two years spent in Rome have been a period of growth both spiritually and socially. Firstly, in the scholastic community, where I stayed in the first year, the focus was on the spiritual growth. The morning and evening prayers, the Eucharistic celebrations and the recollection helped me grow in my spiritual life. This also goes to the community at the General House where the prayers helped me deepen my spiritual life and to have more time for personal reflection. They helped me reflect about how God loves me and appreciate God's mercy.

Secondly, being in a new country and meeting new people helped me grow in the way I relate with people, had a broad understanding of reality and became flexible in many issues and situations. It has been a beautiful moment in my life to stay in the community with people from different countries and different entities of the congregation. It was an enriching experience. The experience I had will help me in the way I live in the community. I thank the two communities I stayed, that is, Via Romagna Community and the General House Community, for the environment they created that helped me to study well and to grow in the life of prayer and community.

What specific contribution will you be able to make in your Entity from these studies?

In normal cases, a tree is helped to be straight when it is still young. I believe that the studies in the youth ministry will help the congregation, in general, and the Anglophone delegation, in particular, to accompany young people and to help them become good citizens and good disciples of Jesus Christ. I believe that the young people are the hope of the Church and of the society, for that, they need to be accompanied with authentic and credible animators who can give good witness to the young people. It is from this that the studies in the youth ministry will help to give insights on issues related to youth ministry.

What will your next destination be?

According to my superiors, they have asked me to go to Chipata- Zambia to be part of the new mission that the Congregation has opened. The aim of the mission is to help many young people in the diocese of Chipata in their search for God. I hope that the studies I have done here in Rome will give me the opportunity to participate actively in that mission.