

THE FAITH AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

The Gospel-image of John the Apostle can serve as an inspiration at the beginning of this process. In the traditional reading of the Fourth Gospel, he is both an example of a young person who chooses to follow Jesus and “the disciple Jesus loved” (*Jn* 13:23; 19:26; 21:7).

“...and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, “What do you seek?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, “So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter) (*Jn* 1:36-39).”

In the search for meaning in their lives, the two disciples of John the Baptist hear Jesus make the penetrating question: “What do you seek?” To their reply, “Rabbi (which means Teacher), where do you live?”, the Lord responds with an invitation: “Come and see” (*Jn* 1:38-39). At the same time, Jesus calls them to embark on an inner journey and to be prepared to move forward in a practical way, without really knowing where this will lead them. It will be a memorable encounter, so much so that they even remember the exact time of day (cf. *Jn* 1:39).

As a result of their courage to go and see, the disciples will experience the abiding friendship of Christ and will be able to pass each day with him. They will ponder his words and be inspired by them; and will be deeply affected and moved by his actions. John, in particular, will be called to be a witness of the Passion and Resurrection of his Master. At the Last Supper (cf. *Jn* 13.21 to 29), the intimate nature of their relationship will lead him to rest his head on Jesus’ chest and to trust his every word. In following Simon Peter to the house of the high priest, John will face the night of suffering

and loneliness (cf. *Jn* 18:13-27). At the foot of the Cross, he will endure the profound grief of his Mother, entrusted to him, while accepting the responsibility of taking care of her (cf. *Jn* 19:25-27). On Easter morning, he will share with Peter the frenzied yet hope-filled race towards the empty tomb (cf. *Jn* 20:1-10). Finally, during the miraculous draught of fish at the Sea of Galilee (cf. *Jn* 21:1-14), he will recognize the Risen Lord and will give testimony to the entire community. John's example can be of assistance in understanding that the vocational experience is a gradual process of inner discernment and growth in the faith, which leads to discovering the fullness of the joy of life and love, making a gift of oneself and participating in the proclamation of the Good News.