

Voluntas Dei USA
Team Lesson
September 2018

This lesson invites us to continue to reflect on the Vision Statements from our Congress and Assembly. Brief paragraphs are taken from each “direction” – Commit, Reinvigorate, and Grow. Teams may wish to go back and read the complete statements handed out in August. The questions for discussion come from comments offered by the small group discussions. These are the most frequent comments. The council will review all of the comments as we move forward. Team leaders are invited to forward any comments to Frank Berna for the council’s consideration (berna@lasalle.edu).

Opening Reflection:

In order to bring one’s life to fruition,
To be capable of adapting to one’s environment,
We must constantly disregard the past and the future.
We must concentrate on the present.

Incursions into the past are beneficial
If we find there what is good and beautiful,
Fine and true; in other words
All that can provoke or bring forth the positive
And a sense of wonder.

Dreams of the future are profitable insofar as
They create optimism, enthusiasm, and joy in us,
A kind of contentment, of personal satisfaction.

- Fr. Parent, *The Present Moment*, p. 32.

Commitment

Voluntas Dei is the name of a particular community of relationships. We are defined by a deep level of commitment to live out the will of God in our lives. We inspire each other to search out more and more to make even deeper commitments. Through these commitments we are transformed over and over again. At the same time, if we are not committed, it will show. We lead by example, for ourselves and others around us. As St. Francis is quoted as saying, “preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words.”

Commitment is like being part of a home or a family. It creates a bond which allows us to connect even though we are geographically apart most of the time. It creates a home where relationships create a sense of familiarity – a sense of belonging. It creates a hunger to strengthen these commitments, which allow us to continue to connect inwardly and grow outwardly as an institute. It can also help us to grow individually. It is a safe and nurturing place. As a result, it is a safe place to fail. So, individuals can use gifts others see in them to take on commitments they might otherwise shrink

from. Through these commitments they can grow and become more who they are meant to be. They can also learn more about who they are.

In this section, as well as in Reinvalidate and Grow, members frequently highlighted the importance of the team. In the area of commitment, three basic themes were fairly common:

1. The team is the place of formation:
 - a. How do we strengthen the place/role of the team in the initial formation of members?
 - b. How do we use team meetings for the ongoing formation of members?
2. The spirituality of the 3 Fives:
 - a. How do we continuously incorporate a reflection on our spirituality in regular team meetings?
 - b. How can members strengthen their own commitment to this spirituality?
3. The use of technology:
 - a. How can we use technology to connect with those unable to be present for team meetings?
 - b. How can we use technology to strengthen the team experience, even for those who do attend regularly?

Reinvigorate

In the midst of challenges, we have to ask ourselves how we keep this spark alive. We must continue to connect and reconnect with Jesus so that we also can say, “were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” Reinvigoration can come from many corners. For *Voluntas Dei*, it comes from our spirituality and our charism. It centers on our coming together and sharing with each other, from the discipline of our spirituality, the use of social media and other forms of communication, from our service to others, from the joy of our calling, and from the meeting of new challenges of changing times.

Frequent comments included:

1. We need action statements; only want to assess progress for next four years:
 - a. One example: have each member identify some of their gifts, talents, and a word about their ministry to be shared with all members; deepen appreciation for who we are.
 - b. Another example: have a “mentor” for each new member; like RCIA, someone to walk with them through initial formation.
2. Use technology to promote a vibrant spirituality among ourselves and to share that spirituality with others – how might this be realized?
3. The importance of the Present Moment:
 - a. Live in the Now
 - b. Focus on the presence of God in the Now
 - c. How might we strengthen this practice?

Grow

We look for growth in diversity as well... How do we address, attract, and welcome those from other cultures? This is an even greater challenge in a time of animosity toward immigrant groups in the United States and throughout the world. Who are we trying to attract? While the majority of immigrants coming to the United States are Spanish-speaking, there are increasing numbers of immigrants from Asia and Africa. We also need to think about how we will welcome younger members. Welcoming others means that we will have to change. This can be a fearful process.

Members need to be proud of who we are in *Voluntas Dei* and share it with others. Our broader media efforts will be strongest where they help support personal encounters (with others) by clearly communicating who we are and our place in the broader Catholic Church.

Frequent comments included:

1. Get some feedback from the Spanish group; what works and what doesn't work for them
 - a. How can we learn from them?
 - b. Can we create a more welcoming environment?
 - c. Are there other communities to whom we should reach out to?
2. Create a brief narrative/script to communicate to others who we are...
3. There is a correlation between personal growth and the growth of the Institute:
 - a. "They will know us by who we are"
 - b. Consciousness of one's own God-given dignity; to be examples for others to discover and grow; how do we accent this theme and develop it?

Concluding Prayer:

Let us pray that God's will may be accomplished in us – Our Father...

Amen!

Prepared by Frank Berna