



YCS

A New Generation of Apostles

by Alison O'Regan

Christian Leadership

'There is an urgent need for the emergence of a new generation of apostles anchored firmly in the word of Christ' (Benedict XVI 2006). In this message of Pope Benedict XVI for the 21st World Youth Day, young people are challenged to live as this 'new generation of apostles', challenged to give their lives to transforming the world by accepting their unique missions from God, just as Jesus and the first apostles did.

Christian leadership is about radically transforming the world into God's kingdom. This means being able to change the world practically; chairing meetings, taking minutes and public speaking; changing the wider community with campaigns and group actions; and living as an informal, everyday example of apostleship. Every Christian has a role to play in effecting these changes and students are challenged to passionately take up their missions from God and transform the world.

Being a leader also means making mistakes, and often being unsure about the next step to take. Just as Peter struggled with his mission, so will many students of today. It is being able to hear God's call through the Gospels, and taking the time to pray and reflect, that students will find strength for their actions and be able to empower the students around them.

YCS – Faith in Action

The Young Christian Students movement exists to empower young people to actively live out their desire to change the realities they are faced with, and to do so in the light of their faith and with the passion of young hearts – the same young heart with which Jesus and his apostles lived and changed the world.

Talk to almost any students about their beliefs, and they will be able to tell you what is important to them, be it equality, respect, love or the dignity of people. However, many of these students will also tell you that they do not encounter a world which reflects these beliefs; people suffer poverty, neglect, poor body image issues and considerable

pressure to be a 'success'. This contradiction between the beliefs and real lives of the students is what the YCS empowers them to change. The YCS provides a method of formation called the **Review of Life**, which enables students to critically understand a situation, realise what they want to change, what they are called to do by their faith and what actions they can take to bring about a positive change in the situation.

The Review of Life (See, Judge, Act):

is a method of looking at the ordinary circumstances of life as a sacred place of the divine presence and call of God. It results in action – courageous formative action for change – action that is a vocational response to God in our lives (O'Sullivan 1991, p. 83).

See: Students look at the issue from all angles, including who is affected by it and why it exists.

Judge: Students articulate what they wish the situation to be, and what the teachings of the Church and their personal faith say about the situation.

Act: Having reflected on the issue and deepened their understanding of how effecting change is part of their mission, students are empowered to think about practical steps they can take to change the situation, and how they can involve other people in their actions.

In using the Review of Life method, students develop leadership skills. They are formed in their roles as witnesses to the Gospel and as apostles changing the world. The courage which it often takes to respond to the contradictions between beliefs and realities can be difficult to find, but student leaders will be able to do this, and inspire leadership in others.

Alison O'Regan currently works as the Melbourne YCS Coordinator. As a student, she was a member of the Australian YCS National Executive Team, and served as the National Chairperson during 2006. Alison graduated from Santa Maria College, Northcote, in 2007.