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## **5. After all, can I do it alone?**

Dear young people,

I have learnt first-hand how important it is to have spiritual guidance in one's life. In 1586, when I was 19 years old, I experienced one of the greatest crises in my life and tried to resolve it on my own, but with little success. From this experience I realised that do-it-yourself is not possible in the spiritual life, because in the human heart strong tensions are constantly being played out between love of God and love of self, and that they are difficult to resolve without the help of a person to accompany you on the journey.

So, once I arrived in Padua to pursue my university studies, my first concern was to find a good spiritual guide with whom I could draw up a personal life programme and thus take my journey of growth seriously.

Here I experienced that perfectionism and voluntarism cannot be the elements that make one walk in a full life, but only the acceptance of one's own fragility handed over completely to God.

Even after becoming a priest, I continued my path of accompaniment and spiritual direction; I discovered, however, the importance of sharing the journey of my interior life with my cousin Louis de Sales and, above all, with Antoine Favre, Senator of Savoy. Despite the diversity of our vocations, we shared a true spiritual friendship and walked together in the ways of the Lord.

It was also important in my life to have a confessor with whom I could open my conscience and ask God for forgiveness. This accompanied me to fight sin at its root and to become free.

Rely on a spiritual guide, a person familiar with God and whom you trust, with whom you can open your heart and read your story in the light of Faith, so that you can become aware of and emphasise the gifts you have received and the great possibilities open before you. For me, there is no true spiritual direction if there is no friendship, i.e. exchange, communication, mutual influence. This is the basic climate that enables spiritual direction.

I suggest a small path that has been helpful for me to walk with my spiritual guide and that has enabled me to find inner balance:

- start from your real life and the concrete situation in which you live with its resources and limitations, trying to make unity in the many experiences you have.

Your life, in fact, runs the risk of being filled with so many things to do without meaning and direction. One suggestion I give you is not to be distracted and always be present in the present moment.

- During your days you are drawn to and oscillate between different forces, sometimes not harmonious with each other: that of the senses, emotions, rationality and faith. What allows you to find the balance between them is dedication, that is, always putting your heart into the things you do, with the awareness that every moment is an opportunity and a call to fulfil God's will in your life.

You may ask, what is the point of making the effort to be accompanied? The authenticity of your life is at stake: to you who are caught up in anxieties, fears and worries, the path of accompaniment will help you discover who you really are, but above all for Whom you are.

*Office for Vocational Animation*

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