PERSONAL PRESENTATION:

My name is Susana de Torres and I am a secondary school teacher at the Salesian school, Paseo de Extremadura, in Madrid.

I have been working there for 19 years, the last 17 of which I have been responsible for youth ministry in my school as coordinator of the Secondary section, and also as general coordinator for the school.

I have always been closely related to things Salesian. I am a past pupil of the school where I work and I have been a leader in the Youth Centre there as well. I was also part of the SYM team of my province, edited a magazine for leaders and as a young person in SYM I was involved in the organisation of the meeting of Spanish youth with Pope Saint John Paul II in Cuatro Vientos, Madrid, in 2003.

Finally, I had the great fortune of being actively involved in the WYD Madrid 2011, and in the SYM Don Bosco in 2015. In 2017 I was involved with the Youth and Family Ministry Congress organised by Youth Ministry Sector.

I have a degree in Journalism, although I have always felt like an educator. Before starting teaching I worked in radio, in the COPE network, and in the Information Office of CONFER España. While doing this I left pastoral coordination to draw up an accompaniment project. Currently, I teach Spanish and Literature classes in 1st, 2nd and 3rd ESO.

**EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES TO STRENGTHEN YOUNG PEOPLE'S SENSITIVITY TO BECOMING ACTIVE LAY PEOPLE IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION**

Good evening. Before starting my presentation I would like to express my gratitude at being able to be here with all of you. I am flattered, and I will not deny that I am somewhat nervous in sharing my words with the people around me. I sincerely hope that my experience, which is what I am offering you today, will help you to reaffirm your Salesian vocation: we are *"signs and bearers of God's love for young people."*

When I received the invitation from Fr Joan Lluis Playá, I thought: what can I contribute to the Salesian Family Spirituality Days 2023? How can I contribute to the reflection on educational processes to strengthen young people’s sensitivity to becoming active lay people in social transformation?

Before I started writing, I consulted the different meanings that the RAE dictionary offers about the word *process*, and I stayed with these:

1. The action of going forward.

2. The passage of time.

3. The set of successive stage of a natural phenomenon or of an artificial operation.

4. The action of following a series of matters that have no end.

After reading them, I drafted my own definition: “A set of actions that develop over time, that move us forward and that have no end.” But I was not too convinced because neither the objective of these actions nor their purpose was defined....

What could be the objective of a Salesian pastoral process with children, adolescents and young adults? It’s clear to me: *Da mihi animas caetera tolle*: The salvation of the children and young people that God has entrusted to us.

It is true that sometimes it is difficult to bring it down to earth for many reasons: coldness towards religion, and the emotional fatigue that COVID has generated among people makes me wonder if the beneficiaries of our works “want to be saved”, at least in the way we propose it to them. I consider that we are living in times of change, and that some of the practical schemes, which are not fundamental, need to be transformed. Our young people still need us and they challenge us to “sharpen our ears” and to “widen our hearts even more.”

When we talk about pastoral processes at school, I personally distinguish four concentric circles that surround the life of our children. If I may, let me give you the name of the pillars of every Salesian work: *Playground* would cover the outer circle; *Home* would be the second of them; *School* the third, and *Church* the closest and most intimate of all. Let me detail each of them:

The outermost circle, the *Playground*, represents the ministry of environment; a festive, purposeful and non-invasive ministry. A ministry that is resonant thanks to the Salesian sacrament of presence the Rector Major talks about. A pastoral ministry that offers courageous proposals to our youngsters through the “Good Morning”, tutoring, solidarity campaigns... a pastoral ministry that nurtures a feeling of belonging to Salesian work thanks to closeness and simple details ... an affective and close up kind of ministry, often one of “first proclamation”. A pastoral ministry that answers the question: What can we propose to these young people that is close and attractive to them?

The second circle, *Home*, comes about spontaneously if the *Playground* brings them together and keeps them active. This is when our young people get a taste of “being" or “feeling part of”. Observation by educators is very important in this process: What are the young people most open to our proposal asking us for? What kind of place are we going to offer them to continue growing in their faith?

This is where the most personal proposals come into play: being involved in celebrations, in province or diocesan events, taking on some pastoral responsibilities, etc.

The *School*  circle I would focus on group commitment, a gradual project where the young person freely and depending on age and stage can grow together with others by taking on responsibilities that are of help to their life of faith. This is akin to the *Valdocco sodalities*...These young people are our “Michel Rua”s those who “go halves with us”. They share in our responsibility for educative and pastoral work.

And finally, we come to the *Church* circle, focused on personal commitment. After having experienced everything that the Salesian house offers them in the previous stages, young people find themselves faced with a proposal for spiritual accompaniment. What personal project does God have for you? How can you be “like that good yeast that helps to grow and make the bread of the Human Family bigger and tastier"?

Staying in this last circle is not something eternal. When their formation among us has come to an end and they flex their own wings, a new horizon opens up where the Salesian school feels like home, like a safe place they can return to... and here is the great challenge: What can we continue to offer these young people? How can we accompany them in their process of becoming “good Christians and upright citizens”?

Let me go back to my definition of process: “A set of actions that develop over time, that move us forward, that have no end, and whose objective is the salvation of the young people that God has entrusted to us.” We need to continue fostering partnerships between us as a Salesian Family so that the young people who leave our schools find a community in which they can live and celebrate their faith, where they rediscover “their roots”, and become men and women capable of transforming society in terms based on the gospel.

Let me conclude my presentation with words from Fr Viganó*: "In the hearts of all who are Salesian in their approach, young people are the sacred ground before whom we take off our shoes. Like Moses, God speaks to us through them. They are the native place of our mission, the theological place where God seeks to remain at our disposal, awaits our return and offers us the grace of an encounter with Him.”*

**Susana de Torres**