

## **University Pastoral Care**

### **Today's pastoral care, local diocesan activity, and interreligious dialogue at the Bocconi University**

Today's university pastoral care is a sort of "frontier" service. This expression refers to the multiple aspects that characterize university pastoral care, while expressing – through an image – the synthesis of what pastoral care really means.

In the large diocese of Milan, in our case at the Bocconi University, pastoral care has to do with frequent changes in situations and opportunities. This is mainly due to the high mobility principally of students not only owing to the physiological incoming and outgoing flows connected with academic cycles, but also to students frequently attending courses abroad (exchange students, internship, etc.).

In consideration of very fast changing flows of students, pastoral care is highly demanding in terms of capability to renew proposals, of intuition to seize favourable occasions, of elasticity in maintaining remote relationships. In a word, pastoral care cannot be static.

A second major feature is that pastoral care is confronted with a significant heterogeneity of the Christian community attending the University. It consists principally of young non-Milanese people coming from much different church experiences and environments. This involves the need to make up for diversities, explain the peculiarity of the Ambrosian reality (the Ambrosian liturgy, for instance), and sometimes provide a mediation between diverging sensibilities. It is necessary to find a common language capable of securing an authentic brotherly climate.

A third feature of the university pastoral care is the need to offer welcome and listening, within the frame of interpersonal relations. This is probably the logical consequence of the above considerations. When confronted with the intense and sometimes frantic university life, the classical pastoral care structure of parishes is unsuited and of little use. Offering authentic and deep personal meeting opportunities is much more fruitful. This makes it possible to start significant spiritual paths and favours true inner growth that will remain in the long run regardless of where one may go or whatever may be one's professional and existential situation. University pastoral care is a frontier experience, as said at the beginning, because it has to be reinvented day by day, because it affords no guarantees in terms of structures and groups, because it has humbly to accept the alternation of significant moments with others that are apparently void. A university pastoral care to be entrusted to the sole true Master, Jesus. Thus, the fact that the San Ferdinando church and Rettoria are located within a city district is certainly a grace: this favours an interchange with people who do not belong to the university environment and the chaplaincy is prevented from providing a sort of exclusive specialist service. Moreover, it makes it possible to offer some proposals to all people, thus producing a vitality that would otherwise be unthinkable.

In addition, by its own nature, the university environment paves the way to an interconfessional and interfaith dialogue. This probably needs a more active availability: the opening of an interfaith room at the Rettoria in May 2012 is intended to be a clearcut sign in this direction.