

“DUC IN ALTUM”

Francine Guilmette¹



1. A year for your future

What is «Duc in Altum»?

A 10 month journey to equip Catholics young adults to discern and live in a fuller and freer way their vocational identity as adults in faith. The term “*Duc in Altum*” is the Latin translation for “*Put out into the deep*”.

What is “a vocation culture”?

«A culture in which each Christian is empowered to identify and respond to the mission to which he /she is called as a member of the Body of Christ, in and for the world».²

Desires expressed by young adults regarding a “vocation culture”

«Create discernment team consisting of faith-filled people».

«Inspire us with open dialogue, a dialogue where we will recognize our responsibility and accountability».

«Introduce us to objective mentors who are truly open to God’s will for us, and can serve as wisdom figures».

¹ Francine GUILMETTE, Don Bosco Center, Toronto (Canada).

² III CONTINENTAL CONGRESS FOR VOCATIONS 2002, *Conversion Discernment Mission*, Montreal 2002, 11.

«We ask that you support and train us to be leaders and risk-takers for the sake of God's kingdom».

Why Duc in Altum?

1. To respond to the deepest questions of young adults: Who am I? Where am I going? How can I find true happiness? How do I find out what God wants me to be and to do? How can I discern among so many good choices?

2. To accompany young people in facing a multiplicity of propositions and experiences, and reflect on short-term and long-term commitments.³

How did it start?

In 2005, a small team in Montreal, QC, led by the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco, began reflecting on the cries of young adults regarding vocation discernment. Partly inspired by the Italian program "*Un anno per il tuo futuro*", and creatively shaped to our reality, the team launched the first group in the fall of 2005 with 19 participants! The inspirational models are Blessed John Paul II, and the Salesian Saints like Francis de Sales, St. John Bosco (founder of Salesians) and St. Mary Mazzarello (co-foundress of Salesian Sisters). Since then, other 2 teams and groups emerged in Ottawa and Toronto. In 2013, the Salesian Sisters established a coordination team «Duc in Altum Canada» to oversee, coordinate, train and promote Duc in Altum.

Who is it for?

Young adults, in their 20s and early 30s, journeying in their faith and relationship with Christ and ready to commit for one year in exploring the question of how to respond to God's personal call to happiness. The ideal number of participants is between 10 and 15.

How do potential participants discern their readiness for Duc in Altum?

- attend Info-Sessions (usually in August and September);
- reflect;
- request interview;
- fill out registration form.

What is the format?

Group encounters: 1 week-end + 6 full Saturdays (10am to 9pm) + week-end.
Personal accompaniment: 1 hour once a month, time and place agreed upon.

What is the focus of each group encounter?

DIA 1: Orientation of the itinerary.

DIA 2: Identity.

DIA 3: The Word of God.

³ N.B. *Duc in Altum* is not a recruitment initiative for Diocese or religious communities.

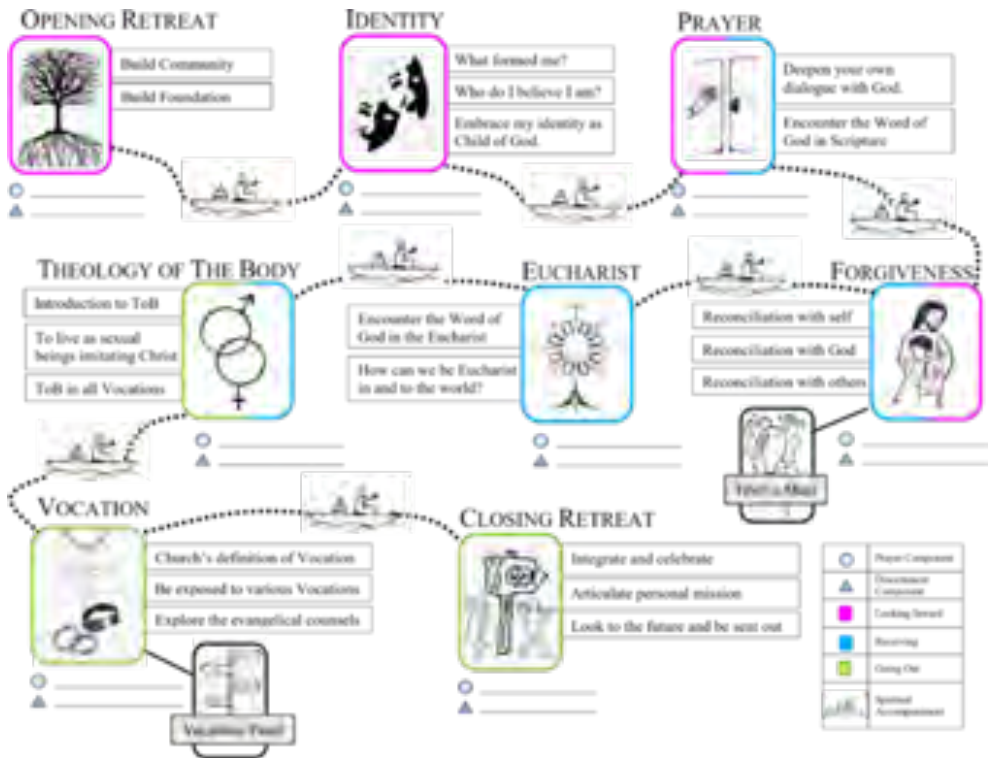
DIA 4: The Eucharist.

DIA 5: Marriage & Theology of the Body.

DIA 6: Reconciliation (self, others, God).

DIA 7: Discipleship and universal call to holiness.

DIA 8: Integration, personal mission statement, Celebration.



What are the essential components of Duc in Altum?

- Christ-centered.
- Focused on community building family style: group journey, meals, ice-breakers, free time.
- A faithful journey (DUC'ers need to commit to *all* encounters and accompaniment sessions).
- Personalized accompaniment.
- A rich variety of persons from various paths of life teaching, witnessing, praying, serving (guest speakers, witnesses, confessors, celebrants, service team, host community).
- Exposure to a variety of personal and community prayer experiences, excerpts of spiritual authors.

The participation of the leadership team at every encounter to animate, to support, to model.

Salesian Spirituality colors the leadership style and the entire journey

1. «Yes to life!» Daily life is the place to meet God.
2. Christ-centered relationships.
3. Joy and commitment / Youth evangelizing youth.
4. Experience of Church: communion and service.
5. Vocation choice.
6. Mary as model of discipleship.

What is the expected outcome?

Conclude the year's journey with an explicit desire to making "the will of God", as it reveals itself in their lives, the *focus* of their life *choices* and *commitments* and be *better equipped* to nurture this focus.

How is it financed?

Each participant contributes \$300/350 CND depending on local site. This covers: Duc in Altum binder / other materials, 22 meals and lots of snacks, transportation & lodging for 2 week-ends at a Camp, offering for guest speakers, t-shirts.

The actual real cost of this journey could be estimated around \$1,000/\$1,500 per participant.

What kind of leadership makes Duc in Altum happen?

A leadership team that is passionate about developing a "vocation culture" among young adults, that believes strongly in the vision of *Duc in Altum*, that has diversified gifts and abilities and works collaboratively within and beyond the team. It is ideally composed of adults and youth (frequently past DUC'ers) representing various vocational choices.

Who contributes to the journey called Duc in Altum?

The leadership team: coordinates, animates, evaluate the journey.

The Spiritual Companions: accompany each DUC'er.

The participants themselves, now referred as «DUC'ers».

Guest speakers / Witnesses / Priests (in various roles).

Service Team / Host community.

Overall, it is a caring community composed of 40 to 50 people at the service of the young adults who are being supported and encouraged to make life-giving choices.

Are you interested in starting Duc in Altum in implementing in your area?

1. Gather a small team.
2. Express your interest and contact DIA Canada (see below).
3. Go through training program by coordinating DIA Canada team: in general: a solid knowledge of faith and a deepening of spirituality.

Regarding *Duc in Altum*:⁴ vision, objectives, content, process, animation skills, Salesian Spirituality, vocation culture.

Leadership skills: Jesus as leadership model, collaborative and servant leadership attitudes and skills, planning and evaluating skills, specific roles, planning tools,

1. Become a member of DIA Canada / yearly fee (\$100 per year).
2. Purchase program (Leadership Book: \$50).

2. Vision Statement

«Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch» (Luke 5:4)



Duc in Altum is a journey to equip Catholic young adults to live fully and freely their vocational identity as discerning adults in faith.

Breaking it down.

Journey. While not part of the goal per se (the goal starts at the “to”), we begin our goal statement reiterating that *Duc in Altum* is not so much a program or seminar, as it a journey. In fact it is a small journey on the overall journey of life. It is a beginning. Hopefully if participants never saw their lives as journeys, the journey of *Duc in Altum* is merely the first leg of what they now see as the pilgrimage of life.

Equipe. *Duc in Altum*'s main purpose is to instill tools in young adults and teach them how to use these tools. We cannot force or simulate an interior change in the participants; rather we provide education in tools and opportunities to practice using them. The word “equip” correctly denotes that it only has value if the tools taught in the “equipping” stage are subsequently used.

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Catholic young adults. We specify the audience of *Duc in Altum*. It is aimed at young adults. Specifically, it is aimed at Catholics. Therefore its primary purpose is not to catechize, evangelize, and engage in mystagogy, etc., as it presupposes that the participants have already undergone these steps of Catholic formation. It is important to note that these steps in Catholic growth never completely end, and especially in today's Catholic culture, most of us will never receive all the catechesis we need, and we certainly all need to be continually evangelized. However, this is not *Duc in Altum's* primary purpose. Likewise, non-Catholics, or nominal Catholics may participate in *Duc in Altum*, but at the risk of not being able to engage fully due to a lack of the above.

Live fully and freely. *Duc in Altum* seeks to form the entire person, and so the person must live fully: in all aspects of life: spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, and relational. *Duc in Altum* finds its foundation in Salesian Spirituality that recognizes that the various dimensions of the human person cannot be separated: they must be integrated. The *Duc in Altum* journey necessarily requires that participants recognize obstacles to living fully the life God calls them to, and seeking God's help to overcome them. Likewise, the person must live freely: God proposes; the individual must respond to God's call in complete freedom. *Duc in Altum* can force no one to change, we simply invite, and the individual must choose in his/her own freedom whether to respond. Therefore, *Duc in Altum* calls the participants to identify ways in their lives that they are not free, not able to respond to God freely, and to seek that freedom.

Vocational. Many young adults come to *Duc in Altum* seeking their Vocation, and indeed *Duc in Altum* seeks to provide the tools to discern God's will. Beyond discerning which formal Vocation God has called each one to, we seek to build up participants to respond first to the universal vocation to love, then to seek how they are called in each moment of each day to respond, and ultimately to the personal, unique mission God has called them to in life, which includes their formal Vocation, but also every detail which is particular to them.

Identity. To live fully as a Christian is to live knowing self as a creation and child of God. *Duc in Altum* leads the participants into loving, honest realization of themselves as they are, and as God is calling them to be. This identity is vocational because it is in loving and serving God that we find our deepest, truest identity.

Adults in faith. Ultimately, *Duc in Altum's* goal is to build up men and women of God. Some enter *Duc in Altum* with the formation of children: often attending mass, receiving sacraments, knowledge of the Church's teachings; but not necessarily living as adults of faith, lovers of Christ, servants of God. *Duc in Altum* seeks to equip these individuals so that they can begin to stand on their own two feet eating solid food, not milk. They now begin live their vocational identity. Not dependent on the urgings of family, formulas of a program, or aimless wandering of sheep with-

out a shepherd, they follow a path that only they can walk, for they follow Christ on the journey of their lives.

3. The Synod on *Youth, Faith and Vocation*, and the Program *Duc in Altum*

The Synod on *Youth, the Faith and Vocational Discernment* is an amazing grace-filled opportunity to reflect and respond as a Church to the deep needs of young people in search of happiness and true love. In my own life, I experience dialogue with young people as a transforming moment! So, let’s zoom in a bit on Synod 2018 in order to “dive deeper” into a very pertinent and fruitful programme called *Duc in Altum*!

One of the lines of the preparatory document caught my eyes, «*Promoting truly free and responsible choices, fully removed from the practices of the past, remains the goal of every serious pastoral vocational programme*». ⁵

The Salesian sisters of St. John Bosco are
an international community of
consecrated women whose main mission
is
to educate and evangelize youth!
Info:
www.salesiansisterscanada.ca

“Duc in Altum is a mindful,
critical and hair-raising
blessing.
It is about time!”
Participant 2013

Duc in Altum was inspired, tested since by the vocational questions of young people that emerged during the III Continental Congress for Vocations (Montreal, April 2002) as well as World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto! At the Vocation Congress, an unplanned but Spirit-filled Young Adult Statement surprised and captured the

⁵ SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Youth People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, Preparatory Document, Rome 2018.

participants of the congress and expressed how Catholic Young Adults were searching «for objective mentors who are truly open to God’s will for us, and can serve as wisdom figures».⁶

The Preparatory Document on the Synod 2018 points out that «*Within the fluidity and insecurity previously outlined, the transition to adult life and the building of a personal identity increasingly require a “reflective course of action”*».⁷ Well, guess what? *Duc in Altum* structures one possible and life-giving “reflective course of action” sustained over time as opposed to a one-off encounter. The journey offers a respectful environment, a consistent and supportive group, and several tools in order nurture, train, and equip Catholic young adults that are searching for happiness and meaning in their lives. From the very first group, participants have called themselves “Ducers”, one who “puts out into the deep.”

“Duc in Altum taught me the steps in discernment and helped me to make key decisions for my life.”

Participant 2015

The expected outcome is to conclude the year’s journey with an explicit desire to make “the will of God” the focus of a young adult’s life choices and commitments and be equipped to nurture this focus in today’s challenging world. The mission of *Duc in Altum* is to form discerners with God and with a Church that cares and accompanies young adults.

⁶ Young Adult Statement. III CONTINENTAL CONGRESS FOR VOCATIONS, cit.

⁷ SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Young people, the faith and vocational discernment*, Preparatory Document, cit.