

BE A GOOD LISTENER - LEARNING FROM SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

Giovanni Dody Kurnianto ^{a,1,*}

^a Gregoriana University Roma

¹ giovannidody@gmail.com

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to prove that the spirituality of Fransiskus de Sales in his Introduction to the Devout Life is still relevant today, especially in the world of formation of priests and religious candidates in Indonesia. This work was born in the midst of Francis de Sales' concern as Bishop of Geneva for the spiritual life of the laity in his diocese in the midst of the onslaught of the Protestantism movement that swept Europe at that time. As if, Francis wanted to tell his people that, not only in the Protestant Church, in the Catholic Church also holiness belongs to everyone, not only to the clergy, monks and nuns. This book was born in the form of a practical guide for anyone who wants to build a spiritual life. A new perspective is offered by Francis de Sales that the first step to building a spiritual life does not start from the celebration of the sacraments and liturgies but from the longing for God that arises from everyone's heart. It is this longing for God that must be cultivated and nurtured, first of all, in spiritual friendship with those who are more experienced in the spiritual life. In the world of formation, this is known in several forms such as spiritual guidance, personal assistance or cura personalis.

Keywords:

Spirituality, Protestantism, Spiritual Guidance, Listening

INTRODUCTION

Luigi Rulla (1932-2022) introduced a new perspective on the world of prospective priests' formation during the Second Vatican Council. Rulla is both a Jesuit and a Psychiatrist.¹ Around the 1960s, during the Second Vatican Council, Rulla conducted research on seminarians and nuns in the United States. Rulla wanted to study the psychosocial processes that occur in the vocation decision-making process in seminarians and nuns when they decide to stay or leave the vocation. From the research, Rulla shows that their decisions to enter into formatting, stay and leave the vocation are driven by subconscious motivations.²

Rulla's research also changed the perspective of priesthood and religious formation after the Second Vatican Council. Two documents of the Second Vatican Council regarding the formation of priests (*Optatam Totius*) and monks (*Perfectae Caritatis*) overemphasize the pastoral aspect as the goal of formation.³ As a result, the pattern of priestly and religious formation programs at that time, around the 1960s, sometimes only emphasized the external aspects of candidates for the sake of their pastoral demands. This causes the formation program to produce individuals who are fragile and not strong on the internal side of their personality.⁴ Rulla's research continued with the help of colleagues at the Gregorian University Institute of Psychology in the 1970s. This lengthy research resulted in two volumes of Rulla's work being published in 1986 and 1989 under the title *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*.⁵ In short, Rulla's research provides an important note for the world of priestly and religious formation regarding the importance of fostering the internal side of the candidates, more than the external side. In other words, Rulla's research also emphasizes the importance of personal assistance in the world of priest and religious formation. The importance of internal human formation which presupposes

¹ Peter Egenolf, "Vocation and Motivation: The Theories of Luigi Rulla", *TheWay* 42/3 (July 2003), 81, <http://www.ifso.it>.

² Peter Egenolf, 81.

³ Peter Egenolf, 82.

⁴ Peter Egenolf, 82.

⁵ Peter Egenolf, 81.

the importance of personal assistance is also mentioned concretely in two papal documents regarding the formation of priests, namely *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992) and *Ratio Fundamentalist Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (RFIS) 2016.⁶

The importance of cultivating the internal aspects within every human being as a way to develop spiritual life has been initiated by Francis de Sales in his “Introduction to the Devout Life” which was published for the first time in 1619. The thesis of this research is that the spirituality of Francis de Sales which is contained in the “Introduction to Devout Life” made a significant contribution, not only for the pastoral of the laity but also for the formation of priests and religious at this time. In the midst of the onslaught of the Protestant movement that swept through the European Catholic Church at that time, it gave birth to a new perspective on the pastoral of the laity and seminarians today, namely the importance of listening to their life stories.

METHODS AND APPROACHES

This study uses the “close reading” method of the book *Introduction to the Devout Life* by Francis de Sales which was first printed in 1619. This method is useful for finding insight from Francis de Sales about his pastoral method to develop the spiritual life of the laity. Reading his life history also helps readers understand the impact of the birth of Protestantism on the rise of practical spiritual movements within the Catholic Church, including the publication of *Introduction to Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales.

FRANCIS DE SALES: BISHOP OF GENEVA, PROTESTANTISM AND THE LAITY⁷

Francis was born in 1567. His residence was across Lake Annecy, near the village of Chateau de Sales Castle, Geneva an area at that time was still part of France. His father, named Francois de Boisy. He

⁶ PDV no 45; RFIS, *introduction* no. 3.

⁷ Wendy Wrigt, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*, (New York : Croosroad 1997), 29-34,[PDF, sent by Proff.ssa Donna ORSUTO on moodle of lesson: “Teologia e spiritualità del laicato” in Gregoriana University, download on 17 November 2021], 29-34.

was a respected local political figure who was quite influential in the area. His mother's name was Francoise de Sionnaz. Francoise was a young wife. When she conceived Francis, she often had anxiety. She often went to Notre Dame de Lisse Church in central Annecy to pray for her children. Perhaps the mother's prayer for her child's growth were answered. In 1602, Francis was ordained Bishop of Geneva.

Surprisingly, when he became Bishop of Geneva, Francis lived near his homeland, Annecy. This happened because in 1602, when Francis was ordained Bishop of Geneva, the Diocese of Geneva had been in exile for nearly 50 years. The reason was the birth of the Protestant Church in Germany which was pioneered by Luther in the 1500s.⁸ This Protestant movement was growing rapidly and gave a great shock to the Roman Catholic Church in Europe. One of the effects was the Diocese of Geneva, which at that time was still part of the French state. In France, the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant movement were both allowed to worship. As a rule, the dominant and quantitatively winning group has the right to use the existing church building. In Geneva, the Protestants were victorious. Therefore, they expelled them and requested that the Diocese of Geneva relocated to a remote village near Lake Annecy south of Geneva.

As bishop, Francis was uneasy with the development of Protestantism in European society. The Protestant movement was very aggressive in offering the concept of holiness «no longer belongs to the hierarchy». This movement was quite successful in attracting the interest of some Europeans who wanted to explore the spiritual life without having to become priests, monks or nuns. This situation greatly influenced Francis' pastoral model as Bishop of Geneva.

Francis was reminded of the figure of Charles Borromeo. He was Bishop of Milan when Francis was a student at the university of Padua. Francis saw how Charles, as Bishop of Milan, was always in the midst of his people. Francis was greatly inspired by Charles Borromeo. Thus, the territory of Annecy he was familiar with, and not very large, surrounded him almost every day. He visited the old prison. He visited the old convent of Saint Clare and gave sermons to the sisters who lived there. Francis also regularly visited the Dominican Church near Lake Annecy to provide catechesis for children. As bishop, Francis

8 Antal Birkás, "The Protestant Reformation: Origins, Impact and Heritage", *Civic Review*, Vol. 14, Special Issue, (2018), 424-434, DOI: 10.24307/psz.2018.0427, <http://www.real.mtak.hu>.

cared deeply for the laity. This visit and his warm concern for the laity paid off. Some lay people such as Antonie Favre, Jane de Chantal and Louise de Charmoisy were his first students.

Francis often gave short letters containing spiritual advice to some of his students, especially Louise de Charmoisy. Louise de Charmoisy was a young woman, the wife of a court clerk in France. He came to Francis and expressed his desire to deepen his spiritual life. Francis also gave him regular spiritual guidance. The life of Louise de Charmoisy was of particular interest to Francis. Louise's desire to deepen her spiritual life arose in the midst of her luxurious life as a courtier's wife.

In the period 1607-1608, Francis was interested in collecting back his spiritual advice which he wrote in the form of short letters. While still writing letters to some of his spiritual children, Francis rearranged the themes he wrote in the spiritual advice he had given to his disciples. In 1610, Francis finally managed to complete the rearrangement and the manuscript was ready on his desk. These collections of spiritual advices were rewritten as one long letter, consisting of five chapters. Through this letter, as if Francis was giving personal spiritual advice to an imaginary female character named «Philothea». In 1619, this manuscript began to be printed and presented to readers in a more familiar form under the title *Introduction of Devout Life*. Through this work, Francis de Sales was finally recognized as the first saint to write down guidelines for the development of spiritual life for the laity in a systematic way.

SOME INSPIRATIONAL POINTS IN SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES THOUGHTS

In his book *Introduction to Devout Life*, Francis de Sales has listed five very systematic steps in building holiness, especially for the laity. First, one needs to nourish the soul in order to always have a longing for God; the longing to continue to serve Him, the soul's longing to live in love because it feels sure that God loves. Second, the need for prayer and the sacraments in life builds holiness. The third was the practice of living in virtue. Fourth was the practice of dealing with temptation. Fifth was the exercise for the renewal and confirmation

of the soul in holiness.⁹

In this section, I will not describe these five steps. From these five steps, there were three inspirational things from Francis de Sales' thoughts on assisting the laity that I want to convey to you, the readers. First, the idea that the life of holiness can be practiced by anyone with any profession of life. Second, he thought that the life of holiness was not primarily a matter of always praying and have celebration of the sacraments but rather a heart full of love. Third, the need for a spiritual guide.

1. HOLINESS FOR ANYONE AND IN ANY PROFESSION OF LIFE

Wendy Wright (1997) said that the thought of Francis de Sales changed the reflection of the Church on monastic life.¹⁰ Francis de Sales revealed that efforts to build holiness can be carried out by everyone in the journey of his life every day.¹¹ This idea of Francis is known as «countercultural».¹² This idea arose from Francis' understanding of the world as an «a choice arena».¹³ According to Wright (1997) in the understanding of Francis, there are two choices: Christ or the world. There are people who, in their daily lives, choose Christ. Thus, his whole life is based on and colored by the values that Christ lived himself. However, there is also a group of people who choose "The World." They are people, whose daily life is based on worldly values such as luxury, achievement, pride and self-achievement.¹⁴ Everyone who lives in this world can live holiness by choosing Christ.¹⁵ The way, according to Francis, is by taking a

⁹ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life, Introduction of the Devout Life*, New York: Frederick Pustet & Co 1655, XVIII, <http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com>.

¹⁰ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

¹¹ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

¹² Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

¹³ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

¹⁴ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

¹⁵ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

countercultural step, which means living in the midst of the world but trying your best not to be influenced by worldly values.¹⁶

Francis de Sales also remembered the traditions of the Church that occurred around the fourth and fifth centuries.¹⁷ Many people at that time understood that the pursuit of holiness had to be lived by leaving the world. Those who want to get holiness also chose to live in the desert in Palestine, Egypt and beyond.¹⁸ They believed that by fleeing from the “world” and went to the deserted place like the “desert” their old life would be changed by Christ Himself to become a “new creation” in Christ.¹⁹ Francis called it the ascetic way.²⁰ For Francis, they have been willing to deny themselves or to deny their desires” and allow themselves” to be changed by Jesus Christ.²¹ For Francis, they have chosen Christ by abandoning worldly values and letting themselves transformed by the values of humility, love, purity of heart, and continuous prayer.²²

Francis taught that the idea of going into the wilderness and seeking holiness, was no longer necessary.²³ However, according to Francis, everyone who wants to achieve holiness in his life must continue to live the “ascetic way”. In other words, the idea of «countercultural» must also be based on the spirit of «ascetic».²⁴ Those who want to achieve holiness by choosing Christ in the midst of their daily lives, must remain like those who went to the Desert, who are willing to “die for himself” and allow Christ himself to

¹⁶ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*..

¹⁷ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

¹⁸ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

¹⁹ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

²⁰ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

²¹ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

²² Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

²³ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

²⁴ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

change what is “in his heart” to become creation, new in Christ.²⁵ In this case, Francis also wanted to say that spiritual life is not the first to change things that are “outside” or things that are “visible”. The spiritual life is primarily about being willing to allow oneself, so that the things that are “within”; the “invisible”, that is, the heart, is transformed by Christ’s values such as humility, love, purity of heart and a never-ending desire to pray. For Francis, external things would change automatically if, first of all, people would allow their hearts to be changed by Christ.²⁶

2. *TO BUILD A SPIRITUAL LIFE IS A MATTER OF CHANGING HEARTS, NOT JUST BEING PIOUS*

Francis opened his book «Introduction to the Devout Life» by discussing what the spiritual life really meant. He captioned the first part of his book: « The Description of True Devotion ».²⁷ First of all, Francis tried to remind his readers that people often get caught up in various misconceptions about the wrong understanding of spiritual life. This happened because people liked to understand spiritual life according to their will. Francis wrote:²⁸

Arelius was wont to paint all his pictures with the features and expression of the women he loved, and even so we all color devotion according to our own likings and dispositions. One man sets great value on fasting, and believes himself to be leading a very devout life, so long as he fasts rigorously, although the while his heart is full of bitterness; and while he will not moisten his lips with wine, perhaps not even with water, in his great abstinence, he does not scruple to steep them in his neighbor’s blood, through slander and detraction. Another man reckons himself as devout because he repeats many prayers daily, although at the same time he does not refrain from all manner of angry, irritating, conceited or insulting speeches among his family and neighbors. This man freely opens his purse

²⁵ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

²⁶ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

²⁷ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*.

²⁸ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*.

in almsgiving, but closes his heart to all gentle and forgiving feelings towards those who are opposed to him; while that one is ready enough to forgive his enemies, but will never pay his rightful debts save under pressure. Meanwhile all these people are conventionally called religious, but nevertheless they are in no true sense really devout.

This writing is very interesting because, which was written in the 1600s, still current to this day. What Francis wrote about his anxiety about spiritual life which is only “outside” is still happening today. Francis considered that people prefer to show their lives with spiritual life that is only “outside” which can be seen by people without allowing their innermost heart to be changed by Christ. Francis wrote:²⁹

When Saul’s servants sought to take David, Michal induced them to suppose that the lifeless figure lying in his bed, and covered with his garments, was the man they sought; and in like manner many people dress up an exterior with the visible acts expressive of earnest devotion, and the world supposes them to be really devout and spiritual-minded, while all the time they are mere lay figures, mere phantasms of devotion.

The analogy of Michal’s story that deceives Saul’s servants who are looking for David, emphasizes the basic elements of “external” life, namely lies and falsehood. By placing the cloth-covered statue on the bed, Michal managed to fool Saul’s servants into easily thinking it was David. For Francis, if a life of holiness only means hiding a wicked heart with “outward” things that look good and pious, it means that the person is living as a hypocrite.

3. *THE NEED FOR A SPIRITUAL GUIDE*

For Francis de Sales, one of the basic elements that must exist to build a spiritual life was the presence of a spiritual guide. In his book *Introduction to devout life*, Francis quotes Tobit’s dialogue with his son, Tobias. Tobias said to his father: “I don’t know the way.” Then, his father said: “Seek thee a man which may go with thee.” (Tobit 5:2-4).³⁰ As Tobit’s story, said Francis, people who want to deepen

²⁹ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*..

³⁰ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*..

their spiritual life must have a spiritual guide.

There are several important things that Francis taught about this spiritual director. First, Francis taught that having a spiritual director is a sign of obedience and humility. Francis quotes the words of a Spiritual Master, John Avilla: «Tough you search for the will of God, you shall never so assuredly find it as in the way of humble obedience, so much recommended and practiced by all holy persons who have aspired to devotion».³¹ Obedience to learn from a Spiritual Master who has experience building this spiritual life will not happen without humility. Thus, according to Francis, those who will seek spiritual guides or friends are those who “have the fear of God” (see Sir 6:16).³² This is actually the main requirement for those who want to develop a spiritual life according to the teachings of Francis de Sales. For Francis, spiritual life was not primarily about always praying or have celebration of the Sacraments.³³ Spiritual life, according to Francis, is a person’s journey to meet God. This journey requires a guide, a companion and a spiritual friend. However, this journey will not happen if people do not have the fear of God. This fear of God is actually able to move a person’s longing for God and thus have a sense of obedience and humility as well as to learn from an experienced Spiritual Guide.

Second, Francis explained the criteria for a spiritual director. A spiritual director must be a person who has certain qualities. This is important because in addition to being obedient and humble, the thing that must be in a person when he meets his spiritual guide is trust. So, a spiritual director must be someone who can be trusted. Francis gave some of the qualities of a spiritual director:³⁴

“but I say, choose one amongst ten thousand; for there are fewer

³¹ Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

³² Wendy Wright, *Francis de Sales and the Introduction to the Devout Life*.

³³ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*. Here, Francis wrote: “In the second part, to lead her father on, I show her the two great means by which she may unite herself more and more to his divine Majesty, viz., the use of the sacraments, by which our good God comes to us; and holy prayer, by which he attracts us to himself.

³⁴ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*.

than can be imagined who are capable of this office. He must be a man of charity, learning and prudence.”

Third, is prayer. Francis said that to find a qualified and trustworthy spiritual director requires a prayer. Francis wrote:³⁵

“but I say to you again, Ask him of God, and having obtained him, bless his Divine Majesty, remain constant, and seek no other; but proceed on, with sincerity, humility, and confidence, till you arrive at the happy end of your journey.”

Francis said that if the spiritual guide is sought prayerfully, people will not only find a qualified spiritual director but will also undergo the spiritual guidance with sincerity, humility and trust so that it will create joy at the end of the process.

REFLECTION: CALLED TO LISTEN

I find the thought of Francis de Sales is very interesting in an effort to initiate good pastoral steps for the laity at this time. In practice, many priests – including myself – greatly favored on the involvement of the laity in liturgical and sacramental celebrations. Thus, the number of laity who are present and actively involved in every liturgical and sacramental celebration sometimes only measures as pastoral success of a parish priest at this time. Yes, it is true. There is nothing wrong with that belief, but many priests -including myself- sometimes forget that the most important thing is to accompany them to have a longing for God.

Therefore, while reading on the thought of Francis de Sales, it came to my mind an attempt to become a good priest in the midst of the lay people by being a good listener. This is One of the important pastoral’s works that is quite important among lay people today is the willingness to listen to them carefully. The method can be varied, it can be through the living room pastoral, it can be with formal and regular spiritual guidance, but it can also be like what Bishop Francis de Sales did, going around to greet and meet his people.

The question then is why listen? The answer is, because «listening» is the basic and essential element in the spiritual guidance process.

³⁵ Francis de Sales, *Introduction to Devout Life*..

Henry Nouwen explained this well. He wrote:³⁶

Spiritual guidance affirms the basic quest for meaning. It calls for the creation of space in which the validity of the questions does not depend on the availability of answers but on the question's capacity to open us to new perspectives and horizons. We must allow all the daily experience of life-joy, loneliness, fear, anxiety, insecurity, doubt, ignorance, the need of affection, support, understanding, and the long cry for love- to be recognized as an essential part of the spiritual quest.

For Henry Nouwen, spiritual guidance in today's perspective is no longer aimed at finding answers to a problem. In that sense, spiritual guidance is no longer referred to as problem solving. For Nouwen, in today's perspective, spiritual guidance is a continuous process, where a person feels accompanied and encouraged and convinced to dare to face his problems with a wider perspective. Because, accepting all forms of experiences in daily life such as joy, anxiety, support, attention, loneliness, self-doubt and so on – is the key in every process of spiritual journey. So, in this case, the first thing that is needed for every priest who wants to serve as a spiritual director in any pastoral work for lay people is a willingness to listen, not provide solutions. Solutions, advice and answers that seem to provide certainty are sometimes another form of escape from the pain that exists in every human problem. Answers and advice from humans sometimes actually limit and make you stop. However, accepting the pain of every problem with a broad perspective because it is accompanied by a mentor often actually makes people grow more in spiritual life.

APPLICATION FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION IN INDONESIA

Every Christian vocation -to become a priest, monk or nun or live in a marriage bond- comes from God and is a gift from God. This gift, it must be understood, was first given to the Church.³⁷ This means that every Christian vocation is always present in the Church and through the Church. So, every Christian vocation is never lived alone

³⁶ Henry Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction*, (London: SPCK 2001), 9.

³⁷ Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates for the Priesthood, no 1.

and for its own sake. Every Christian vocation, including the priestly vocation, is exercised, first of all, for the service of the Church as communion.³⁸ This means that everyone who lives and lives his Christian vocation is always in the company of others and always demands the involvement of others.

The statement above also gives an awareness that is quite important in the context of the vocation to the priesthood that the Church is the main formator. The church is primarily responsible for discriminating the vocation and worthiness of candidates who are prepared for a priesthood ministry.³⁹ In practice, this task is also the responsibility of a diocesan bishop, the supreme leader of the particular church, to recognize the internal vocation of each prospective priest as an authentic vocation that comes from the Holy Spirit. This task is usually carried out with the help of a team of formators who have been prepared and appointed by the Diocesan Bishop. So, in this context, the main task of a formator is to assist and accompany candidates (seminarists) to perform a vocation *discernment* so that seminarist have the ability to know themselves, transform themselves to adopt Christ's values and finally give themselves to service to the Church.

In Indonesia, one thing that needs to be realized in the context of the Church's task to carry out the discernment of this vocation is the high number of priest candidates who are still undergoing formatting in seminaries in Indonesia. The Indonesian Church is still characterized by the existence of secondary seminaries, both junior high and high school levels, which are owned by several dioceses in Indonesia. This is not the case in most of the countries in the European region. This difference can be seen in the *Pedoman Pembentukan Hidup Imamat di Indonesia* (PPHI) issued by the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (*Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia*- KWI) and the *Ratio Fundamentalist Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (RFIS) issued by the Holy See through the *Congregatio per Il Clero* in 2016. The PPHI, which is referred to as the initial formation begins with the intermediate seminary stage.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, RFIS stated that the initial formation begins with the

³⁸ Guidelines for the use of psychology... .

³⁹ Guidelines for the use of psychology... .

⁴⁰ PPHI no 119, Cfr with RFIS no 57.

propaedeutic stage which must be lived for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 1 year. In the RFIS, the existence of an intermediate seminary is placed as a “pastoral vocation” which must be run by a bishop with the help of his priests.⁴¹ This can be a sign that shows the high number of vocation in Indonesia compared to several countries on the European continent.

The high number of young people who are interested in studying at the Seminary also creates difficult challenges, namely the pattern of formation and the limited number of formators. This can trigger the temptation to create a formation pattern that tends to emphasize the communal pattern of development, tends to pay attention to exterior things and pay less attention to interior things. This makes the discernment process that should have occurred in the initial formation in the seminary not running optimally. Communal assistance that focuses on external matters can also have an influence on the development of spiritual life. One of the misconceptions, as criticized by Francis de Sales in his book *Introduction to Devout life*, is when spiritual life stops at things that are external.

This research on the spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales actually yields a brief conclusion in the pastoral context for the laity and for the formation of the priesthood, namely regarding the importance of personal assistance. This is also an important contribution from the spirituality of Saint Francis de Sales for the formation of priests in the Indonesian Church. Even though at that time, personal assistance to the laity was initiated by Francis de Sales in the midst of the onslaught of the Protestant spirituality movement, this idea still feels actual, especially in the world of formators prospective priests in Indonesia. The fact about the high number of seminarians and the limited number of formators in some seminaries can no longer be a reason not to attach importance to personal assistance for seminarians. This personal assistance is the main requirement for the Church – in practice it is carried out by the formators – to carry out the process of discernment of vocations in its prospective priests.

It is in this context of personal guidance that the virtue of being a listener is needed. That is, one of the important elements in the context of the formation of prospective priests, learns from St. Francis

⁴¹ RFIS no 16.

de Sales, this is listening. If the formation process is a discernment process, then this formator's process presupposes a form of personal assistance. If this personal assistance is absolutely necessary in the world of formators prospective priests, especially in Indonesia, then "listening" is a competency that formators must possess, especially those in the Indonesian Church. The discernment process will work well in a personal guidance if a formator listens well, not only listening to the seminarian before him but also listening to himself first.

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