the world, the role of elders and reverence for one's ancestors are contributing factors to the formation of their identities. However, this is not shared universally, as traditional family models in other places are in decline. This leads to young people suffering as well. Some young people move away from their family traditions, hoping to be more original than what they see as "stuck in the past" and "old fashioned." On the other hand, in some parts of the world, young people seek identity by remaining rooted within their family traditions and striving to stay true to the way they were raised.

The Church therefore needs to better support families and their formation. This is especially relevant in some countries without freedom of expression where young people – particularly minors – are prevented from attending church and as such, must be formed in the faith at home by their parents.

A sense of belonging is a significant factor to the shaping of one's identity. Social exclusion is a contributing factor to the loss of self-worth and identity experienced by many. In the Middle East, many young people feel obliged to convert to other religions in order to be accepted by their peers and the surrounding dominant culture. This is also acutely felt by immigrant communities in Europe, who also feel the pressures of social exclusion and the pressure to shed their cultural identity and assimilate to the dominant culture. This is an area where the Church needs to model, and provide space for, healing for our families, responding to these issues by showing that there is room for everyone.

It is worth noting that the young person's identity is also shaped by our external interaction and membership within specific groups, associations and movements which are also active outside of the Church. Sometimes, parishes are no longer places of connection. We also recognize the role of educators and friends, such as leaders of youth groups who can become good examples. We need to find attractive, coherent and authentic models. We need rational and critical explanations to complex issues – simplistic answers do not suffice.

For some, religion is now considered a private matter. Sometimes, we feel that the sacred appears to be something separated from our daily lives. The Church oftentimes appears as too severe and is often associated with excessive moralism. Sometimes, in the Church, it is hard to overcome the logic of "it has always been done this way". We need a Church that is welcoming and merciful, which appreciates its roots and patrimony and which loves everyone, even those who are not following the perceived standards. Many of those who look for a peaceful life end up dedicating themselves to alternative philosophies or experiences.

Other key places of belonging are groups such as, social networks, friends and classmates as well as our social and natural environments. These are places where many of us spend most of our time. Often, our schools do not teach us to develop our critical thinking.

Crucial moments for the development of our identity include: deciding our course of study, choosing our profession, deciding our beliefs, discovering our sexuality and making life-changing commitments.

Other things that can both shape and affect the formation of our identities and personalities is our experiences with the Church. Young people are deeply vested in and concerned about topics such as sexuality, addiction, failed marriages, broken families as well as larger-scale social issues such as organized crime, human trafficking, violence, corruption, exploitation, femicide, all forms of persecution and the degradation of our natural environment. These are of grave concern in vulnerable communities around the world. We are afraid because in many of our countries there is social, political and economic