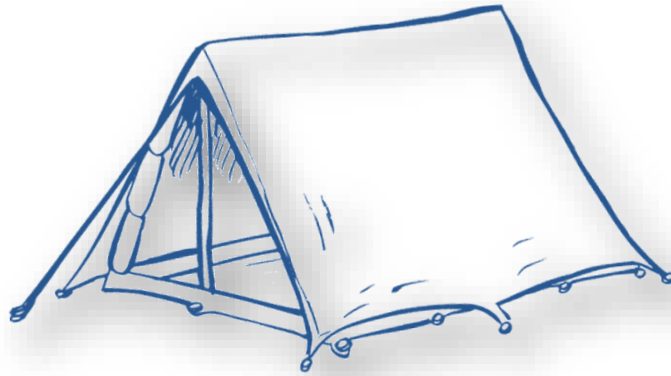


THE MEANING OF THE TENT

INTRODUCTION

The camping tent is the key element proposed to the youth in this program. It is both their starting point and their goal.



In order to pitch a tent it is necessary to be familiar with all of its parts: the tarp, the ropes, tent pegs, poles, the roof and the door. It is very important to be familiar with the utility of each element and how they join together to give strength and firmness to the tent so that it may respond to its finality: being a little portable house, a place of rest and of meeting, which provides protection in the outdoors and accommodates one or more people.

In these units of Affective-Sexual Education, **the tent represents the PERSON**. In this way, the young person – taking the tent as a personal image and protagonist along this journey – will discover step by step, each and every one of his/her dimensions as a person: his/her body, sexuality, affections, freedom, will and moral dimension. Each element of the tent corresponds to a dimension of the person. The objective is for them to learn to look at, observe, come to know and recognize themselves and, just like with the tent, be capable of “assembling” their different dimensions into a single, integrated unity: the person.

At the end of this journey, the youth will have acquired sufficient tools to be able to contemplate the two questions that head up this itinerary: **“Where should I pitch my tent?”** and **“with whom?”**.

The Program, considered as the collection of these units, will help them to orient their personal vocation: How are they made? What are they made for? Where are they going? To whom do they answer? Whom do they choose?... Along their path there will come a time in which they will choose to set up their tent, opening its door to the person that they choose, thus responding to their unique and personal vocation, just as the prophet Isaiah reminds us:

“Enlarge the space for your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly; lengthen your ropes and make firm your pegs” (Is 54, 2).

A BRIEF HISTORY

The use of camping tents dates back to ancient times: the beginning of the Iron Age.

Throughout history the tent has been attributed distinct usages, and has evolved through the creation of new structures and materials which facilitate the protection it provides, and offer greater stability and ease of assembly.

The Hebrew people lived in tents in the desert for more than forty years, and there are famous tents or canopies like the tent of Moses, of Cedar Son of Ismael, etc.



The tent has been a tent since ancient times.

The person has been a person FOREVER.

The Arabs used, and continue to use, tents to camp in the desert.

The Romans used them to camp on battlefields.

Both in the First and the Second World War soldiers in combat zones were housed in large camping tents; tents were also installed to serve as refectories, hospitals and offices for the officers.

Currently, tents are used in emergencies, such as natural disasters, and for recreational camping.

METAPHOR OF THE TENT AND THE PERSON

The word “campaña” (English: countryside) derives from “campiña”, which refers to stretches of land to be cultivated; the word “tent” derives from the Latin *tendere* which means “to tend”. “Tending” is linked with receiving other people. In order to tend to someone it is necessary to enter into a relationship with the person that you are tending to. One must go out of himself in order to be able to please the other person, to be able of welcoming them and taking care of them.

These two ideas of **relationships and stretches of land** refer us back to both the origin and the end of the person as a relational being and as a part of “something”.

We come from the earth, “we are dust”, stretches of land to be cultivated and plowed, to enter into a relationship with. This “extension” of land invites us to look toward Another, toward our origin. If we are an extension, this leads us to think that we belong to something greater, that we have an origin, to think about the Creator of all things:

“Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Gn 2:7).

The verb *“tendere”* points toward this aim of relation that is written in the heart of each one of us. It points us toward the desire for union, for communion, to which every man is called, and which simultaneously turns our gaze once again to our origin, in which this mystery of relation is rooted:

“ God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gn 1:27).



Knowing and recognizing our origin helps us understand our identity. In this way, the youth will be able to respond to the questions: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going?

*We are dust,
a stretch of land
whose purpose is
to tend to someone,
to meet someone,
to allow them to enter.*

FROM THE TENT TO THE TEMPLE

The tent is a place of meeting. It is also related to the words “tabernacle” and “temple”.

In all religions, the temple is the sacred place where the divinity makes himself present to men, the place where men enter into communication with the world of the gods.

The word “temple” comes from the Latin *templum* which means “sacred enclosure” and from the Greek verb τέμνειν which means ‘to cut’, ‘to trim off’. It is an enclosure reserved for the gods - cut off, separated, isolated. This demarcated space is sacred (*sanctus*) and, therefore, impenetrable. *Sanctus* comes from the word *sancire* which means ‘demarcate’, ‘establish’, ‘fence in’. This gives us an idea of a limited, fenced off, reserved place.

We can see, following the etymological and historical origin of the concepts and words “tent” and “temple”, that it is possible to arrive at the understanding of a certain relationship between the temple and the person. In this way, the person is ascribed with the characteristic of a unique and singular place for a meeting of intimacy. **The person is the place of meeting with God, in intimacy with God.**

THE TEMPLE IN THE BIBLE

In biblical language the tent as a tabernacle has different expressions: *'ohel*, tent; *ohel mo'ed*, tent of meeting; *'ohel ha= eduth*, tent of witness; *mishkan*, dwelling place; *mishkan ha= eduth*, dwelling place of witness; *mishkan 'ohel*, dwelling place of the tent; *beth Yahweh*, house of Yahweh; *qodesh*, holy; *miqdash*, sanctuary; *'hekal*, temple.

The symbolism of the temple is also found in the Old Testament. During the patriarchal age, the Hebrew people did not have a temple, but they did have sacred places where they invoked the name of Yahweh.

Abraham is considered the first Hebrew. He listens to the voice of the Lord and sets out on a journey. He leaves his land and his relatives, and walks along the path toward the meeting of the promise of God, of a new land that will give fruit: his descendants.

“Go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you” (Gn 12:1).

With this idea of “setting out”, the young person will take their backpack and begin an adventure. This itinerary will help them to discover, in a personal way, this land that has been promised for them: their own way, their vocation.

Mount Sinai is also considered a sacred place, the place of the manifestation of God to Moses.

“Do not come near! Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground” (Ex 3:5).



Painting of Tablets. Sinai. Moses. Ernest Descals.

After Sinai, during the exodus in the desert, the People of Israel possess a “portable sanctuary” where God can reside and remain in the midst of the people, and which serves as a constant reminder of the covenant that God has made with man: the Ark of the Covenant. In this way, **also the young person can discover this covenant is inscribed in all of their person: in their body, in their heart and in their mind. The promise of God.**

Like man in general, also the people of Israel stray from the path and fabricates a “false sanctuary”. Israel loses trust in the promise and seeks to adore other gods, but it is not God who manifests himself then, but rather a false god made by the men themselves: the golden calf.

“Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for that man Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him” (Ex 32:1)... “On seeing this, Aaron built an altar in front of the calf” (Ex 32,5).

In life, the youth also make false temples for themselves, places that distance them from God rather than bringing them closer. Desiring to believe in something, they end up adoring false gods.



King David has a plan to build a temple for Yahweh, but it will not be him, but Solomon, to build it:

“The Lord intends to dwell in the dark cloud; I have indeed built you a princely house, the base for your enthronement forever” (1Kg 8:12-13).

Later, the temple of Jerusalem, without making the other sanctuaries obsolete, will become the center of the worship of Yahweh. People will come to it from throughout the whole country to “see the face of God” (cfr. Ps 42:3). It is understood that the divine residence is in heaven, but the temple is like a replica of the celestial palace, in which Yahweh makes himself present on earth.

We once again unite the idea of the tent as an “extension o...f” and of the temple as “replica of something”. If we relate the idea of the origin of the person as an extension of something with the idea of the temple as a replica, then **the person, as image and likeness of God, makes God present.**

From the construction of the second temple on (...see the history of the 1st and 2nd temple...), because of the loss of religious meaning of the first temple, and up until the New Testament, the temple of stone begins to acquire a more spiritual character, since God is present where he reigns, where he is adored.

In the same way, beginning in childhood young people come to know themselves first through their body, from what is most physical, only subsequently becoming familiar with the rest of their dimensions, acquiring a spiritual knowledge of themselves.

***The body-person,
as a tent-temple
where God makes
himself present.***

In the New Testament, the new temple is **Jesus Christ**. The Virgin Mary is the true tent of meeting, the temple *par excellence*, where God makes himself present - so present, in fact, that He becomes flesh in her flesh. God, in the womb of Mary. God is made man in Jesus: the very body of Jesus is the new and definitive temple, not made by human hands. He is the Word of God who establishes his dwelling place among men, the temple above all temples. The place of meeting with God is Jesus Christ. Understanding this idea, **the young person will recognize that Jesus Christ is their way to an encounter with God.**

After the Resurrection, the body of Christ will be transfigured in the **Eucharist**, which continues to make Him present to all, today and forever.

From Pentecost on, the **Church** constitutes the new temple of God, as the continuation of the Body of Christ. With this idea, we return to the suggestive initial proposal of the tent as an "extension of earth". **The members of the Church, considered individually, are equally temples of God, temples of the Holy Spirit.**

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy" (1Cor 3:16-17).

Many times young people are unable to recognize themselves as temples of God, and therefore do not live out their true dignity, destroying themselves instead. Other false temples, like the golden calf, surround them, and can truly wound them.

It is very difficult to heal the wounds of the heart and the spirit. Only God, in his Son Jesus Christ, can heal these wounds...:

"Healing the brokenhearted, and binding up their wounds" (Ps 147:3).

... and rebuild all that was destroyed:

"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19).

The tent as a meeting place with God is the person himself, temple of God, place of intimacy with God.

Whoever is in intimacy with God will discover their true path and their vocation. Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? With whom? What for?

