

In my pastoral ministry, which is for young adults, applying the Ver component involves intentionally approaching their concrete reality and their communities before proposing any pastoral action or reflection. This first step focuses on understanding life as it is actually experienced, not only through data or general observations but through dialogue, listening, and their daily experiences. Within Hispanic youth ministry, especially in some rural communities in Mississippi, I consider several elements particularly relevant: family migration stories, economic challenges, bilingual cultural identity, and the emotional and spiritual struggles young adults face. This approach helps avoid abstract pastoral responses and instead encourages accompaniment rooted in real life, which later informs the processes of Juzgar y Actuar.

An important element of the Ver stage is called the “thick description.” This refers to a deeper form of observation that goes beyond simply describing visible facts. It seeks to understand meanings, emotions, cultural symbols, and the broader context surrounding people’s experiences. For example, it is not enough to observe that a young person rarely attends church, a thick description would explore the reasons behind this, how the person feels about faith, what family or social influences are present, and how they interpret their own spiritual journey. This deeper perspective allows a more holistic and human understanding of reality.

Applying thick description to life stories in ministry means listening carefully to personal testimonies with openness and respect, recognizing that each story contains spiritual, cultural, emotional, and social dimensions. When these stories are valued, pastoral ministry moves beyond simply transmitting information and becomes genuine accompaniment. This helps ensure that future steps of Juzgar y Actuar respond authentically to young people’s needs, supporting their identity, strengthening their faith, and fostering a deeper sense of belonging within the Church community.