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Dear Friends,

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On April 24th, 2005, from Saint Peter's Square, Benedict XVI reminded all of us: "Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ"

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This year promises to have much in store for us. St. Paul tells us, "When anyone is joined to Christ, he is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come."

2Cor: 5:17

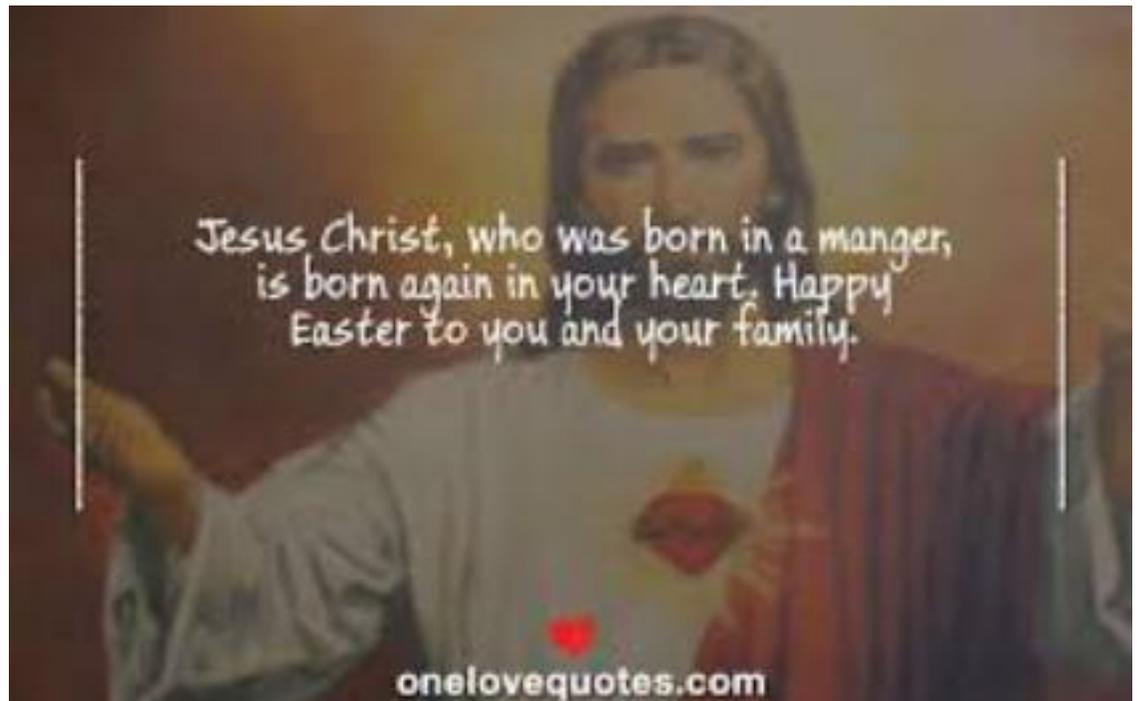
As we open the doors to those in need recognizing in them the face of Jesus in reaching out to others may we experience the joy of Easter.

With all good wishes and prayers,
Adelaide, Connie, Lilly, Cecilia and Satira

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MESSAGE OF HIS HOINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT 2017

“The Word is a gift. Other persons are a gift”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Lent is a new beginning, a path leading to the certain goal of Easter, Christ's victory over death. Christians are asked to return to God “with all their hearts” (Joel 2:12) to grow in friendship with Jesus, the faithful friend who never abandons us. Lent is a favourable season for deepening our spiritual life through fasting, prayer and almsgiving. At the basis of everything is the Word of God, which during this season we are invited to hear and ponder more deeply. I would like to consider the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (cf. Lk. 16:19-31). Let us find inspiration in this meaningful story, for it provides a key to understanding what we need to do in order to attain true happiness and eternal life. It exhorts us to sincere conversion.

1. The other person is a gift.

The parable begins by presenting its two main characters. The poor man is wretched and lacks the strength even to stand, The picture is one of great misery; it portrays a man disgraced and pitiful. The poor man is called Lazarus, which literally means God helps. Lazarus appears as an individual with his own story. He becomes a face, a gift, a priceless treasure, a human being whom God loves and cares for though operationally invisible to the rich man. Lazarus teaches us that other persons are a gift. Therefore the parable invites us to open the doors of our heart to others. Lent is a favorable season for opening the doors of our hearts to all those in need and recognizing in them the face of Christ. Each of us meet people like these every day. Each life that we encounter is a gift deserving acceptance, respect and love. The Word of God helps us to open our eyes to welcome and love life, especially when it is weak and vulnerable.

2. Sin blinds us.

Unlike poor Lazarus, the rich man does not have a name; he is simply called “a rich man”. His opulence was seen in his extravagant and expensive robes. The man was clearly ostentatious about his wealth and in the habit of displaying it daily. “He feasted sumptuously every day” (v. 19). In him we can catch a dramatic glimpse of the corruption of sin, which progresses in successive stages: love of money, vanity and pride. The Apostle Paul tells us that, “the love of money is the root of all evils” (1 Tim 6:10) It is the main cause of corruption, and a source of envy, strife and suspicion. Instead of being an instrument at our service for doing good and showing solidarity towards others, money can chain us and the entire world to a selfish logic that leaves no room for love and hinders

The parable shows that the rich man's greed makes him vain. His personality finds expression in appearances, in showing others what he can do. But his appearance masks an interior emptiness. His life is a prisoner to outward appearances, the most superficial and fleeting aspects of existence.

/the lowest rung of this moral degradation is pride. The rich man dresses like a king and acts like a god, forgetting that he is merely mortal. For those corrupted by love of riches, nothing exists beyond their own ego. Those around them do not come into their line of sight. The result of attachment to money is a sort of blindness. The rich man does not see the poor man who is starving, hurting, lying at his door. Looking at this character we can understand why the Gospel so bluntly condemns the love of money. "No one can be the slave of two masters, he will either hate the first and love the second or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave of both, of God and of money Mt. 6:24)

3. The Word is a gift.

The Gospel of the rich man and Lazarus helps us to make a good preparation for the approach of Easter. The liturgy of Ash Wednesday invites us to experience quite similar to that of the rich man. When the priest imposes the ashes on our head, he repeats the words: "Remember that thou are dust, and to dust you shall return". As it turned out, the rich and the poor man both died and the greater part of the parable takes place in the afterlife. The two characters suddenly discover that "we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it" (1 Tim. 6:7)

In the afterlife the rich man speaks at length with Abraham, whom he calls "father" (Lk. 15:24, 27) as sign that he belongs to God's people. This detail makes his life appear all the more contradictory, for until this moment there has been no mention of his relation to God. In fact, there was no place for God in his life. His only god was himself.

Amid the torments of the afterlife, the rich man recognizes Lazarus and wants Lazarus to alleviate his suffering with a drop of water. What he asks of Lazarus has his fill of bad. Now he is being comforted here while you are in agony" (v.25). In the afterlife, a kind of fairness is restored and life's evils are balanced by good.

The parable goes on to offer message for all Christians. The rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, who are still alive. But Abraham answers: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them" (v.29) Countering, the rich man's objections, he adds: "If they will not listen wither to Moses or to the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead" (v.31).

The rich man's real problem thus comes to the fore. At the root of all his ills was the failure to heed to God's Word. As a result, he no longer loved God and grew to despise his neighbor. The word of God is alive and powerful, capable of converting hearts and leading them back to God. When we close our heart to the gift of God's Word, we end up closing our heart to the gift of our brothers and sisters.

Dear friends, Lent is the favorable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in His Word, in the sacraments and in our neighbor. The Lord, who overcame the deceptions of the Tempter during the forty days in the desert, shows us the path we must take. May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we may rediscover the gift of God's Word, be purified of the sin that blinds us and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need. I encourage all the faithful to express this spiritual renewal by also sharing in the Lenten Campaigns promoted by many Church organizations in different parts of the world, and thus to favour the culture of encounter in our one human family. Let us pray for one another so that, by sharing in the victory of Christ, we may open our doors to the weak and poor. Then we will be able to experience and share to the full, the joy of Easter.

From the Vatican, 18 October 2016





PR.CIR-02/127.2016_EN

Rome, 14 December 2016

Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure for me to address all of you at the beginning of my term of office as President of the World Conference of Secular Institutes – CMIS (2016-2020). During the recent General Assembly held in Rome last August I had an opportunity to witness the vast plurality of our presence in the world and the richness of the charisms of our Institutes.

As President, together with the other members of the presidency and the Executive Council, I wish to be in constant contact with all the Institutes, provide you with useful and important information, and facilitate both mutual knowledge and the exchange of experiences, in addition to representing you during encounters with the Congregation for the institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA) in the Vatican. It will not be possible for me to reach out directly to each one of the 193 member institutes of CMIS, and hence I place full trust in the national and continental conferences, counting on their support to the World Conference of Secular Institutes in contacts with each institute and, in unison with CMIS, forwarding information to the Conference's member institutes.

In 2017, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Apostolic Constitution "*Provida Mater Ecclesia*" of Pope Pius XII, I invite the continental and national conferences of secular institutes to organize encounters in their respective areas and countries to recall and commemorate the importance of this document as the statutes for all secular institutes. CMIS as such is not planning to organize a world encounter because many indeed were those who took part in events that were both demanding and costly for our institutes during this year now coming to a close. Celebrating the 70th anniversary of "*Provida Mater Ecclesia*" (1947) and also "*Primo Feliciter*" (1948) on the continental or national level will be a more practical and economical solution, as well as an excellent opportunity for spreading knowledge about the vocation of consecrated laypersons in the Church. Moreover, we will keep you informed if the Congregation organizes encounters regarding *Provida Mater Ecclesia* in 2017.

Internet is nowadays a great and important instrument available for use in order to deepen and show to others the beauty of our vocation as consecrated laypersons. On the CMIS website (www.cmis-int.org) you will find a considerable amount of General Assembly material in a number of languages. Whenever there are no translations into your respective languages invite the members of your institutes, who have both the time and the language skills, to translate such texts

for you. In this way we will be able to curtail expenditures for “official translations” which are quite costly at times.

Dear Presidents General and Presidents of the national and continental conferences, I encourage you to be assiduous visitors to the CMIS website, and in your turn encourage the members of your Institutes to take full advantage of this opportunity. Moreover, please send our secretariat any and all information regarding important events you live in your respective parts of the world. Among the recent documents posted on our website I would like to bring to your attention the Letter sent to the 2016 General Assembly by His Eminence Pietro Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See. It is incumbent upon us to study this text of great value with due attention.

Together with subjects such as the Identity Traits of Secular Institutes and On-Line Formation, the themes mentioned above were discussed by the Presidency during its meeting in September and by the Executive Council during its November session. As representatives of secular institutes in the world it is our wish to respond to the signs of the times with humility and love in order to be an “evangelizing presence” in unity in today’s world.

My heartfelt wish for all of you is that during this time of Advent you may live the hope and joy of encounter with the Lord Jesus, the source of life and light for every day we live on this earth.

May the Incarnation of the Son of God fill us with gratitude for the exceptional Gift God offers to each person and to the world at large, and imbue us with the force to be a joyful gift at the service of our fellowmen, especially the neediest of those in need.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Szpilarewicz', written in a cursive style.

Jolanta Szpilarewicz

President of CMIS

