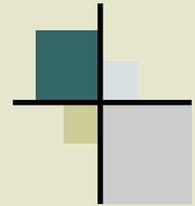




United States Conference of Secular Institutes

Mountaineer



Dear friends,

This year Lent began on Valentine’s Day and thus is a vivid reminder that Lent should be a time to grow in love. We look with gratitude at all Jesus went through for love of the Father and love for us in his passion and death. It is a season set aside to prepare for the great event of the resurrection, not only recalling and reliving Jesus’ rising, but also one day our own. It is a time to focus on the Father’s great love as Jesus did, and in return to show him that he is number one in our lives. We examine our consciences to see where our love is lukewarm, and work to rekindle the fire through increased prayer, that is, spending more time or perhaps more quality time with the Lord. We also try to dismantle the walls that we put up through our inordinate attachments so that the Father may reach into our lives with greater ease.

Holy Mass can be for us a school of humility, when we bring ourselves in all our smallness and lay them on the paten. We also can use the liturgy as the occasion for offering to the Father all our storms, trials, successes and failures. Then the priest can speak the words of consecration, and as the bread is transformed into Christ, we are transformed more and more into his image. At Mass we re-live Jesus’ act of obedience to the Father, and join him in circling around the Father and – in our case – attempting to fulfill the Father’s will. I love to look at the host and meditate on how small and simple Christ makes himself for us. He even gives us himself to be consumed. And in this act of taking Jesus, and with him the Father, into ourselves, we actually are lifted into the heart of the Father. This is the mystery of the unity between the Heavenly Father and his children

At the end of January the executive committee met in Scottsdale, Arizona, where USCSI will hold its Annual Meeting September 28-30, 2018. The Franciscan Renewal Center is a beautiful refuge surrounded by the city, but so calm and peaceful. In the distance one can see the mountains which seem to embrace the area. The grounds are beautifully landscaped with dessert plants and cacti, with ample places for meditation. The food is top-notch and the staff exceedingly friendly and helpful. Just last October a new church dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels was dedicated. It is gorgeous with lots of natural light and magnificent stained glass windows. We will have a guided tour to explain their significance. Of course, you can count on warm weather which sounds really good to those of us living in winter areas at present. Please, do try to schedule this event into your calendars.

Now I wish you much grace for the season of Lent and a holy expectation for the Feast of the Resurrection.

Marcia Vinje, President

March 2018

Volume 10, Issue 1



SAVE THE DATE

Sept 28-30, 2018

USCSI Annual Meeting

Scottsdale, AZ

Check into airline fares TODAY!

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Consecration and Secularity
Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church regarding Secular Institutes.
June 4, 2017, Solemnity of Pentecost

This letter from the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life was written with the collaboration of CMIS, the World Conference of Secular Institutes. This past November each bishop who attended the annual fall meeting of bishops received a copy of the booklet. Here is a summary of its contents.

The vocation of secular institutes is rooted in the Incarnation and therefore, members remain where they are living and working. The letter admits that secular institutes are little known and often confused with Ecclesial Movements and associations.

Secular institutes are a “synthesis between secularity and consecration, two facets of the same reality.” They are diverse and have multiple forms in order to adapt to various situations of life. They work to discern God’s will in all facets of life and to personally respond to Him.

As members of consecrated life, consecrated seculars receive their vocation to live the way of the evangelical counsels as a gift. They are called as Jesus invited some of his disciples not only to welcome the Kingdom of God, but to place their lives at its service. This following of Christ is initiated by the Father and made possible by a gift of the Holy Spirit, thus expressing the “Trinitarian character of Christian life.”

Life in secular institutes is not only an internal consecration but an external one as well, in an institute approved by the Church. Members make a permanent commitment to live according to the institute’s style of life. The institute helps the individual to be faithful to his/her vocation, while the member shares responsibility for the institute’s charism which is a gift to the Church.

While we speak of secularity there is no dichotomy between sacred and secular. Members of secular institutes stay in the world as co-participants in both dimensions of a world imbued by the divine. Priests who belong to secular institutes have a two-fold mission of serving the fraternity and promoting the sanctification of the world through their priestly ministry.

Secular institutes face certain challenges. One is to live a life of prophecy, that is, a life built on the Gospels and protesting worldliness. Another is the tension in making a synthesis between love of God and love of neighbor, looking at the world through God’s eyes. Members of secular institutes should build communion and encourage dialogue, modeling the unity of the Trinity. One of the greatest challenges is to allow diversity within unity, also within the institutes.

Finally, Mary is held up as a model and intercessor to help consecrated seculars recognize the social dimension of the Gospel, to build communion, and to enter the Father’s heart to find there answers to concrete questions.

Copies of this booklet are available for purchase for \$2.00 from Jessica. Text 612-618-9334.



The first national meeting of secular institutes in Vietnam took place at the Hochiminh City Archdiocesan Pastoral Center September 6-8, 2017. The main objective of the meeting was to bring together the secular institutes in Vietnam and to get to know more about them, their charisms, and ongoing formation. The meeting was highlighted by sharing apostolic activities, advantages of secular institutes, difficulties faced by the members, and the needs to consider especially in training for formation programs.



Please note: a four page report was received by the CMIS secretary and this will be posted on our website, as it shares the rich culture and provides a full summary of the talks, fellowship, liturgies, and participants.

A First National Meeting of SECULAR INSTITUTES IN VIETNAM

The local organizers were the Vietnam Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Committee on Consecrated Life led by Rev. Thomas Vu Quang Trung S.J. Secretary of the Committee and Episcopal Vicar for Religious of Saigon Archdiocese and others. One hundred twenty five members of 16 Secular Institutes in Vietnam attended the meeting together with the four ACSI Executive Board members. Of the 16 institutes present there were three institutes for men and 13 for women. Overall, Vietnam has 269 congregations in 26 Archdiocese and 27 Secular Institutes. There are 4,106 Men Religious, 25,013 Women Religious, 1404 Diocesan Priests, 23 men secular members, 21 Secular Priests and 1282 women secular members.

Various papers were presented sharing thoughts such as: members are not to depend on the hierarchy but like leaven in the dough reach out to people all around us keeping alive the Gospel values; we need to train formators who will be able to give formation in secular spirituality distinct from that of Religious; and to participation in more national and diocesan vocation promotion programs.

Lily Fernandes shared the work of CMIS which has published a book on formation (available in English, Italian, and French). She encouraged members not to make comparisons between religious and lay people but to be proud of the fact that God has created us to be mediators and she explained the five important aspects of Consecrated Secularity being

1. To live inside the heart – world of feelings
2. To live inside the house – go through the problems of a family
3. To live inside structures – live with the contradictions/ limitations of conscience
4. Ability to live in the structures – judged by the world
5. To live inside history – responsible to this world to make it a better place to live in day to day.



USCSI Joins Catholic College Students at SLS18

One of the largest gatherings of Catholics around the topic of evangelization, **SLS18: Inspire & Equip**, hosted by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (**FOCUS**), welcomed more than 8,000 participants to Chicago Jan. 2 – 6, 2018. Attendees, most of them college students, honed evangelization skills through training and practice sessions. USCSI members, Jessica Swedzinski (Schoenstatt) and Kathy Tierney (DeSales Secular Institute) were able to educate many of them about Secular Institutes as participants passed by our booth in the Expo Hall.

No sooner had we begun to set up our booth when a Franciscan sister ran up to us and said, “Secular Institutes! I need information from you.” They had a woman looking into their community that they felt may be called to a secular institute and they wanted to get information for her. Just minutes later, two members from the Regnum Christi, a lay association, came to us wide-eyed with excitement, “The Vatican has given us the OK to decide whether we want to be a secular institute or a society of apostolic life so we want to talk to you!” Father Gabriel of the Community of the Franciscans of the Renewal was in the booth to the right. He was also “very familiar” with secular institutes as a canon lawyer. Finally, Fr. Ralph O’Donnell, Executive Director of the USCCB Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations paid us a welcome visit as well. To have so many recognize us and know what we represented was a good sign that word is spreading about secular institutes!

We found that college students usually need an invitation to visit the booth, as many are quickly walking past on their way to another event, or buried face first in their cell phones. Jessica lured many with our colorful green magnets with a quote from Pope Francis, “You are at the heart of the world with the heart of God.” Kathy then enticed them to play a one-minute trivia game about secular institutes. The humorous choices for answers had them smiling and laughing as they quickly went through each question which were educational as well as entertaining. We distributed almost 1200 magnets and had meaningful discussions with dozens of participants. A few of them thought that this may be their calling, or knew somebody else who might be called to a secular institute.

The conference included three tracks; a Collegiate Track for the more than 5,000 college students who came from 410 campuses, the Campus Ministry Track for more than 500 chaplains and campus ministers and a Lifelong Mission Track for over 1,000 lay ministers, parishioners, seminarians, parish priests, FOCUS alumni and benefactors. Additional attendees included others wishing to transform their parishes, communities and workplaces, as well as more than 800 FOCUS staff.

We were fortunate enough to attend some of the sessions and listen to keynote speakers. It was so wonderful to see so many young Catholics on fire for their faith. One of the most profound moments was when we were eating in the convention center food court. As young people sat down at their tables with their friends, before diving into pizza, burgers, and fries, they bowed their heads and said grace. Every table. Every person. It was amazing.

SLS18 included daily opportunities for Mass, adoration, confession and discernment. More than 200 priests concelebrated daily Mass and heard approximately 4,000 confessions over the course of the five-day event. Celebrants included Cardinal Blase J. Cupich (Archdiocese of Chicago), Archbishop George Lucas (Archdiocese of Omaha), Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio (Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA) and Archbishop John J. Myers (Archbishop emeritus of Diocese of Newark).

FOCUS alternates years with hosting its national events: SEEK and SLS. Last year, SEEK2017 inspired nearly 13,000 attendees in San Antonio, Texas. Registration is now open for SEEK2019, which will be in Indianapolis, Indiana, Jan. 3 – 7, 2019. More than 700 people have already signed up. We plan on being there too! -Kathy Tierney

You are invited to help manage the USCSI Vocation Booth in Indianapolis November 14-16, 2019 at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC). Plan a diocesan or Area Faith Community Vocation Promotion in your area!

How can you and your institute help us spread the good news?



Kathy Tierney and Jessica Swedzinski speak with Eleanor Segraves at Focus SLS-2018 in Chicago. The Regnum Christi women are discussing their options this spring to become a secular institute. The January 2-6th event was an invitation-only leadership training. Below are two men studying at the South Dakota School of Mines in Rapid City and at the South Dakota State University in Brookings. Both are cousins of Jessica.



It's YOUR Mountaineer - Please contribute from your secular institute. These are the next due dates we are aiming for in 2018:

June 1, 2018

October 1, 2018

December 1, 2018

Here is a sampling of one of the nightly keynotes, later published on the web:

Fr. Mike Schmitz: Don't turn friendships into projects By Joe Slama

Chicago, Ill., Jan 8, 2018 / 4:07 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- Authentic Christian friendship requires intentionality and a willingness to be vulnerable, Fr. Mike Schmitz told attendees at a Catholic leadership conference last week.

“Discipleship must be rooted in friendship,” Fr. Schmitz said. “It has to be this thing called virtuous friendship.”

Fr. Schmitz spoke at the Student Leadership Summit in Chicago on Wednesday night. Known as SLS, the summit is hosted by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) every other year. It aims to train student leaders and other ministers with tools for evangelization and missionary work, largely on college campuses. Wednesday night was Day 2 of the event, which centered on the theme of “Authentic Friendship.”

Fr. Schmitz is known for his catechetical online videos through Ascension Presents, and serves as a college chaplain in Duluth, Minnesota. He began his talk on friendship with a quote from Ecclesiastes: “Two are better than one. If one falls, the other will lift up his friend. But woe to the one who has no friends, for if he should fall, he has no one to lift him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:10).

Fr. Schmitz said it may be easy to get a faulty impression of FOCUS’ goal in developing friendships with those whom they evangelize, saying it may sound like “it’s about manipulating people through a relationship.”

“Sometimes we can get into this mindset that says that when I look at people I see a project, not a person,” he said. “That’s not true, because discipleship must be rooted in friendship.”

“It has to be this thing called virtuous friendship, or else it’s not going to work,” he said. “Friendship that is not incidental, but is intentional.”

The kind of friendship for which Catholics should strive arises from a common purpose and a desire to imitate the traits of the other, he continued, pointing to David and Jonathan in the Old Testament as an example of virtuous friendship.

The Book of Samuel recounts Jonathan and his armor-bearer making a surprise attack on the back of the Philistines’ camp, trusting on a sign from God to determine whether to advance or retreat.

Fr. Schmitz highlighted the courage of Jonathan in making this decision. Similarly, he said, David shows courage and a passion to defend the honor of God when he volunteers to fight the Philistine champion Goliath.

“When Jonathan sees this, he sees himself. This is virtuous friendship. This is ‘I see something in you, that I also have in me,’” the priest continued.

“In order to have virtuous friendship, you need to be someone pursuing virtue. Someone not pursuing virtue is incapable of pursuing virtuous friendship.”

Fr. Schmitz said that a problem can arise with college students who want to spread the Gospel, but find themselves surrounded by so many opportunities that they are pulled in many directions at once, and thus encounter indecision in what path to follow.

“Friendship can’t grow unless you commit,” he emphasized. However, this type of commitment requires a risk because it demands vulnerability.

And vulnerability is more than just transparency, Fr. Schmitz continued. “Being transparent is like being in a fishbowl. But being vulnerable is like letting people get in your fishbowl,” he said. “It’s letting them help you. It’s letting them challenge you. And it’s letting them hurt you.”

He told the story of one of his former students, named Anne, who began following a Christian lifestyle while living with members of her sorority. Because of this, her roommates stopped wanting to spend time with her, but she offered up this heartbreak to God for the conversion of friends. Soon, she found opportunities to be there for her roommates in times of trouble.



“One after one, the others just turned to Anne, because they knew her. She had let them see her heart.” Fr. Schmitz said that all five roommates eventually joined her Bible study, and three became Catholic.

Fr. Schmitz spoke to CNA about potential pitfalls that may arise when pursuing this vulnerability, warning against sharing too much of oneself too quickly.

“It’s not a race to vulnerability. It has to grow,” he said.

He also talked about the changing nature of evangelization, the task for which SLS is designed to equip attendees.

“The Church has always had mission as its heart,” he said, referencing Pope Paul VI. However, the way this mission takes shape has seen a shift in recent times.

Whereas most work of evangelization previously relied on “professionals,” at a time when people were “born into a culture that (was) also Christian,” evangelization now takes place “in a culture that is post-Christian.” For this reason, he said, we are all being called to be missionaries.

Fr. Schmitz also said that many people in the Church have received the sacraments, but have not been properly catechized, and so they often fall away.

Going forth from conferences and gatherings like SLS, Fr. Schmitz told CNA that he sees the Church responding to a renewed call for evangelization.

The future of the Church will be “Christians, Catholics, coming to know the Lord in a deeper way, allowing the Lord to move their lives in a new way that looks different from the rest of the people around them, and then having to go through the fires, and go through the water, and go through the valleys, and go through the mountain passes and peaks, and saying, ‘This is how you actually follow Jesus’ in a radical way,” he said.

“It’s going to look totally normal, and yet entirely unique.”

You are Invited to an International Meeting in Rome

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has begun a reflection process regarding the use of the terms *consecration* and *consecrated life*. The first stage is a seminar on “Consecration and Consecration through Evangelical Counsels: Reflections, Unresolved Issues and Possible Pathways” to be held in Rome in March. Invited participants will include canon lawyers, theologians and experts on the diverse forms of consecrated life. The discussion will center on commonalities and diverse forms of consecrated life.

The second stage of the process will be an International Meeting held in Rome May 4-6, 2018, for members of all forms of consecrated life as well as members of Associations and Ecclesial Movements who are interested. The results of the March meeting will be shared and then discussions will be held on questions that surface. There will be both plenary sessions and specific workshops for the various forms of consecrated life.

The deadline for registration is April 15

through the congregation’s website:

www.congregazionevitaconsacrata.va

Please inform the USCSI executive committee if you plan to attend as well.



A common Lenten goal is to increase one's prayer time. These biblical admonitions could provide more time to do that, as you will spend less time speaking ...

Don't open your mouth:

In the heat of anger – Proverbs 14:17

When you don't have all the facts – Proverbs 18:13

When you haven't verified the story – Deuteronomy 17:6

If your words will offend a weaker brother – 1 Corinthians 8:11

If your words will be a poor reflection of the Lord or your friends and family – Peter 2:21-23

When you are tempted to joke about sin – Proverbs 14:9

When you would be ashamed of your words later – Proverbs 8:8

When you're tempted to make light of holy things – Ecclesiastes 5:2

If your words would convey a wrong impression – Proverbs 17:27

If the issue is none of your business – Proverbs 14:10

When you are tempted to tell an outright lie – Proverbs 4:24

If your words will damage someone's reputation – Proverbs 16:27

If your words will destroy a friendship – Proverbs 25:28

When you are feeling critical – James 3:9

If you can't speak without yelling – Proverbs 25:28

When it is time to listen – Proverbs 13:1

If you may have to eat your words later – Proverbs 18:21

If you have already said it more than one time (then it becomes nagging) – Proverbs 19:13

When you are tempted to flatter a wicked person – Proverbs 24:24

When you are supposed to be working instead – Proverbs 14:23

Proverbs 21:23: "Whosoever keeps his mouth and his tongue, keeps his soul from trouble."



Our website will soon have daily reflections – please check it out!

"Save the Date Postcards" for our Annual Meeting will be arriving in your mailbox shortly.

If you have friends you would like to invite in this manner,
email their addresses to Jessica. jessica@schrsmary.org

We publish the following obituary, remembering all secular institute members who have been called into eternity. Indeed may they as bona fide "salt and leaven" rest in peace!

Mary Doris Christensen died at peace with her God on December 24, 2016, aged 94. Although many of us have never been able to feel certain about what happens after death, Aunt Chris was very sure, and we're enjoying the thought of her in heaven, sitting joyfully at the right hand of God. Aunt Chris spent much of her life in prayer and spiritual contemplation, leading a quiet but joyful life, particularly in the last years of her life, when she gave up TV, movies, and most other light pleasures simply to sit in the peace of God. She never passed up an opportunity to be of service to others, helping and supporting people in her parish and family. But lest this make her sound terribly serious, I can assure you that everyone who knew her remembers her ready laugh and quick wit. She called everyone darling, as in "Darling, I've been driving for 70 years, I hardly think I need your advice."

She joined in all the Sagar and Knapik family fun, going to the beach, picnicking, giving fabulous presents, and unforgettably performing humorous charades at Christmas gatherings. Aunt Chris was born on April 13th, 1922 in Yonkers, NY. In her youth, she was a fine athlete and loved baseball, football and golf. She thought if the LPGA Tour had existed she would like to have been a professional golfer. She did have the opportunity to join the All American Girl's Baseball League, but decided instead to enlist in the Women's Army Corp, where she served until the end of WW II. After the war, she attended Bellevue Hospital School of Nursing on the GI Bill and spent the rest of her working life as an RN.

It was during the WW II that she took one of the biggest steps of her life in converting to Catholicism. She remained very devout for the rest of her life, a godmother to my sister Jan Couture and my cousin Joanne Myers. A woman of natural moral authority, she had a strong influence on family, friends, and the many students she tutored. She was a devoted member of Jesu Caritas Society, a Roman Catholic Lay Order. Above all else, she was a person who understood love. She loved us all and we loved her.

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It has also been drawn to our attention that **Olympia Panagatos from New York City, a member of the Servitium Christi Secular Institute, died in October of 2016. May they rest in peace.**

USCSI Mission Statement

The USCSI shares in the mission of Jesus Christ in serving its member institutes by providing education, resources, and support for member institutes.

The USCSI is an organization of member institutes committed to making known, understood, and appreciated the call to consecrated secularity in the Catholic Church.

USCSI collaborates with other groups to present consecrated secularity as a viable option in today's Church.

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