



# The Mountaineer

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Dear Friends,

It is Lent. Does that make your heart fall or does it make your heart sing? I like to think of this season as one to grow in love for Jesus and to follow in his footsteps. True, his footsteps lead us to the desert which conjures up visions of barrenness, merciless heat, and chilling cold at night. But for Jesus it also meant leaving distractions behind and being able to focus totally on loving his Father and discerning his Father's will for his life. He often stole away from his followers and the crowd to find alone time, to steep himself in prayer in the presence of the one he loved most.

However, Lent is also a time for greater community involvement. When we go to Mass there are many more comrades at our side – at a distance, of course. We gather for common Stations of the Cross, for communal penance services, perhaps for a Bible study. Our parishes offer more spiritual enrichment as undoubtedly, do our institutes themselves.

In this Year of St. Joseph, I thought how much he is an inspiration for us in consecrated life. He was constantly in the presence of his God in the most literal sense, and accompanied by Mary, the Mother of God. He was always in this sacred community of family life, relishing the sharing of his faith with his wife and child. Like him we aim at total consecration to the Lord and we joined an institute to have the communal support to keep urging us to live up to our ideals.



Like Joseph we live in a world that constantly tries to pull us away from God. Just imagine what it was like in Egypt, a place of open paganism even if there were a few Jewish families around for support. Undoubtedly, he had to walk past idols and temples, and yet in his heart he was focused on his Holy Family. Isn't our situation similar?

Joseph was a man of silence. He never speaks in the Scriptures, but he certainly fulfilled the will of God at the drop of a hat. Go to Bethlehem? Of course. Leave in the middle of the night to travel to Egypt? Without question. Establish his business in Nazareth?

Lead me on. Wherever the mission led him, he was willing to go, *because* he heard the voice of God calling.

Are we able to respond so quickly and without question when the Lord changes our plans? Perhaps Joseph can show us how. Lent is an opportunity to practice the quick FIAT of Mary and Joseph. We search for God's voice when something throws a wrench into our well-planned day. We see his hand when circumstances lead us on a different path. All because we belong totally to our God, we trust his wisdom, knowing what is best for us. We have surrendered ourselves like Joseph and the blessings are unimaginable.

With prayers for all of you, *Marcia Vinje*

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# ***Light, Salt, and Leaven by Marcel Caron***

*From the Canadian Conference Website:*

*Secular Institutes represent a new form of consecrated life within the Church. The men and women who belong to these groups choose to live the Gospel in the midst of our contemporary world by making lasting and formal commitments. By their presence and their work, these members contribute to the transformation of the world from within in the manner of a leaven by translating the living strengths of the Gospel into daily deeds and gestures and by adopting the attitudes of Jesus as much as possible. Most of them are laypersons, but there are also clergymen. They usually live alone or in small Christian communities and they carry out their profession or their trade according to their skills and aptitudes in milieus that are most diverse.*

On February 2nd, the Church celebrates the feast of the presentation of Jesus in the temple. But this year is also an important anniversary. In fact, 25 years ago, John Paul II instituted February 2nd as the World Day of Consecrated Life, a day to celebrate all men and women who give themselves in active and contemplative religious life, in the order of consecrated virgins, as hermits, in societies of apostolic life, in new communities and, of course, in secular institutes.

For 73 years, secular institutes have been part of consecrated life! This is very little in more than 2000 years of the history of the Church... But, over the years, we have developed our own way of being this living presence of God in the world. Through our insertion in temporal realities and through our love for God and for the world, we have developed a spirituality of discernment and creativity and a spirituality of dialogue and communion. This is how the great conversation with humanity can begin to reveal to every man and woman that they are the image and likeness of God – who is close at hand.

The members of secular institutes are, as Paul VI said, the “mountaineers of the Spirit.” It is up to us to accept the great adventure of overcoming the greatest challenges in order to do as Jesus did: to climb the mountain to be with God and to find him also on the plain, in the midst of crowds often

*“harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:36). And we always respond: “Present!” For these men and women are our brothers and sisters; they have been entrusted to us in a special way. It is up to each one of us to respond to our vocation to be light, salt, and leaven.*

## **Light, salt, and leaven: a call to be fulfilled!**

*“You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:14),* Jesus reminds us. It is up to each one of us to have the audacity to bear witness, for this same verse ends with the words: *“A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”* It is up to us to regain the courage of mission to proclaim loud and clear our love for God in the world.

*“You are the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13).* I'm not a scientist, but Google says that because of its high mineral content (magnesium, calcium, potassium...), salt promotes cellular exchanges, maintains skin hydration and slows down aging. By reading these words from a spiritual perspective, we are called to be of those men and women who allow human contact. By drawing from the source of living water that is Christ, we continually welcome new life. What a wonderful discovery for us and all those around us!

You are the leaven in the middle of the dough. *“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened” (Mt 13:33).* Leaven makes the dough rise, even if it is very small. And it takes very little to see the whole dough rise! It is now fashionable to be “influencers” on social media. This is the role of the leaven... to seek to have an impact in the environment where it acts! And this is our profound call: to be “influencers” of our environment, through our values, our solidarity, our respect for others, our prayer and to believe in our mission as baptized people, knowing that it is God's work!

Our vocation is more necessary than ever! On this day of consecrated life, let us celebrate it with pride and joy. Even more, let us celebrate this day by challenging another person to open himself or herself to the possibility of a call to give his or her whole life to God for the mission! Let us dare to present Jesus who calls us to total self-giving.

## Light, Salt, and Leaven continued...

### Let us make a difference!

At the heart of this pandemic, the mission of faith, hope, and love that we carry is more necessary than ever. We are in contact with men and women who need to be supported, welcomed, and comforted. May our presence as light, salt, and leaven constantly impel us to undertake a small gesture, to listen, to accompany, to share a word that can make all the difference!

Because that is why we are given, consecrated! The mission gives meaning to our life; it is the mission that continues to move us and gets us up every morning to discover new opportunities to meet Jesus and to make him better known, loved, and served! This is what the Church recalled in one of the most important documents concerning secular institutes: *“The whole life of the members of a Secular Institute (...) must become an apostolate”* (Primo feliciter, no. 6).

On this XXV<sup>th</sup> World Day of Consecrated Life, I warmly greet all consecrated and associate members of secular institutes present in Canada. Some Institutes have sprung up on this land; others have spread their roots here and have blossomed. Certainly, together as partners and fellow colleagues in secular consecrated life, men and women, priests and laity, we live the beautiful vocation of being a significant presence of consecrated life in the midst of the world and the Church.

May these words of the Gospel on the feast of the presentation of Jesus guide our steps to continue to be these “mountaineers of the Spirit”: *“For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel”* (Lk 2:30-32).

Always be Mountaineers of the Spirit!

Marcel Caron, ISPX

February 2021, occasion of the XXV World Day for Consecrated Life

Please note:

an **online course organized by the Spanish Conference of Secular Institutes (CEDIS), as a presentation of our vocation.** It is very well done with teachings, prayer, and music and testimonies... These are 5 one-hour long sessions. I find it worthwhile to share with our Spanish speaking members and those the Lord might call to serve in our secular institutes.

<https://www.youtube.com/c/conferenciaespanoladeinstitutosseculares>



Coming soon to your email box—so please save this weekend:

Invitation to the US Conference of Secular Institutes’

National Meeting—September 24-26, 2021

Marytown Retreat and Conference Center, Libertyville, Illinois

Re-Imagining: Little Things Make a Big Difference

# SEEK 2021

## SEEK21 Conference Bears Fruit in Unexpected Ways

There's a first time for everything. And in this pandemic year there have been a lot of firsts, including the USCSI's first virtual booth, which debuted at the SEEK21 Conference hosted by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), February 3-7, 2021. The attendance record was shattered as over 27,500 attendees from 100+ countries logged in to experience a weekend of rich Catholic worship, prayer, and learning (with an additional six-month unlimited access).

The USCSI broke its own attendance record, with 12 members covering shifts in the Zoom room to be available to speak to any conference attendee who might "stop in" to our booth. A total of six institutes joined forces in the preparation and assistance at the booth: Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary (Jessica Swedzinski), DeSales Secular Institute (Heather Triggs, Katherine Marsh, Kathleen Tierney), Apostolic Oblates (Leela Sebastian, Joan Patten, Monica Hejkal, Teresa Pauls, Christine French), Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ (Rita Santistevan), Caritas Christi (Natasha Sager), and The Company of St. Ursula (Rachael Griggs and Elena Taylor-Garcia).

Conference attendees were able to visit the booth by scrolling through a list of sponsor logos and clicking on the USCSI logo. We decided to name our booth "Consecrated Life in Secular Institutes" so that attendees may have some clue as to *what* we are, especially since the word "secular" tends to make people think of something we are not. Once entering, they were presented with this welcoming and colorful banner crafted by Joan Patten, AO:

SEEK21

LIVE IN: 3 hour(s) 13 min 56 sec

Consecrated Life  
in Secular Institutes

United States Conference  
of Secular Institutes

*"The mission of secular institutes is to 'make present in society the newness and power of Christ's kingdom, striving to transfigure the world from within by the power of the Beatitudes.'" -Pope John Paul II*

Consecrated Life in Secular Institutes ❤️

Facebook Instagram YouTube

MESSAGE WEBSITE

United States Conference  
of Secular Institutes

Need Help

...SEEK 2021 Fruits—continued

Once “inside” our virtual booth, our young adult attendees felt right at home with the variety of social media choices at their fingertips. They could “like” our booth by clicking on the heart

next to our booth name, and select their choice of platform from Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or our website. The Instagram and YouTube platforms are new to USCSI, which already had a website and Facebook page. However, the under thirty crowd leans heavily toward the visual and less towards text, so their preference has shifted to Instagram and videos. Joan Patten, AO, and Natasha Sager, CC, were instrumental in setting up our new conference accounts and populating them with plenty of photos and videos.

In the past, the SEEK conferences have kept us plenty busy with hundreds of people stopping to ask questions from secular institute members. We had no idea how many people would be stopping by our virtual booth, or how many would enter the Zoom room for a conversation. We decided it was better to be prepared for a crowd than to have a crowd and not be prepared. We had 2 to 5 members on almost every shift just waiting for a visitor. Unfortunately, there were very few visitors to the Zoom room. Altogether 7 people stopped in for a conversation. On a positive note, those who stopped in were very serious discerners, and left us hoping that the conversations will lead to vocations in the future. FOCUS provided a list of 24 people who entered our booth to get information and we plan on using that information to send additional information. The first ten attendees who liked our new Instagram page will receive a copy of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales. And one lucky attendee will receive free registration to the USCSI Annual Retreat at Marytown in September.

One of the more unexpected blessings of the weekend was the conversation shared by the members while waiting for visitors. It was so wonderful to hear about the unique charisms of each institute, how each lives out poverty, chastity, and obedience, or the history and founding of their institute. Friendships were formed and emails exchanged so that we can keep in touch with each other. It’s like a new community began to form, a community of consecrated cousins, so to speak.

*-Kathy Tierney, DeSales*

**Please view: Welcome to Secular Institutes, a short clip which features 10 members from four institutes, all on the USCSI Youtube channel link. See QR on page 13.**



Teresa Pauls (Seek21 Staffer), Teresa Monaghan, and Margaret Mathew are members of the Apostolic Oblates.

*May the Lord renew every day in you and all consecrated persons the joyful response to his free and faithful love.*

*Like lighted candles shine always and everywhere with the love of Christ, light the world.*

*May the Most Holy Mary, the consecrated woman, help you to live fully your vocation and mission in the Church for the salvation of the world. Amen.*

*-Aleteia, Prayer of Pope Benedict XVI on February 2, 2006*

## Witnessing to the College-Goers

*We believe you each would have liked to be with us at the heart of the action when 27,600 young adults gather to follow Jesus more closely. These are heroic and noble men and women giving up time, talent and treasure to evangelize! Here are snapshots from USCSI virtual booth staffers:*



*I'm grateful to collaborate for the last few years with multiple institutes at conferences where the USCSI is represented. Learning about other institutes and meeting their members has deepened my vocation as a member of a Secular Institute. While our vocation is not easily*

*understood or seen, it is a great gift that must be shared with others. I was pleased to create some materials not only for SEEK21, but for beyond, which can be used also for promotional and educational opportunities in the future. I was also grateful to meet Natasha, inspiring member of Caritas Christi and work with her in starting the Instagram account as well as creating content for it. It was a joy to share in this work together! I am also very impressed at the availability of many of the members from various institutes who gave multiple hours to sitting in a Zoom room in case somebody came with questions. Since I am on the west coast, I had the "late shift." I met two young women from Colombia who were interested in knowing more about consecrated life and evangelization. I was edified by their zeal and ask that you keep them in your prayers as they search for God's will. Thank you everyone for praying for the SEEK21 conference!*

*Peace, Joan Patten, Apostolic Oblates, CA*

*I am presently in formation with the Secular Institute of Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ, which follows the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi. This was my first time participating in a SEEK/FOCUS conference, which has been a powerful, evangelization movement, among college students, for quite a while. I was excited*

*to experience some young women pop into the Zoom Room and the vocation virtual booth to learn more about this relatively unknown option for consecrated life. I am grateful for the hospitality shown to me by all the secular institute members who attended during the weekend.*

*I learned a lot and discovered we are all part of a beautiful diamond, with many facets, but share in common the mission to bring Jesus' amazing love and presence to others, while living full-time in the suffering world. The world, as St. Francis once said, is our cloister.*

*Rita Santistevan*

*Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ, NM*



Hello everyone, my name is Natasha Sager. Here are two interesting facts about me. First, I was born with a rare form of Cerebral Palsy called Schizencephaly. Second, having a physical disability didn't stop me from pursuing a vocation in consecrated life. I entered Caritas Christi on November 1, 2018, and as I head towards my third year of formation, I will make my first profession by the end of 2021, God willing.

By the suggestion of a fellow member of my institute, I offered to help the USCSI with their social media and the SEEK21 Conference. For me, it has been a joy finding new ways to spread knowledge of the vocation in Secular Institutes. An even greater joy has been working with other women from different institutes who share a similar vocation and hearing their stories. I would now like to share the story of my journey towards consecrated life.

Even though my family was never religious, I always had an innate desire to know God and be involved in church. By 2001, my mother had

## Witnessing to the College-Goers....continued

remarried and gave birth to my two younger sisters. Thanks to the efforts and desires of my stepfather's parents, my two sisters were going to be baptized into the Catholic Church. My desire to be united to God was stirred at that time, and I asked if I could be baptized as well. Even though my sisters and I were baptized Catholic, my family did not participate in the Church at all after that.

Through the years I was involved in the Catholic Church off and on, but it was not until 2013 that I looked into RCIA and receiving the rest of the sacraments. I called around local Catholic Churches to see if I could possibly get help with getting to the classes weekly. I was grateful to learn that the Church of Saint Paul nearby offered to help. RCIA gave me a deeper understanding of the Catholic Faith. My understanding and love of the Eucharist grew especially during this period and made me eager to receive Communion for the first time. I was Confirmed Easter Vigil 2014, and I have been a participating member of the Church of Saint Paul ever since. I am a K-6 Catechist teacher, and I serve and volunteer any way I can.

A few months after Confirmation, I attended a Catholic conference called "Rediscover Catholicism." It was there that I first felt a twinge of desire to pursue consecrated life. I knew that there would be challenges toward fulfilling this desire, considering my physical handicaps, so I began researching different consecrated communities. I found a secular institute that was designed specifically for people with disabilities, but after discerning with this community long-distance for several months in 2015, for some reason it did not feel like the right fit. After much prayer, I stopped the discernment process with them.

The next couple years I spent significant time in prayer developing my relationship with God. At



the end of 2017, I came across Caritas Christi and found a spiritual director who encouraged me to pursue this community. Their charism was intriguing to me, especially their desire for holiness and intentionally living out the Gospel in every aspect of their life.

Even though I have the challenges of a disability, I believe that these difficulties can be used to make Jesus known and loved as I serve him through consecrated life. Through daily perseverance and joyful witness, I desire to help others grow in faith with the same enthusiasm that God stirred in my heart all those years ago.

*Natasha Sager, Caritas Christi, Andover, MN*  
<https://thehiddenleaven.blogspot.com/?m=1>



*It was such a joy to meet women from other institutes, reminding me that we are all part of something so much bigger than ourselves. We are all women delighted in and called by, the Lord.*

*Meeting a woman in discernment on Saturday morning, who asked about our three vows was such a valuable experience. It really made me think/consider how do I live those out in our way of life, and it reminded me just how interwoven they truly are, dependent almost on one another for any of them to be lived fully and in a healthy and holy way. It was such a blessing and wonderful opportunity!*

*Have a lovely week!*  
*Heather Triggs, DeSales Institute, GA*

## Meet more Seek21 Staffers



*The Lord Provides! One gift I receive over and over through my vocation is the experience of the Lord's providence. Jesus invited me to rely completely on Him and His care by*

*taking my vows; He has never failed me, and I know He never will. He is the all-powerful God who is love; I am His beloved bride—how could He ever fall short?*

*My initial "yes" was challenging because I couldn't see how God could provide me with the things that would make me happy, since I was giving up those things to follow His call. Starting with my first day moving in with the Oblates, He began to give me everything back, concretely fulfilling the desires of my heart. Some things were exactly what I had given up, like riding horses. In other areas Jesus gave me what I truly desired, fulfilling the deeper desire that manifested itself in wanting something more superficial than He wanted to give me, like having a husband.*

*Over the years I have been so struck by His providential care, that I even have article #303 from *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* as my signature in my email: "The witness of Scripture is unanimous that the solicitude of divine providence is concrete and immediate; God cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world and its history" (emphasis in original). My prayer is that everyone may know the truth of this with both head and heart.*

*May Jesus Christ be praised!*

*By Monica Hejkal, Apostolic Oblates, NE*

**It was powerful to pray together at the daily conference Masses for vocations. Vocations to be faithful Catholics, not just so-so or lukewarm... Curtis Martin and Edward Sri went above and beyond 22 years ago to a pressing need that is now lately being recognized mainstream. The five-steps**

**to a true evangelization really work. We want to be part of this spiritual snowball daring to reach eight billion people in THEIR generation.**

**Christine French took Kathy and me via her laptop to meet the small groups at the Omaha gathering. I also enjoyed how Leela Sebastian made sure our screenshot staff was highly visible daily on her FaceBook.**



**Jessica Swedzinski,  
Schoenstatt Sisters of  
Mary, NYC**



*I just wanted to send a little note to let you know that I am so glad I could join you, Jessica, and Leela yesterday at the SEEK21 virtual booth. I did not realize the extent and scope of FOCUS and was truly amazed at what you shared with me. I felt that yesterday's gathering was significant. I hope the event, overall, made an impact on discerning people.*

*Rachael Griggs,*

*Company of St Ursula, OH*



**It was a joy to meet so many of you! It was A DELIGHT to share in our mutual love of Christ and service to his Church. How grateful I am to have met so many new faces who walk the same path of consecration and service! Let's do**

**it again sometime!**

**God bless, Katherine Marsh, DeSales Institute, Tecumseh, Ontario, Canada**

## *A Few Gems From Seek21*

**Bishop Robert Barron nailed the Identity of Jesus**, saying the four Gospels are there to show Jesus Christ is God!

**Archbishop Samuel Aquila said Jesus ushers in the Kingdom**, he desires to heal us, as the whole town gathered at his door, bringing their sins, ills, and joys in honesty. Let us pray and be that trusting today.

**From Jeff Cavins – Double Your Parish in 5 Years:** Jeff was in a parish of 3,000 families but only 3 new baptized parishioners on Easter Vigil. We have to teach people how to join, to make spiritual babies. Do you know the Gospels? The basic proclamation, kerygma, I put into 7 points: 1) God loves you and has an amazing plan for your life, 2) Sin has broken this plan, 3) Jesus comes and dies for us, 4) Respond to his Good News and Confession, 5) Get baptized in the Holy Spirit, 6) Firmly planted in the Family of God, and 7) Go out and make disciples!

**From the huge Pro-Life array on Mission Way:** “Every human life is a gift to the world. Whether born or unborn, young or old, healthy or sick, every person is made in the holy image of God. The Almighty Creator gives unique talents, beautiful dreams, and a great purpose to every person. On National Sanctity of Human Life Day, we celebrate the wonder of human existence and renew our resolve to build a culture of life where every person of every age is protected, valued, and cherished.

This month, we mark nearly 50 years since the United States Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision. This constitutionally flawed ruling overturned State laws that banned abortion, and has resulted in the loss of more than 50 million innocent lives. But strong mothers, courageous students, and incredible community members and people of faith are leading a powerful movement to awaken America's conscience and restore the belief that every life is worthy of respect, protection, and care. Because of the devotion of countless pro-life pioneers, the call for every person to recognize the sanctity of life is resounding more loudly in America than ever before. Over the last decade, the rate of abortions has steadily decreased, and today, more than three out of every four Americans support restrictions on abortion.

... As a Nation, restoring a culture of respect for the sacredness of life is fundamental to solving our country's most pressing problems. When each person is treated as a beloved child of God, individuals can reach their full potential, communities will flourish, and America will be a place of even greater hope and freedom. ... we promise to continue speaking out for those who have no voice. We vow to celebrate and support every heroic mother who chooses life. And we resolve to defend the lives of every innocent and unborn child, each of whom can bring unbelievable love, joy, beauty, and grace into our nation and the entire world.

**From the Educational Selection on Mission Way:** Dr. Jonathan Reyes spoke about Gender saying we make a choice of how we came to be. Either we believe in Created Order and your way to happiness is to step in and grow in that order, OR you trust Random Process viewpoints and happiness is what you think. When we read in Holy Scriptures that God created us male and female four points come to bear. 1) We are created with the only distinction of male or female, 2) This is unchanging in the cosmic order, 3) Reason is that man should not be alone (as we are all made for union and relationship – the beauty & depth of union bond is the possibility of a child – mirrored in the image and relationship of our God), and 4) God declared it Good! Please note the scientific materialist process has no need for relationships. The greatest poverty is isolation and that is why covid loneliness is so destructive.

**Closing by Co-Founder Curtis Martin:** Along with his down-to-earth, point-by-point *How do I evangelize?* he asked the college students to invest time for small bible groups (Jesus invested in only 12 men for three years!), to love God and neighbor, and let's start a spiritual snowball as it goes to the entire world to reach 8 billion people in **their** generation! God Love You All!

**Mark your calendars for  
Salt Lake City, Utah, from December 30 through  
January 3, 2022, and join us!**



# Fidelity to the Charism: Saying “Yes” to the Inexhaustible Gift of God

By Father Scott Traynor

In Saint John Paul II’s Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (March 25, 1996), the term “charism” appears 86 times in 112 paragraphs of the document. In almost every case, the term is in reference to “the charism” of the institute of consecrated life. Charism is precisely in the sense of that unique gift of the Holy Spirit given to the Church through the life of the Founder or Foundress of an institute, which has been discerned by the Church and expressed and safeguarded by a determined spirituality, mission, and rule of life of the Institute.

As a fun exercise, pull up *Vita Consecrata* from the Vatican website<sup>1</sup> and Ctrl-f search for “charism.” Your browser will handily highlight the 86 occurrences. Notice the surrounding words and phrases and you will quickly notice two facts. First, the Church acknowledges a wide variety and diversity of charisms in the constellation of Institutes of Consecrated Life with which the Church is blessed. Second, in referring to any given Institute, the Church speaks of “the” charism, “the charism of the founder” the “original” charism, the “founding” charism, the “proper” charism, the “specific” charism, the “particular” charism, the Institute’s “own” charism. This language emphasizes that the charism of the Institute is at the very heart and foundation of the Institute’s identity and mission, and as John Paul II beautifully teaches, is at the heart of each member’s vocation and personal call to holiness. Thus the Church calls Institutes and their members to think and act “in conformity with”, “according to”, “in keeping with”, “in fidelity to” the particular charism of their Institute.

Pope John Paul II singles out fidelity to the founding charism as the first point of emphasis needed today to support the growth of holiness in consecrated life. “It is precisely in this fidelity to the inspiration of the founders and foundresses, an inspiration which is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit, that the essential elements of the consecrated life can be more readily discerned and more fervently put into practice.”<sup>2</sup> How so? Because as a gift of the Holy Spirit, duly confirmed by the Church’s own discernment, the charism of the Institute leads each member in growing Christocentric Trinitarian intimacy:

“Fundamental to every charism is a threefold orientation. First, charisms lead *to the Father*, in the filial desire to seek his will through a process of unceasing conversion, wherein obedience is the source of true freedom, chastity expresses the yearning of a heart unsatisfied by any finite love, and poverty nourishes that hunger and thirst for justice which God has promised to satisfy (cf. *Mt* 5:6). Consequently the charism of each Institute will lead the consecrated person to belong wholly to God, to speak with God or about God, as is said of Saint Dominic, so that he or she can taste the goodness of the Lord (cf. *Ps* 34:8) in every situation. Secondly, the charisms of the consecrated life also lead *to the Son*, fostering an intimate and joyful communion of life with him, in the school of his generous service of God and neighbor. Thus the attitude of consecrated persons *is progressively conformed to Christ; they learn detachment from externals, from the tumult of the senses, from all that keeps man from that freedom which allows him to be grasped*

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031996\\_vita-consecrata.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata.html)

<sup>2</sup>Vita Consecrata (VC), n.36.

*by the Spirit*. As a result, consecrated persons are enabled to take up the mission of Christ, working and suffering with him in the spreading of his Kingdom. Finally, every charism leads *to the Holy Spirit*, insofar as it prepares individuals to let themselves be guided and sustained by him, both in their personal spiritual journeys and in their lives of communion and apostolic work, in order to embody that attitude of service which should inspire the true Christian's every choice.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this spiritual dimension of consecrated life, the human, fraternal, apostolic, cultural and professional dimensions of consecrated life are all dependant on deepening formation and personal appropriation of the charism of the Institute.

“...all these elements are united *in the dimension of the charism* proper to each Institute, as it were in a synthesis which calls for a constant deepening of one's own special consecration in all its aspects, not only apostolic but also ascetical and mystical. This means that each member should study diligently the spirit, history and mission of the Institute to which he or she belongs, in order to advance the personal and communal assimilation of its charism.”<sup>4</sup>

Not only does the charism of their particular Institute vivify growth in these dimensions of consecrated life for individual members, it also provides the sure rudder of discernment when considering questions of how to best adapt to changing circumstances, needs and opportunities in the world for the Institute as a whole.

“But all must be fully convinced that the quest for ever greater conformity to the Lord is the guarantee of any renewal which seeks to remain faithful to an Institute's original inspiration. In this spirit there is a pressing need today for every Institute *to return to the Rule*, since the Rule and Constitutions provide a map for the whole journey of discipleship, in accordance with a specific charism confirmed by the Church. A greater regard for the Rule will not fail to offer consecrated persons a reliable criterion in their search for the appropriate forms of a witness which is capable of responding to the needs of the times without departing from an Institute's initial inspiration.”<sup>5</sup>

It is hard work to undertake initial and ongoing formation of members in the charism<sup>6</sup> and to return to the charism of the Institute to navigate the many challenges of a changing world and the needs of the Institute itself:

“Faced with the many and pressing problems which sometimes seem to compromise or even overwhelm the consecrated life, those called to it cannot fail to feel the commitment to bear in their hearts and in their prayer the entire world's needs, while at the same time they work with zeal in the fields determined by the founding charism. Clearly, their dedication must be guided by *supernatural discernment*, which distinguishes what is of

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<sup>3</sup>ibid.

<sup>4</sup>VC, n.71

<sup>5</sup>VC, n.37. Cf. n.42

<sup>6</sup>Cf. VC, nn. 65,68.

the Spirit from that which is contrary to him (cf. *Gal 5:16-17,22; 1 Jn4:6*). By means of fidelity to the Rules and Constitutions, this discernment safeguards full communion with the Church.”<sup>7</sup>

It is work to return to the juridic expression of the charism found in the Constitutions, the Rule, the Statutes as sure guides which have been confirmed by the discernment of the Church.<sup>8</sup> It is work, and also a vocation affirming joy, to return to the writings and institutional memory of the Founder or Foundress regarding the charism to seek light on current questions and issues. And it is work to understand the charism more deeply through the lived experience of the Institute and its members, especially where there is stable, abundant and mature fruit in evidence. But all of these efforts help the Institute address present situations by drawing on the sure and inexhaustible richness of the charism, to allow God to light and guide. The need is great:

“The whole Church greatly depends on the witness of communities filled *with joy and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52)*. She wishes to hold up before the world the example of communities in which solitude is overcome through concern for one another, in which communication inspires in everyone a sense of shared responsibility, and in which wounds are healed through forgiveness, and each person's commitment to communion is strengthened. The nature of the charism in communities of this kind directs their energies, sustains their fidelity, and directs the apostolic work of all towards the one mission. If the Church is to reveal her true face to today's world, she urgently needs such fraternal communities, which, by their very existence, contribute to the new evangelization, inasmuch as they disclose in a concrete way the fruitfulness of the *new commandment*.”<sup>9</sup>

The need is great and the Church is grateful for and greatly blessed by Institutes whom she trusts to undertake these efforts:

“But it is above all to you, consecrated women and men, that at the end of this Exhortation I appeal with trust: live to the full your dedication to God, so that this world may never be without a ray of divine beauty to lighten the path of human existence. Christians, immersed in the cares and concerns of this world but also called to holiness, need to discover in you purified hearts which in faith *see* God, people docile to the working of the Holy Spirit who resolutely press on in fidelity to the charism of their call and mission.”<sup>10</sup>

*Father Scott Traynor*  
*Canon Lawyer and Vicar for Lay and Clergy Formation,*  
*Diocese of Sioux Falls, SD*

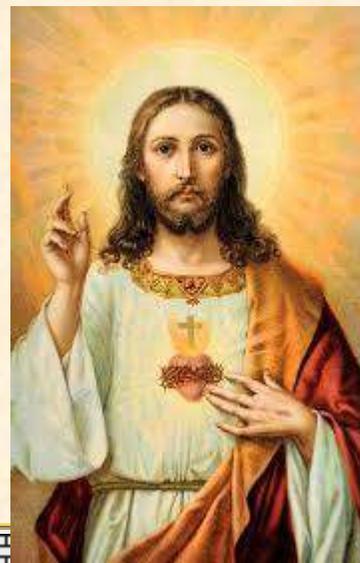
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<sup>7</sup>Cf. VC n.73.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. VC, n. 62.

<sup>9</sup>VC, n.45.

<sup>10</sup>VC. n.109





# NEWS BRIEFS



☞ **Eileen Fanning from *The Official Catholic Directory*** assured us on February 2, 2021, that the page for Secular Institutes is in the digital version of the directory rather than the print version. It can still be used to prove tax exempt status. If anyone has questions about getting the digital flipbook, please contact customer service at [info@nrpdirect.com](mailto:info@nrpdirect.com).

☞ **Making donations to USCSI:**  
We are most grateful for any amount. Please send your donations (checks made to “USCSI”) to: Deacon Paul Lang, 26 Settler Court, Tinton Falls, NJ 07753

☞ **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.

☞ **Executive Committee of the United States Conference of Secular Institutes:**

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☞ Please share joys & blessings from your institute in this YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH for our **Summer Mountaineer**.. Email [jessica@schsrsmay.org](mailto:jessica@schsrsmay.org) by **May 26, 2021**.

☞ **A YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH PRAYER**  
O St. Joseph, at Fatima you appeared as head of the Holy Family and with the Child Jesus, blessed the world and all its inhabitants. As the greatest consoler of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, we beseech you to assist us in our devotion to your beloved spouse, especially in our First Saturday reparations, which console our heavenly Mother. As the faithful father and protector of Mary and Jesus, we implore your powerful intercession in helping us to restore marriage and family to right order with God. With your spiritual carpenter skills, rebuild our Church and guide those who have strayed back to our Eucharistic Lord. Help us to do our part in bringing about the triumph she promised. Amen.