Theological Perspectives
Barbara Pandolfi

Introduction

- The journey undertaken was prompted by the previous CMIS Assembly, in an attempt to take some further steps toward the future, and it is also the result of discussions with several persons from different Institutes[1].
- After about a hundred years from the birth of the first Secular Institutes, 80 years after *Provida mater*, after the Second Vatican Council, and following several interventions of the Magisterium (synod, Dicastery…), reflecting on the theological aspects of consecrated secularity continues to stimulate our reflection. Perhaps it could also be useful for a concrete discernment of new Institutes. It is important for those who live this vocation to reflect and discuss together based on their own experience and sensitivity, within a theology that comes from the base.
- It is worth remembering that even today, discourse on the laity (not only on consecrated laity) remains open and has not found a clear, shared place within theological-ecclesial reflection from which we, as Secular Institutes (IISS), can start or can simply use as a basis to deepen our specific charism.
- A final clarification: I will not deal with priestly Secular Institutes in this presentation, although some aspects I will discuss may apply to them as well.

Let us start with a phenomenological glance at the current situation of Secular Institutes (albeit briefly), as partially emerged from the report on the questionnaire taken cared of particularly by Antonio, Fr. Marcel, and Chiara.

Some open questions and challenges emerged

1. First, let me say that Secular Institutes (IS) were born with multiple identities: at the beginning of the twentieth century, forms of life of persons wishing to live their consecration in the world emerged in various European countries and contexts, so much so that even then there was a desire for discussion and common definitions[2]. However, they were born within a very specific historical and cultural European context.

[1] Marien, Lourdes R., Luisella M., Valentina S.

[2] As early as 1938, a meeting was organized in Sangallo, Switzerland, bringing together associations of lay people consecrated to God for the apostolate throughout the world, with a view to seeking recognition from the Holy See.

Therefore, they possessed similar characteristics or objectives. Today, the very first question is raised by the diversity among Secular Institutes (not so much due to whether they are of diocesan or pontifical right). The current variety of Constitutions does not always facilitate identifying common theological lines across all the concrete ways of life assumed over time by the different Institutes.

The situation is further complicated in mixed Institutes that accept or welcome unmarried men and women, priests, and married couples ... perhaps all with the same degree of belonging.
This wide variety of situations, currently recognized by the Church, makes it difficult to draw general theological lines that satisfies everyone.

Another element of reflection is the presence of Secular Institutes in many countries outside Europe, where this form of life originally began[3]. The themes of secularity, work, politics, and women... have taken on diversified connotations linked to the history, culture, and traditions of different contexts. For us, as seculars, inculturation is fundamental; we do not live with the perspective of a community that has its own uniform style, with standard times for prayer, ways of living, or choice of structures...

All of this poses some questions for us:

- What are the essential elements that distinguish a Secular Institute from other forms of consecrated life (for example, Religious Institutes[4])? What, in other words, is specific, essential, and indispensable to define Secular Institutes?
- Discernment and formation require specific pathways[5]. At the same time, does an Institute that accepts vocations from other countries have the courage and strength to challenge and interrogate itself, without losing the specificity of its own charism?

New theological perspectives are therefore emerging, also in light of the magisterium of Pope Francis, who has repeatedly urged the whole Church to start from the **peripheries**. Indeed, according to his teaching already expressed in *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), it is necessary to recognize **the voices of the various continents as theological places** (that is, as places that speak of God, speak about God, or,

---

[3] Countries that have not experienced certain aspects of Europe – such as anticlericalism or atheism – but have been shaped by other factors, such as the legacy of colonialism, extreme economic inequalities caused by grave injustices, the indiscriminate exploitation of the land, and engagement with major, deeply-rooted religious traditions…
We are therefore faced with new issues and challenges, which also affect the theology of the IISS and the formation we provide.

[4] Let us bear in mind that, in the current context, religious life is undergoing various forms of change and renewal, with the result that some of those 'outward characteristics' which, over time, have marked the distinction between religious life and secular consecration are now less clearly defined or less immediately apparent.

[5] Cf. J.J. TAMAYO, *Teologie del sud. La decolonizzazione come nuovo paradigma* (Theology of the South. Colonization as a new paradigm), Queriniana, Brescia 2024.

even better, as words that God pronounces as a communication/revelation of Himself in history). This suggests that we move beyond the application paradigm that reached the Second Vatican Council from scholasticism, according to which dogmatic principles must simply be applied to pastoral situations. **Dogma - that is, theoretical definition - preceded and imposed the same framework on everyone.**

On the contrary, Pope Francis reminds us that not only pastoral work but also theology must smell of "the people and the street". It is an invitation to a synodal and pioneering theological research that is the fruit of a "post-clerical and post-colonial Church"[6].

Is it possible to listen to and take the entire voices of all local Churches more seriously?

Which model of Church?

Elio Castellucci states: "It is not possible to answer the question 'who is a layperson' (and therefore also 'who is a consecrated layperson') without first answering the question 'who is the Church".[7] *For this reason, even if briefly, we cannot avoid doing so ourselves*.

In recent decades, ecclesiology has emphasized that secularity is a dimension not only of the laity but of the whole Church. Secularity, understood as immersion in the "century" (the world, history, life), is a fundamental and constitutive dimension of the Church and its mission, showing how the Church is intrinsically shaped by history[8].

Therefore, in a completely "secular" Church, the identity of the lay faithful reflects the elliptical nature of the Church itself. This identity can always and only be defined by considering two focuses: in relation to Christ and His mission, and in relation to the world in which it is immersed and to which it is continuously sent.

This observation is of primary importance because it avoids the risk - which historically led to serious misunderstanding - thinking of the Church as an entity unto itself, definable a priori as if it were established prior to any relationship with the "other"[9].

The ecclesial subject, instead, is structurally intertwined with the events of history, and it is impossible to define who the Church is in an abstract way, without considering its constitutive relationship with the world (secularity)[10].

---

[6] Cfr. An article published in *L'Osservatore Romano* by Christian Bauer on 3 April 2026, presenting Sergio Massironi's book, "Towards a Topology of Joy: Where the Second Vatican Council is at Work", Castelvecchi, Rome 2025. In the theological reflection by secular institutes, are we perhaps still too much influenced by the debate on secularism that preceded and led up to the Second Vatican Council (and which has not disappeared even from post-conciliar theological reflection, including the 1987 Synod), and do we adopt an overly Eurocentric perspective?

[7] E. CASTELLUCCI, 'An Overview of the Theology of the Laity Today: Perspectives', in '*Orientamenti Pastorali*' (Pastoral Orientation) 1 (2003) nos. 6/7, 42–84, here 42.

[8] It is also possible to compare A. SCOLA, *La teologia del laicato alla luce dell'ecclesiologia di comunione: l'identità del fedele laico* [The theology of the laity in the light of the ecclesiology of communion: the identity of the lay faithful], in PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY, *A Venti anni dalla Christifideles laici: memoria sviluppo, nuove sfide e compiti* [Twenty years after *Christifideles laici*: memory, development, new challenges and tasks], Rome 13-15 November 2008, in laici.va

[9] L. HELL, 'Catholicism', in J.Y. LACOSTE, "Critical Dictionary of Theology" (Italian edition edited by P. CODA), Borla-Città Nuova, Rome 2005, pp. 286–288.

[10] See PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS, *Christifideles laici*. Assessment and Prospects, Vatican Press, Vatican City 2010, 33–34.

As Vergottini states: "Vatican II recommends overcoming the dualistic ecclesial model (inside/outside). In fact, just as the Church does not exist in opposition to the world, neither does a Church exist preceding the world. The Church lives its mystery inside history, which is why every Christian vocation is necessarily both ecclesial and historical"[11].

We are, therefore, all disciples journeying toward the fullness of the Kingdom, not fleeing from history, because this history and our lives are already the beginning and part of the Kingdom we await in its fullness.

Among the different possible models of Church, it seems to me that the theology of Secular Institutes is drawn to privilege the vision of *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), in which the mission *in mundo* emerges, rather than that of *Apostolica Actuositatem* on the apostolate of the laity (which, moreover, never mentions Secular Institutes, perhaps not considering their members sufficiently lay?) or that of *Lumen Gentium*, which does contain the classic definition of a layperson but also highlights connotations that were already debated immediately after the Council.

In fact, the approach of GS is one we can consider more attuned to Secular Institutes (or it reflects us better), because it requires us to be aware that we are not involved in a mission of "conquest," as absolute possessors of the truth. In fact, we do not possess it; it is the Spirit who continues to guide us into all truth. We are its servants, recognizing ourselves as fragile and sinful disciples, seekers and pilgrims who have never fully arrived. We are "apprentices of life," artisans who need others and the world to better grasp the presence of God already at work and the Spirit who goes before us, just as occurred at the dawn of the Church and is witnessed in the Acts of the Apostles.

Paul VI wrote in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*[12]: "The laity, whose specific vocation places them in the midst of the world and at the head of the most varied temporal tasks, must thereby exercise a singular form of evangelization [...]. Their task is to put into effect all Christian and evangelical possibilities hidden, but already present and active in the realities of the world"[13].

Let us take a further step.

Consecrated secularity... consecrated laypeople... or... consecrated secularism/laicity[14]?

Words are important in defining who we are.

- *Where we come from... a look at the past towards the future*.

One of the significant newness of Vatican Council II is Chapter V of *Lumen Gentium* (specifically No. 40), which, according to many authors, is one of the central themes of the Second Vatican Council.

---

[11] M. VERGOTTINI, “Lay Christians, or rather the secular nature of the Church”, in *Credere Oggi* (To believe Today) 25 (2005) no. 150, 75–94, here 76

[12] With regard to secular institutes, it is interesting to note that Paul VI never refers to LG or AA, but always quotes and refers specifically to GS

[13] PAUL VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 70. The document was published on 8 December 1975

[14] I realise that, depending on the terms used, there is a ‘risk’ of excluding priestly IISSs.

When the Vatican Council II affirms the universal call to holiness, it highlights that being a layperson is not a "secondary-worse-minor" condition compared to religious brothers and sisters.
There is a holiness equal in substance (not in forms) for everyone; for all, it is an **obligatory vocation** because holiness is the fullness of a totally evangelical life. Therefore, it is not determined by a specific state of life (referred to in the past as the "state of perfection").
*However, many of us are heirs to a different, pre-conciliar history:
Before the Council, the desire to venture into a consecration in the world - strenuously defended by the first founders of Secular Institutes - emphasized two inseparable aspects: secularity and consecration. The Church was asked to recognize this state of life as a "state of perfection" as well.
It seemed almost as if the radical embrace of lay life alone could not be a "condition of perfection" but "needed" consecration, the profession of the evangelical counsels in the codified triple form (with a strong, though indirect, reference to that of monks and the religious orders later).

- Without running the risk of a dichotomy (the two aspects are obviously inseparable[15]), we can ask ourselves what expresses the centrality of our form of life: lay secularity or consecration?
- If lay secularity, lived in its Christian radicalism, is at the center - in a life completely given to this mission in the way of Christ and Mary – what are its consequences?
- Can we attempt a different language today?

Monasticism had achieved a radicalization, certainly moved by the Spirit and rich in grace for the entire Church, by which we still risk being conditioned. In fact, the monastic radicalization in the face of a Christianity made less pure by the infiltration of various philosophical and political elements contributed to highlighting matter, the world, and the body as negative and bad - an idea far from the biblical vision and the theme of the Incarnation, yet one that exists to this day.
On the contrary, for Jesus, there was no "sacred" world and "profane" world; Christ always transcends the logic of the pure and the impure typical of his time.
In this context, the layperson was effectively confined to the "profane world" and considered "profane" themselves - compromised by a world that is viewed negatively, becoming an increasingly passive object of the care and teaching of the clergy, who possessed the capacity to teach and "command"[16].
The risk was the weakening among Christians of the sense of responsibility toward the structures and systems of the world, toward earthly life and physicality; above all, the gospel message **risked being reduced to an individual search for perfection**.
Yet, the primitive community of Jesus' disciples, which certainly possessed a strong apostolic-missionary drive and a real radicality of life leading even to martyrdom, did not seek to "withdraw" from the world, even in the midst of persecution.

---

[15] Paul VI spoke of bringing these elements together using a striking image – that of mountaineers.

[16] Graziano's conception of the *duo genera christianorum* was sustained by the idea that the life of lay Christians was a concession made to human weakness, a sort of compromise. Emphasis on the heavenly realm took precedence over commitment to the earthly world. From this perspective, even clerical life was not always valued for its own specific merits.

This idea also carried over into religious life, albeit with different connotations.

- The rise of the mendicant orders and the various Third Orders was an interesting attempt at a first rediscovery of a life in the world, but it risked being almost a "monasticization" of the lay world - an interesting choice that nevertheless hid certain risks.
- We have fallen, and we risk doing so again, into the lack of the **spirituality of the Incarnation** - a lack that risks making people think of God as absent from the world, especially from the modern world (precisely, where He needed to be brought back), risking a religion without a world and, therefore, the idea of a world without God.

Yet, as long as laypeople think they can become holy by imitating religious orders, the Church will be impoverished in its mission.

Today we perceive it as fundamental that it is secularity/laicity that gives shape to consecration, and this is a challenge that can indicate the maturity of the journey of Secular Institutes. This is because it captures and brings to light the specificity of their consecration: no longer vows lived almost in the manner of religious life, which we risk still preserving as a "model", falling into a dangerous dichotomy between consecration and secularity.
Instead, we can affirm with Madeleine Delbrêl: "We, the people of the street, believe that we lack nothing that is necessary. Because if this necessity were lacking, God would have already given it to us".

An important theological perspective follows from this.
Certainly, the world is the field where wheat and weeds coexist, but this does not prevent the final harvest. However, precisely from this, it is evident that the Kingdom of God, which is justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17), is already sown in the world, in our midst. It is built also through all our gestures of self-giving, love, and life that make it grow and walk toward its fullness[17]. Already now, we live in an eschatological time and build the Kingdom.

The layperson and the consecrated layperson is a man/woman for whom things exist, for whom their truth is not engulfed and abolished by a higher reality. On the contrary, it is about referring the elements of this world to the Absolute. The form of this world passes away not because it disappears, but because it is transformed into new heavens and a new earth, which are not totally separate from the world, from our history, and from our inter-relationships. We are already building eternity right now… this is the meaning of the resurrection of the body, of the wounds of the Risen Lord.

Therefore, as **consecrated laypersons** - that is, persons who have embraced and taken seriously the whole reality of the world and history because they burn with desire for the Absolute - it is necessary to seek out those sparks of love, justice, forgiveness, and truth that are sown by God on this earth, in

[17] "Whoever serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by others. Let us then pursue what leads to peace and to building up one another" (Romans 14:18–19).

the hearts of human beings (whether they are aware of it or not), recognizing them as the very substance of our vocation (and consecration).
Furthermore, in this way, we (and other laypeople) can guarantee permanent attention to the Church's extroversion, its rooting in cultures, and the unfolding of history.

Born for mission

If the Council affirmed that the Church is entirely missionary - indeed, it is either missionary or it is not (AG 2:35) - and if Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*, placed at the center a Church going out, we can say that Secular Institutes understood this first and were born precisely by intuiting this fundamental fact. And they intuited it not in the "classical" perspective of going to distant lands, *ad gentes*, but to live it in that reality which, despite being Christian, had "lost touch with God" or, rather, had reduced God to a private matter.
Today in the West, there are many reflections on this theme (aware that the West no longer seems to be the center of the world, not even for Christianity, as if it were an anesthetized world).
I recall only Henri de Lubac, who emphasized how our era has sadly lost "the taste for God"[18]. Or, in the evangelical sphere, the German Paul Tillich asking whether "the Christian message (especially Christian preaching) is still relevant to the people of our time? And if it is not, what is the cause? And does this reflect on the message of Christianity itself?"[19].
For the crisis no longer seems to concern just some aspect of Christian life or religious practice, but has become a "crisis of God" (Metz).
However, Tomáš Halík states that some of those who have distanced themselves have moved away from traditional ways of believing and its institutional forms, but have often remained in search spiritually. Therefore, he asserts, "the answer to the question of who is a 'believer' and who is a 'non-believer' is much more complex than it might seem at first sight"[20].

The specific characteristic of the consecrated layperson is, therefore, first and foremost, their way of living as a missionary disciple.
Their manner is not one "of preaching" from the outside, almost from a pulpit, but their manner, their vocational choice, is to be and to remain in the ordinary conditions of life. So as to share with everyone the hardship, precariousness, joy, risks… without fleeing into a private world, without withdrawing into their *comfort zone*… and here, we can say, **to be a witness to meaning, to joy, and to the fullness of life**.

---

[18] H. DE LUBAC, *On the Paths of God*, Jaca Book, Milan 2008, p. 87

[19] P. TILLICH, *The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message for Humanity Today*, Queriniana Press, Brescia 2021, p. 31.
Cf. F. Cosentino, *God at the Margins: The Revelation of God in an Age of Christian Irrelevance*, St Paul Publication, Cinisello Balsamo (Milan) 2023.

[20] T. HALÍK, *The Dream of a New Dawn: Letters to the Pope*, *Vita e Pensiero*, Milan 2024, 11–13

Man and woman competent in their work (whatever it may be), passionate about life in the world, about the events of history… nothing is foreign to them, but everything is assumed as their theological reality. They do not merely tolerate or endure all of this, but accept social and political responsibilities and commitments, fighting against injustice, building peaceful coexistence, committing themselves to the common good… **knowing that they are building the Kingdom**… For this, they spend/consecrate their entire lives! For this, they live in faith, thirsting for the Absolute… for this, they are satisfied only by God, whom they seek and find in the world.

Our life, which is "in the world" by vocation, cannot fail to urge us to modify, amplify, and at times unsettle our awareness as Christians who hold certain ideas in a certain way.
We recognize that ours is a life in continuous tension between theory and practice, between consolidated statements and new challenges and questions. It is a life that consciously accepts fragility, perhaps even apparent insignificance and littleness, the insecurity of those who dare to walk untrodden paths, sometimes alone.
For example, we experience concretely how entering into relationships with people facing difficult lives leads us to read the Gospel with new eyes and poses unprecedented challenges to us. Evil, sin, mercy, freedom, and grace are words that become increasingly charged with new meanings and questions.

I deliberately draw from Acts of the Apostles, on the journey of the early Church… It is not the same thing to become a companion to a eunuch on the road to Gaza, as happens to Philip (and eunuchs were outcasts, cursed, people without children and therefore considered already dead), or to speak in the public square of Athens, engaging with Greek philosophy… or to make the choice to select seven men to serve the poor/widows…. New challenges posed by the proclamation of the gospel yesterday as today, decisions to be made as individuals, but also as a Church.
In fact, while the gospel is always the same, the way it is proclaimed changes, in the awareness that the Spirit, as I said, leads the Church progressively into the entire truth.
And we are there to listen, but also to experience the same hardships, the same fears, the same doubts… to believe that with Vatican II, pastoral work is no longer a simple organizational or social strategy, but becomes an application of theological doctrine, and this, in turn, must learn from pastoral work. A dialectical relationship[21].

Contradiction and complexity are the very hallmarks of secularity, which offers companionship rather than solutions, solidarity rather than preaching, invocation rather than decision, because eschatology itself, of which our consecration is a sign, is fullness of communion for all peoples (*Buffon*).

What guides the Christian difference, which Secular Institutes are called to witness, should be that leaven in the dough as said by Matthew (13:33), which **gives human plans the broader character of the Kingdom that grows mysteriously** - a Kingdom that comes, that matures slowly like the seed.

[21] Cfr. MASSIRONI, *Towards a Topology of Joy*, op. cit.

Unlike other forms of consecrated life, that of Secular Institutes requires its members to act with **personal responsibility**. It therefore requires discernment, maturity, competence, and honesty with oneself….
Evangelical radicalism is liberation from all possessions and powers that could condition our actions, and will allow us to act with personal responsibility, even daring to make frontline choices… beyond what is already defined and codified ("we must obey God rather than men").
It requires courage… **Living without a protective network**, and this is what we must train for.

We are aware, as Sergio Massironi writes: "Contemporary theology is therefore also challenged by the promptings of the Magisterium - here one truly touches the inspiration of the Spirit - to engage with that 'knowledge' which is not found at centers, already cataloged in the most authoritative libraries, but at the margins. It is the center that shifts. However - and this is a synodal challenge far from being won - it is necessary to convene the interlocutor and give them the floor.
"The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts" (GS 1).
It is the desire to break any temptation to separate ourselves from what is common, to overcome the recurring and unshakable conviction that we are the sole depositories of a knowledge manifested in doctrines rather than in events, and **which must be separated and safeguarded from the changing flow of historical events**.
Opting for the primacy of reality over the idea, as proposed by Pope Francis, means remaining within the horizon of the Incarnation, whose theological, anthropological, and pastoral consequences have engaged Christian debate since its origins.

"**There is no truth of God separate from time and space**, a truth that despises human places and any connection with bodily realities, distancing the believer from involvement in the drama of human events"[22].
Gaudium et Spes can then be seen as the "second Constitution on divine revelation" of the Council, after *Dei Verbum*, **since God speaks in Scripture and in history**; because there is a connection between **places and revelation, to listen to the voice of God** speaking to the Church. This is the path of synodality.

The Word and events
Jesus "said also to the people: 'When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, "It's going to rain," and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, "It's going to be hot," and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?'" Luke 12:54-56.
"For us, it is a matter, then, of reading concrete situations that appear as 'theological places' from which the Risen Lord Himself speaks".

[22] MASSIRONI, Towards a Topology of Joy, op. cit. 63-65

If reality is superior to the idea (as Pope Francis reminds us), meaning that concrete situations, people, and lived facts must be privileged over abstract concepts/theories, preventing the idea from separating itself from real life.
This searching theology[23], which does not yet know everything about God's revelation and therefore must continually go on a journey of discovery, is the source of our spirituality.
To believe that there is a *sensus fidei* that inhabits the peripheries, that inhabits the people of God.

It is within this complexity that we can recognize the Spirit of God; indeed, the First Letter of John says: "Every spirit that acknowledges that **Jesus Christ has come in the flesh** is from God" (1 Jn 4:2). This should be the spirituality of those of us who live secular consecration: being consciously present in daily life. The life of work, relationships, and everyday occurrences, in fact, makes faith mature, at times tests it, but in any case makes it more adult.

It is not easy to live this way… it is a journey for mountaineers of the Spirit, as Paul VI used to tell us. For this reason, a strong spiritual life is necessary.
If we want to be men and women of faith, let us live our lives in the manner of Jesus; Christ lived the common life of the men of his time to sanctify the ordinary life of men of all times. By immersing ourselves in reality, we will find ourselves immersed in God and in His wisdom that surrounds us on every side. Living a deep life, a deep, simple, sincere faith, enlivened by a hope that believes contact with God is possible, and by a love that desires above all else the fulfillment of His will.
It is a great grace that the Lord reserves for us as consecrated laypersons, a treasure that enriches our lives.

Our life is formed by the purpose for which you live: "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6). No one can serve two masters… If we desire to possess a spiritual life, it is necessary to consolidate our life.
Since we do not always see these sprouts, we need an inner certainty, that is, the conviction that God can act in any circumstance, even in the midst of apparent failures.
This certainty is what is called the "sense of mystery". It is knowing with certainty that whoever offers and gives themselves to God out of love will surely be fruitful (cf. Jn 15:5; *Evangelii Gaudium* 278-279).

Then our prayer can only spring from the facts of life, within life… from an incarnate Word (the Word is always incarnate, because the Word became flesh); only this prayer allows us to grasp the world and **the way we treat the things of the world will be as if they were parables of the God's Kingdom** (A. Casati), because doctrine - life - cannot be without mystery (GE, 41).
It allows us to believe that the resurrection of Christ produces seeds of the new world everywhere; and even when they are trimmed, they sprout again, because the resurrection of the Lord has already intertwined itself with the fabric of this history, because Jesus did not rise in vain.

---

[23] MASSIRONI, *Towards a Topology of Joy*, op. cit.

Consecrated life has always been read in an eschatological perspective, as a sign and anticipation of the future world.
In this perspective, it seems to me that Secular Institutes truly have something significant to say, in the conviction that the future world will not be totally separate from that seed of the Kingdom which already manifests itself and is silently growing in history.
Let us ask ourselves, however, **are we dying people hoping for the end, or are we living persons who are already experiencing the resurrection**? (D. Vitali).

To conclude
We cannot fail to recognize that the path of the Incarnation is the path of fragility and vulnerability….
As Secular Institutes, we are, perhaps, beginning to understand that it is necessary to coexist with vulnerability and that this is a gift.
For us, it can be an existential transition from the concept of abstract perfection - of those who do not show (must not show) weaknesses - to the awareness of being human beings, sinful men and women loved and saved, who cannot judge, but only place their own heart in contact with that of others:
"Ultimately, they trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic way…" (GE 49).

For us, it is a matter of **returning always to Galilee** to meet the Risen Lord: Galilee, a borderland, impure-mixed, a land of work … yet the land of the Incarnation, the land of vocation, the land of the encounter with the Risen One.
It is in this land that we encountered the Promise of God which was being fulfilled in the life of a man like everyone else, who comes from the obscure village of Nazareth and sits at the table with sinners, welcoming women among his followers; could he be the Messiah?
Here, in this land of everyday life, the heart opened to the infinite….
Here we perceive that only proximity allows us to recognize what the Spirit has sown and sows in others as a gift for us, for the Church… is this our **obedience** to life and, today we can say, to history?
Here, far from the temple, we can learn to discern God not only in places of the sacred, but of holiness in its different connotations.