Madrid Congress, 18 August

The Prophecy of Secular Institutes: From the Magisterium to Life

"Humanity, created by God in all its grandeur, is today facing a pivotal choice: either to construct a new Tower of Babel or to build the city in which God and humanity dwell together. Each generation inherits the task of shaping its own era, of guiding history to become a place where the dignity of every person is safeguarded, justice is promoted and fraternity is made possible. Yet every era also runs the risk of creating an inhumane and more unjust world. (...)" (Magnifica Humanitas, 1).

This call from Pope Leo XIV places our reflection within the broader discernment to which the whole Church is being invited. It is a call that we sense addressed especially to us, who, in the flow of historical events, are called to bear witness to the love of God, contributing to the building of a more human and fraternal world.

We begin from experiences lived in various cultural contexts, in the light of the Magisterium of the Church on Secular Institutes, inspired by the words of Pope Francis: *"Be revolutionary. Be revolutionary"* just as the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* of Pius XII (10 May 2014) was a *"truly revolutionary gesture"*.

Round Table with Multiple Voices

"Now what was the original inspiration of Secular Institutes? What was the soul, giving birth, animation, development? It was a longing, a search, deep and preoccupying, for a synthesis, a way of life combining the two characteristic features of your way of life: full consecration according to the evangelical counsels and freedom to take on the responsibility of a presence and transforming action in the world, from the inside, to shape it, to make it a better world, to sanctify it. On the one hand the profession of the evangelical counsels is a specific form of life, giving both strength and witness to that holiness which is the vocation of all the faithful. It is a sign of perfect identification with the Church, and with the Lord and Master himself and the aims and purposes which he has entrusted to the Church. On the other hand, to reside in the world implies the Christian responsibility of men and women who, themselves redeemed by Christ, are, as surely committed to "illumine and organize temporal affairs in such a way that they may always start out, develop, and persist according to Christ's mind, to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer" *(Lumen Gentium, 31).*

"In this picture of the present situation there is a deep, providential, unmistakable link you might say identification between the charism of Secular Institutes and one of the clearest and most important themes of the Council, the Church's presence in the world.
The Church is very much aware of the fact that it exists in the world and walks together with humanity and experiences the same earthly lot as the world does. She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society (Gaudium et spes, 40)" (Pope Paul VI, XXV anniversary of *Provida*

Mater Ecclesia, 1972).

Testimonies

1. Remaining in the ordinary of life as a choice, in the style of a Church that walks with all humanity

Paola B. *– Italia - Secular Institute Figlie della Regina degli Apostoli*

2. What spirituality for a secular life that follows the path of incarnation?

M. Rocío G.C. *– Spain – Secular Institute Schönstätter Marienschwestern*

"The Holy Spirit, who wondrously fashions the variety of charisms, has given rise in our time to *new expressions of consecrated life,* which appear as a providential response to the new needs encountered by the Church today as she carries out her mission in the world.

One thinks in the first place of members of *Secular Institutes* seeking to *live out their consecration to God in the world* through the profession of the evangelical counsels in the midst of temporal realities. (...) Secular Institutes, each in accordance with its specific nature, thus help to ensure that the Church has an effective presence in society" (Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, 10).

Testimonies

3. What is our contribution, as secular consecrated persons, to the secularity of the whole Church?

Leena R. *– India – Secular Institute Maids of the Poor*

"The secular character of your consecration highlights, on the one hand, the means by which you seek to live it — those proper to every man and woman living in ordinary conditions in the world — and, on the other hand, the way it unfolds: a deep relationship with the signs of the times which you are called to discern, personally and in community, in the light of the Gospel. On repeated occasions, your charism has been authoritatively identified precisely in this discernment, so that you may be a laboratory of dialogue with the world, a 'laboratory of experimentation in which the Church verifies the concrete ways of her relationships with the world' (Paul VI, Address to the General Superiors of Secular Institutes, 1976). "The enduring timeliness of your charism derives precisely from this, for this discernment must not take place from outside reality but from within it, through full involvement" (Pope Benedict XVI, 3 February 2007).

Testimonies

4. What signs of the times do I welcome as a challenge in my life?

Lina A. *– Syria – Secular Institute Volontarie di don Bosco*

5. What discernment is asked of me in the complexity of today's history in my country?

Olamma I.C. *– Nigeria – Secular Institute Missionarie del Vangelo*

"There is a new step to be taken. Originally you chose to "come out of the sacristies" to bring Jesus into the world. Today the movement of going out must be complemented by a commitment to make the world present (not worldliness!) in the Church. Many existential questions have arrived

late on the desks of bishops and theologians. You have experienced many changes in advance. But your experience has not yet enriched the Church sufficiently. The movement of prophecy that challenges you today is the next step after your birth. This does not mean returning to the sacristy, but being "receptive antennas, transmitting messages". I gladly repeat: "you are like antennas ready to receive the smallest innovations prompted by the Holy Spirit, and you can help the ecclesial community to take on this gaze of goodness and find new and bold ways to reach all peoples"(Address to the Italian Conference of Secular Institutes, 10 May 2014)" (Pope Francis, Letter for the 75th anniversary of PME, 2022).

Testimonies

6. How do I make the world present in the Church today?
María Piedad A.F. *– Spain – Secular Institute Filiación Cordimariana*

7. What does "going out" mean today in order to be receptive antennas?
p. Vicente S.B*. - Canada – Istituto Voluntas Dei*

"This means being prophetic presences in a very concrete world. It means bringing to the world, in the situations in which you find yourselves, the world of God that is to be heard. It is this that truly characterizes secular life: knowing how to say that world that God has to say to the world. Where "to say" does not mean so much "to speak" as "to act". We say what God wants to say to the world, acting in the world (…) to be attentive, on the one hand, to the realities that surround you (…) and at the same time, to the mystery of God, (...) with your heart immersed in God" (Pope Francis, 23 October 2017).

Testimonies

8. To say: "to be a very concrete prophetic presence" in my life means…
Idalmys Nohely G.U. *– Dominican Republic – Secular Institute Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia*

9. What does the centrality of the Word mean in my life?
M. Florencia M. *– Argentina – Secular Institute Cristifero*

"Consecrated secularity is a prophetic sign that urges us to reveal the Father's love with our lives rather than with words, to show it daily on the roads of the world. Today is not so much the time for persuasive and convincing discourses; it is above all the time for witnessing because, while apologia is divisive, the beauty of life attracts . Be witnesses who attract! ... I therefore invite you to deepen the meaning and the way of your presence in the world and to renew in your consecration the beauty and the desire to participate in the transfiguration of reality. " (Pope Francis, Address to the CMIS, 2 February 2022)

Testimonies

10. What does it mean for me to be a witness?

***Landowski** – Poland – Secular Institute Cristo Re*

“You are called to live all the precariousness of the provisional and all the beauty of the absolute in ordinary life… This path requires unhinging habits that no longer speak to anyone… May yours be the service of the seed, the service of the leaven, the hidden service…” (Pope Francis, 25 August 2022).

Testimonies

11. Being a pilgrim means accepting precariousness with eyes fixed on the Absolute…
***Susan L.** – USA – United States Conference of Secular Institutes - USCSI*