



The Voice of Pope Francis on Consecrated Secularity

Dear brothers and sisters:

The document of Pope Pius XII, *Provida Mater*, was in a certain sense revolutionary: indeed, it outlined a new form of consecration, that of the lay faithful and diocesan priests called to live evangelical counsel in the secular life in which they are immersed, on account of their existential condition or their pastoral ministry. The newness and fruitfulness of the Secular Institutes lies therefore in the conjugation of consecration and secularity, practising an apostolate of witness, of evangelization, and of Christian commitment in social life, to which fraternity is added which, without being determined by a community of life, is in any case true communion.

In the wake of *Provida Mater*, you are called today to be humble and passionate bearers, in Christ and in His Spirit, of the meaning of the world and of history. Your passion is born of the ever-new wonder for the Lord Jesus, for His unique way of living and of loving, of encountering the people, of healing life, of bringing comfort. Therefore, your “staying within” the world is not only a sociological condition but also a theological reality, which enables you to remain attentive, to see, to listen, to sympathize with, to rejoice with, to intuit needs.

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. This is very important. Especially in a time such as ours, in which, faced with difficulties, there can be the temptation to isolate oneself in one’s own comfortable and safe environments and withdraw from the world. You too could fall prey to this temptation. But your place is to “stay within”, as a transforming presence in an evangelical sense. It is certainly difficult, it is a road that involves the cross, but the Lord wants to journey it with you.

Your vocation and mission is to be attentive, on the one hand, to the realities that surround you, always asking: what is happening? without stopping at what appears on the surface but going deeper; and at the same time, to the mystery of God, to recognize where He is manifest. Attentive to the world, with your heart immersed in God.

I would like, finally, to suggest spiritual attitudes that may help you on this path and that may be summarized in five verbs: to pray, to discern, to share, to give courage, and to have sympathy.

- *Pray*, to be joined to God, close to His heart. Listen to His voice, before every event in life, living a luminous existence that takes the Gospel in hand and takes it seriously.
- *Discern*, to be able to distinguish essential things from ancillary ones; this means refining that wisdom, cultivating it day by day, to enable you to see what responsibilities it is necessary to take on, and what the priority tasks are. It is a personal but also a community path, and so individual effort is not enough.
- *Share* the fate of every man and woman: even if the world’s events are tragic and dark, I do not abandon the fate of the world because I love it, as and with Jesus, unto the end.
- *Give courage*: with the grace of Christ never lose trust, which knows how to see good in everything. It is also an invitation we receive in every Eucharistic celebration: Lift up your hearts”.
- *Have sympathy* for the world and for the people. Even when they do everything to make you lose it, be animated by the sympathy that comes to us from the Spirit of Christ, that makes us free and passionate, that makes us “stay within” like salt and leaven.

Dear brothers and sisters, you are able to be in the world like the soul in the body (cf. *Letter to Diognetus*, VI, 1), witnesses to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This is my wish for you, which I accompany with my prayer and my blessing.

The figure of the Assistant

As a Priest

- A person who takes care of his interior life, witnesses to the love of God and lives his ministry with generosity and passion.
- A balanced and polite person, father and brother capable of communication, who creates communion and trust around him. Who knows how to intervene when it is convenient to animate a group or resolve possible problems, broadening the points of view and opening up new possibilities to consider.
- A person open to updating, who studies the specificity of consecrated secularity, knows the document of the Magisterium and of the Secular Institutes, as well as the characteristic features of the VDB and CDB vocations within the Salesian Family. He knows how to perceive the novelty and improve his service in view of the development of the maturity, the autonomy and the human and Christian responsibility of the persons and groups.
- A person with a vocational culture, always attentive to the signs of the vocation to Consecrated Secularity and available to the persons who come to the institute collaborating with the Responsible in the welcoming and the formation of new vocations.

As a Salesian

- A person who feels and lives the reality of the Salesian Family and fosters the knowledge and the esteem for the Consecrated Secularity among his confreres and among the groups of the Salesian Family and in the environments in which he works.
- A person who expresses the values of Salesian Spirituality with a style and a radiant witness, through:
 - Spiritual Paternity; the style of the Good Shepherd; typical Salesian prayer which is nourished by the Word of God and the Eucharist and by a filial trust in the Help of Christians / (Mary our Help) .
 - Familiarity, optimism, friendship and fraternal dialogue, opening to the others, sincerity and simplicity in relations.
 - A passion for the world of youth, in particular for the poor and abandoned youth; attentive to the signs of the times; work and temperance for the Kingdom.

In short, the availability to service and collaboration with the Responsible the Councillors and the brothers/and sisters.

The General Assembly 8 of the VDB

On the 28 of July our dear VDB had concluded their 8th General Assembly. (These were) days of deep communion, of reflection on the theme “The Mission of the VDB, Today”, and of discernment and election of the persons of new Central Council.

Dagmar K of the group of Dubnica (Slovakia), was elected as the President General, she was already a part of the Central Council for 12 years. We are grateful for her availability. We Pray for her and for her Council and we wish them fecundity in their new mission at the service of the Institute and the Church.

Nomination of Olga Krisova as a member of CIVCSVA

On 9th July the Holy Father nominated our dear Olga as member of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. It is a significant appointment for her, for us and for the Congregation itself. We know Olga well. We know how positive her contribution will be in relation to Consecrated Secularity. Mother Yvonne too was nominated for the same mission. We thank them for their acceptance and wish them a wonderful service.

We give thanks for the 25 years of CDB

On the coming 12th of September the CDB will complete 25 years. It is the fruit of the Spirit and of the precious accompaniment of a good group of Salesians (men and women), and VDB, who with their witness and their word alone were close to them in their Vocational discernment and their formation. We thank the Lord and we pray for their fidelity.

Meeting of the SDB Provincial delegates for the Salesian Family

The Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family, Father Eusebio Muñoz, has called the SDB Provincial Delegates of the Salesian Family for a meeting in the month of September. Two meetings are scheduled (10-15 in Italian, 17-22 in English). The scope (of the meetings) is to reinforce their mission of accompaniment of a reality, The Salesian Family, which is more and more extensive and engaged in the territory. 70 Provinces are registered. In the programme space has been planned for sharing about the reality of the VDB and the CDB.