



The backpack of the SCS

In the heart of the world with the heart of God

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Message of Pope Francis to the CMIS (August 2016) through Card. Parolin

You are in the heart of the world with the heart of God.

The originality and the peculiarity of the secular consecration takes place when secularity and consecration walk together in unity of life. We can say that today this synthesis is the greatest challenge for secular institutes.

Saint Paul VI clearly understood and explained the essence of the secular vocation, as his words attest: "You are at a mysterious confluence between the two powerful currents of Christian life, accepting riches from both. You are lay, consecrated as such by the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, but you have chosen to accentuate your consecration to God with the profession of the evangelical counsels, taken as obligations with a stable and recognized bond. Remain lay, committed to the secular values proper and peculiar to the laity (see LG, 31), but yours is a "consecrated secularity" "; and again: "Consecration indicates the intimate and secret structure of your being and your action. Here is your deep and hidden richness, which the men/people among whom you live do not know how to explain and often cannot even suspect. The baptismal consecration has been further radicalized following an increased need for love, aroused in you by the Holy Spirit; not in the same form as the consecration proper to religious, but nevertheless such as to push you to a fundamental option for life according to the evangelical beatitudes. So that you are really consecrated and really in the world "(09/20/1972).

Today a renewed synthesis is required of secular institutes, always keeping the gaze fixed on Jesus and being at the same time immersed in the life of the world. Making a synthesis between consecration and secularity means first of all keeping the two aspects together, without ever separating them. It also means combining them, not superimposing them: the overlap, in fact, would lead to living in a formalistic way, to observe various practices without this involving a change in the way of living relationships with brothers and with the world. Finally, making a synthesis, also means that one element must not be subordinated to the other: secularity and consecration must walk together, one needs the other; one is not first lay and then consecrated, but not even consecrated and then lay, one is at the same time a consecrated layperson. From this derives also another very important consequence: we need continuous discernment, which helps work in a balanced manner; an attitude which helps find God in all things.

For this reason, formation is of fundamental importance, which must guide the members of Secular Institutes to respond fully to the mission of their respective Institutes, arousing a commitment ever new and profound with the Christ who calls and sends, and at the same time to get involved in the reality of today's world. This formation is particularly demanding, because it requires a continuous effort to create unity between consecration and secularity, between action and contemplation, without the support of a community organization of the life of prayer and work. However, if we try to remain constantly open to the will of God, we will have that glance of faith that leads us to discover Christ present always and everywhere. For this reason, it is necessary to educate to an intense personal relationship with God which is at the same time enriched by the presence of the brothers. Community life is not required, but communion with the brothers is essential. All life must be animated and marked by communion with God and neighbour.

The commitment to secularity moves with a wide range, on vast horizons. Continuous attention must therefore be paid to the signs of the times: history must be read, understood and interpreted, and it must be inserted into it in a constructive and fruitful way, to leave an evangelical imprint, contributing, according to the various responsibilities, to direct it towards the Kingdom of God. This vocation therefore entails a constant striving to make a synthesis between the love of God and love for men, living a spirituality capable of combining the criteria that comes "from above", from the grace of God, and the criteria that comes "from below", from human history. Growth in love for God inevitably leads to growth in love for the world, and vice versa.

Guided by the Holy Spirit in your actions, bring the logic of God into the world, helping to bring about that new humanity that He wants. It is God who creates the synthesis between secularity and

consecration. Thanks to Him we can exercise a prophecy that implies discernment and creativity aroused by the Spirit. Discernment as an effort to understand, to interpret the signs of the times, accepting the complexity, the fragmentation and the precariousness of our time. Creativity as the ability to imagine new solutions, inventing new and more appropriate answers to the new situations that arise. Being the companion of humanity on the move is a theological reality for you. The search for dialogue and encounter, which asks you to become men and women of communion in the world, is an essential part of it. Therefore, you are called in Christ to be signs and instruments of God's love in the world, visible signs of an invisible love that pervades everything and wants to redeem everything to bring everything back to the Trinitarian communion, the ultimate origin and fulfilment of the world.

In summary, we can say that it is particularly urgent to take care of the life of prayer: to be women and men of prayer, of intimate friendship with Jesus, letting Him be the Lord of our life; and take care of family life: you do not have the obligation to live in community, but you must be a home that many men and women can draw light and warmth for the life of the world, as Saint John Paul II told you (01.02.1997). Precisely because you are dispersed like yeast and salt, you must be witnesses of the value of fraternity and friendship. A human being is not an island; we must avoid falling into indifference towards others. If your task is to transfigure the world, restoring the order of creation, it is necessary to shout with life to the man of today that a new way of being, of living, of relating to the world and with others is possible, to be new men and women in Christ. With chastity show that there is a different way of loving with a liberated heart like that of Christ, in the oblation of oneself; with poverty, reacting to consumerism that especially devours the West and denounce with our life and even our word, where necessary, the many injustices against the poor of the earth; with obedience being witnesses of inner freedom against individualism, vainglory, pride. Being "the advanced wing" of the Church in the new evangelization. But no new evangelization is possible unless it starts from the newness of life, which makes one's own the sentiments of Christ and his oblation even unto death.

Then the biggest challenge, even for secular institutes, is to be schools of holiness. A peculiar style of holiness should emerge from every Institute, sanctity incarnated in everyday activities, in small and large events where the creativity of faith, hope and charity flourish. The Virgin Mary is the perfect model of this embodied spirituality. Constantly united to the Son in daily life and in family concerns, she led a completely normal life, similar to that of many others, and so she collaborated in the work of God. Staying united to her, surely you will have the guarantee of walking on the road of secular holiness.

Another indispensable element to give a proactive contribution to the new evangelization is to live fraternal love. I mentioned earlier the importance of communion: all the members of secular institutes are called to live it, in the ordinary situations of the world, alone, in family, in groups of fraternal life, according to their own constitutions, actively participating in the life of the Institute. In the Last Supper Jesus prayed to the Father for all his disciples, asking for the grace of unity for them. Only a community that, despite its human limitations, shows love among its members is credible and makes visible the love of God, the gratuitousness, loyalty and tenderness of his love. The Son of God, with his incarnation, brought men the gift of fraternity. In Christ we are all brothers and all children of God. The love of each of us towards all others, from the closest to the most distant, is precisely the only way that Jesus has shown us to find the way of salvation.

What is the humanity before you? People who have lost their faith or who live as if God did not exist, young people without values and ideals, broken families, unemployed, lonely elderly people, immigrants ... "Come to me, all of you who are tired and oppressed, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11.28). By saying this, Jesus shows you the way. How many faces crossed on the street, going to work, or going shopping! How many opportunities do you have to give refreshment, encourage, give hope, bring consolation! It is this life in the world ("in saeculo viventes", says canon 710) which constitutes the "secularity", the common note to all secular institutes, but which is lived in different ways by different institutes, especially those of clerics compared to those of the laity. The secular priest and the lay person are both in the world, but their relationship with the world is different. Secular priests are committed to cultivating a lively solicitude towards people afflicted by various (types of) poverty, accompanying all those who live their faith in the heart of human commitments; and above all through the Eucharist the secular priest participates in a peculiar way in the offering of Christ to the Father, an offering that obtains the grace that comes to regenerate humanity.

This is the way: called by the Lord to follow him in the world, bring love for the world, first of all loving him with all your heart and loving every brother with a paternal and maternal heart. Don't get into the habit by becoming "insipid". "If even the salt loses its flavour, with what will it be salted?" (Lk 14:34).