



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE ITALIAN CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS (CISM)***

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 7 November 2014*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers,

I welcome you and I thank you for your welcome. In particular, I thank the Father President for introducing our meeting, which is taking place at the conclusion of your National Assembly. In light of what I have heard about your work, I would like to share with you a few points of reference for your journey.

First of all, religious life mainly helps the Church to realize that “attraction” which causes her to grow, for before the witness of a brother and sister who truly lives the religious life, the people ask themselves “what is there here?”, “what impels this person beyond the worldly horizon?”. I would say this is the first thing: to help the Church to grow by way of attraction. Without worrying about proselytizing: attraction!

We heard in the Gospel last Wednesday: “whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:33). This decision, in different ways, is requested of each Christian. But we religious are called to give it a testimony of prophecy. The witness of evangelical life is what distinguishes the missionary disciple and, in particular, those who follow the Lord on the path of consecrated life. And prophetic testimony coincides with holiness. True prophecy is never ideological, it is not compared to the institution: it is the institution. Prophecy is institutional. True prophecy is not ideological, it is not “trendy”, but is always a sign of contradiction according to the Gospel, as Jesus was. Jesus, for example, was a sign of contradiction for the religious authorities of his time: the Pharisee and Sadducee leaders, the doctors of the law. And He also was for other options and proposals: Essenes, Zealots, and so on. A sign of contradiction.

I thank you for the work you have done in these days, as the Father President was telling me: work which serves to go forward on the path outlined by the *Evangelii Gaudium*. He used a lovely expression, he said: “we do not want to fight defensive rearguard battles, but to expend ourselves among the people”, in the certainty of faith that God always makes his Kingdom burgeon and grow. This is not easy, it is not taken for granted; it calls for conversion; it calls above all for prayer and adoration. I recommend adoration. And it calls for sharing with the holy people of God who live on the outskirts of history. Decentralize. In order to live and bear fruit, every charism is asked to decentralize, in order that Jesus Christ alone is at the centre. A charism should not be preserved like a bottle of distilled water, it should be made to bear fruit, courageously comparing it with current reality, with cultures, with history, as we are taught by the great missionaries of our institutes.

A clear sign that religious life is called to give today is fraternal life. Please, do not let the terrorism of gossip be among you! Get rid of it! Let there be fraternity. And if you have something against your brother, say it to his face.... At times you may end up coming to blows, this is not a problem: this is better than the terrorism of gossip. Today the culture which prevails is individualistic, centred on subjective rights. It is a culture that corrodes society from its primary cell which is the family. Consecrated life can help the Church and society as a whole by giving testimony of fraternity, that it is possible to live together as brothers despite diversity: this is important! Because in a community we do not choose its members first, we are there with people of different character, age, education, sensitivity ... yet we seek to live as brothers. We do not always succeed, as you well know. Often times we make mistakes, for we are all sinners, however, we recognize we were wrong, we ask forgiveness and give forgiveness. And this does good for the Church: it makes the lymph of fraternity circulate in the body of the Church. And it also does good for the whole of society.

This fraternity presupposes the paternity of God, and the maternity of the Church and of the Mother, the Virgin Mary. We must reestablish ourselves in this relationship every day, and we can do so with prayer, with the Eucharist, with adoration, with the Rosary. We thus renew our “being” with Christ and in Christ every day, and in this way place ourselves in an authentic relationship with our Heavenly Father and with Mother Church, our Hierarchical Holy Mother Church, and Mother Mary. If our life always renews these fundamental relationships, then we are also able to achieve authentic fraternity, a testimonial brotherhood, which attracts.

Dear brothers, I leave you these simple guidelines, on which you are already walking. I encourage you to go forward and I accompany you on this path. May the Lord bless you and bless all of your communities, especially the most challenged and most suffering ones. I thank you for the prayer with which you accompany me and my service to the Church. Thank you!
