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JOHN PAUL II



*BUILDERS OF CHRISTIAN
CULTURE IN THE MISSION OF THE
NEW EVANGELIZATION*

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On 24 July 1992 the Secretary of State sent a letter to Cardinal Eduardo Martinez Somalo, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, expressing the Holy Father's best wishes for and spiritual participation in the Fifth World Congress of Secular Institutes.

This is a translation of the letter, which was written in Italian.
(L'Osservatore Romano in English, 2 September 1992).

Your Eminence,

The Holy Father, informed of the Fifth World Congress of Secular Institutes, has charged me to express his cordial greetings to the meeting's organisers and all the participants.

First of all, His Holiness expresses his appreciation of the choice of the theme, "*Secular Institutes and evangelization today*", which is most opportunely inserted within the Church's vast involvement in fostering the new evangelization. It is a process of grace which reaches its climax in the ever necessary conversion of heart, which is to be understood as a return to God, the provident and merciful Father, and availability towards one's brothers and sisters, who expect understanding, love and an unwavering proclamation of the revealed word.

Today the Church's evangelising mission must take into consideration the profound cultural and social transformations of our day, which can frequently create obstacles to evangelising activity rather than promote it. Members of Secular Institutes are quite conscious of these challenges which they are called to face,

because they have received the gift of a *"new and original form of consecration, suggested by the Holy Spirit to be lived in the midst of temporal realities, and to insert the power of, the evangelical counsels that is, of the divine, eternal values into the human, temporal values"* (Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, X, 1972, p. 943).

The Holy Spirit has granted them the grace of being more radically conformed to Jesus in the path he walked to reconcile mankind with God, to break down the walls of enmity (cf. Heb 2:14) and to create the New Humanity. A *"new ardour"* is needed to bring all this about; the Secular Institutes are asked to make theirs an extraordinary involvement in witnessing to the newness of the Gospel. Without a more zealous response to the call to holiness in order to communicate the Gospel of Peace to the world which is about to enter the new millennium, every effort would be reduced to attempts lacking apostolic effectiveness. New methods are also required for communicating the newness of the Gospel to the world. Towards such an end members of Secular Institutes must be open to new forms of communication offered to them by the progress of technology. However, they must not forget that the communication must also be adapted to the newness that it is called to spread. It must be distinguished by its Gospel simplicity and the fact that it is offered freely (cf. Mt 10:8) in order to promote a free, responsible and joyful response.

The experience of seeking the living God and having a personal encounter with him is the most valuable thing that can be offered to people. Without a doubt the call to holiness is at the root of the call to the new evangelization. This requires a deep ecclesial communion which begins within the Institutes themselves and extends in an affective and effective communion with the whole People of God. The close relationship between the building of a Christian community and service to the world was clearly expressed by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, where he states that *"a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. However, for this to come about, what is needed is first to remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself"* (n.34).

The new evangelization, however, also requires a service to the world. There are many ways to bring this about, according to one's particular vocation and the concrete necessities: witness of life; dialogue and militancy; personal contact; individual and prophetic denunciation; defence of truth; and the witness of love. It is important that, in a world marked by the *"culture of death" but which yearns for the values of the Spirit, Secular Institutes are able to be signs of the living God and craftsmen of the "culture of Christian solidarity"*.

The Holy Father, therefore, urges everyone to continue on this path, to increase the many initiatives of Christian inspiration and not to fear being present in the various "modern Areopaguses" in order to bring the Good News of the Gospel there by the word and deed. Commitment to peace and development of peoples, the defence of human rights, promotion of women and the education of young people are some of these "Areopaguses" of the modern world in which the Secular Institutes must be involved.

With these wishes, invoking the protection of Mary most holy, Queen of the Apostles and Star of Evangelization, upon all those participating in the congress and upon all members of Secular Institutes, the Supreme Pontiff cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of the most abundant heavenly favours.

I gladly take this opportunity to express my deepest regards.

*Cardinal Angelo Sodano
Secretary of State*