

IN THE SAME CHARISM....

with responsibility



**COMPANY OF ST. URSULA
SECULAR INSTITUTE OF ST. ANGELA MERICI
FEDERATION**

www.istitutosecolareangelamerici.org

e-mail: fed.comp@libero.it

CONSECRATED SECULARITY



**COMPANY OF ST. URSULA
SECULAR INSTITUTE OF ST. ANGELA MERICI
FEDERATION**

**INTERNATIONAL MEETING
SALESIANUM
ROME 22-26 JULY 2009**

ACTS

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TO THE READERS

In the common and ordinary conditions of human existence....

We find this pointed out in the Constitutions, in art. 2.1, where the example of Saint Angela Merici is set before us: “... *in the common and ordinary conditions of human existence, united in a spousal stance to the Son of God, her Lover.*”

This is what we experienced in Rome last month, from July 22 to 26, in the Federation’s meeting on the theme of **CONSECRATED SECULARITY**.

We must go on delving into this very theme, making it our own, being converted, finding again the freshness and newness of its origins, in order to live consecrated secularity in a Merician style today.

We have encountered and discussed this theme of ours for about 50 to 60 years before this, from the time when secular institutes were formally recognized by the Church—as if we had to discover who knows what new theories!

In fact, we have had aspects of the originality of the Merician charism, at times without being noticed, a little buried, marginalized as if it were more desirable for other aspects of consecrated life to be put forward, more “religious,” more “ecclesial,” more outside the ordinary.

A meeting like this was necessary, so that we might return to the essential centrality of the Christian and thus the Merician message.

It seems like discovering hot water. However, even hot water is an achievement. *The common and ordinary conditions of human existence*, and not others sought out or constructed by us, are the appropriate place of our secular consecration.

The common and ordinary conditions of human existence....

There, where we live, abide, where we relate with each other, work... amid those houses, in those streets, in that countryside,

in that city, on that continent, in that reality, our daily life unfolds. This is our appointed place for becoming and for being holy, for offering and giving our lives. Life is enough for us, a life consecrated in ordinariness, like the life of Jesus Christ, of the first Christians, like the life of Saint Angela.

In the common and ordinary conditions of human existence, united in a spousal stance to the Son of God, her Lover.

Let us return to simplicity, to seriousness, to poverty, to the essentials of our origins. Even as a Company, let us willingly relinquish so many other things, other projects that overburden our existence, that busy us, that worry us, and that distance us from the One Thing Necessary, *our only Lover—the Lover of us all, the Son of God.*

Let us rediscover how to live our espousal with joy, in ordinary life... *his grace is enough for us.*

If we always have *Jesus Christ as our only Treasure, we will be for all a fragrance of virtue.*

With the desire to revisit our consecrated secularity, let us willingly open the pages of this collection that reports the Acts of the meeting, to meditate individually or in a group or in a Company, to ask ourselves to respond today to our vocation, *with a great and yearning heart.*

May we find in these Acts the biblical and theological richness of our life of secular consecration, in the very profound presentations and in the homily of Mons. Adriano Tessarollo and the concrete reality, the seriousness, the novelty of secularity, in the presentations of George Mazzola. Heartfelt thanks to them!

To us, the greeting that becomes a plea to the Lord and to Saint Angela, that we may be able to rediscover and to live our *marvelous dignity.*

Caterina Dalmasso

23 July



SALUTATIONS TO THE PARTICIPANTS

**Maria Razza - President
of the Federation**

I'm very pleased to give you the welcome in that house which, for the second time, receives us for our International Meeting.

From me, the Council of the Federation, all the Companies and all the Groups, in this first occasion that sees us re-united in greater number, I give the salutations to the Assistant of the Council of the Federation, Mons. Adriano Tessarollo. We want to renew him our deeper gratitude for its accompaniment and confirm him our constant memory in prayer for the new task that the Holy Father has entrusted him, like Head of the Church of Chioggia, elevating him to the Episcopal dignity!

With joy I give my salutations to all the participants to this meeting, to all who are here and also to those which have not been able to take part, but that accompany us with affection and prayers.

It was May of 2007 when we came there, so numerous, to remember the bicentennial of Canonisation of our Saint Mother and Founder Angela Merici.

Now we are here again, for this annual appointment, which is ordinary but very important for everyone of us, for our Companies and for our Groups.

That's a fundamental moment to grow the common belongings to the Institute and to continue to grow in the

faithful adesion to our call to live and testify today the Merician Charism that was put in “our hands”!

The Council of the Federation, in its task of planning the activities, wishes to continue to put in the centre of the common reflection the engagement of the formation. This means many things: I think it’s important and typical of people who want to pick the signs of the times in order to live in dinamic fidelity the received charism.

Last year, with Mons. Giordano, we have tried to pick the challenges and the perspectives, the enrichments and the difficulties that multiculturality causes in our lives, so also in our Institute that, thanks to God, is growing in many foreign Countries.

We have understood that *“secular consecration does part of the ways to announce the Gospel so significant for the Church of the third millenium in its mission to announce and testify the Gospel to the humanity”*.

In this meeting that today we open, we want to known something more about the consacred secularity, so our life! We can reflect on our way to be, we can think about our way of living our Merician Charism in the world, how we interpret it in Company and how we propose it to who is near and to who asks account of it to us.

I’m sure that all the reflection we will hear from our Assistant and from Dr. Mazzola will help us to don’t lay down on joined objectives, but to feel stimulated to continue the research, to find the right equilibrium among our roots, our history and our fidelity to our time, without deny the past, which is our wealth, but opened to the future!

Now don Adriano will help us to “theologically” replace, according to the Word of God, the foundation and the sense of our secular consecration, because *“by obeying to the*

councils and the inspirations that continually the Holy Spirit provokes us in the heart” we can be faithful in the dynamicity “living the evangelic councils in the secularity”, as our Constitutions say.



RELATIONSHIPS
by His Excellence Mons. Adriano Tessarollo
The Ecclesiastical Assistant
of the Council of the Federation



First Conference

1. *"... It is not eating and drinking that make the Kingdom of God but the saving justice, the peace and the joy brought by the Holy Spirit. It is the person who serves Christ in these things that will be approved by God and respected by everyone. "* (Rm 14, 17 - 18). **The value of consecrated lives**

When addressing the participants at the International Conference for Secular Institutes in 1970, Pope Paul VI said, among other things:

"In this way, the path leading to your holiness is clearly outlined:

- the offering, for which the consent was freely given as part of the plan of salvation, as revealed by the word of God,
- the acceptance of what life has in store for us,
- accepting the will of God as a gift, in all the events that take place in world.

At the same time we can clearly make out the characteristics which define your mission as secular lay people:

- such as testimonies of human virtues, like "justice, peace and joy" (Rm 14, 17)
- "the moral lives you lead", (1 Pt.2,12) as quoted by Peter in his first letter, echo the words of Our Master found in the gospel of Saint Matthew: "In the same way, your light must shine in people's sight, so that seeing your good works, they may give praise to Your Father in heaven." (Mt 5, 16).

It is also your duty and mission, as secular lay persons, to strive hard in order to build a society where every individual is treated with dignity and respect; where there are sound moral values to achieve it; in politics, economics, education, health or scientific research.

Our experiences in life, our work and personal interests, while forming part of our daily routine have a different meaning because our ultimate aim is to unite ourselves with the will of the Son of God, who entered this world for our salvation”.

And he urged us on saying: “Therefore involve yourself in every painful situation, in every act of injustice, in the constant struggle for truth, beauty and goodness, not because you have a solution for all the problems, but because in all that concerns the well being of mankind, you can be a living testimony of God’s plan of Salvation. This is what you were called for. Your consecration is a testimony of the graces given by the Holy Spirit, to help you live your vocation to the full; on the other hand, you willingly and submissively commit yourself to God’s plan, revealed through His Son Jesus Christ, whom you were called to follow”.

Secular consecration reflects the two aspects of Christian life. Firstly, the relationship with God, that is, belonging completely to Him, by means of the consecration and with the help of the word of God. Secondly the relationship with our fellow men, this can be seen from our behaviour in daily situations. Above all, it is the second aspect which will be dealt with in this meeting. We belong personally to the Heavenly Kingdom by means of our vocation and our consecration, and our mission is we help others to form part of this Kingdom. The definition of vocation and mission can be found in Saint Paul’s letter to the Romans.

“A privilege of yours must not be allowed to give rise to harmful talk..... For it is not eating and drinking that make the

kingdom of Heaven, but the serving justice, the peace and the joy brought by the Holy Spirit. It is the person who serves Christ in these things that will be approved by God and respected by everyone". Rm 14, 17-19

The words of Saint Paul help us to understand that man is not an island but is in constant relationship with God and man. *He who serves Christ in these things will be approved by God and respected by everyone.* What are these things and which are the ways that help us to serve Christ and are acceptable to God and allow us to attain the respect of our fellow human beings? I am not sure, says Paul; some laws, traditions and particular customs come from men but with the help of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul mentions *the peace, the justice and the joy brought by the Holy Spirit.* These are the gifts which make up the Kingdom of God on earth.

The lay consecrated person builds a relationship with others and influences them by his behaviour. Therefore, our private religious life carries less weight than the evidence we give by our examples of sound moral values, which belong to the Kingdom of God, because they are the blessings of the Holy Spirit. The service and solidarity we render to our fellow men, is itself a service rendered to Christ and can only be achieved through obedience, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul emphasises that this can only be achieved by "the help of the Holy Spirit". It is for this reason that a steady spiritual life, sustained by prayers and the Sacraments, helps the Christian to lead a life similar to Christ's because, if a person allows the Holy Spirit to lead him, his actions become the result of the Holy Spirit.

One can attain the heavenly kingdom of God while still living on earth, by serving Christ through the help and intercession of the Holy Spirit who gives justice, peace and joy.

Saint Paul's way of seeing things is very enlightening and of vital importance to the way of life the consecrated

secular person leads, it is, above all, how a Christian should live. The words justice, peace and joy complement one another and should not be separated. In Saint Paul's letter the word "justice" is considered first and foremost the action of God: it is a merciful justice which was rendered to us through the Redemption of Jesus Christ and by means of which He has reconciled us to Him, thus bringing back the lost peace. As a result of the justice of God, peace reigns within our hearts. Together with the word peace, Saint Paul adds the word "joy" because justice correlates to peace and joy, that is, to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The virtues which are characteristic of the life of every Christian are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit urges us on to do good deeds in our Christian life. If we have faith and allow God's "justice" to lead us, we can perform good deeds because His justice offers freedom, forgiveness and holiness. Thanks to the Holy Spirit we are saints, sons of God, temples of the Holy Spirit and new beings, capable of performing good deeds. The instability in our spiritual life comes from our continuous struggle to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us on to do good and the possibility to withdraw from the actions of the Holy Spirit and give in to the "weaknesses of the flesh".

This will help us understand the importance of receiving the grace from God, the importance of prayer which enables us to receive it, and the strengthening of our faith, as we become more apt and submissive to the will of the Holy Spirit. In this way we will be able to win our inner struggle between the strength of the grace of God and our personal freedom, so that we will be able to lead a life of sound moral values. We read again in Saint Paul's letter *"Each of us must consider his neighbour's good, so that we support one another. Christ did not indulge His feelings either....."* (Rm 15, 2-3).

In order to be “the new man”, in order to lead a real, mature Christian life, which is deep rooted in our intelligence and freedom of will, it is necessary that we change from within. Faith helps the Christian to accept God’s gift which will gradually change him and help him to understand, discover and contemplate on the mystery of God’s plan. Furthermore, Pope Paul VI said that the consecration reflects the special graces which are given by the Holy Spirit, to help you fulfil your vocation and bind you completely, willingly and submissively to the will of God the Father, revealed through His Son Jesus Christ, whom you were called to follow. Every time we meet Christ we have to change our way of thinking but for some, as was in your case, His request was more demanding; leave everything behind, because God is all and He will be your all in life. This does not mean that you will relate differently to Him or bind yourself to Him; it means that God has chosen you and He asks you to put your full trust in Him. To shape one’s life on that of Christ, keeping these words in mind, to adapt to Christ’s life, through the advice given in the Holy Scriptures, is fundamental and binding and requires zeal and tangible example.

This new way of looking at things establishes in us a deep ray of hope and with it the joy of being able to announce and share it with others. This is made possible by the help of the word of God and by our way of living according to the Gospels.



Second Conference



2. *“... those who are involved in the world, as though they were people not engrossed in it, because these world, as we know, is passing away. (1 Cor 7, 31). The attitude of the secular consecrated person*

I believe that the isolated deeds of evangelic Christian life are not only beneficial and bound to particular incidents in our life; they also tend to become habits. However, we must be very careful where it concerns these attitudes or habits and make sure that we are treating other persons and things, as well as our relationship with them, correctly.

We are living in a world where persons who instil hope in us are missing. Man has become self centred and relies only on what he plans for himself and on his actions. We need something that goes beyond man's actions and capabilities. Today man believes that every situation is to be exploited for his own good, but not as a means of finding a real reason for living, understanding God and his fellow men. In so doing, he fails to understand God's plan for him as revealed in the Bible, whereby God Himself directs and animates man's action in the management of the world.

It is Christian hope which determines how man should behave in the Christian world. We must live the “present” well aware of the past and of a much greater future for us. We must

take the opportunity to abide by God's plan which surpasses man's intelligence and is being accomplished now. For the religious person time is immeasurable. The very thought of meeting the Lord prevents man from acting according to his own wishes. Every believer passes through a period of tension when faced with the problem of wanting to remain in this world or longing for future life. Inspired by this, Saint Paul writes: "*Because this world as we know is passing*" (1 Cor 7, 31).

The passage in the First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7,29-31) confirms that while the Christians "*are involved*" in the world like all the other human beings, at the same time they live "*as though they were people not engrossed in it*". Saint Paul wants to make it clear that the Christian who really believes in Christ puts his trust in Him. He is well aware that his time on earth is a short passage between Christ's victory (death and resurrection) and His Glorious manifestation (His second arrival or meeting with Christ). This period of time is a time of waiting, of divine patience, of penitence, of struggle, but above all, a time of grace. In awaiting the coming of Christ, the church is already from this moment in time "the Kingdom of God" on earth. The reign of Christ is a reality which is still being built and in which, thanks to the gifts of the Holy Spirit; believers are regenerated and made holy.

How should we react when faced with the problems in the world today? The presence of the Church in the world is "eschatological", that is, it anticipates those who live in this world as though "they do not belong to the world" (Jn. 17,16), So, they are living in waiting and consider all that has to do with the world as transitional. So all the things that are made use of in the world and the time in this world are also considered transitional: "*What I mean, brothers, is that the time has become limited and from now on, those who have wives should live as though they had none; and those who mourn as*

though they were not mourning; those who enjoy life as though they did not enjoy it; those who have been buying property as though they had no possessions and those who are involved in the world as though they were people not engrossed in it: because this world as we know is passing away!” (1 Cor.7. 29 – 31)

So, the biblical term “hope” means living our life awaiting for that day when God will call us all to Him, as His chosen people, will pour forth His Spirit on every desire of the flesh and will send us the Redeemer, who will gather the lost sheep of the people of Israel.

Hope and patience are the main characteristics which determine the behaviour of the Christian person when faced with the values of the present day world. The word “hope” can also be interpreted as joy as quoted in Saint Paul’s letter to the Romans. *“Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship, keep praying regularly ...”* Rm 12, 12: keeping in mind however that your life now and in the future depends on “being one with Him”.

The relationship we have with Christ through faith gives a better meaning to the second coming of the Lord. The core of the eschatological message is represented by our relationship and participation in the life of Christ, in short we can say «in Christ», when referring to «with Christ». To be «in Christ» **today**, prepares us to be «with Christ» in the **future**. Eschatological tension means going through a period of expectation until you meet the Lord, in order to be *“taken up in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air”* and to be *“with the Lord forever”* (1 Th 4, 16-17). The focal point of this hope is having faith in the Risen Christ.

In his encyclical Gaudium et Spes, Pope Paul VI writes: “Together with all men of good will, the Christian is dedicated to the task of building the world and contributing to the good of humanity, operating in accordance with the legitimate

autonomy of the terrestrial realities. In fact, this new relationship does not in any way alter or diminish the natural order and even though it might involve a rupture with the world in as much as it is a reality opposed to the life of grace and the expectation of the everlasting kingdom, it also implies the will to work in the love of Christ for the salvation of the world. That is to say for leading men to the life of faith and as far as possible reordering the temporal realities according to God's design, so that they many contribute to man's growth in grace for eternal life. (Apostolicam Actuositatem 7).

It is by living this new relationship to the world that the baptized cooperate in Christ for the world's redemption. Consequently the secularity of one baptised here seen in its most general significance as existence in this world and participation in its manifold activities can never be understood outside the framework of this essential relationship whatever concrete forms it may assume."

Various citations from the letters of Saint Paul help us to look at our present life and foresee what awaits us in the future.

- 1Cor 15, 19: *"If our hope in Christ has been for this life only we are of all people the most pitiable".*

- 2Cor 3, 11-12: *"For if what was transitory had any glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts forever. With a hope like this, we can speak with complete fearlessness ..."*

- Ep 1, 18-20: *"May He enlighten the eyes of your mind, so that you can see what hope His call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage He offers among His holy people and how extraordinarily great is the power which He has exercised in raising Him for the dead and enthroning Him at His right hand in Heaven ..."*

- Col 1, 5-6: *"... because of the hope that is stored for you in heaven. News of this hope reached you not long ago through the word of truth, the gospel that came to you. ..."*

- 1Tm 4, 5-6: *“you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ and show you have really digested the teaching of the faith and the good doctrine which you have always followed ...”*.
- Heb 6, 18-19: *“We who have fled to Him might have a vigorous encouragement to grasp the hope held out to us. This is the anchor our souls have ...”*.
- Heb 10, 23: *“Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the one who made the promise is trustworthy”*.



Saturday 25th July
CONFERENCES Giorgio Mazzola
President of Christ the King Secular Institute

First Conference

***Our life to be as close as possible to the mystery of the
Incarnation, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ***

The more I think about my vocation, the more I realize that our vocation goes really to the origin of Christianity. Serving Christ is living the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Our time suffers of this reality. Even our bishops have been repeating to us to go to the origin. The world has become so secularized because it is leaving God out of his earthly realities. The dignity of man created by God is one of the realities rejected by today's culture.

We learn about prayer; we learn about the dignity of Christians; we have lost the value of the sacred. What has become of our divine life? It is a question of entering interiorly into the mystery of the divine life received at Baptism and show it through exterior signs.

What does it mean participating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

We are Christians as long as we understand this. We have to look up continuously to Jesus how he lived, prayed, behaved to conform our lives with his. Jesus behaved in a different way to the culture of his time. Jesus revealed himself to the people of his time bit by bit. He had a deep relationship with His father. Jesus speaks in a direct manner and this behaviour annoyed the high priests. Jesus is the Way, the life and the Truth. He came here on earth to show us the way...i.e. life....Eucharist; the truth by His Word. Salvation passes through His life.

The lack of vocations in the world is not primarily the

result of less attention to the problems in the world but above all to the loss of the sense of God.

The authentic comprehension of the Christian vocation is born from the contemplation of the mystery of the Holy Trinity; the Christian life is a participation in the life of the Trinity. Baptism makes us participants of the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus in a mysterious way: but what does this signify for our life?

Look at Jesus who is the full revelation of His Father and a perfect work of the Holy Spirit: or else look at Him as man in his own time: how did he live? In what way did he show the will of His Father? His parables were meant to be understood to open the way for Heaven but his signs did not generate faith and his disciples did not understand: it is only the unconditional offering of his life could open a breach in the hardened heart of man.

Participating in the death and resurrection of Jesus means that even us, like Jesus, the salvation of the world passes through the offering of one's life. It deals with death.

We die when we remain faithful to our own duty; competence, loyalty, sincerity; we die when we don't perceive the fruit of our own life given in custody to God in the contest of everyday life as that of all human beings. (virginity is an anticipation of death) When, for example we ask ourselves what are we doing here? For what does it serve the offering of my life in an indifferent world ? It is Christ's experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. My own life must be rooted in Christ through the cross The unique way of living one's own Christian life is by offering it. We, have to behave in a decent, sincere manner and that means dying to oneself.

Our own virginity anticipates eternal life and it is a form of dying to oneself. We should not expect to see the fruit of our actions. Jesus did not see any fruit. He seemed to be a complete failure: the apostles left him at the hour of his death.

His death seemed to be death but it was life...real life.

We have to be brave in the Holy Spirit. The message of the Gospel I have already within. Now it's up to us to spread it in every manner. We need intelligence, fatigue without limits to reach the fulfilment of God's project on the world. And our role is to bring the world back to God. We participate in the fulfilment of His life. The WORD lives through the incarnation of the human experience. It was so, for Jesus: so it is for the Christian life. This is the contribution of the Secular Institutes for the Church...our life .Our life is a call to be the place of the revelation of the Father.

We do not have to think about other places; life "is enough". It is life itself which indicates the times and the ways of our faithfulness to God. Whereas, we Christians, very often we think that we have to achieve something of ours, of oneself. We have very little trust in the ordinary; we try to look for the extraordinary or else we look for places consonant with us, often protected. It is the reaction of the prophet Jonah when he heard the call of the Lord, "Do you prefer to choose yourself, on your own, the territory of the mission?"

It is the intuition of the document of Secular Institutes *Primo Feliciter* which says, "The world is not simply the place of the apostolate but it is in it, through the relationships and its activity that we discover that every secular reality is supernatural because all the world is created by God which comes from Him and leads to Him."

"It is in Him that dwells corporally the fullness of the divinity, and you participate of His fullness" (Col. 2, 9-10a)

The Word, the divine Logos lives the human experience. And in this we understand the authentic profound emotion of the human being.; regarding love, friendship, a piece of music, a romance, a painting, a film, choir singing, the face of a child, but also a piece of work well done; an understanding; a perfect equation.....

This is our style of life: we try to show the signs of the presence of the Son of God in our ordinary life with its beauty and knowing how to indicate there, where existence shows traces of the corporal presence of the WORD. "The place of your apostolate is therefore all the human." (Pope Benedict XVI to the participants in the International Conference of Secular Institutes 3-2-2007)

Second Conference

The poverty of Christ as the heart and distinctive character of our style of life

We have to look at poverty from a spiritual point of view. We learn poverty in contemplating the poor heart of Christ. We have to look at Jesus who emptied himself completely....conditioned himself to time, space, experiences, suffered unjust accusations, insults....He the Son of God. He let himself be driven to death. If we don't become poor we can never be real Christians. You will be enriched by his poverty. We have to be detached from whatever we have, especially detached from ourselves. When we live this way we would revolutionize the world. Spirituality must take first place in our life. This is a matter of grace. Jesus said to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you. The only thing that counts is life is to belong to Christ. This is the attitude of St. Paul. We have to be convinced that the Lord knows about our situations.

Poverty is accepting life with its limitations, its oppositions and all this is entrusted to the Lord including the fruit, very often hidden, of our fidelity. It is poverty of whoever accepts to search with fatigue what the Word of God has to say to the world. However, our style of life as Christians in the world is often that of someone who already knows everything, of one

who knows what to say about life. But this attitude shuts many doors. Jesus made himself servant and defined himself as servant. The servant is one who does not have his own program; who does not decide about his own life. Everything is determined by the will of his master.

The lack of a distinctive sign in attire or in a visible community is not only practical but also and above all spiritual. It is the poverty of one who does not want privileges or protections. "To you it is not asked to institute particular ways of life, of apostolic commitment, of social interventions except those which could be born from personal relationships, fount of prophetic richness." (Benedict XVI to the participants of the international Conference of Secular Institutes 3-2-2007)

Poverty is in the one who renounces to do anything of his "own" who renounces possessions.

Poverty is in the one who does not base his successes in great works, to be able to be fully docile to the Spirit; poverty is in the one who really believes that "grace is enough".

Even the Church is called to be poor and not to put itself too much in the centre. The Church must put at the centre of her life Jesus poor, His poverty: It must neither put the centre on the help to poor people, although very important, but above all its own poverty, not much and only in material things and means, but also in efficiency, in activity in frenzy.

This poverty becomes sobriety of initiatives: in the face of actual situations; the multiplying of groups, books and periodicals; of meetings/equips / refresher courses/ schools of evangelization etc. This appears to be always an evident contrast. I am not saying that one does not need to study. But the Christian life has to be lived in its essentials.

Sobriety of language: we have the Sacred Scriptures and an extraordinary Liturgy (if we don't ruin it). Among the Christians the most broken commandment is probably the second "Do not call the name of God in vain."

Too many words said without respect and awareness of the presence of His divine Majesty.

In the second place our religious language (words, manners, pictures etc) must be purified from being an attitude of devotion and habit. It must be a language which meets the interior life of men and women of this time. This is a field in which Secular Institutes can give an important contribution.

There are some typical examples which show how bad habits have left out the Gospel and have generated an empty language. (i.e. initiatives against world hunger or the collections of money in favour of some projects; the prayer of the faithful etc.) Other cases show that they are moving to a pagan language; certain songs with the tunes of parties; the bad habit of clapping, which introduces a pagan cult of the person. But the Gospel is not so! When we have done what we had to do, we remember that we are useless servants.

I have to give my maximum attention to the Spirit to discern what He has to say to me and what the Lord desires of me. Poverty is not a question of fulfilling my own project. We have to pray for the Church (that is us) to be poor even poor in initiatives. What is needed for the Church is to have few things but the essential ones.

Conclusion: (Reflections from letters written in prison of May 1944 by Dietrich Bonhoeffer for the baptismal day of his nephew Dietrich Wilhelm Rudiger Betzhe)



**Excerpts from the Homilies by Mons Adriano Tessarollo
Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Council of the Federation**

Salesianum 22nd July Saint Mary Magdalene

Today, the first day of our meeting on ***Consecrated Secularity*** the church remembers Saint Mary Magdalene.



Mary Magdalene seems to be looking for happiness and her life changed when she met Christ on the shores of the lake Galilee. For her, this meeting was the beginning of a new life, and we can say that from then on she dedicated her life to follow Christ. She formed part of the group of women who followed Christ from Galilee up to Jerusalem and was one of those who were beneath His Cross and present at His burial. Mary Magdalene was also the first woman to meet the Risen Christ, the first one of all the disciples and even before all the apostles.

Deep down in her heart she longed for happiness, love and dialogue and this is what urged her to look for Christ. All her desires were fulfilled when she met Jesus of Nazareth who asked her to follow Him by loving God and men. That meeting changed her into a disciple and handmaid of The Lord, so much so that she formed part of the group of women who followed Christ from Galilee up to Jerusalem and who served Him and the Twelve, out of her own pockets. (Luke 1-3).

We can compare Mary Magdalene's experience to our own path leading to faith and to our consecration as an

invitation and a choice to dedicate our life to the service of the Lord and of the Church.

The reading from the **Song of Songs** (3,1-4a) emphasises the subject of looking out for the Lord: *I shall seek my sweetheart I found my sweetheart*. This passage is all about trying to look for the Lord, but expressed in a deep sentimental language. Serving the Lord does not mean suppressing, eliminating, not taking into consideration human sentiments, because these feelings are binding if we want to meet the Lord, because our feelings help us to manifest the Lord and choose Him above all else.

I now quote **Psalm** 63 which we have just heard being read. This psalm urges us to spend our life eagerly in search of God and points out to us the joy we experience when we meet and live in harmony with God.

This helps us to understand better that consecrated life does not only mean pledging to serve the Lord but primarily allowing God to possess us. In this way, consecrated life becomes a mystical experience of reciprocal belonging. In this psalm, this reciprocal sense of belonging is explained more clearly by examples of real incidents which mark our everyday life.

- *God, You are my God, I pine for You...* Every morning, when we wake up, life begins again. The psalmist starts his day with a prayer, but his is not a prayer to the Lord, he prays to **his** Lord, with whom he shares a reciprocal sense of belonging and faithfulness. Already at the break of dawn he starts the day with a prayer to find the Lord.

- *My heart thirsts for you, my body longs for you as a land parched, dreary and waterless ...* The word thirst expresses a deep sense of desire and vital need. Here thirst

refers to the need of every human being because man cannot live without water. So how can man live without God

- *Thus I have gazed on you in the sanctuary...* How does the person who is in search of God react? For the psalmist, the Temple represents the presence of God on earth. Christ Himself told us that He is the new Temple where we meet God; we build this rapport with the Father, in the Holy Spirit, through the Son. We start our day longing to contemplate and achieve the signs of His presence.

- *Better your faithful love than life itself.* What do we ask for, what do we expect of Him? The faithful love which God bestows on us when He welcomes us back to Him. This brings to mind the parable of the Prodigal Son and the way the father welcomes and embraces his son when he comes back to him after leaving home.

- *My lips will praise you...* Our matins are a hymn of joy thanking the Lord for His love.

- *Thus I will bless you all my life; in your name lift up my hands... A song of joy on my lips and praise in my mouth ...* Prayer is a way of giving thanks to the Lord for His infinite love which will always accompany us and our brethren.

- *All my longings fulfilled as with fat and rich food...* In our relationship with the Lord, He fulfils our soul. We have a sacrament which Jesus Christ wanted to give us as the primary aspect of prayer. The Holy Eucharist fulfils our need of Christ, while binding us together. The Eucharist is a banquet; we are nourished by the written Word as well as by the Bread offered for us.

- *On my bed, when I think of You, I muse on You in the watches of the night...* We end the day thinking about the Lord and His love and if during the night the psalmist wakes up, he remembers the Lord because the previous day was a living experience of the Lord.

- *For you have always been my help, in the shadow of your wings, I rejoice...* At times, during our life we experience fears and threats. Just like the nestling fears the predator that threatens its life but feels safe and protected under his mother's wings, the person who prays feels protected by God because His presence gives him security.

- *My heart clings to you... Your right hand supports me* ... The prayer ends with the Lord affectionately embracing the person in prayer, an embrace which does not signify dismissal but means "we will always be together". The person who prays feels as secure as a child who is supported by his father's or mother's arms.

Mary Magdalene can become the guiding light of our consecrated life, a life which only looks out for our meeting with the Lord, who gives us a sense of security and joy and a certainty that God will always accompany us with His strength, His love and mercy on our journey.

Salesianum 23rd July

The chosen people of the God of the Bible owe their existence to two fundamental experiences.

The first experience is that found in the Exodus, where God, by means of His mediator, Moses, makes Himself known to His people as their guide and liberator and as the "word" which gives meaning to man's life. The people of the old Covenant were born from this experience.

By means of the people of the New Covenant, God revealed Himself to us through His Son Jesus Christ who became the Word of The Father, the Truth of The Father, the new guide of the new people and the ultimate redeemer.

By means of The Revelation, God made Himself known to man. The focal point, the ultimate aim of the Revelation is that God Himself is communicating with man and is inviting man to communicate with Him, He makes Himself known and allows man to find Him. Even the awareness of creation and the life of mankind are the result of the Revelation. Revelation is attained by man's experiences; experiences which help man understand God's presence and actions.

But how does man react to this divine presence?

The gospel which we have just read warns us against disbelief. Disbelief is only man's reaction when he does not want to acknowledge the signs God sends him, when he does not want to hear when God speaks to him, when he does not accept His invitation; in short, he neither accepts God's messages nor God Himself. An act of faith is an act by which man opens his heart lovingly to God and submits willingly to His Revelation.

Blindness, deaf ears, hard heartedness and stubborn determination are the signs of not accepting God's will. This stubborn determination is depicted clearly the way we say no to the Lord; our backs held straight and our heads raised high (in the oriental fashion) instead of bowing our heads down as a sign of acceptance.

Let us ask the Lord to give us eyes to be able to see, ears to hear, and a heart that is always ready to accept the signs that He gives us. Signs which might not always be as grand as the Theophany on Mount Sinai or as revealing as when Christ showed Himself as the Son of God when He lived amongst us. These signs, no matter how small, are real and spiritual because they are gifts of The Holy Spirit and He shows Himself to us, not only by means of mediators like Moses and Christ, but even by means of lesser manifestations. The written word of God, brought to us by means of the Church, the brightness of God's light in our clear conscience and "The Word" of the

Lord which comes to us through the invitation of our brothers and sisters. These are the lesser signs which are brought to us in our daily life, the good deeds we receive from our brethren, the many signs we find in the world around us. But we must open our eyes to see; so that we will not be scolded by the Prophet Isaiah's words: "*That is blind yet has eyes, that is deaf and yet has ears...*" (Is. 43, 8)

These were also the experiences of the Saints, of those who lived their lives with their hearts open to the Lord, ready to receive, their ears open, ready to hear and their eyes open ready to see, in this way they are ready to meet the Lord. They have seen Him, they have heard Him, and they have become closer to the Lord by means of the sacramental and human signs, signs which come from the Word, the Bread, Baptism and the sacraments.

But even the signs received in our life from fellow men, convey the Lord's message, signs like the good actions of many people or a special event which has touched our life.

At times we speak of visions, even Saint Angela speaks about the Divine Vision she had in Brudazzo. When we refer to visions, we often think about physical experiences. In reality it is all about deep, spiritual experiences which touch the heart and the mind, which change a person's life and way of living. There are many signs by which the Lord chooses to talk to us and, as we find written in the Letter to the Hebrews, "*God spoke to our ancestors at many moments in the past, and by many means, but in our time He has spoken to us in the person of His Son.*" (Heb. 1-2) and He continues to speak to us, through the Church, by means of the story of our life, our various experiences and the experiences of others who are close to us.

Let us ask the Lord to give us eyes that can see, ears that can hear and a heart that is willing to change.

Basilica of S. Paolo fuori le Mura 24th July



We are gathered here today in the Basilica of Saint Paul to spend this day of our meeting on the tomb of the Apostle Paul, a month after the Pauline year had come to an end.

Paul had come to Rome around the year 60 A.D. to be judged. He was beheaded at The Three Fountains about 3 kilometres away from this Basilica where he was buried. Since he was a Roman citizen, he could be buried on a Roman burial ground even though he was a Christian. We know that his tomb was a place of worship and during the first two centuries of persecution, the Christians could go to pray in private in order to obtain the strength from the apostle Paul to carry on with their evangelic mission. Beneath the Papal altar one can see a strip of marble with the inscription *Paul the Apostle, a martyr*. This basilica was built above the tomb and since the beginning of Christianity, has always been an important point of reference for all western Christians.

At the closing of the Pauline year, the Pope reminded us that, recently, a hole was drilled in the tomb and a fibre optic probe was inserted by means of which fragments of very fine purple linen, lined with gold, fragments of blue linen, granules of red incense and tiny fragments of bones were found. When experts who did not know the origin of these objects submitted

them to a carbon 14 dating process, it resulted that they belonged to a person who lived between the first and the second century A.D. the exact time when Paul was buried in this tomb.

The Pope also said that it is a unanimous belief and an indisputable tradition that these are the real remains of the apostle Paul. It is very touching to know that Saint Paul was here and that he passed through the streets of the Roman Empire to announce the experience he had with the Risen Christ and sailed the Mediterranean Sea and tracked the neighbouring lands to bring us the message of the gospels. At the right hand side of the colonnade of the Basilica, an eternal flame was lit to remind us of the enlightenment and strength of the gospel announced by the apostle Paul. In bringing us this announcement Paul met with much opposition, which led to his martyrdom, but there were also many who accepted him. His last announcement was made to the Romans to whom he has written the longest and most important letter.

The Pope himself augured that the spiritual journey proposed to the faithful during the Pauline year would continue, because in following Paul's example, we will get to know and experience Christ better, thus allowing ourselves to be enlightened and changed by the gospel. This is what every Christian ought to be predisposed to. Saint Paul who taught people of different nations can still be considered the person who continually conveyed to all men the message of the Risen Christ, because Christ loved us all, He died for us all and was risen for us all. If we want to live again the Christian experience which Saint Paul gave in his message to the Romans, we must say that **all that makes Christian life lies in being innovative, because** with the coming of Christ, started a new way of worshipping God, a new religion. The way a man leads his life becomes adoration; his body, his actions and his

whole being become a sacrificial offering; this is the new religion. It is not what we offer to God anymore, but our whole existence must become the offering itself.

And what is this new religion? Saint Paul tells us: “*Do not model your behaviour.... but let the renewing of your minds transform you so that you may discern for yourselves the will of God*”. (Rm. 12, 2). The Pope tells us that the two most important words are **transformation** and **renewal** – we must change and renew our life. Therefore we must shed our old selves, become new men with a new way of living. This continuous renewal is the most important sector for leading a Christian life. It is only if we become a new person that it is possible to think that the world may change.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul wrote: “*So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation, the old order is gone and a new being is there to see*” (2 Cor. 5, 17). When Paul met Christ, he experienced this new creation and he admits that he became a new person. He tells us that after meeting Christ, he started living *for Christ and in Christ!* This was the beginning of the renewal and transformation which accompanied him throughout his life.

This must become the motto of our spiritual journey: we must become a new person. Let us keep in mind this phrase: “*... though this outer human nature of ours may be falling into decay, at the same time our inner human nature is renewed day by day.*” (2 Cor. 4, 16). This is an invitation for us to allow ourselves to be continually renewed, allowing The New Man Jesus Christ to take hold of us and mould us. He is the New Man par excellence. We are invited to change ourselves continually and our way of thinking. This means that we have to learn to see the world differently and understand the real existence of the new of Jesus Christ. Paul insists on the

difference between the old and the new man, the old way of thinking and the new one. The way of thinking of the old man, is the accepted way of thinking of today, this leads to success, well being, self esteem, fame ... and so on. This only reflects egocentricity.

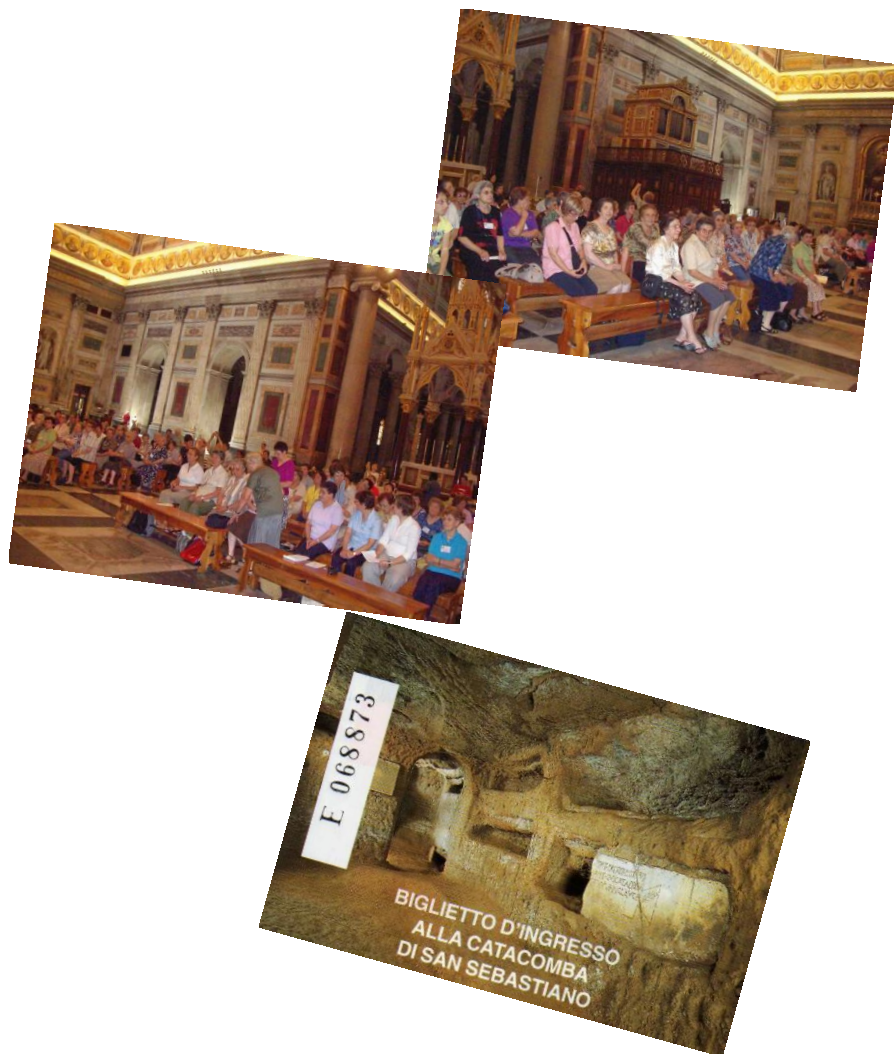
Paul invites us to learn a new way of thinking, that is we must learn to understand the will of God, so that we can willingly submit to His will, until we learn to want only what God wants, because what God wants is good and beautiful. It is a matter of allowing our spiritual sense of direction to change. This great change in Paul's way of thinking was the result of his experience with God, because God was given preference in all his thoughts.

Let us ask the apostle Paul to help us live this experience of renewal and transformation every day and learn to understand and submit ourselves to Christ's way of thinking and will; it is only then that we can become those new men in whom and from whom the new world emerges.

In order to be able to do this, we must strengthen our inner life; we must remember to look at the world through the eyes of God. All this is possible if we share an intimate rapport with the Lord, through prayer. Paul is a mystic because he learnt to live in close contact with God and belonged to Him alone. It seems that one has to leave his old self behind and become one in Christ. With regards to this, Paul says that through faith, Christ lives in our hearts and in this way even we, whose foundations are firmly rooted on love and charity, will be able to understand *the width, the length, the height and the depth.....* the great extension of Christ's love.

Let us end off by thanking God because by the intercession and example of Saint Paul, we were able to understand a little of the greatness of his love. Let us pray that his love and goodness dominate in our hearts, let us ask Christ

to live in our hearts and change us into new men who act as is expected of them out of love.



CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING

Maria Razza - President of the Federation

Our meeting ends here. We have made experience of what St. Angela says us: “looking at itself as beloveds sisters” has been for us a big help.

Staying together, listening to and sharing the same reflections, living the meeting with Christ Resurrected, telling our lives, our hard works and our joys: all this and...much more has been what we have lived in these days, and we praise the Lord for this, sure that we have received special gifts.

The presence of everyone of you has been precious for all and the relations that have been interlaced between us are a wealth!

Now we go back to the ordinary life with the further certitude that there, in the normality of our daily existence, Jesus precedes us and there, in the weekly and ordinary life, its grace doesn't lack and...is all that we need! Thanks to Mons. Adriano, to Giorgio Mazzola, and thanks to everyone of you: may everyone feel personally caught up from the exhortation of our Saint Mother and Founder: ***“Be careful, with large and full heart of desire”***, because Him, our Common Lover, is always with us!





BEATITUDES

Inspired by the letters of St. Paul

*Blessed are those who, like Paul,
recognize that they were chosen and
beloved by God before the creation of
the world.*

*Blessed are those who, like Paul,
live the freshness of the Spirit
that makes us, in Baptism, children of
God.*

*Blessed are those who, like Paul,
praise the Father who in Jesus
fills us to the brim with all blessings.*

*Blessed are those who, like Paul,
live joyfully the mystery
of the crucified and risen Lord
in their own lives.*

*Blessed are those who, like Paul,
gather at the Eucharistic banquet,
reconciled with their brothers and
sisters.*

*Blessed are those who, like Paul,
thank the Father who calls us to live
in communion with brothers and sisters
and enriches us with Christ's grace.*

*Blessed are we if we commit ourselves
to be Paul today;
if we are, like him, faithful witnesses
of the Lord Jesus, and proclaim him
joyfully and consistently. Amen.*



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