

ADDRESS OF THE UISG PRESIDENT

Identity and Prophetic Significance Of Consecrated Apostolic Life

May 25, 2011

First of all, let me say I am not speaking as a theologian but as one who participated in the Theological Seminar held in Rome, February 8-11, 2011.

This seminar was an occasion of bringing together a group of theologians from different cultures and from various continents of the world. For me it was an opportunity to be enriched by the diversity of reflections and dialogue that occurred during those days and I will share some of my impressions from the seminar.

The presentations and dialogues reflected the reality that we are living in a time of epochal change, impacted by the effects of globalization, secularization, consumerism and technology. These factors pose many challenges to religious life, calling for a search for a new identity and a new consciousness in the midst of this rapidly changing world. The changes call for reshaping our sense of self, of our congregation, our Church, our world and our images of God.

To what does all this invite us to reflect upon? What are our hopes and desires as we move into the future? Religious life is a dynamic process, involving the dying of old concepts and images, while creating a new language, new paradigms and new expressions of the theology of religious life, along with a new theology of the vows. There is a need to re-image the theological concepts that have shaped us, as the very context of our lives today has changed. Our lived experience calls for the search for a larger context for our theology of religious life, for a more cosmic, interdependent model reflecting our dynamic God who is ever creating anew.

As was evident in the seminar, there are no clear answers to the challenges posed to us today. But at the same time participants spoke to the opportunities we have to explore how we might give a stronger intercultural witness, and how we might creatively collaborate among congregations and with the laity in carrying out our mission in the Church. Along with this movement toward greater collaboration and dialogue, there is also the call to deepen our quest for God, allowing God to transform us. Grounding ourselves in a deeper spirituality is core to our relevance.

The issues of relevance, identity, credibility and visibility surfaced in various ways throughout the seminar. These issues will clearly be the subjects of ongoing discussions. In our continuing search for the heart of religious life in the context of today's radical changes, how do we kindle the fire within us, to bring to birth Christ's presence in the world? How do we identify where people are meeting and experiencing God today, so we can find ways to be present there? We are challenged to go forward with courage and hope, while creatively holding the tension of opposites that are part of our interconnected lives today.

In closing I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to those who organized the Theological Seminar. Also, I wish to thank the UISG for opening this first day of their Assembly to members of the UISG, giving us the possibility to reflect together on the topics of the Theological Seminar. Together we can search for ways to go forward. There was a mandate from the participants

of the seminar to find a way to carry forward what was begun in the seminar, to gather together theologians who could form an international work group to further the theology of religious life, through research and gathering from the lived experience of religious women and men.

Our two Unions want to encourage and promote theological reflection on religious life, and the formation of our members. Hopefully today, together with you, we can bring some direction and light on this topic that is so relevant to all of us.

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UISG President

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From: 2011 77th Assembly – Mary Lou Wirtz, FCJM
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