

## E-BULLETIN #124

*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)*

item 234

### meeting of Pope Francis and Leaders of Religious

The Union of Superiors General held its 82nd General Assembly in the Salesianum in Rome from 27th to 29th November, 2013. The story of three experiences provided the basis for reflections and encounters within the various linguistic groups.

- **Father Janson Hervé** of the Little Brothers of Jesus spoke of "the light that helps me be at the service of my brothers and how Pope Francis strengthens my hope".
- **Brother Mauro Jöhri**, Capuchin, explained "how Pope Francis is an inspiration to me and a challenge for the office I hold within my Order"
- **Father Hainz Kulüke**, of the Society of the Divine Word, spoke about "leadership within a religious missionary congregation against the background of an international and inter-cultural context following the example given by Pope Francis".

The Holy Father chose to meet with the Superiors for three hours, rather than the short encounter that normally happens. No address was prepared in advance. Instead a long, informal and fraternal discussion took place, composed of questions and answers. Various aspects and problems of the religious life were tackled. The Pope often interspersed his speech with personal stories taken from his pastoral experience.

### identity and mission of consecrated life:

The first set of questions related to the identity and mission of consecrated life. What kind of consecrated life do we expect today? One which offers a special witness was the answer.

"You must truly be witnesses of a different way of doing and being. You must embody the values of the Kingdom".

The Pope stated that a radical approach is required of all Christians, but religious people are called upon to follow the Lord in a special way:



"They are men and woman who can awaken the world and enlighten the future. Consecrated life is prophecy. God asks us to fly out from our cosy nest and go to the frontiers of the world, avoiding the temptation to 'domesticate' them. This is the most concrete way of imitating the Lord".

The Pope continued by saying that to be prophetic is to strengthen what is institutional in consecrated life, that is the charism of the Congregation, without mistaking it for the apostolic work which is carried out. The first remains, the second will pass. The charism remains because it is strong. Sometimes there is confusion between charism and its practical implementation. The former is creative, always looking for new paths. The charismatic witness must be realistic and include the possibility of being sinful witnesses:

"We all make mistakes. We have to recognize our frailty. Accepting that we are sinners does us a world of good".

One of the participants asked: "Pope Francis, you have often invited us to go to the **peripheries** of the world. How can we do that?" The Pope answered that the world perspective is different if seen from the outskirts rather than from the centre. This forces us to continuously rethink our religious life. He mentioned a letter by Fr Arrupe to the Jesuit social centres in which he stated that in order to make a preferential option for the poor it is necessary to live with the poor.

"We have to look at things from the periphery. We have to go there in order to really know the life of the people. Otherwise we tend to embrace stern, fundamentalist positions, based on a centralised vision. This is not healthy. For example: those who work with youth cannot give a regimented vision of reality all the time because that is like water off a duck's back. Today God asks us to leave our nest. Even those who choose the cloister receive the mandate to pray for the spreading of the Good News. This is the most concrete way of imitating the Lord: to go out!"

## **vocations and training:**



When asked about the situation of vocations and training, the Pope emphasised that there are young Churches which are bearing new fruit. All cultural setups can produce vocations. What is to be avoided is the "traffic in novices" whereby some congregations go "candidate hunting" in countries where they are not present so that they can send them to the 'home country' where vocations are scarce.

It's also important to try and fathom the right intention of any young man or woman wanting to join. There could be a rather spurious intention at the beginning and this has to be purified during the formation years. One must always be alert: is this young person looking for a shelter, some kind of safe nest? This naturally gives rise to a re-evaluation of the inculturation of the charism which is specific, but at the same time, it interacts with the different cultures.

The Church must ask for forgiveness and look with shame upon apostolic failures caused by misunderstandings in this field such as the case of Matteo Ricci in China who was grossly misjudged. Intercultural dialogue must push for the introduction of persons of various cultures in the governance of religious institutes, thus expressing different ways of living the charism. It has nothing to do with folklore

but it's rather a question of mentality, of different ways of thinking. You cannot train a person for the religious life without taking into account his/her culture, his/her world view. One cannot lose his/her cultural and personal identity during his/her period of formation.

### **four fundamental pillars:**

The Pope insisted upon the importance of training for religious life which he presented as being founded upon four fundamental pillars: spiritual, intellectual, communitarian and apostolic. It is indispensable to avoid every form of hypocrisy and clericalism by means of a frank and open dialogue on all aspects of life:

"Formation is an artisanal craft, not a form of policing", he commented. "its aim is to form religious persons with a tender heart, not bitter like vinegar. Time allotted to training varies according to one's gifts and culture. Otherwise we'll produce 'little monsters'".

We mustn't forget that:

"young people use a different language and categories. It's not a question of geographical differences but of a cultural change which is in answer to an epochal transformation".



We must train young people so that they may be witnesses of the Resurrection, of the Gospel values, so that they may lead and train the people of God. That is the aim of training for religious life: it's for the faithful people of God that we enter such life. Thus, if a seminary accepts a candidate who has been sent away from a formation house for serious reasons, it's a case of not thinking about the people of God and that is a serious problem.

The courage shown by Benedict XIV in dealing with cases of sexual abuse must encourage us to be serious about the formation of our candidates. And he concluded by saying:

"we are not training administrators or managers but parents, brothers and travelling companions".

### **vocation of brotherhood:**

When asked about the vocation to become brothers, the Pope said that "this is not a lesser choice but a different call". It's necessary to reflect on the matter and to highlight the importance of such choice. "I don't think for a moment that this type of vocation belongs to the past", said Pope Francis but "we must understand what God wants from us".

There is a document on the brothers which is being reviewed by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life. It's been there for a long time and it's necessary to look at it again. On the question concerning brothers as Major Superiors in Clerical Institutes, the Holy Father replied that it is an issue pertaining to Canon Law and that's the realm where it should be addressed.

## community life:

Another set of questions addressed community life. Pope Francis remarked that it has a great force of attraction, and presupposes the acceptance of differences and conflicts. There are different forms of community life depending on the various institutes. At times it is difficult to live in fraternal love, but without it no fruit may be borne:

"Someone who is not capable of community life is not fit for the religious life".



At times one notes a certain tendency towards individualism which is often a flight from community life. How to combine mercy and compassion though with firmness towards those confreres in a difficult situation? The Pope went on to say:

"Even in the best families there are some members who go through a rough time. Community conflicts are necessary: we can't dream of a community or any human group which is free of conflicts and we must tolerate them and overcome them not by eliminating or

ignoring them but by facing them. At times, we can be very cruel to each other. We are all tempted to criticise either because we think we are better or for some personal gain".

In certain cases, accompaniment may be required, especially in the case of mental or physical illness. In any case:

"We must never act like managers when faced with a brother's conflict: but our charity must reach out like a gentle touch".

When faced by conflict we mustn't react like the priest or the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan who simply ignored the problem: we can't avoid conflict but we mustn't remain stuck in it either: we need to tackle it and behave like wise people trying to find possible solutions. Patience and tenderness are the virtues we need. It is painful but it's the only way forward. Certainly, if there is no resolution of the problem, other solutions will need to be found such as a transfer or even leaving the order but everything must be done in a gentle and caring way.

At this point the Pope mentioned a personal experience. A young man, 22, an alcoholic who suffered from depression, was rescued by his mum's loving and tender care. Now he's a successful person. We must pray for the gift of loving care:

"In the Office readings on the feast of St Joseph's there is an expression that I liked a lot which said that Saint Joseph treated his family with a *Eucharistic tenderness*. That's how we should treat our brothers"

concluded the Holy Father.

## relationship between religious and local church:

Some questions tackled the mutual relationship between the religious and the local churches in which they work. Pope Francis stated that he knows from experience that there are problems:

"We, the Bishops, ought to understand that consecrated people are not just helping hands but they enrich the Dioceses with their charism. Dioceses need your charism".

The insertion of religious communities in a Diocese is important and the bishop must acknowledge and respect this charism. Conflicts generally appear when dialogue is lacking. Here the Pope gave some examples from his own experience. He also noted that the issue has been dealt with several times and that the Prefect for the Congregation for Religious Institutes is working on a shared document.

## frontiers of the mission of consecrated persons:

The final questions regarded the frontiers of the mission of consecrated persons. "They must be sought on the basis of the charism of each institute", answered the Pope. He mentioned Fr Arrupe, former Superior General of the Jesuits, and the choice he made in favour of the refugees.

"Situations of exclusion remain the first priorities but they also need discernment. The first criterion is to send the best and most gifted people to those situations because of the risk implied which requires men of courage and prayer. It's necessary that the superiors keep in close touch with the people involved in this type of work".



Alongside these challenges he mentioned the cultural and educational mission in schools and universities. These are sectors where consecrated people can give a tremendous contribution:

"When the fathers from (the magazine) *Civiltà Cattolica* came to see me, I told them about the frontiers of the new philosophies, like the "Weak Thought" and the "Pensée unique". I also reminded the Superior General of the Salesians of the frontier of Patagonia which was the dream of Don Bosco".

For the Pope, the pillars of education are:

**"transmitting knowledge, transmitting methods, transmitting values.** By these means, faith is communicated. The educator must measure up to those he educates, and must give careful thought to how to proclaim Jesus Christ to a changing generation".

Then he insisted that the educational task is of paramount importance. He recalled some of his experiences in Buenos Aires and how it is fundamental to be well equipped when receiving into an educational context children and boys/girls who come from dysfunctional families. How do you proclaim Christ to these young people without inoculating them with a "vaccine against the faith"?

Before taking leave of the 120 Superiors General present, the Pope announced that 2015 would be a year dedicated to consecrated life. He concluded by saying:



"Thank you for the act of faith you made by coming to this meeting. Thank you for what you do and for your spirit of faith and your service. Thank you for your witness and also for the humiliations through which you have had to pass: it's the path of the Cross".

Vatican City  
29.11.13

item 235

**this passion speaks “of being in love.....”**

The Prefect of the *Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, **Cardinal João Braz De Aviz** held a press conference on Friday to announce the upcoming *Year of Consecrated Life*.

At the press conference he told journalists that Pope Francis had announced the Year in November 2013 at a meeting with the Union of Superiors General. Noting that it will take place in the context of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, the Cardinal said:



“We believe that the Council has been a breath of the Spirit not only for the whole Church but, perhaps especially, for the consecrated life. We are also convinced that in these 50 years consecrated life has undertaken a fruitful journey of renewal — certainly not free of difficulties and hardships — in the commitment to follow what the Council asked of those consecrated: fidelity to the Lord, to the Church, to their own charism and to the people of today”.

For this reason, he said, the *first* objective of the *Year of Consecrated Life* would be to “make a grateful remembrance of the recent past.”

With this positive outlook on the past, he continued: “we want to embrace the future with hope” — the *second* objective. Although the crises that affect the world and the Church are also felt within consecrated life, Cardinal Braz de Aviz said women and men religious remain full of hope, based not on their own powers, but on trust in the Lord. “In Him,” he said, “no one can rob us of our hope.”

This hope though, he noted, cannot keep us from “living the present with passion” — and this is the *third* objective of the coming Year. This passion speaks “of being in love, of true friendship, of profound communion.” This is “the true beauty of the life of so many women who profess the evangelical counsels and follow Christ more closely in this state of life.” In this regard, he said, the Year of Consecrated Life will have an evangelical focus, helping people to realize “the beauty of following Christ” in the various types of religious vocations.

The *Year of Consecrated Life* is expected to begin in October of this year, coinciding with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the promulgation of *Lumen gentium* (the Second Vatican Council’s constitution on the

Church), which has a specific chapter dealing with consecrated life. The anniversary of the Council's decree *Perfectae caritatis*, will be the occasion of the close of the Year, in November 2015.



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<http://vd.pcn.net/en/>

for anyone interested the **VIDIMUS DOMINUM** website describes itself:

- a place for religious life throughout the world to meet, be informed and reflect, the Vidimus Dominum website aims to "provide reasons for the hope" which animates consecrated life and communicates "what we have seen and heard, and touched with our hands... the Word who is life" (1 Jn 1:1).

## sac asia oceania e-bulletin

### you commented...

**on #123** The two articles of #123 of the Asia Oceania bulletin contained two significant contributions for the Pallottine Family. The message of Pope Francis from the Upper Room in Jerusalem can be considered a blue print of the "Pedagogy of the Cenacle" that we are often speaking about. The fact that the International Movement called "Jesus Youth" has adopted Pallotti's image of Queen of Apostles as its spiritual and apostolic inspiration must fill us with joy and gratitude. These are all signs of the times that we need to take into consideration. As someone said during the recent meeting of the General Coordination Council of the Union, it is all a question of "entering the Cenacle, remaining in the Cenacle and moving out of the Cenacle".

**JN 09.06.14**

What a powerful issue for Pallottines and friends. We have the thoughts of Pope Francis on the Cenacle so central to our charism and we have Fr. Tomy's reflections on Jesus Youth, so clearly the work of the Holy Spirit. I will spread this issue in a special way to as many people and groups as I can.

**CF 09.06.14**

Great words and great pics (especially the one of Francis, the rabbi and imam embracing).

**MB 09.06.14**

Many thanks for both the words of Pope Francis, certainly pertinent to us as UAC, and the article on *Jesus Youth* this sounds like an exciting movement of The Spirit, such a venture

could be just what we need as we seek to find new and appropriate ways of bringing the message of St Vincent through The Spirit to all.

**CS 10.06.14**

I am one of the staff working in the provincialate of ABVM province, Bangalore. I read regularly your bulletin published in the Union of the Catholic Apostolate - website from the Pallottine Generalate. It is very informative. The bulletin gives a lot of useful information about the works and lives of Pallottines all over the world. I should appreciate your hard work and thank you for all your efforts in bringing out the bulletin regularly.

The bulletin has definitely started with the intention of giving information about the happenings in Asia-Oceania region. In the course of time, you have also started covering happenings in other parts of the world. It's fine. In the present context, my suggestion is that you should think of changing the name of the bulletin from Asia-Oceania to another name that can indicate the global nature of the bulletin. Hope my request will find a place in your deliberations regarding the content of the bulletin.

**VP 10.06.14**