

“Community Life and Mission: Toward a Future Full of Hope”

The Center for the Study of Consecrated Life at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, held its symposium: *“Community Life and Mission: Toward a Future Full of Hope”* featuring Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, OP, on February 5-6, 2016. It began on Friday evening with a video of Fr. Radcliffe in which he stated that it is the role of religious to go outside of the Church, to go where “Christ is not named,” then continued with a panel of religious discussing how they discovered their call.

“Being the Body of Christ”

On Saturday Fr. Radcliffe offered a presentation on *Being the Body of Christ*, both corporately and also individually. Noting that ours is an embodied faith and addressing current cultural ambiguities and dualisms of the body, he asked “how can we be Christ’s Body today?”

He stated that we have nothing to say until we have first **listened**, and then asked us to consider “who am I afraid to listen to?” The beginning of preaching the gospel involves looking at peoples’ faces, are there faces we fear? Our human vocation and personal sanctification is to be the face of God so we must also learn to read the faces of others.

Welcoming Crises

Religious life must be abundant life: alive and joyous! We cannot be ambassadors of the God of life unless we have joyful lives. Sadly, religious life for many has slipped into survival mode. Rather than fear crises we must realize that crises are the way we grow up, for it is in the rhythms of life that God works. “Religious life is going through a crisis; thanks be to God!!”

How we live this will determine how we flourish, mindful of and directed towards the crises in civilization. Religious today should look at such crises including the refugee crisis, fundamentalism, the rise of religious violence and the threat of ecological catastrophe.

Intergenerational Dialogue

As he concluded the day, Fr. Radcliffe encouraged intergenerational dialogue among religious. He noted that big differences in religious life today are generational. Orders that thrive will accept, rather than be afraid of, the differences. Such orders must trust the young to be different.

He said our vows should be a vibrant invitation to our contemporaries to live, saying something about what it means to be alive. It’s not that religious need to get a life; we need to have a life!

To learn more about the Center for the Study of Consecrated Life got to: <http://www.ctu.edu/consecratedlife>

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