

THU 24 May 2018 – Greetings to the Canadian Religious Conference

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you here in Montreal and to share with you two words about reconciliation and interculturality as main challenges for us as women and men of faith and Religious Institutes.

Reconciliation is at the core of our vocation. Because we have believed in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, we have been called to collaborate in the mission of reconciling all things in Christ. It is Jesus' mission, following the will of the Father, and guided by the Holy Spirit. A mission entrusted to the Church, the community of His followers.

Reconciliation is a complex process that involves, at least, three dimensions: reconciliation among human beings, which is impossible without the justice that makes us live as brothers and sisters; reconciliation with the environment, our Common House, God's creation for the support of life; and reconciliation with the Trinity. Dimensions that are so closely intertwined that they cannot be achieved one without the other.

Reconciliation means to move ahead from the past, to break the fetters that make it a weight rather than give energy to go forward. To move ahead means to recognize the truth, to discern how God is acting in human history, to promote justice and to be merciful. Indeed, reconciliation does not finish with the emergence of truth and the return of justice in human relations and with the environment. Reconciliation goes deeper through forgiveness, the best remedy for healing and establishing relationships in love.

Interculturality, as “a mutual exchange between cultures that can lead to the transformation and enrichment of all those involved”¹, is a privileged means to contribute to reconciliation. Interculturality recognizes cultural differences as the revelation of the countenance of humankind created in God's image and likeness and enriched by the ever deeper exchange between them. Therefore, interculturality is not an end in itself but the means through which we create the conditions to fully live the human vocation. Interculturality contributes to the humanization of persons, cultures and peoples.

Reflection on interculturality takes us beyond the recognition that there are and there have been many cultures in the world (multiculturality) and causes us to focus on the effort to build bridges and establish a smooth communication between them. Interculturality is a complex process not devoid of conflicts.

Interculturality is not a “meeting between cultures” intended as an alternative movement to inculturation. Interculturality is not about creating a supra, meta or transcultural sphere or space².

¹ STANISLAUS, L.-UEFFING, M., *Interculturalidad*, Estella (Spain), Ed. Verbo Divino, 2017, p. 23.

² Cfr. STANISLAUS, L.-UEFFING, M., op. cit, p. 586.

The recognition of different cultures and the ability to live in multicultural contexts, respecting and even enjoying diversity, is an important step forward. However, a temptation of Consecrated Life is to take multiculturalism as an expression of universality. Perceiving multiculturalism merely as the peaceful coexistence between persons of different cultures would mean missing out on the opportunity to experience catholicity within one's own religious communities. When regarded as the opportunity to accept the challenge of engaging in an enriching exchange between cultures, multiculturalism leads to the experience of interculturality as a contribution to the reconciliation of all things in Christ.

Interculturality is a participatory process which interacts with the historical, social, economic and political context in which it unfolds. It is a process that, as previously stated, makes the development of cultures more dynamic by bringing about changes which foster the universal dimension of humanity.

The Church is not for herself but for the world; she is there to proclaim the friendship that God offers all human beings. With his liberating love, God desires all people to be saved³. The Church is a sign or sacrament of this desire for universal liberation. It is a Church that *has been sent* to all cultures and *from* all cultures to contribute to the liberation of all men and women and all peoples. That is because she is a "Church that goes forth" – as described by Pope Francis- engaged in the promotion of a dignified life for all human beings. A Church that reaches out to all, that is, that follows the way of interculturality.

As Church and Consecrated Life, we have been enriched by cultural diversity. We may be enriched even further if we deepen interculturality. These processes start with welcoming diversity as God's gift. Recognizing diversity allows for the experience of a diverse God, the One and Triune God, a community of love that communicates its love in many ways. The amazing diversity and complexity of creation leads to recognizing the richness of God's love.

*Gaining a deeper understanding of the Gospel is a process of interculturalization*⁴. Consequently, the opportunity to deepen interculturality as a characteristic of our Consecrated Life is the one means available to us to better understand the Good News that we are called to proclaim all over the world and in all manifestations of human life.

Again. Thanks a lot for your kindness receiving me this evening and your patience to listen to these incomplete reflections about two big challenges for our human, Christian and Religious life.

³ 1Tim 2:4; cfr Jn 3:17.

⁴ STANISLAUS, L. – UEFFING, M., op. cit., p. 405.