

## NOTES / THE SECULAR CONSECRATION: A PRECIOUS DRESS DESIGNED BY THE LORD

The Secular Institute "Mary, Mother of the Redemption" was founded in February 2006 from the spiritual womb of the Apostolic Movement of which it shares the founding charisma: announcing the Word of God to those who do not know it, reminding it to those who have forgotten it. Every vocation is always a gift of the Lord and it is often accepted as a personal response to God even before understanding its theological significance. In faith, trusting abandonment to Christ, obedience through love, precedes understanding. The beauty of the vocation also resides in these edges always out of phase with the mere human reasoning. The answer is not the result of a calculation. Of course, it always takes place within a complex path of faith in which shadows or uncertainties could emerge.

Then, what lets us renew the thread that binds us to the heart of Christ? Precisely the personal relationship with him that is Word, Eucharist and ecclesial communion. Indeed, it is precisely at the crossings, more or less stormy, of life that we must cling to His light, daring and asking for help from the only One who can give man existential fullness. Consecrating oneself gives joy because we have the conscience that the Lord has revealed to our heart something of that eternal 'dream' that He has on every person for his good and for the salvation of his brothers. Thus the Lord deems us to be trustworthy.

It is true, when one is very young, so many thoughts and desires crowd his mind, someti-

mes turning away from Jesus. But, at a certain point, the heart feels that something is missing, that the circle does not close. So he sets off to find out what makes him restless. Then, how many interrogatives emerge placed within us from the Spirit of the Lord! Why do not I want marriage like any other woman? Why not some children to hug that can comfort me in old age?

One day, in that inner language with which we turn to God without the need to pronounce sonic words, I asked him, to tell the truth with a little irritation: but in the end, Lord, who are we? We who? Here it is, yes, I meant us women, young and old, who, in the Apostolic Movement, do not have a boyfriend or a family. Priests have a precise path to follow and we? It's ugly to be neither meat nor fish. It makes one think of a 'lukewarmness' that is not loved by the Lord. Therefore, that tip of irritation. Well, the Lord did not wait too long and revealed to me who I am: a lay person who has to give everything of herself to Him because nothing belongs to her anymore; a person who, living the evangelical vows, not in a convent, but in concrete reality, precisely secular, already indicates, among the painful wounds of the world, that they can take away everything (body, goods, will and loved ones etc.), but if we have Christ, He is enough for us.

So, finally, I also understood this passage: "Secular Institutes are not religious Institutes: this negative definition requires avoiding the confusion between the two: Secular Institutes are not a modern form of religious life, but they are a vocation and an original form of life» (CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES, "Secular Institutes: their identity and their mission", Document for the Plenary Assembly, 3-6 May 1983).

In the Church, everyone has his specific identity drawn by the Lord, the 'clothe' with which he surrounds and defends our nakedness. Theology only recognizes, through the signs of history, what already resides in His eternal wisdom that governs events.

Anna Guzzi

### And immediately the Spirit pushed him into the desert

The desert is the place where man experiences that one can only be from God and nobody else. He cannot be from men. They do not exist. He cannot be from the earth. It is devoid of all life. He cannot be from the sky. It is without rain. Man is alone with his God. The desert recalls the dust of creation. It is devoid of all life. God takes it, kneads it, gives it the desired shape, breathes in it his breath of life and dust becomes a living being. Everything is from God, only from Him.

The eternal Word became flesh, dust of the ground. He did not assume the dust in its condition of origin, but in its history of sin, even not having known sin. It must be redeemed, saved, loaded with every life. He descends not in the void of human existence, but instead he lowers himself into the death of the very dust, with the mission of recreating it and replenishing it with all kind of life, with his grace and with the gift of his Holy Spirit. The desert is humanity. He can draw nothing from it. All that is necessary for its life he must draw it from his Father.

In the desert Satan tempts him. He prospects him ways of life that come from him or from the transformation, modification and change of the relationship with his Father. Jesus knows that only from the Father, from his will and from the principles of life established by Him, dust can be recreated, redone, renewed and regenerated. If even for a very small thing He will not be from the Father, dust will remain dust and there will be no salvation for humanity. The Father is creator and regenerator, on one

condition: that Jesus remains in his divine and eternal will and brings his flesh to be the most holy dust pierced and nailed on the wood of the cross.

The desert is the necessary condition every other man must be led into by the Holy Spirit. He might lead him only through listening to the voice of Jesus that invites him to conversion and faith in the Gospel, in the abandonment of every thought according to which the dust of the ground can receive any kind of life from the dust that is in the desert. If this thought is not abandoned, man will always be prey to the tempter that seduces him by making him believe that life comes from dust, earth or air.

What instead is faith in the Gospel? It is believing that the life of the dust placed in the desert of sin and death can come back to life only if it accepts the Word of Christ, in which the grace and the Holy Spirit of God, the light and the truth of our eternal redemption are. There will never be conversion and faith in the Gospel until man thinks that life can come to him from earth, dust and things of the desert. Life is God and it is all in Christ. We welcome the Word of Christ, we become one body with Him, we become life of his life, life in his life, we fill ourselves with his Holy Spirit and we enter into the fullness of our being created, generated and formed in the image of his life, his soul, his spirit and his body. May the Mother of God and our Mother help us to enter into this divine and human mystery of life.

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# REALIZERS OF THE DREAMS GOD PLACED IN OUR HEARTS

Reflections starting from the speech of H.H. Francis  
with the young Chileans (Maipù, 17 January 2018)

Addressing the young people present at the National Shrine of Maipù, in Chile, Pope Francis urged them never to lose that characteristic - youthful par excellence - of being "dreamers", in that every man is called to realize those dreams that God has placed in his heart. And in this journey, all of us must let ourselves be taken by the hand by the Virgin Mary who "[...] wants to continue accompanying those dreams that God places in your heart: dreams of freedom, dreams of joy, dreams of a better future" (Speech). The Lord has a project, a dream, on each man, who must do nothing but welcome it, voluntarily and freely, in order to realize it to the end.

After the sin perpetrated by Adam and Eve, God the Father had a wonderful dream that consisted in the redemption of fallen humanity. He who fulfilled this dream of the Father was his Only Son, Jesus Christ, who "[...] humbled himself by becoming obedient unto death and death on the cross" (Phil 2: 8). The realization of the dream of God was made possible by this perfect and total obedience of Christ.

Therefore, if we also want to realize "those dreams that God places in our hearts" we must do nothing but follow, in every way, the example that Jesus left us. It is only in this way that the "dreams of freedom, dreams of joy and dreams of a better future" might become reality. Here is why the Holy Father keeps on saying that every activity, every initiative and everything we undertake must have a single purpose, that of bringing the whole world to Jesus: "We are all called, again and again, to be close

to Jesus. If an activity, a pastoral plan, if this meeting does not help us to be closer to Jesus, we have lost time, we have lost an afternoon and hours of preparation" (Speech).

And we are concretely close to Jesus when we follow his footsteps, when we act like he acted. It is only in this way that we can all be protagonists of history: "This is being protagonists of history. Sparkling eyes because we discovered that Jesus is the source of life and joy. Protagonists of history, because we want to infect that spark in many dull and opaque hearts, which have forgotten what hoping means; in many who are apathetic and wait for someone to invite them and provoke them with something worthwhile. Being protagonists is doing what Jesus did. There where you are, with whomever you are and at any time: "What would Jesus do in my place?"» (Speech).

At this point allow me an application to the Apostolic Movement. We who live its spirituality, recognize what the dream that the Virgin Mary has on us is. She wants us to remind to the world, that has forgotten it, the Word of her Son Jesus. Here is why all our activities, initiatives, projects must have this one and only purpose if we want to fulfil the dream that God himself has entrusted to us through the Mother of the Redemption. Because it is only from the Word of Jesus, righteously preached, humbly welcomed and fully lived that the best future might be born that all young people, but not only, dream.

Father Alessandro Severino

The  
Lord's Day  
ROMAN RITE

REPENT, AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL  
(I SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR B)

**THIS IS THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT (Gn 9,8-15)**

To cleanse the earth from the sin of men the Lord God, washed it with a universal flood that lasted forty days and forty nights. When Noah came out of the ark, the Lord made a covenant with him, and in him with humanity. He promised that he would have never again destroyed the earth with another flood. As a sign he placed his bow in the clouds. Seeing the arch, he would have remembered his covenant, he would have abandoned the thought of washing the earth again from the sin of men. God knows that by now man does nothing but sin and can think none other but evil. His heart is prone to evil since adolescence. If he wants man not to sin, he must change him in his nature. From this moment on He will work for the substantial change of man. He will work for the creation of the new man, which might necessarily take place with the will of man. The new creation is accepted.

**THIS PREFIGURED BAPTISM (1Pt 3,18-22)**

Saint Peter sees in the flood a true image or figure of baptism. As the waters of the flood have purified the earth from sin, fruit of the wickedness and iniquity of men, so baptism washes soul, body and spirit from sin, creating the new man, the new creature, making it become the body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit and participant in divine nature. But there is a substantial difference between the deluge and baptism. The flood was sent without the will of man and washed the whole earth. Baptism must be given in faith, with the explicit will of

man. If man refuses to be cleansed of his sin and regenerated or created as a new creature, he remains in his corrupt flesh. He might never act as a new creature, because he will also miss the food that will have to feed the new man so that he does not sin: the light of the Word, the grace of the Sacraments and the Holy Spirit.

**TEMPTED BY SATAN (Mk 1: 12-15)**

Jesus is not the Master who draws the truth from books or from his science acquired by other masters. He is the Master who is the truth in his body, in his soul and in his spirit. He is the Master who has never become falsehood, lie, deceit, wickedness, evilness, pride, shrewdness, cunning, concupiscence, greed, lust, sloth, discord, arrogance, foolishness and things like that. He is light without any darkness, truth without any falsehood, perfect science of God and of men, of time and eternity and most pure intelligence without any veiling. Above all, He is the pure will of God lived in every part, without ever omitting and adding anything. Satan himself and also by using every man belonging to his world of darkness, tempts him with different temptations. He experiences them all. He also invents new ones with the intention of making him fall. But he does not succeed. Jesus is the strong man, he is the strong one on whom he never achieved anything. Here is the one who is the true Master of humanity: the one who has always overcome Satan, making all the infinite love of the Father shine through his life.

*by the theologian,*  
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