

Message to women and men religious of Europe

Our Spiritual life faced with European Challenges

Europe is faced with numerous challenges which give rise to hope and creativity as well as fear, self-centredness and mistrust. These challenges concern us all. They are also ours, women and men Religious, touching on what is most essential and precious for us: life and its meaning, the dignity of every person, justice and peace. Together with our contemporaries we share the same woundedness, vulnerabilities and insecurities. We strive towards a greater unity that needs to be built on an authentic respect for others.

We need to be aware of all the richness of religious life. In following Christ we find the needed resources on which we can rely in today's world.

- **The primacy of God** in our lives makes every moment a time of grace. Putting our trust in Jesus Christ anchors us deeply in God and makes it possible to trust ourselves and others. Prayer and contemplation make us witnesses capable of proposing our faith to a world which is searching for meaning, whilst often losing hope and uncertain in facing its future.

- **Community life** teaches us how to "live together". This is in itself a demanding and rich human experience. It helps us to welcome diversity, grow in patient dialogue and an ability to encounter the other. It invites us to overcome individualism, to break the cycle of fear of the other, of the stranger, of differences. Community life leads us to greater solidarity between congregations, cultures and religions. It is a place where ongoing discernment for mission can take place.

- **Reconciliation** is for each one of us the fruit of an experience of dialogue, truth and humility which enables us to discover the power of forgiveness. We become bearers of this forgiveness, capable of healing our own wounds and those of others, especially of those who suffer because of the violence that marks their history or society today.

- **The vows of poverty, chastity and obedience**, freely chosen, channel a person's deep desires and make him or her ready to love and serve. They help liberate us from the temptation to use power to dominate others and enable us to work towards the dignity of every human person especially the weak, marginalised and victims of today's many forms of slavery.

- **In welcoming a God who never stops surprising us**, we are invited to perceive, right in the heart of the difficulties encountered by religious life today, the hopes and expectations of Europe, a continent that is itself searching for its identity and 'soul'. We should invent new ways of living the charism of our founders so as to respond to the most urgent calls of our times, especially reaching out to youth who are Europe's future.

Together with others we, women and men Religious trusting in the life of the Spirit and in union with the Church, could be pioneers and initiate new ways for Europe. This is our call, however demanding, to help build Europe according to God's own heart.