

XVth General Assembly, 19-25 March 2012, Lourdes (France)

“The Voice of the Future”

Message from Religious Women and Men in Europe



- 1) We, members of the XVth General Assembly of UCESM (Union of the European Conferences of Major Superiors), have been gathered together, from 27 countries, in Lourdes (France), from 19th to 25th of March 2012. During our Assembly, we have been reflecting on the theme “Religious Men and Women in Europe – Life as a vocation”. We support and approve this message written by some young religious invited to take part in our meeting. These days, we have been touched by the living presence of Mary in this shrine of Lourdes and by the example of the life of Bernadette; and we found the vocation of the prophet Jeremiah inspiring for our consecrated life in today's Europe.
- 2) *“The word of God came to me”* (Jer 1.4). Our life is deeply rooted in the Word, since God is always the foundation of our calling, as Religious women and men. We, disciples of Jesus Christ, experience this living Word through a personal relationship with him. We are convinced that we are called to make love stay.
- 3) *“I knew you... I consecrated you... I appointed you as a prophet”* (Jer 1.5). As we have heard this calling once, so we hear it again today. Every human life is a vocation: as religious women and men, we perceive in this a calling to live in fraternal communion and in solidarity with others.
- 4) *“Do not say, 'I am too young'. You must go to everyone to whom I send you”* (Jer 1.7). In the complexity of the reality, we sometimes feel discouraged and unable to speak... We can even come to the point of doubting whether our religious life still has meaning for young people in present-day Europe. But, at the same time, in our fragility, in our poverty, God tells us as he told Jeremiah: “you must go to everyone to whom I send you...” In a suffering world, our Congregations and Institutes are called to be places of solidarity and trust, where several generations of brothers and sisters feel co-responsible for the present and for the future.
- 5) *“Be not afraid of them, for I am with you”* (Jer 1.8). We all know that there is a crisis of faith and vocation but we do not lose heart. The risen Lord is with us! The awareness of his merciful love fills us with joy and courage. We have many great gifts to share with the people of Europe. We believe that *today* is our “*kairos*”, a favorable time of hope, as we entrust our lives to Jesus.
- 6) *“I appoint you over nations... to build and plant”* (Jer 1.10). We come from many nations, having been called to be witnesses of the Lord's presence. We plant and build; we participate in the coming of a new world. We share in the mission of Christ who promises to make all things new (cf. Rev 21.5).
- 7) *“The word of the Lord came to me: 'What do you see?'"* (Jer 1.11-13). We see the reality of a world needing God's love: people whose dignity has to be restored; people whose feet have to be washed; people whose thirst has to be quenched. We see that the Spirit is at work in our hearts, through the hope and joy he gives us today. We see new horizons that inspire us to continue our pilgrimage of faith, toward a new evangelization, side by side with God and with all people of good will.