



CONGREGAZIONE
PER GLI ISTITUTI DI VITA CONSACRATA
E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA

Cité du Vatican, 30 juin 2010

II. CARDINALE PRAEFECTUS

Translated from French.

*Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life,
and for Societies of Apostolic Life
The Cardinal Prefect*

Vatican City, 30 June 2010

Very honored Father, dear Confreres,

A very cordial remembrance to all of you who take part in the 2010 General Assembly. My prayer and my fraternal affection accompany you during these weeks of reflection. Celebrated 350 years since the death of Saint Vincent de Paul and of Saint Louise de Marillac, it is an occasion to analyze the present situation of the Congregation and to plan its future in fidelity to the charism of the Founder.

Permit me to share with you my feelings coming from my experience as Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. In six years of my service in this Dicastery of the Holy See, I believe I have acquired certain knowledge of consecrated life and its actual situation which might be useful to you.

In the course of my numerous journeys over the world, I have noticed with surprise the absence of Confreres from the great current projects of the Church. Also the absence of experts and specialists from the Congregation in different domains of spiritual, theological, pastoral learning. Other Congregations, smaller than ours have them in greater number.

What is the cause of this? Since the Vatican Council II and the troubles that followed, we suffered like other Congregations, losing a good third of our numbers. In 1965, we were 6,030 members. In 2005 we were 4,049. But the great problem is not the number. Our problem is absence in great projects of the Church, due to a certain bending of our works. Traditionally, the Congregation of the Mission had such works as popular missions, mission *ad gentes*, spiritual direction of the Daughters of Charity, and, on the other hand, the formation of the clergy. All this is well summed up in the

collect of the Mass of Saint Vincent de Paul: "*ad salutem pauperum et cleri disciplinam*". For centuries, a good number of Confreres were assigned to teaching and to formation of the clergy. These confreres were intellectually and spiritually prepared for this task. Thus, on the Congregation's level there was certain complementarity and certain balance between teachers and missionaries, between intellectuals and pastoral men, each practicing beneficial influence from another.

After the Vatican Council II, this balance was broken. The type of an intellectual, man of wisdom, the professor has, in large measure, disappeared from our ranks. And it is a damage for the whole Congregation, and probably one of the causes of its actual stagnation.

This fact, in my opinion, is the sign of an infidelity to the charism of the foundation and to the secular tradition of the Congregation of the Mission. The General Assembly has the opportunity to reflect on the problem and to bring the remedy.

It is very urgent since the formation of the clergy is one of the major problems of the Church at the dawn of the 21st century. This is so clear that there is no need to insist on it. Saint Vincent would be aware of the problem, as he was aware of the crisis of the clergy in his time.

Dear Confreres, a correction in the choice of our works is obvious, a balance must be restored, a great tradition resumed. It is in fidelity to its charism that the Company of the Mission will recover the vigor of its finest epochs and its place in the Church.

May the Lord, through the intercession of Saint Vincent, help you in this task.

With all my fraternal friendship,

Franc Card. Rodé

Franc Card. Rodé, C.M.

Préfet