

Rome, November 27, 2018

To: General Assembly of the Regnum Christi Federation, November-December 2018

1. With this second phase we conclude the General Assembly that began with a first meeting in April of 2018.

We are at the end of a long journey that has lasted at least six years, which has demanded much effort. Above all we thank those who have carried out the work of summarizing the previous meetings and preparing the draft documents with great effort, dedication, and patience. The path traveled thus far, given the goodwill of all involved, has been very helpful in clarifying the charism of the Legionaries of Christ, the Consecrated Women, the Lay Consecrated Men, and the Lay Members of Regnum Christi.

Perhaps for some of us not everything is clear, but nevertheless we should have confidence that life itself will clear up everything that still appears uncertain. In reality, there has already been close collaboration between the Legionaries, the Consecrated Women, the Lay Consecrated Men, and the Lay Members for many years. The fact that there have been tense moments and topics should not damage these relationships; on the contrary, we must look for the means to overcome our differences. The first means is the prayer of petition that the Holy Spirit may enlighten and guide our decisions.

Perhaps someone finds him or herself in a moment of desolation on this journey that we will be making these days. Desolation does not come from God because, as St. Ignatius writes in the Spiritual Exercises (n. 317), it is a state of darkness, confusion, and unrest in the soul, which moves it to infidelity, takes away hope and love, makes it feel sad and even separated from God. It is a time when we are exposed to temptation; therefore, it is a time of trial when God nevertheless gives us the grace we need to persevere (ES n. 320). So when we find ourselves in desolation we have to ask ourselves first where it comes from. Desolation comes from the evil spirit, the enemy of human nature, who deceives us. Temptation is part of desolation and closes us in a partial vision of reality. The evil one presents us with a truth as if it were absolute, when it is actually partial, in order to trick us. He prevents us from seeing the whole truth. Therefore, St. Ignatius advises us to persevere in prayer, meditation, and penance in an appropriate way (ES n. 319). We can overcome desolation only if we realize that it is from the evil one, practice patience (ES n.321), and use the means we have to encounter Christ. We overcome temptation through a renewed encounter with Christ because he shows us the whole truth, though it may be difficult for us to accept it or bring it about. Christ never deceives us.

Speaking about desolation with one's confessor or another spiritual person, as St. Ignatius recommends, also helps us to overcome it. Our way of seeing things is often incomplete, and by speaking with others we can see things more objectively. It opens us to a different way of seeing things.

I say this because we are in a process to find the juridical configuration that is most appropriate for protecting the autonomy and unity of each branch. This has meant and means having confidence in God who guides us, even with juridical formulas, which are always limited in their capacity to express spiritual realities and which nevertheless paradoxically, as the experience of the Church teaches us, are necessary precisely to preserve the life of the charism.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life want this work to be completed and consequently want the Statutes of the Federation to be approved, since only on the basis of the approval of the Statutes can the Federation be established. The Congregation does not wish to postpone the matter further.

Certainly, the concrete decision concerning the distribution of property and the direction of the apostolic works of each of the branches of the Federation has not yet been made, or their co-direction or co-ownership, since we still have concrete problems to solve that demand time and prudence. It is thus important that a formulation concerning this point be found in the Statutes of the Federation which stays open for concrete decisions later.

2. One of the points of the renewal of these past few years has been the relationship of the Legionaries of Christ with the Lay Consecrated Men and Consecrated Women and their relationship with the whole Regnum Christi Movement. Since the Lay Consecrated Men and Consecrated Women have been established as Societies of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right, it is clear that the Holy See will not allow them to have the same relationship as the one found in the Statutes of Regnum Christi of 2004.

On the other hand, the Legionaries of Christ should realize that many of the works dependent on them could not have been administered and developed without the dedication and efficient collaboration of the Consecrated Women and Lay Consecrated Men. Likewise, the Consecrated Women and Lay Consecrated Men should keep in mind that they would not exist without the Legionaries of Christ, or in the best case scenario they would have become something else. This should bring everyone to the conviction that you cannot do without one another, not only spiritually but also concretely in your life and apostolate.

At this moment we have three forms of life canonically recognized by the Holy See: a religious clerical Institute and two Societies of Apostolic Life, which live the evangelical

counsels. Other members of the faithful are added, who contribute their own experience of lay life. To protect the autonomy of the religious Institute and of the two Societies of Apostolic Life and at the same time the unity of the charism and of the mission, the three aforementioned realities constitute among themselves a Federation, to which individuals of the lay faithful associate themselves. In this way the Federation offers a canonical configuration to all the members of Regnum Christi so that its apostolic action continues to be more effective.

It seems to me that we cannot avoid considering the place that the Legionaries of Christ have in the Federation, as a religious and clerical Institute, with respect to the Consecrated Women, the Lay Consecrated Men, and the associated lay faithful.

We cannot ignore the fact that the Legionaries of Christ were the first expression in history of this charism that the Spirit wished to give the Church, and consequently that the Legionaries of Christ, through their apostolic work of formation as priests, were the instrument of the action of the Spirit which wanted to raise up Regnum Christi in the Church. As we are all aware, the charism of Regnum Christi is, on the one hand, a single reality, but on the other it is lived both spiritually and apostolically in different ways according to each way of life.

Precisely because the other members participate in the charism of Regnum Christi, not only Legionaries of Christ, everyone, according to their own way of life, becomes responsible for bringing the charism to fulfilment together. Nevertheless, everyone should keep in mind the particular witness that the Legionaries should give precisely because of the historical function that they have carried out in manifesting and developing the charism. It is not an exercise of power, but rather the service of giving witness. It is clear that the Legionaries cannot carry out this work of giving witness on their own, but always need the two Societies of Apostolic Life and the Lay members associated to the Federation. We can imagine a circular relationship where the Legionaries give witness and show the others what they already live and should live, and where the Legionaries themselves are nourished by this service to the other members.

Nevertheless, the Legionaries' charism is not only religious but also priestly. It is true that God wills priests to represent Christ the Good Shepherd in the structure of the Church. But every priest can fall into clericalism. Jesus was conscious of this. We see it clearly in what he taught the apostles in Mk 10: 41-45 after the third proclamation of the Passion. Pope Francis warns us continuously of the danger of clericalism. If we are tempted by this, a phrase of St. Augustine can help us. "Where I'm terrified by what I am for you, I am given comfort by what I am with you. For you I am a bishop, with you, after all, I am a Christian. The first is the name of an office undertaken, the second a name of grace; that one means

danger, this one salvation.” St. Augustine too sees in the priesthood not only a grace but also a danger, the danger of power, of clericalism. The dignity of man is in being a Christian, a son of God in his Only Son Jesus Christ. Baptism is necessary for man’s salvation; the sacrament of holy orders exists to offer to all baptized Christians, including clerics, the means to fulfill the call of their baptism. In this we are all equal. The priest receives the faith from the Church, the holy people of God. He is called to serve the people of God by presenting them with what it already believes and to guide it on the path to holiness. The priest is nourished by the faith and holiness of the people of God. This is what enables him to carry out his pastoral responsibility. This is a responsibility that he needs to live humbly according to the example of Jesus, who reigned from the lowliness of the cross.

In Regnum Christi we must not forget the priestly role of the Legionaries, but it can only be authentically lived by Legionaries and correctly received by the other members when it is both a ‘being with’ and a ‘being for’ service. I say ‘correctly’ with regard to the other members because we often find lay people who are more clerical than the clerics, and they are a danger for them. The recognition of the responsibility that Legionaries have in the Federation, understood in this way, can have several types of expressions in different areas.

The Consecrated Women and Lay Consecrated Men also live the charism by showing that consecration to God and the Church has its own value independently of the priesthood. That fact emphasizes the transcendent values of the fullness of the Christian life even more. Therefore they have the responsibility to be a sign for the Legionaries and the Lay Members that the Kingdom will only be established fully at the end of time.

The Lay Members, through their activity, contribute their testimony that the Kingdom, although only established fully at the end of time, is already present, and that everyone, with their gaze fixed on heaven, needs to commit themselves to improving the world today. They remind us of what John Paul II wrote in n. 15 of the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, quoting Paul VI, that the whole Church, in all her expressions and states of life, has a lay dimension because of the Incarnation of Christ.

3. In the first phase of the General Assembly of Regnum Christi several voting sessions were held, which, although not definitive, have directed this second phase since they expressed conclusions of discussions which have already finished and cannot be reopened.

We have to be aware that the indicative vote of the General Assembly expressed the judgment and will of the Assembly. The content of said vote can only be modified in secondary aspects or details, but not in its fundamental conclusions, since that would mean that the work done in April was useless. The two phases of the General Assembly

of Regnum Christi should really be considered as two phases of the same Assembly. Furthermore, in an Assembly that develops in continuity, if an indicative vote has been held, it cannot fundamentally change, since an indicative vote is held precisely in order to see in which direction the work should go. If what was indicated by the vote is continually rethought, no progress is made. The work needs to go forward, because the Congregation wants it to finish. Now in this second phase of the Assembly we need to consider the work already done in the first phase as finished, and that presupposes that its conclusions cannot change, because the second and final phase is founded on the first. I repeat that both phases are part of a single Chapter and a single General Assembly.

4. Let us remember that in every meeting, all the more so in an Assembly, the ability to listen is essential. Listening means the effort to comprehend what the other person is saying, in order to accept its positive aspects, even if it doesn't agree with one's own understanding of the facts or the matter at hand. Obviously, if we cannot accept what the other person is saying because it doesn't agree with the facts, or is based on false arguments, we need to make that clear with kindness.

I have written this to you not only because of my responsibility in the Holy See but also because of my friendship with the Legionaries of Christ and all of Regnum Christi over these past eight years.

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