

GLOBALIZATION, PROPER CHARISM AND SERVICE TO THE POOR

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In order to face our topic with a minimum of dignity, we would need to be able to respond to some questions: is globalization an irreversible phenomenon? Overall (“globally”), is it to the favor or the disfavor of the poor? Can there be a different globalization? And, if it can be conducted differently, what corrections would need to be made? And by whom? What is the stance of Consecrated Life regarding this phenomenon?

These are preliminary questions, to which the “experts” give the most diverse and contrasting answers. Responding to these questions would require a not-superficial competency and an uncommon knowledge of world situations. Not a small undertaking.

And in addition, they are questions that are dividing public opinion and also Christians.

We will not try to put ourselves into a similar “juniper bush” (predicament), but only to give some elementary indications on the debate going on, with a view to facing our specific problem related to Consecrated Life, its charism and charisms and its vocation in favor of poverties, new and old.

1. Globalization and its problems

a) Some general considerations

Globalization is first of all a technical question that has to do with the rapidity of information and the globalization of markets, with strong influence also on governments, ever more conditioned by a global market and financial powers.

For most experts, globalization as a technique is irreversible; the world is tending toward being a global village, even though we can foresee some pauses, even significant ones, especially due to customs (duties...) for the defense of local economies which risk being overwhelmed by the super-powerful, developed economies.

The phenomenon as such is not neutral: on the contrary, its logic tends to concentrate power and resources, but not as an inexorable law. A more balanced appropriation of its fruits, that is a broader sharing in its advantages, can succeed, thanks to a joint action of statesmen, an intervention of representative and effective social sectors, a spread of a culture of solidarity, as well as a collaboration of capable and responsible bureaucracies.

b) The different interpretations of the globalization of the economy

There is a heated debate going on about globalization, or universalization, between supporters and opponents, optimists and pessimists, “the integrated” and the “apocalypitics.” For the supporters: it is the only possible solution for the difficult period of today’s world, also in view of the struggle against poverty.

For them, besides, the statement that the gap between rich and poor countries increased in these years is debatable. The causes of the inequality are in fact very complex and not only of an economic nature. We need only think of the fact that participation in world economy has helped some Eastern Asian countries grow enormously, while others that isolated themselves, like North Korea and Afghanistan, are among the most miserable. Africa would deserve a separate consideration.

And, they add, the capital that goes looking for the lowest labor costs, definitely helps elevate the poor classes in poor countries, thus setting them on a course of development, difficult to reach in another way.

The opponents, much more numerous, are divided between those who want to destroy the system and those who want to perfect it. Both groups highlight the gross limitations, rather the unacceptable consequences of the phenomenon: advantages for powerful economies and degradation for weak economies, social exclusion and destruction of nature, concentration of power in few hands and insensitivity for human beings and their habitat.

Some of the more radical ones talk even of the end of globalization, already in process or to be promoted, since it is de facto an abuse of power of the stronger over the weaker.

Among those who want to improve the system, the real problem is that there is not the minimal consensus on the proposals about "what to do." But this is a question typical of "innovators:" always agreeing to change and always disagreeing on how to change. But from the research, the heated debate, the confrontations and conflicts, some solution always ends up emerging.

The great difficulty is in seeing if there are convincing proposals. And for the moment it seems there are no recipes ready for this grandiose and unprecedented phenomenon that involves economy and politics, ethics and rights, development and ecology, workability and human dimension. The "discomfort" exists, but no one, for now, has convincing suggestions on how to overcome it. There are general "recipes," but still too theoretical, even though embraceable: "The economic without the social is inhumane. The social without the economic is pure foolish aspiration, innocuous voluntarism," said President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil.

One thing is sure: globalization, as it has been conducted until now, is under accusation by part of public opinion. The Economist wrote, a few days before the Genoa events: "The protesters are right in saying that the most urgent moral, political and economic question in our time is the poverty of the third world. And they are right in saying that the way of globalization, even as powerful as its numerous motors are, can be fought. The fact that these two things are true makes the protesters terribly dangerous; and especially, the current of public opinion that sympathizes with them."

Without counting on the possibility of a growing anger on the part of excluded peoples toward the few privileged ones. A reaction that can favor nationalist and extremist solutions.

c) Sustainable development.

Here we need to add also other voices and other dimensions. Some more recent studies state that "even with significant technological improvements, even in the presence of perfectly functioning markets, the limitations of our planet remain and the continued economic growth is unsustainable. The solution suggested is that, in addition to technological improvements, persons should choose to limit themselves, recovering a dimension of the essential in consumption, and examine themselves on the meaning of their daily choices. After the agricultural and industrial revolutions, today we are facing the challenge of a sustainable society, where the main question is: "Is quantitative development compatible with the earth's limits?"

If this is true, the situation is further complicated; how then conduct the struggle against the frightening poverty of a large part, if development has to be held back?

d) The globalization of information

Besides the economic information in real time, which permits enormous movements of capital, there is the spread of information in all areas, with enormous positive and negative consequences, in many sectors.

An information that, in as much as it concerns custom, life styles, is anyway channeling a predominantly hedonist culture, which promotes consumption at all levels and is significantly lowering the threshold of morality. Until now, it has certainly not been Gospel values that have been globalized, but hedonist ones which empower requests of all kinds, often to the detriment of the spiritual dimension.

While it may seem excessive to some people to speak of a hedonist culture, we cannot fail to recognize that globalization has transmitted predominantly individualism, or the ideology of subjectivity, under the sign of a relativist liberalism where the perspective of “others,” of “all”, of the community is reduced to the precept of *neminem ledere* (not to harm anyone). And therefore, certainly not solidarity.

And where, instead of the past and history, more attention is given to thinking of the present and the future, converted into very lovely mirages by the progress of the sciences.

In practice today, certain values are globalized more prevalently---idolized because absolutized, like the primacy of the economy and the freedom of choosing a personal model of life for oneself according to personal preferences (especially in the field of sexuality and matrimony.)

Still others fear that a cybernetic civilization will risk suffocating a national, local and family identity.

But the globalization of information is also favoring a reaction with the spread of a new sensitivity, rather critical regarding the how in which the universalization of the economy has been conducted until now.

Internet does not serve only to move capital, but also to put opponents of present market management in contact with each other. We can say, in a certain sense, that globalization is producing its antibodies.

e) The globalization of terrorism

Recently also terrorism was added, which risks becoming planetary.

The terrorist attacks and the consequent developments of war risk transforming everything into “conflicts of civilizations,” or even worse, “conflicts of religion.” between Islamic fundamentalism which presumes to impose or globalize the Islamic culture, religion, and civilization to an impious and corrupt West and the most extreme wings of western conservatism which see in Islam only its fundamentalism.

It is worth remembering what a noted theologian has been repeating for years: there will not be peace in the world without peace among religions; there will not be peace among religions without dialog among them. Today this dialog is being polluted by the hatred that arms souls before it arms hands. Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialog is being imposed on us as one of the fruits and one of the tasks of globalization.

2. Formation in face of the new situation

Before these new dimensions of economy, culture, custom, and religion... dimensions that are changing the face of the planet, three basic tasks of formation to and of consecrated life can be indicated: a strong identity, a spirituality of communion, a prophetic mission.

In a globalized society those will be able to survive who have strong identities with solid roots, without fanaticism because they do not scorn respect of others and rationality, who know how to dialog and confront challenges together, who know how to develop through reading the signs of the times, who understand the need of synergies, with prophetic points, of a true prophecy matured in contact with God and with the present.

A. A. A strong identity

A Christian Identity

The forces unchained by globalization are so powerful that they can strike terror into C.L., even though certainly more in the elderly than in the young. Into a consecrated life which, for the most

part, is certainly not passing one of its happiest moments in term of social impact.

Some fear even to be overwhelmed by this wave which beats down customs borders, climbs over governments, makes fun of censures, does not spare the weak, and overturns moral values typical of a Christian culture

Still, the saints, especially founders, would not have been afraid:

“Today Ignatius would be fascinated by the phenomenon of globalization, with the incredible opportunities that it offers and with its terrible threats; Ignatius would not flee before the challenges that it contains. It is a question of working a genuine discernment process in order to discover what comes from the good spirit and what comes from the evil spirit,” says Fr. Kolvenbach, a successor of Ignatius.

It is a question, first of all, of reaffirming our identity as consecrated persons, who know they have something to say and to give also in this situation; this is the first task of formation.

a) The Reign of God first of all

To be relevant also in globalization, we must have something important to say on the questions that touch our deepest competency: life, death, things and God, prayer and the meaning of life, receiving and giving, feeling loved and loving, the fulfillment of self and faith.

It's a matter of learning to say the words that no one says anymore and not to level ourselves out/down to what everyone says, with some kind of religious tint.

It's a question of globalizing mysticism, as source of spiritual rebirth, for a generation in search of a spirituality, in search of ways to experience God. The spiritual desert, rather widespread, is hungry and thirsty of genuine experiences that bring one close to God.

For this it is an absolute priority to let oneself be permeated by the word of God, by a praying familiarity with the Word of God, in order to be able to speak it in situations, with the conviction of experience.

That is not something one improvises, nor does a little half-hour of daily reflection suffice.

Much, much more is needed, also for institutes of active life, who must become dispensers of meaning more than of services.

C.L. must choose the better part, listening to the Word and its incarnation in the present, without distorting It in the process. In the certainty that if analyses of various types, ever more sophisticated, are indispensable, they still do not touch the profound reality and its ultimate consistency, which lies in being before God, his will, his directions, and his love.

C.L. in globalization and for globalization, must have an acute sense of God, feeling reality as He feels reality, fruit of a constant personal and communitarian attending to (spending time with) His Word.

It must be added that this dimension does not regard only the “elite”, but also and especially the poor. It has been observed that “while the Church in Latin America was opting for the poor, the poor were opting for the church (with a small “c”) and charismatic movements.” (Comblin) Pentecostalism and charismatic movements are those that are growing most today, especially among the poor and marginalized. In Africa, there are countries in which the Pentecostals amount to 80% of Christians. That means that the world of the poor has need especially of those who know how to talk about God, who know simple ways to reach him, beginning with sharing their difficulties.

In this context C.L. has the great task of giving a name and an address to the irrepressible need for transcendence, which is in the heart of every human person.

It is a question of keeping this flame alive, this yearning, which helps humans to transcend themselves, to move from “larva” to “butterfly,” to find themselves within themselves and outside themselves. To find themselves, transcending themselves, to go out of themselves to find themselves in God!

b) Reflection of the light of Christ

The awareness that we are called to witness Christ's form of life, or rather, to globalize it, to make it present to the very ends of the earth with new means, cannot fail to fill us with pride and courage.

The deepening of a personal love with Jesus, Light of the world and Heart of the cosmos, goes hand in hand with the conviction that the future belongs to the Gospel and those who propose it in a consistent/convincing way.

Globalization is mediating a lowering of prestige toward Christianity, present in the West almost as though in presence of a "crash of the ecclesiastic universe," an evaporation of the Christian system, to start us off toward a post-Christian era, generating a sense of distrust and discomfort in many Christians regarding the future, especially in the young.

C.L. must be a point of "qualitative" resistance, displaying its invincible love for Christ also in this time of trial, supporting Christians with its serene and trusting adherence to Christ.

C.L. is aware that the Gospel brings the children of God the only response worthy of the human person, to the new challenges that globalization puts to human fraternity. With Cardinal Lustigier we can say that "we are only at the beginning of the Christian era."

Society has taken from our hand the sword and the power which we often coupled with the Gospel, and is bringing us back to the beginnings, to the early Christians, defenseless but strong in their faith in the Son of God.

It is a matter of starting anew from Nazareth, from apparent weakness, from trust in God, from humility. In this situation the fascinating beauty of the face of Christ can be presented better and our witness can become more credible. The Fathers of the Church used to present the loftiness of the monastic life as a sign of the superiority of Christianity, in a world in complete moral decadence. This is what we would be able to say today in respect to C.L.

Vita Consecrata in numbers 84-92, invites the elaboration of a culture of the evangelical counsels, a culture to be globalized, in order to check those aspects of our present culture which are little or not at all Gospel, to the extent that they put money, sex, power-appearance above everything. It is only an indication of the great possibilities of inculturation, applications, of evangelization, innate in the evangelical counsels, starting off from their Christological anchorage. And new perspectives of formation.

c) With one's own charism

There might arise a fear in someone that this equalizing wave might overwhelm or hide or undermine one's own charism.

First of all we can remember with Rogers that "What is most personal is most universal" and therefore "dig into your well and you will find water for all."

In addition, it is good to recall that "living species do not mix together, nor will they blend into a single whole." It is a matter of being "living beings," a living species.

But also: globalization presupposes extreme specialization. In global competition the winner is the one who has most competence, ability, professionalism; that is, specialization.

For C.L. that means to take seriously the specialization inherent in one's own charism. And this precisely in order to serve the poor better, in their new and old poverties.

Every charism can be seen as a "specialization in the church (even though it is not only this!). In globalization those charisms who are specialized with "creative fidelity", that is updated, revised for today, strengthened in their essence, will be able to compete.

And this at two levels: professional effectiveness, so as to be universally accepted as also of spiritual-mystical depth. That is, how to live our particular "specialization" meaningfully in the light of God. For example, how live the profession of educator today, not only from the professional point of view, but as journey toward God? It is this sector, spirituality, inherent in one's

own charism, which must be deepened and offered to the world, in order to give meaning to work, to the profession, to life.

This is an area in which institutes of active life must “specialize”; at a time when the quantity of works is decreasing, the quality of the spiritual proposal must increase, in a way reliable to the lay world. And that, given also the lay nature of our many works in the areas of healthcare, social service, education, and in general, works of charity.

A charismatic laicism that can be shared with lay persons, too, and therefore globalized.

Here’s another area to deepen: our specific spirituality. Specific, not in the sense of emphasizing peculiarities excessively, (also because our complex society with its many relationships and belongings makes any simplification impossible) but aware of belonging to a family of similar charisms that can give origin to a substantial and sharable spiritual current.

A. B. A spirituality of communion

In these years C.L. has had the merit of having globalized the spirituality of communion: from a topic practically internal to C.L. it has become today a topic proposed, and insistently, to the whole Church.

C.L., at the present time, cannot fail to develop this, its co-essential dimension, also so that the stress on its identity does not slide insensibly into a new fundamentalism.

The return of fundamentalisms influences formation. It is not enough to have people who are very sure in their faith; they must also be formed to respect reason. Faith and reason come from the same Source. Not only faith in God, but also in Jesus Christ. To follow Christ is to tend toward God (faith) but in company of the perfect man (with a perfect mind and with total love.) None of the components (faith, reason, agape) may be sacrificed: it would be contrary to an integral following.

Islamic fundamentalism has demonstrated how every principle, even the most lofty, cut off from the rest, from by other religious and human values, produces perverse effects. As, furthermore happened in religious life when ignorance paired up with fanaticism. They were the worst times for C.L., worse yet than moral decadence, because in the name of the God of love, the commandment of love was being trampled upon. Not without a reactionary involution.

Formation, then, will develop a fraternal dimension alongside formation in faith and in intelligence, as a winning reality, because it is the realization of the “preceptum,” the new commandment, the principle sign left by the Lord.

All of that involves commitment in three big “D’s”: dialog, discernment, willingness (“disponibilità”)

a) Dialog

N. 51 of VC entrusts three tasks to dialog: promote growth in a spirituality of communion, give witness to and proclaim the value of fraternity, and keep alive a sense of communion among peoples.

Internal dialog, formation to daily dialog, dialog within the Institute, dialog among the various generations, dialog with ecclesiastic components, dialog with the principal currents of thought and with persons of the civic and ecclesiastic world, is for the service of the great world perspectives. Dialog which is not spontaneous, nor obvious, if the observation is true that there is a certain narcissism in recent classes of persons who ask to enter C.L.

In addition, the amount of communication typical of globalization does not necessarily mean understanding each other better. Communicating much does not mean understanding each other more easily.

Today, with E. Morin, people are talking more and more of the ethics of comprehension, which is “the spiritual mission” of education and formation (The Seven Knowings.)

The ethics of comprehension requires on its part the learning of a disinterested way of discussion, understanding before condemning, analyzing before becoming indignant. It is a question, in fact of increasing the awareness of one’s own frailty, the complexity of situations, the need to internalize tolerance and be convinced of the truth of the Gospel teaching “do not judge.” That will serve especially for all forms of dialog implicit in the broadening of horizons, but today it serves especially for inter-religious dialog, which has become very important, especially since Islam has come to general attention.

Aware of the complexity of the Islamic world and its internal travail, dialog is necessary, also because it can promote non-fundamentalist parties, who would like an Islam more suited for living in the modern world, without, because of that, losing its soul and its recognition of the absolute transcendence of God.

Without mentioning that also C.L. has very similar reservations regarding the road that the West has taken toward moral degradation, even if it wants to oppose it with completely peaceful ways. Basically C.L. feels the same discomfort toward some unacceptable outlets of lifestyles of some or many of our contemporaries, defended in the name of an absolute freedom. We’re talking of a dialog done in love, which does not wait for reciprocity, but trusting the higher and longer-lasting power of love.

At the recent synod of bishops many recognized this merit for religious and encouraged them in this task: religious are in the front lines of dialog with Islam and must continue it, according to the example of St. Francis, who dialogued with Saladin (Sultan of Egypt) while the crusaders were in arms.

And if someone should be skeptical about such dialog, it is good to remember that the Gospel does not require reciprocity when it speaks of the neighbor. The encyclical *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* recalled it very appropriately: “The neighbor is not just a human being with his rights and his fundamental equality before everyone, but becomes the living image of God Father, ransomed by the Blood of Christ and placed under the action of the Holy Spirit. The neighbor therefore must be loved, even though an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him, and for him we must be disposed to sacrifice, even the supreme sacrifice.” (SRS 40) It is clear that also those belonging to other religions are our neighbors.

But it is also necessary to become aware of the difficulties of dialog between North and South. The reason why a relationship between North and South does not reach a level of true dialog derives from the fact that the North does not want to leave behind its somewhat hypocritical paternalism to place itself seriously in discussion. And that not only on a cultural level, but also an economic level.

Globalization happens in a neo-liberal cultural context, with all of its Darwinian ideology of the dominion of the strongest and healthiest, with the elimination and exclusion of the weaker and the unproductive. And the one dictating the rules of the game today is the North, the stronger.

Think only of the protective politics in the area of agriculture, which forbid the exportation of enormous quantities of agricultural products from the South to the North. That North-South dialog must be initiated within Institutes, where the exchange of gifts has to become real and exemplary, where fraternity and the ethics of comprehension annul all difference. Then we will be able to speak with a certain experiential knowledge of such dialog.

Also in this perspective the importance of the community dimension shows up; it favors the participation and involvement of all, as also the installation of correct relationships between cen-

tralization and needs of the various local, regional and national communities, between general administrations and inculturated foundations in various contexts.

In a word, it is a question of promoting fraternity at all levels, as a basic and priority Christian attitude, as the commandment of love is of priority. Fraternity that becomes an agent of knowledge, communication and understanding and as a corrective to possible hypocrisy which impedes true dialog, both inside and outside the Institute. And also to be able then to work in favor of a globalization that is less greedy and more equitable.

International formation centers are particularly useful for this purpose, where a mutual acquaintance is begun, to arrive then at an understanding of the problems of individual countries. And the traditional forms of help from North to South, which pass through religious institutes are not at all outdated. Religious congregations, enjoying significant prestige in public opinion for this humanitarian action, can be in a position to sensitize public opinion about the real situations of marginalized populations and thus prepare the terrain for more global interventions of solidarity. The action done by our institutes in this area will never be sufficiently valued, an action that touches the heart and begins a conscientization which mobilizes moral and financial energies!

b) Discernment

A serious problem stands before the Christian conscience and C.L today: how to respond to the cry of the poor and the excluded today? What attitude to have in face of the unstoppable, but not ungovernable process of globalization?

Here is where a serious discernment is needed, very complex, but more secure to the extent that it is done in communion with the Church.

One of the effects of the present situation is the “collapse of expectations;” the weakening of the State and the uncertainty of the tomorrow crush any kind of hope and expectation for social change. In some particularly weak areas there is a situation of exclusion which touches not only the material sphere, but also the interior sphere. It destroys persons because it destroys hope, the hope of being able to improve.

It is important also to recall that globalization is like the air we breathe; it is polluted, but it is the air that is available to us. We try to purify it, along with persons of good will. Discernment ought to be directed, therefore, toward a corrective course for present situations, one that is characterized by solidarity and realism. Even though, as mentioned above, it is very hard to find the “how.” But that is not up to religious, primarily; it is up to them to spread fraternity, which requires more solidarity and more attention to those who are left or thrown to the edges of society.

Religious must de-mystify the absolute primacy of economy, which by now seems the first and only motor of the West, by revealing all the sufferings and marginalization that “economism” is causing.

In this context it is important to initiate young people to the practice of community discernment. A practice that requires a capacity for an objective examination of situations, to seek what appears closest to the will of God, to manage conflict and differences with peace and joy, without personalizing them.

The future with its changes requires in those who work at these problems a significant competence, a sincere love for the poor in an understanding of the complexity of situations and solutions, personal detachment so as not to confuse the search for God’s will with personal affirmation of one’s own views.

They are attitudes (and competencies/skills) which one doesn’t improvise; they require long-term preparation.

c) Willingness to collaborate (“Disponibilità”)

C.L. therefore cannot fail to align itself with those who work for the globalization of solidarity, even though it does not have a ready-made solution.

Here, too, it is necessary to be realistic; our isolated voice, like our action, can do very little in the present context, beyond the small or great local realizations that we are able to do.

At this point it is necessary to join with persons of good will, often with various organizations, Catholic and non-Catholic, who work in this field. The growth of civil society has been expressed in recent times by the multiplication of NGO's.

While early international volunteer efforts, working mainly in social service and human promotion programs, had strong ties with religious institutes, today NGO's, even of religious inspiration, are fully autonomous and have a much vaster and more articulated field of action, which goes from the socio-economic area to the political, to the defense of human rights.

This is a concrete area of collaboration with the laity. Individual institutes can have their lay organization, their NGO, where lay people are already collaborating (some already work at upper international levels, the UN at New York, Geneva), but they cannot be isolated from a broader coordination, for more effective work.

The presence of consecrated persons in these new environments will be a Gospel presence, that is non-violent, supported by prayer. A presence directed more toward proposal than toward protest, even though in certain cases the latter cannot be excluded. A presence that does not exploit the poor, but wants to serve them, witnessing to a great active love and not only a programmatic one.

A presence, therefore, that goes beyond planning and words, but is concretized in dedication and personal sacrifice, especially in the more difficult places typical of the difficult undertakings that have honored C.L. for centuries.

The ever more frequent discovery, on the part of the public, of the presence of missionary religious in the most unthinkable and risky places, fills even the most skeptical people with amazement and admiration, and is one of the most legible witnesses to Christian love.

A presence that is meant to be Gospel leaven in the total body, together with other Christians engaged on the frontier of globalized service to the poor.

Becoming immersed in the circuit of the universalization of big problems does not mean taking consecrated persons, especially the young ones, from humble everyday services, which most often are at the edge and forgotten by the media, far from great manifestations, and from events that make news. It means rather to witness to the realism of Christian service, which thinks not only of resolving structural problems, but also to help, here and now, the neighbor whom the Lord puts along our way.

3. For a prophetic mission

1. A renewed cultural commitment

If it is true that until today, globalization has been conducted mostly by economic, hedonist and individualistic values, then one of its main challenges to C.L. is that of implementing an evangelical counter-culture. And that, with the contribution of the distinctiveness of all forms of life, from monasticism to secular institutes.

It would be interesting and useful, at least once, to gather the various forms of C.L. to listen to their specific contribution to this topic. Each of them can make a relevant contribution, when this is fruit of specialized reflection on the charism and therefore on their spiritual and operational experience.

That involves, besides the rest, a renewed cultural commitment, for an impactful and relevant presence in the debate, which can be expected to be broader and more intense among persons of

good will who do not disdain meaningful contributions, indeed, listen to them willingly. And that, as the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* says, “so that the light of Christ will penetrate all sectors of society and the leaven of salvation will transform society from within, fostering the growth of a culture imbued with Gospel values...

“But in addition to this service of others, within the consecrated life itself there is a need for a renewed and loving commitment to the intellectual life, for dedication to study as a means of integral formation and as a path of asceticism which is extraordinarily timely, in the face of present-day cultural diversity. A lessened commitment to study can have grave consequences for the apostolate, by giving rise to a sense of marginalization and inferiority, or encouraging superficiality and rash initiatives.” (VC 98)

In fact one cannot globalize nothingness or that which is insignificant in terms of contribution to the progress of solutions to the big problems involved. But that implies the hard, humble, hidden work of study and the farsightedness of formation directors and superiors, who look at tomorrow more than resolving immediate problems which, perhaps, have no tomorrow.

There is absolutely no felt need to increase superficiality in our environments!

Certain of our interventions do not arouse interest because they bring no new proposals, sometimes they are repetitions of slogans more than fruit of mature and competent reflection.

C.L. must proclaim the Gospel freedom that does not bow to idols of the world, even though it is “worldwide”. And that, with a reflection that is able to unmask the falsity and the inconsistency of those idols, even though such reflection will not always be met by everyone’s agreement.

While many, for example, are ready, like us, to oppose the “economism” and individualism that cause great inequalities, there are considerably fewer who, like us, are ready to oppose the no less dangerous hedonism, because sensitivity and resistance on this point is quite reduced in many Christians.

2. For a fraternal world.

“In an age characterized by the globalization of problems and the return of the idols of nationalism, international Institutes especially are called to uphold and to bear witness to the sense of communion between peoples, races and cultures.” (VC 51)

In lay terms we could say with E. Morin, that we must globalize love, spread love and poetry: “A love that is born bathes the world with poetry. A love that lasts waters daily life with poetry. A love that dies throws us back into prose.”

Is it not perhaps because we sing the sublime love of God so little that the world is so prosaic and so divided? And above all, it seems dominated and embittered by an “*instinctum mortis*”?

Globalization is both unifying and balkanizing the world. Human evolution, observes the same author, is also a growth in the power of death, in the possibility of destruction in various ways: nuclear, ecological, pharmacological, (think of the attraction of heavy drugs), ethical (individualism). A civilization of comfort can produce discomfort. (“*benessere*”—“*malessere*”)

It is a matter of spreading trust: a trust based on the reality of the immeasurable and transforming Love of God Father, capable of any positive surprise, and based on the no less consoling reality of fraternity of human persons, all well-loved children of this God of love.

How can we not place these realities at the top of our formation priorities, realities able to infuse trust and mobilize the best energies so that the world will be united in fraternity?

3. From globalization to interiority (inner life), for a Gospel presence

The tasks and challenges that await C.L. will be faced effectively and first of all with a return to interiority.

It is in our inner life that we mature our identity and our project, that is Christian and conformed to our charism, always more at the service of the poor in this globalized world.

Before facing the reflector lights, we need to turn on the light inside of us.

It is within us that we keep alive a sense of the transcendence of the living, true God, stronger than idols, a God for whom people today do hunger and thirst, especially the poor.

It is within us that the sound of the cry of the poor becomes a decision for action and dedication.

It is within us that the new commandment becomes a concrete commitment for fraternity.

It is within us that “we open and re-open” dialog with persons of good will, in spite of all the obstacles, difficulties, misunderstandings and failures.

It is within us that we decide to study seriously the complex problems of our times to understand them and make a contribution in words, proposals, concrete action.

It is within us that we ponder and mature the various options, with a reflection that is not superficial nor dictated by slogans or fads.

It is within us that, accompanied by the Fathers of religious life, we mature the conviction that our struggle against evil, both personal and social, is a sharing in the eschatological battle of Christ against Satan and all of his divisive forces. And that, therefore, when we overcome our selfishness, we advance solidarity.

It is within us that we pray so that agents of peace and those who hunger and thirst for justice do not lose courage in their commitment for a world order ever more attentive to the human dimension, remembering that the consecrated person helps the world first of all with prayer and then with action.

It is within us above all that we entrust ourselves to the Word of the Lord daily, so that it will enlighten us and make us credible witnesses of his Gospel, amid the difficulties of a complex society that is ever more inter-dependent and less comprehensible.

It is within us, finally, that we understand what St. Augustine says: “Following the right path between the left of desperation and the right of presumption would be very difficult, if Christ had not told us: ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’” (Discourse 142)

The invitation to interiority, far from being an escape from complexity, is, then, preliminary to being meaningfully present in the globalized world, since “the more profound (one is), “the more universal” (one is).

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