

Communities inter: cultural, generational congregational



Dear Sisters,

I am writing this letter at a time when Pope Francis is in Lisbon (Portugal) with more than one and a half million young people who are taking part in the World Youth Day. At the General House, we have followed several moments of the meeting, enjoying the happiness of this multitude of young people, coming from so many countries with their culture, language, flags, colourful T-shirts... a living testimony of the internationality of the Church, but also a symbol of youth of the world. In such critical times as those in which the Church is currently experiencing, this meeting was a sign of hope that encourages our confidence in the future. Pope Francis, with his characteristic spontaneity, addressed to them words full of dreams and realism, calls for encouragement and optimism, which were welcomed by the young people with joy and delight.

This month's INFO is centred on the "inter"; on the testimony of some sisters who narrate their experience of living in intercultural, intergenerational, and inter-congregational communities. They speak to us about the value of diversity and give us some clues on how to build fraternity while being different. This is the path of religious life in our time, in a world that is becoming more and more global, which has brought geographical distances closer and accentuated inequality, abuse and injustice, posing new challenges to those who want to live the gospel of Jesus.

There are intercultural religious communities all over the world. They have arisen from the missionary activity and vocation of many who have wanted to go to evangelise other worlds. But they are also the fruit of the decrease in the number of sisters and brothers, which has required institutes and congregations to merge communities and provinces. And, as has happened to us on other occasions, from poverty and vulnerability we discover the value of this newness and appreciate the richness of interculturality.

Religious life has always been intergenerational, as are families where children are with parents and grandparents. But intergenerational relationships have never been easy. Perhaps what is new now is that older people are living longer, and that cultural changes have accelerated, making understanding between generations more difficult. Recognising the advantages they have for all, is something to be promoted. In the specific case of religious life, what is at stake is the living transmission of the charism, of history, of traditions that must be preserved because they give identity. Hence the importance of creating spaces for intergenerational encounters in the communities, assemblies, celebrations, etc.

Inter-congregational experiences are new but growing in number. We lived through many years of isolated congregations, closed in on themselves, each in their own apostolates. At this time the Spirit has moved us, breaking down the barriers we had built up, and we have undertaken joint experiences. Along the way we have discovered that the other charisms, complementary in the multifaceted face of Jesus of Nazareth, have helped us to live the joy of sharing with others, to grow in fidelity to our own vocation, and to strengthen our charismatic identities, for the enrichment of the Church.

It is a reality that this path of encounter and communion that brings together cultures, ages, and charisms in respect for differences, is a prophetic sign of Consecrated Life today that we must encourage and promote.

Yours affectionately,