

extend the charisma of religious communities beyond our consecrated members.

There is also the fact of religious synergy, inter-congregational collaboration and global networking that offer new possibilities for mission and evangelisation. Indeed, this continental gathering demonstrates the need to create new lasting bonds (in English, we say "*bonding together*"), to share useful information.

In times of crisis, in times of challenges, intensive formation is crucial, especially for members who are advanced in age. They need updating and reassurance, otherwise they are lost. Updating and training create a new bond and strengthen the existing ones. It is worthwhile to train future leaders who can carry on the prophetic mission.

It is worth remembering that crisis and challenges also lead to dialogue with secular culture. Today, there is talk of Artificial Intelligence: how much are you already immersed in it, for the apostolate? This form of intelligence is also part of our heritage. Religious life must engage in and with the world, and through the world. This means dialoguing with secular culture, being open to scientific advances and addressing contemporary issues. Without a doubt, we know that the prophetic voice, reflecting that of Christ, is relevant when it speaks to the signs of the times.

Often, Jesus calls us to step outside our habitual way of thinking ("to think outside the box"), and act differently. The insecurity of being considered wrong prevents us from daring to experiment with new paradigms. Whoever is afraid to dare in discovering the hidden good, risks losing the good he or she cherishes. Religious life today is very fragile, but it remains prophetic. Jesus assures us that he loses nothing of what the Father has entrusted to him, and that whoever comes to him is never lost. To him be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter

Dear Sisters, Dear Fathers, with you I greet the members of your Executive Committee: Father Jānis, Sister Olena, Sister Vojtěcha, Father Mark-Robin. Thanks for the invitation!

Your theme for this meeting is: "Religious Life: Identity and Future - Facing Today's Challenges". The Union of European Conferences of Major Superiors: you represent 28 countries and some 185,000 members; an immense energy of human resources. God bless you all!

Across the centuries, from Europe, many missionaries went all over the world preaching the Gospel, with great success. This success resonates still, especially among the younger Churches. Many of us are living witnesses to the magnificence works.

Today's First Reading emphasises that all the disciples were dispersed because of the persecution of the Jews, because of the resultant crisis. The challenges were too much for them and they were scattered. However, the dispersion became a positive factor: it facilitated the spread of the Gospel. So, a challenge, a crisis, changed to an advantage!

Religious life today is marked by fragility and prophecy, crisis, persecution, and dispersion: dispersion of efforts, dispersion of members, dispersion of ideas, dispersion of resources, dispersion of what constitutes security. Dispersion and dissipation now go hand in hand!

In some cases, our dispersion has an internal origin. It may be caused by the indifference of Christians themselves, by scandals in the Church, by secularisation around us. When the cause of the crisis is from within, there is much to dread.

Consecrated life faces challenges and opportunities in our time. Let us explore some key aspects, especially some of the internal challenges.

Today, the prophetic dimension of our commitment is very weak and timid. Consecrated life is called to be a radical evangelical undertaking, a fire that lights other fires, that illuminates all hearts.