

Pope on economy of religious institutes: fidelity to charism and discernment



In a message to 1000 general economists from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, Pope Francis asks them to rethink their economic strategies never putting profits first rather fidelity to their charisma and self-giving. Reviewing their works, collaborating with other institutes and with the local Church, to implement a "responsible austerity". "The hypocrisy of consecrated

persons who live like the rich - he said - hurts the consciences of the faithful and damages the Church".

Vatican City (AsiaNews) – Faced with the difficulties related to the aging of the members and the complexity of the social situation, members of religious institutes must implement "discernment" and analyze how their works "manifest or not the charisma ... professed". It must also be remembered that in their economic decisions an institution "needs money and does not serve money", subjecting all choices to an ethical criteria.

This is a quick summary of the message that Pope Francis has sent to participants in the international economic symposium, organized by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on the theme "Rethinking the economy in fidelity to the charism." The symposium, attended by about 1,000 bursars and treasurers, is taking place at the Antonianum, November 25 to 27.

The advanced age of the members and the lack of vocations often require institutions to review the map of their presence and their structures, which have become too big or impossible to sustain. As a result, various institutions tend to reduce and bring together communities, sell houses and works, withdrawing from their mission in society because they are unable to respond as they once were.

The Pope, in his message primarily puts emphasis on the fact that the charism of an institute must always be a living reality and one that is called to bear fruit ". Through an "openness to reality and listening to God who speaks to us in it", we must discover new areas of commitment: "We have to ask - he says - if we are willing to 'get our hands dirty' in the history of

today; if our eyes can discern the signs of the kingdom of God in the folds of events that are certainly complex and conflicting, but that God wants to bless and save; if we are really traveling companions of the men and women of our time, especially of so many wounded that lie along our streets, so that we share their expectations, fears, hopes and also what we have received, and that belongs to all".

Another fact to remember is that the charism is related to the word "charis", gift, grace, "charis without a society cannot function well and ends up divesting itself of its humanity... The consecrated are called to become prophecy through our lives animated by charis , the logic of gift, gratuity; we are called to create brotherhood, communion, solidarity with the poor and needy".

In a review of the economy of the community "the main criterion of evaluation of the works is not their profitability, but if they correspond to the charism and mission of the institute is called to accomplish." This means that sometimes "discernment can suggest to keep an activity that makes losses running - being careful that the loss is not generated by inability or incompetence - but restores dignity to individuals, victims of the waste culture, the weak and fragile: the unborn , the poor, the seriously ill elderly, people with disabilities ".

Other times, an activity can be managed with other institutions or with the local Church, "so that this continues, albeit in other ways, as the Church's work."

Discernment also means going "against the tide" religious "uses money and is not used by money for any reason, even the most just and holy".

"How many consecrated persons – he continued - still continue to think that the laws of economics are independent of any ethical consideration? How often is the evaluation on the transformation of an activity or the sale of a property seen only on the basis of an analysis of cost-benefit and market value? ".

The pontiff then suggested an "education for responsible austerity." To do this it is important to start "from small everyday choices. Everyone is called upon to do their part, to use the goods to make choices in solidarity, to care for creation, to confront the poverty of families who live next door. This means acquiring a habitus, a style in the name of justice and sharing".

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