

# A Message to the Young School Sisters of Notre Dame

My Personal Experience  
At the Congress on Consecrated Life  
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First of all I want to say that it was indeed a privilege for me to be a participant at the Congress held in Rome, November 23-27, 2004. I received the letter from Sister Rosemary inviting me to attend the Congress as a young religious sometime in February, 2004. Even though I knew that this would be an inter-congregational event of both women and men religious, I was not then fully aware that indeed religious from all over the world would be in attendance. As one of the 50 young religious among 850 leaders of congregations, theologians, presidents of conferences and directors of reviews/journals among others, I must truly say that I witnessed the Spirit of God alive in our midst. All spoke, dialogued, prayed as one, not as many congregations, not as the young or as leaders, we were all together in our efforts to recognize the action of the spirit in consecrated life today, to discern and articulate what we felt God was saying to us through this experience, and to urge one another to act together with a renewed passion for Christ and passion for humanity. Indeed, it was the search for the meaning of consecrated life today and in the future that we were all about.

The theme of the Congress “passion for Christ and Passion for Humanity” was well adorned or articulated via the Gospel icons: the Samaritan Woman and the Samaritan Man. Even though presentations on the first day of the Congress focused more on the theme of the congress through the eyes of the Gospel icons, I experienced every event at the Congress speaking so deeply about and inviting us to commit ourselves to cultivating a passion for Christ and a passion for humanity in new contexts. Because our society is creating more and more people (including us) that are either at the well thirsty or on the edge of the road half dead, it is the Samaritan stance that will aid us into the future, a stance that embraces both a passion for Christ and a passion for humanity.

As 50 young religious in attendance, we had the opportunity to meet as a group, first to get to know one another and secondly to find our place at the heart of the Congress. We realized with awe mixed with gratitude that, as young as we are, the future of consecrated life is entrusted to us, it is in our hands. While fears were openly shared about consecrated life dying or being half-dead in some parts of the world and yet in other areas it is thriving, it was the courage of the young that again prevailed. As young members we articulated our hope for a future for consecrated life, and not just a future but a **fully life-giving consecrated life and persons**. We all expressed our thirst for community life as an expression of mission, as a place for sharing faith and relationships. We, the young religious, also articulated our personal gratitude for have been thought of

and invited to be a part of the dialoguing body about the future of consecrated life. One of the young members in particular used a common feature among many cultures to express this: a young child carried on the shoulders of the adult or parent. Such a child has the advantage of a vision that is far reaching because he/she stands taller than the adult. The adult in this case can only see so far and is drawn to trust the child on his/her shoulders, who can see further than he/she can. The child seated on the shoulders of the adult continues as well to trust the wisdom of the adult carrying him/her.

My dear sisters, this was our Congress because it was about the yesterday, the now and the future. We are the ones who hold the future of our congregation. I believe that all of us share the hopes of the young religious who participated in the Congress. The Congress was a second voice of our own 21<sup>st</sup> General Chapter, **calling us to embrace anew the call to Transformation**. I believe too that it is also our call to form a "Samaritan" consecrated life with a thirst for God/Christ and a passion for humanity that await us in the village and by the roadside. Let us all trust the seductive power of the Lord like the Samaritan woman. By trusting she became an expert teacher of her people at the village of Samaria. Indeed it is by so doing that we will be led into naming our greater desire, which will in turn put in perspective our small desires.