



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MEMBERS OF THE SECULAR INSTITUTE OF
MISSIONARY PRIESTS OF THE ROYALTY OF CHRIST**

*Consistory Hall
Thursday, 11 January 2024*

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I welcome you, a large representation of the Secular Institute of Missionary Priests of the Kingship of Christ, founded by Father Agostino Gemelli in 1953, just over seventy years ago. Among you today is an African confrere, because in recent times the new members are mainly priests from Guinea, Burundi, Rwanda and other African countries. And in Burundi you are establishing a formation centre dedicated to Bishop Courtney, the apostolic nuncio who was killed in that country. You also have some partners in Germany and Poland.

Thank you, because this meeting offers me the opportunity to highlight the value of *secularity* in the life and ministry of priests. Indeed, secularity is not synonymous with secularity. Secularity is a dimension of the Church, called to serve and bear witness to the Kingdom of God in this world. And consecration comes to radicalize this dimension, which is clearly not the only one, but is complementary to the eschatological. The Church, every baptized person, is *in* the world, is *for* the world, but is not *of* the world.

So, if secularity is a dimension of the Church, both laity and clerics are called to live and express it, albeit in different ways. Each realizes it according to their own condition in the wake of the mystery of the Incarnation. During these decades, you priests have made your way, experiencing this identity of yours "in the field", enriched also by the confrontation with the Missionary sisters and brothers of the Kingship of Christ.

You are diocesan priests, and wish to participate fully in the priesthood, in communion with the Bishop and confreres. The Institute helps you in this. It does so in accordance with the *Franciscan* charism, which is that of *minority*: in this way it forms you in humble, willing and fraternal service. And it does so according to the model of the *kingship of Christ*, which consists of serving, of giving oneself generously, in paying in person, in solidarity with the poor and the excluded. Kingship and minority: in Christ they are one, and Saint Francis bears witness to this.

I like an expression of your prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, where it says: “May we be in solidarity with, and friends of, the people, apostles of kindness and truth, so that the Gospel might become the heart of the world”. “Apostles of kindness and truth”. A beautiful expression, that you repeat every day to confirm your *vow of apostolate*, in the conviction that, joined with Christ in the Holy Spirit, one is an apostle first and foremost with one’s own humanity, with those human virtues that [Vatican Council II](#) describes: sincerity, concern for justice, fidelity to one’s promises, kindness, discretion, steadfastness of soul, thoughtfulness, rectitude (cf. Decree [Optatam totius](#), 11).

Dear brothers, may fidelity to this vocation of yours preserve you from two tendencies that are widespread today, even among priests: self-absorption and worldliness. None of us is completely immune to them. You must recognize this and react with the Lord's grace. May Our Lady and Saint Francis of Assisi help and accompany you from Heaven. I bless you all from my heart. And I ask you to please pray for me. Thank you.

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