

# CONVINCARE. DOC

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## Emilio Tresalti

(25 June 1935 - 3 May 2021)

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## Foreword

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**Fabio Vescovi**



This "Comunicare.doc" contains some contributions in memory of our dear Emilio Tresalti, President General of our Institute from 1991 to 2006, President of the World Conference of Secular Institutes (CMIS) from 1996 to 2000, physician and Chief Medical Officer of the Gemelli Hospital in Rome. For many of us, he was also our director, a brother and a friend who expected a demanding, yet enriching sort of friendship, a man of God, a man for the many men and women who met him and appreciated him.

Emilio left us suddenly, with no warning, on the morning of 3 May 2021, a Monday. This was his favourite day of the week, the beginning of his working week that he started, like any other day, getting up early for prayer.

It is not easy to draw a profile of him. The testimonies we have collected, which necessarily required us to only select some, come from many different people and are written in different languages. This is not only testimony to his capacity to speak different languages, a gift from the Spirit, but also his ability to nurture profound relations with men and women from different cultures. The material we have collected thus far is certainly not meant to be a well-structured biography, but should be read as a collection of personal memories, funny anecdotes or as a source of unstructured biographical notes that shows his complex personality, where the light and shadow of his character reside next to each other, with no intent to celebrate or portray him as a saint.

A special thanks to the people who edited this document and we hope it is successful in presenting the profile of a believer who made a firm, passionate vocational choice and left his brothers in the Institute a credible, exemplary testimony of his rich life as a consecrated layman.

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## **Letter from the President General of the Secular Institute "Christ the King"**

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**Antonio Vendramin**

*To all professed and aspirant members*

On Monday morning, 3 May, Emilio Tresalti passed away unexpectedly. Now, a few days later, I'm writing these words in his memory. I learned about his death from Carlo Savarese, as I was on my way to work. Neither of us could believe the news and we were quite shaken by the sudden heart failure that struck Emilio.

He had moved into new accommodation a few days before Easter as he needed increased care. Carlo had worked hard to make this move happen, and it was something Emilio himself had wanted. Some of the details were still being finalised, but everything seemed to be on track and seemed a better fit for his growing healthcare needs. But the Lord had other plans.

It is quite the task to recall everything Emilio did both inside our Institute (President General from 1991 to 2006, and plenty more) and outside, working with many Secular Institutes around the world, to promote the vocation of secular consecration.

He was born in Rome on 25 June 1935, the eldest of four brothers, including one who became a priest. He learned about the Institute when he was still young, through Armando Oberti (via work in his diocese with Italian Catholic Action), and he took his first vows on 25 October 1959 and his perpetual vows on 22 November 1975.

After graduating in medicine and surgery in 1959 from Rome University, he did his military service as an officer, a medical lieutenant, in Terni, and also represented the health authorities on a civil level.



He also began working as a volunteer assistant to the Chair of Medical Pathology for a three-year period until 1963 while specialising in Endocrinology and Metabolic Diseases. That same year, he also started to work as an occupational physician at the new oil refinery hub in Gela in Sicily. However, a different outlook as to what was professional meant he clashed with other physicians on site. He was the subject of intimidation and received some serious threats. Initially, it looked like the solution would be for him to move to become the Healthcare Director of the Santa Barbara nursing home in Gela, but subsequently, in 1969, as the pressure on him continued, it was decided he should leave Sicily, in agreement with Prof. Giuseppe Lazzati. Having returned to Rome, he came to work as an inspector at the Gemelli general hospital. He also spent lengthy periods in Somalia, focusing on training and healthcare organisation. His career moved forward at Gemelli, until he eventually became the Chief Medical Officer. Many of us remember him on television, as he read out the healthcare updates about Pope John Paul II following the tragic assassination attempt on the Pope in May 1981. In 1995, as soon as he reached retirement age and before what was standard practice, he left his prestigious role at the hospital to the amazement of his co-workers, who held him in high esteem (as was also clear at his funeral), so he had more time for the Institute as President General.

Emilio played a major part in the development of our Institute. At first, this was in Italy, through contact with various dioceses in Sicily while he worked on the island, during which time he was the General Representative for Aspirants, from 1970 to 1973, and then from 1974, as the Head of the "Sicilian Group" of professed members. Later, Emilio also oversaw the spread of the Institute outside of Italy's borders, in the 1980s and during his Presidency, playing a part in the creation and development of sections in a number of countries. In all likelihood, without his determination we would have remained a slightly less widespread group. He definitely helped us broaden our horizons and become less provincial, to see situations from multiple different viewpoints, to appreciate all cultures and to enter into the mentality of others without judging. He was also awake to anything new and to change.

His openness was also evident in ecclesial settings, with the development of our vocation. For example, in 1970 during an international conference of Secular Institutes, Lazzati indicated Emilio to be a member of the international commission tasked with preparing the Statute for a permanent coordinating body for

Secular Institutes. The World Conference of Secular Institutes (CMIS) was formally created in 1972, receiving definitive approval from the Holy See in 1974. He was the General Secretary (1972 - 1980) of this new body and later the President (1996 - 2000). Yet, his work in this sphere went well beyond the time he actually held these roles. He was a passionate promoter of Secular Institutes in the Church, holding the role of adviser for many and helping with the creation of various continental and national conferences. His final trip was to Vietnam in September 2018, as he had been invited to speak at the Asian Conference of Secular Institutes. Owing to the expertise he gained over time, he became a consultant to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life from 1991 to 2014. The many recollections we have received are testimony to his extensive service to Secular Institutes and, more generally, to the Church.

His slightly reserved nature probably meant it wasn't always easy to be on precisely the same wavelength as him, but once one got passed that initial impression, communication became easy and dialogue even became personal. There were occasions when his decisions, which he stuck firmly to, were not welcomed, but this is part of being brothers walking along the same pathway. Through his lay style in our vocation, in which he avoided drifting to a more clerical or devotional style, he taught us plenty. He often called on us to appreciate the "beauty" of the world, of nature and human work and art. Thank you for all this, Emilio.

Let me end with a heartfelt thanks to Ms. Helèna, who cared for him so devotedly for many years, and to Carlo Savarese and Marco Monti Chiovenda, who were close to him at different times and in different ways.

*Milan, 12 May 2021*

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## **Emilio Tresalti. In memoriam**

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**Luciano Caimi**

Others will hopefully have the opportunity to share an accurate biographical profile of Prof. Emilio Tresalti, a well-known and appreciated figure in the world of Secular Institutes and beyond. Here, I shall limit myself to sharing my testimony. My piece is structured in four points and hopefully it will provide a fairly accurate picture of his rich experience as a consecrated lay person.

### **1) A firm and passionate vocational choice**

A date sticks with me when thinking of Emilio's life: 25 October 1959. It was the day when he took his first vows in the Secular Institute "Milites Christi", set up under the Canon Law in the Milan diocese (1952) and chaired by Prof. Giuseppe Lazzati (Milan 1909 -1986, now Venerable).

Long an active member in the youth section of Catholic Action (*GIAC*), the twenty-four old from Rome, newly graduated from the Rome Medical School, met Armando Oberti (Vailate 1926 - Rome 2012) who had moved to Rome for business reasons. He acted as the link with the Milanese Institute (in 1976 Oberti was Lazzati's successor at the Head of *Milites Christi* until 1991).

Alongside the Female Youth movement, *GIAC* in the 1950s was a true feedstock for Secular Institutes, the new form of vocation that was acknowledged by Pius XII with the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* (2 February 1947), integrated in 1948 by the important *motu proprio* *Primo Feliciter*.

Tresalti who, like many young activists at the time sought the prudent support of a spiritual director (a Jesuit father), was immediately attracted to that type of vocation. So, from a very young age, once he had finished his four years of preparation he was ready to pronounce his firm "Here I am" as an answer to the call from the Lord.

I don't think that he ever doubted the choice he made. Even from quite a young age, he had a strong personality that pushed him, once he had identified a goal, to go for it without any uncertainty. This also held for the decisions he made about his professional (as a physician) and vocational future.

This uncompromising choice by a young man of twenty-four for a vocation that was perceived as quite unique (especially for men) by the Christians of that time (... and, I'd say, today with the due changes) leads me to make a few considerations.

Let me add a few thoughts about the context in which his vocation grew. *GIAC* in the 1950s was a very vibrant association, with large numbers. In all honesty, it might have been a little too stiff on a cultural and moral level, but it undoubtedly mobilised many people to commit themselves generously and to adopt a demanding approach to Christian life.

For Emilio, *GIAC* was a sort of ideal incubator to nurture the seed of his vocation that would then thrive. Like him, many young people from the male and female chapters of Catholic Action at that time had the courage to make radical choices - because secular consecration is radical - at a very young age. Today, allow me this small digression, things are very different. The fear of making a definitive choice, the widespread sense of uncertainty and increased insecurity/psychological fragility encourage people to delay, in every vocational field, making a decision, and this is also true for Secular Institutes. It wasn't like that with Emilio's generation. They were ready to make their decision and pronounce their "Here I am" at such a young age. This made it possible for them to put real enthusiasm and energy into such decisions, something that is far less likely to happen at a more advanced age.

After joining "*Milites Christi*", Tresalti identified with it totally, and felt he belonged there fully. It became his home and his definitive family. He did not put his love for the Institute into words but, in keeping with his essential and busy style, he generously worked at the different services he was asked to do, until he became the President General - 1991-2006, after Oberti - at the Institute. Incidentally, in 1969, the Institute had been renamed: "*Christ the King*".

## **2) Uncompromising secularity**

When he sometimes was asked to specify what Secular Institutes did (or were supposed to do), Tresalti would answer drily: "Nothing!" Obviously, he would then go on to add some form of explanation. However, he would explain to add strength to his statement, not to water it down or deny it.

On closer examination, his snappy answer was meant to draw attention to the original and undeniable core of secular consecration: the idea of *secularity*. Secularity is to be interpreted, like for any other lay person, not as a simple sociological attribute, but rather as the "theological condition" (Paul VI) for a journey of *holiness*, where daily activities (family - for those who have it - work, social life, cultural life, participation in trade unions, political or volunteering activities etc.) provide the space to bear testimony to the Gospel. This happens on two levels (that interact): 1. Humanly rich styles and conduct that express proximity and are open to meeting others without showing off one's faith and being aware, in the right way and at the right time, that we need to "give reason for the hope" we have (*1 Peter*3:15); 2. Competences able to animate, in a Christian way, the "temporal realities" where one works, in order to conform them to the original design of our Creator (i.e. the full development of people and society) (see *Lumen Gentium*, 31).

For Tresalti, in line with Giuseppe Lazzati, Secular Institutes were not supposed to have their own initiatives or charitable or social works, rather they had to take care of the human, Christian and vocational formation of their members. This would help every member grow with increased awareness and willingness to work "in the world" with the attitude of bearing witnesses and "animating" the different settings I have just mentioned from within.

Based on his extensive knowledge of Secular Institutes, he was correct in criticising some uncertainties and the risk of taking on some forms that were typical of religious life when it came to correctly interpreting secularity. This is a risk we might call persistent and it ties in with a sensitive issue that has been present since the very beginning of Secular Institutes: their pluralism. Within certain limits, it is perfectly acceptable because each Institute has its own "gifts" and specific sensitivities, but it is misleading when it is watered down or it loses sight of that typical secular dimension.

In his countless meetings with Secular Institutes, in Italy and abroad, Tresalti insisted on this, convinced that the very credibility of this vocation hinged on the secular dimension.

Next to the "institutional" side of the problem, there was the personal element. This is related to the correct way of living as a consecrated layperson on a daily basis. On this front, Emilio's testimony seems meaningful in various respects.

The first such aspect is in terms of his personal relations. He wasn't the touchy-feely type (after all everyone has their own nature). He was reserved, he liked honest, "mature" relations and he trusted the honesty of the words people spoke. With friends, he was open - to some extent - to sharing personal experiences of Church life and Secular Institutes. He was also exquisitely welcoming. He liked to have guests at lunch or for dinner, sometimes to talk over some specific issues at the Institute or at other times to enjoy some relaxed time with friends. As long as he could, he loved pottering in the kitchen and he was good at it.

All in all, Tresalti's testimony represents a very secular way of *being in* and *living in* the world. The love for his work (physician, Chief Medical Officer, professor), his multiple areas of interest (especially music and art), his pleasure in being informed and improving his biblical and theological knowledge (reading books in foreign languages), his curiosity for other worlds (civil and ecclesial) beyond Italy, the desire to keep abreast of technology so as to be more easily in touch with friends in Italy and abroad: all of this showed an active and aware presence in history, a mature and dynamic interpretation of secularity.

Emilio shunned all forms of showing off through devotional signs, which was common among Secular Institutes. His deep, yet reserved spirituality, a bit like his personality, prevented him from showing external signs of religious emotions or apostolic activism. He was fully aware of the urgency of evangelical testimony in the world, but - especially for the secularised West - he was convinced that this testimony should take on

respectful forms, open to dialogue, and should start from acknowledging the desires, the hopes and the wounds that dwell in the hearts of every man and woman.

Ultimately, for him too, the "serious case" of faith in the post-modern era, fully embraced the "anthropological question". He believed that Secular Institutes had to feel engaged and had to react on this front. But, in order for them to be up to the task at hand, he was convinced that they had to focus on a type of formation that was tailored to the level of the members, to encourage in each of them a growth in the fullness of human and Christian maturity. This was and is the challenge at hand.

### **3) A strong personality and decisive leadership**

Those who approached Tresalti immediately realised they were dealing with a strong, decisive and straightforward person. He had clear leadership skills that he put to good use both in his work and in his ecclesial activities (especially with regards to Secular Institutes).

As for his profession, he held a number of important positions at the Gemelli Hospital in Rome, which is linked to the Medical School of the Catholic University. He started working there in 1969 and he soon became Deputy Chief Medical Officer, holding this position until 1976. From 1980 he was the Chief Medical Officer (CMO). At the same time he taught Hygiene and Healthcare management (1980-99) and immunoprophylaxis and immunotherapy (1996-98) in the medical faculty.

As a CMO, he had to deal with the complex management of a case that captured the world's attention: the emergency surgery and hospitalisation of Pope John Paul II following the assassination attempt on him on 18 May 1981 on St Peter's Square. For long weeks, Tresalti was in the limelight of the national and international media because he had to provide daily updates on the Pope's health and manage the related press conferences. This was also an emotionally tricky time as the eyes of the entire world were on him. He managed everything very professionally and in a very balanced manner, receiving much esteem for how he handled the whole affair. When the Pope had fully recovered, he was received by him in a private audience with his mother. In his office and at home he rightly displayed photos of that day.

In 1995 as soon as he reached retirement age, Tresalti - sixty years old - decided to leave his position, a very prestigious but demanding role, at the Gemelli hospital. This caused quite a lot of surprise and many regrets among his closest colleagues and co-workers. The true and ultimate reason for this decision was basically the following: he had been President of the Secular Institute Christ the King for four years (at the time it was expanding outside of Italy) and he was acutely aware of the difficulties - to his mind insurmountable - to dedicate himself adequately to both positions, as leader of the Institute and of the hospital.

I have always seen Emilio's choice as "heroic", a testimony of Christian courage and real love for the Institute, beyond all words. Leaving the Gemelli hospital meant leaving a role of great visibility, prestige and, yes, power (albeit in its positive meaning).

During his fifteen years as President General, as a member of the General Council and Representative for Ongoing Formation, I had the opportunity to see Tresalti in action with my own eyes. He focused very much on the method for managing collective meetings: a relaxed atmosphere, no pressing times so that everyone could take the floor, calmly, perhaps more than once. When an issue had been sufficiently debated and explored, he was certainly not shy when it came to making a decision. This was true even (and above all) when there were difficult choices to make. A good example of this was when different buildings, belonging to the Institute, needed to be sold to restore the San Salvatore Hermitage, which was in a poor state. The Hermitage

was the venue of many spiritual meetings and it was very close to Lazzati's heart. It needed to be modernised if we were to meet new safety standards. In honesty, there were also some occasions when there were misunderstandings about organisational and managerial issues, but in those case, time and a spirit of fraternity ironed out the difficulties, although divergent opinions often remained.

Well before he took on the Presidency of the Institute, his leadership skills were trained in another key ecclesial setting: the World Conference of Secular Institutes (CMIS). He was the General Secretary from 1972 to 1980 and he chaired it from 1996 to 2000. During his mandates, his key contribution to the organisation became evident in terms of organisation first, then management. It was a fairly small body, but quite complex because it brought together people from different backgrounds, speaking different languages and it involved many different tasks, such as maintaining relations with relevant the Vatican Congregation, establishing relationships with CMIS members, providing the opportunity to deep-dive into vocational experiences, and promoting the periodic international conferences and the assemblies for the elections. It is beyond any doubt that in his long period with CMIS, Tresalti was one of the most authoritative and representative voices for Secular Institutes. He also helped to promote, as part of CMIS, some national and continental conferences, like the Asian Conference. Of course, many times he was invited to participate in the meetings and assemblies of Secular Institutes all over the world. The last was in September 2018, in Vietnam for the Asian Conference. He found it quite hard, because he was getting older and weaker and for some time he had not felt he could travel alone on such long trips.

He was regarded as an authority also in the Congregation for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life, where he was a consultant from 1991 to 2014.

#### **4) Being in a wider world**

This was a very powerful, profound part of Tresalti. He was firmly against to any sort of cultural, ecclesial or spiritual parochialism. As time went by this hallmark of his character grew stronger. He saw different cultures as a richness and he believed in the integration of individual cultures and experiences. For Emilio, this applied both in day-to-day life and in religious life, with a special reference to Secular Institutes.

As a young man, when he left Rome - which already offered some protection against provincialism, given its universal nature - two main events marked his life: on the one hand, in the middle of the 1950s, learning about "Milites Christi", the natural heir of the social, cultural and ecclesial culture of Milan; and on the other, his first position as a physician in Gela (Sicily) at a production plant of a company called ANIC (ENI group). This job was far from easy. Given the local situation, starting such a large industrial plant was clearly a benefit for the local economy, but it soon attracted the attention of organised crime (Tresalti was threatened and eventually he left the position and worked as a consultant in occupational medicine at the Santa Barbara hospital in Gela).

In both cases, for Emilio, joining "Milites Christi" in Milan and the job in Sicily entailed his opening up to different worlds other than Rome. A decade after he started working at the Gemelli hospital, he had an experience that deeply marked his international sensitivity, with a special focus on developing countries. I am referring to his post as Professor of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine at the Medical School of the Somali National University (Somalia) from 1977 to 1980. Later, in 1989, he became the Vice President of the Association of Latin American Studies, based in Rome, further proof of his international outlook. His international side also included: the Health Department - Council of Europe, Strasbourg 1994-1995; the Department for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome, 1977-1982.

Rome, Milan and Italy in general, however beloved because of his social, cultural, vocational and professional roots, were not sufficient for his international mind. His gaze and his desires moved from there, but stretched far beyond, especially, when he was thinking about the future of Secular Institutes.

This opening and reaching out to the world clearly demanded specific abilities and attitudes, without which this international dimension would just be wishful thinking.

Tresalti spoke different languages, a key instrument to communicate. He mastered English, French and Spanish. Alongside Italian, this meant he could speak to almost anyone, anywhere in the world.

Languages were a key tool, but they weren't everything. Emilio would always repeat as much: he insisted that there was a need to have a certain "ecology" of personal attitudes to tune into other cultures and their interpreters. So, any (even potential) sense of superiority of some cultures (starting from western ones) was totally unacceptable. Allow me a digression on this. He certainly did not spare his criticism of the majority of Catholic evangelisation/mission models over the centuries, with just a few exceptions (one being the Jesuit Matteo Ricci in China). Christianity could not just be replicated elsewhere, because its model was born in the West, under Roman control of doctrine, morality and liturgy. The real challenge in many ways was (and still is) that of achieving the wise inculturation of the Gospel in the local cultures where it is proclaimed.

Tresalti was convinced that the remedy against certain mental attitudes generated by the superiority complex of the western world in general was a truly empathic relationship with people and "other" cultures that are different from ours. This meant abandoning all stereotypes and prejudice in approaching the other party and its world, and embracing a willingness to listen, to have an exchange and try to be in the other's shoes, and to look at reality, including the religious and vocational spheres, from their perspective. Hence, the need to be able to adapt, in terms of mentality, customs, accommodation, eating habits etc. On this, Emilio really led by example. Wherever he was, he would fit in without any problem. He would even wear local clothes, especially in India where he used to wear local outfits to show his deep desire to integrate with the host country.

These considerations, however, were a sort of introduction to a point that was very close to his heart: the *spread of Secular Institutes*. He was profoundly convinced of the value of secular consecration, both male and female, which was confirmed by the many vocations, although still limited in absolute numbers, everywhere in the world. His concern (that applied mainly to his Institute) was to nurture such vocations, with all the due attention for different cultures, and the relevant implications on inculturation of a charism like this, as mentioned above. This meant, for instance, that the Secular Institute that was originally established in Italy and then grew in Africa and Asia clearly expected their members to be faithful to the core vocation (consecration/secularity), but it needed to be interpreted and experienced according to the local society, culture and spiritual sensitivity.

Tresalti certainly was a key protagonist of Secular Institutes worldwide. He would always defend the peculiarity of its charism, and was genuinely concerned when he picked up signs of some potential alteration to its core, especially by those who, hoping to render the Church a better service, were pushing for more direct forms of evangelisation or application of ecclesial ministries. He was convinced of the opposite, that the way they were expected to contribute to the Gospel was precisely to remain consecrated laypeople in the world to contribute, through faith, hope and charity, to building a "human sized city" as our teacher in life, the Venerable Giuseppe Lazzati, used to say. Of course, this view had (and still has) many implications in terms of competences, passion, spirituality, formation, involvement and a real sense of belonging to the Church.

To conclude, we must be grateful to Emilio for his discreet, open and pondered testimony at the tireless service of Secular Institutes.

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## **My memories of Emilio**

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**Giorgio Mazzola**

I must confess that I am writing these notes mainly for selfish reasons. I have never had good memory, so I am rushing to put down memories of my years spent with Emilio, since they played a very important, if not prevalent, part in my life.

His passing helps me to look at these memories through not only grateful, but also affectionate eyes, although they also include difficult situations when it was hard to understand things and each other. Indeed, being Christians means first and foremost leaving space to Love, summarising the past, ours and the one lived next to people, in a story of salvation. So, focusing on good memories does not mean betraying history, but rather looking at it through the eyes of the One who, as we know, has different eyes.

I am trying here to collect many memories, even scattered ones, so that readers can dwell where they deem it best.

Let's start with the very first time I met him. It happened during a three-day study session of the Institute in Villa Sacro Cuore at Triuggio in 1988. I was a third-year aspirant, but at that time aspirants were admitted to the three-day session for professed members. That particular session is still remembered for an unpleasant and sad squabble during the event. At that time, Emilio presented a report on the impact of the Institute on other cultures and he mentioned, among other things, Matteo Ricci in China and Roberto De Nobili in India. That really drew my attention as, at that time, I was reading a book on the adventurous and exciting story of Jesuits in China. So, after the presentation, I approached him and feeling very humbled and a bit shy, I asked him something, although I can't remember what exactly.

The following meeting was three years later, in autumn or winter 1991, and Tresalti had just been elected President of the Institute. I was asked, by the secretary, to collect Emilio from the Catholic University in Piacenza and take him back to Milan. As often is the case with me, I did not ask anything further and just drove to pick him up. But there was a reason why I'd been asked to give him a lift: during the trip, Emilio asked me to be in charge of the Year of Spirituality. I remember him asking me if had any objections, and I shared with him a couple. He listened to me, then, calmly, said that what I said was perfectly understandable, but not sufficient, so I accepted. I learned, though, that these sorts of meetings generally hid some requests. This happened at least three times: in 1994 with a request to look after the aspirants in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), in 1996, the aspirancy in Italy and in 2001 the aspirancy for the whole Institute. Based on my previous experience, the following times I did not rush to present my objections, but I limited myself to not saying no...



The first time I went to Zaire, it was with him. I think it was during the summer of 1993 (I hope the archives confirm this). We spent one night in Kinshasa and, that night, for the first time ever, I had the opportunity to share something about my life and my family with. I told him that it wasn't my first time in Africa as I had spent one month in Tanzania with my parish.<sup>1</sup> I also shared my brother's adventures in India (nearly penny-less as the only money he earned was through selling jeans and western clothes) and in Zaire (he hitch-hiked from Kivu to Kinshasa). In the end, Emilio commented: "So there, I got it right picking you!" The following day we left for Bandundu (in the photo Benjamin and Fr. Werner Bach, a Verbite) and I remember Emilio's happy face when the trip ended on a dugout canoe to cross the River Kwilu (in the picture below). He didn't tell me much during those days (he wasn't talkative) and clearly he felt it was enough for me to come into contact with that reality. On the way back he asked me, quite bluntly, to learn French. I enrolled for a couple of years in the courses at Centre Culturel Français and the following summer I went to Brittany for a course for a couple of weeks.



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<sup>1</sup>Because of that month I spent in Tanzania, I had attended Swahili classes. He was very impressed when, during a Council Meeting of the Institute that had been extended to include our African brothers, for some reason I popped into Via Stradella in Milan and greeted the group in Swahili.

Emilio was very demanding when it came to foreign languages and, more in general, on the necessary level of professionalism that had to mark any decision and commitment.<sup>2</sup> He thought languages should be learned properly (he advised me to subscribe to *The Economist*) and he did not tolerate superficiality and sloppiness. He did not like provincialism and he hated to think that the Italian culture was superior to others (without knowing them). He also did not tolerate that we looked at our foreign brothers in the Institute through a folklorist lens (different eating habits, dress codes etc.). He was really bothered by this and I must say that his attitude was contagious.... I cannot stand it either! Emilio gave me some advice on how to learn about the different realities in the world. He always asked me to prepare by reading some works and he suggested I visit the supermarkets and the local bookstores, take local transportation (he loved using rickshaws in Mumbai!) and try the local restaurants to get an idea of the culture of the people I was about to meet. Emilio had initially studied French, then he learned English and Spanish and for some time he tried learning Polish too. Sorting out my books at home, I discovered that basically all the books he gave me were written in a foreign language, mostly English, and not related to the usual topics: the autobiography of Nelson Mandela, *Ebola* a novel, an essay on conflicts in Africa, "Western Spirituality" by Matthew Fox (it was purchased in Auckland), a guide book on West Africa and many more. To encourage the spread of the Institute, he offered two scholarships to Institute members - so far unused - to learn Chinese and Korean. I realised I came short on something I should have done: I did not complete the process of translating and publishing *Epistle To Diognetus* into Chinese. It was something he really cared for. Even today, we must reiterate, as Emilio used to tell me and us, that studying another language and being interested and shaped by what happens elsewhere in the world, is a true (and costly) act of love for the world (not the only one, certainly!) and it is an act that is in perfect keeping with our secularity, so it is a "movement" typical of our secular consecration.

Emilio was also interested in all technological advances and gadgets, even more than me - an electronics engineer. He was one of the first people to have a mobile phone, which he passed on to me. The same for computers: when he changed them he handed them on to me. In general, he liked nice, well done things. He also liked to be informed about current affairs. I remember that during a lunch in Rome, about the aspirancy, at which Carlo Savarese was also present, we listened to an album by the Beatles ("*Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*"). Emilio was very surprised that I knew the hidden meaning of a song by the Beatles (*Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* - focus on the initials). I also remember a meeting for the formators of the Institute when he started off by playing "If I ever lose my faith in you" by Sting, if I remember correctly. During those meetings for directors, he also invited a Jewish friend, a historian (Prof. Bruno di Porto), a Russian professor, a protestant pastor (Martin Uhl)... Emilio really wanted to open up to new realities, and he was strict in his judgements when he saw that people were entrenched in their mind sets. His attitude about prayer and the Word of God was special and, even in this case, it was quite far away from the most common schemes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I remember how attentive he was to the restructuring of Via Stradella in Milan and the San Salvatore Hermitage above Erba, so that we were compliant with the regulations. In those years, difficult decisions had to be taken about the house in Desio and, precisely, the building in Via Stradella and San Salvatore.

<sup>3</sup> I am sharing here an excerpt from an answer he gave to one of my emails. It was about some proposed 'itineraries' for the Bible. This is what he wrote: "My approach is to listen as much as possible, purely as someone who wishes to know God's mind about man, the world and things.

To do this, I believe one needs to read, re-read and try to understand what God is trying to tell us. As such, I shy away from isolated characters or characters that have been singled out. I feel that focusing on a single character is a bit artificial and I am also bothered by so-called "icons", although these are fashionable, nonetheless.

For instance, I feel that one of the reasons one does not find "secularity" in the Bible is that it is seen through the spirituality of characters who represent something we already know or, at least for experts, have a message which is known.

His demanding character (one of his former students at his funeral called him “brusque”) is something I experienced first-hand following our first trip to Zaire. I felt somewhat uneasy, for the first time - later it happened again - after ending a call with him. During that first trip to Zaire I struggled from liver intoxication due to anti-malaria drugs (the product was subsequently recalled from the market), and I discovered that Emilio (a physician!) did not take any malaria prophylaxis. The liver plays nasty tricks on the mood, in addition to imposing strict dietary habits. I was not well and I rang Emilio to tell him that my condition was not good to travel to Zaire - I would have to leave a few days later - but he implied, quite bluntly, that health issues could not be an impediment. I confess I did not like it, but I learned also to ignore my ailments in the trips I undertook in the following years. This was the real teaching: one needs to go beyond ones limits. That trip to Zaire then turned out to be particularly complicated, with a waiting time of five days at the Procure des Missions in Kinshasa (it was during the protests of Ville Marte) and a risky trip to get to Bandundu where we spent just a few hours!

I wouldn't know how many countries Emilio visited, but it was never on holiday. I believe that in his life, although he travelled a lot, he never went on holiday like most people do. I was surprised by his willingness to travel to meet people. I remember that he travelled to Germany to meet - at the airport - the Head of the Caritas Christi Institute, or his trip to Belgium to meet the Verbite Father Werner Bach, whom we had met in Bandundu.

To be honest, the first time I met Emilio abroad was in India, when I took part, along with Fabrizio Lardini, in a retreat in Goa with our Indian friends. I was impressed because he arrived in the middle of the night, but in the morning he was already up and ready for meetings wearing a kurta. Emilio asked me to go on many other trips, in Africa and elsewhere, so much so that when I took my perpetual vows, in 1999, the aspirants, a bit cheekily, presented me with a nice pair of walking shoes and a T-shirt with their signatures and the writing "Tre salti per il mondo"<sup>4</sup> (Three jumps around the world, playing on Tresalti's name)

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The most beautiful thing I find, every time I read the Bible directly, every day, or I go through book by book with the help of good commentators and translators or through the Church liturgy, I discover something new, with incredible freshness and vitality.

Such an approach creates a mentality and it facilitates a way of seeing things that makes us closer to God's way of seeing things, if I may put it this way. So my actions will be more tuned in with God's plan.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it does not provide me with recipes, solutions to problems or even prompt, operational responses."

4 The pun really only works in Italian. This T-shirt has many memories for me, because two of the aspirants who signed are already with the Holy Father, Fabrizio Panozzo and Elenio Zimelli.



If we wanted to continue with this image, I would say that if we wanted to give Emilio a T-shirt today, we would need to write: "Lazzati for the world". I don't think I'd be wrong if I state that the current geographical spread of the Institute in the world wouldn't be a reality without the decisive push by Emilio. As a symbol of this spread I would choose this picture that shows the Professor with the first non- Italian professed member, Robin Francis D'Souza. A symbolic photo indeed!



Going back to my travels, Emilio liked the initial article of a series of mine in *Comunicare* about my trip to Togo. I started off by saying that for an engineer like me, it wasn't easy to understand that you need... to "think on your feet", meaning that you learn by travelling and knowing different realities. This expression, somebody told me, was then used by Emilio during preparatory assemblies for the Congress. I won't deny I was happy to learn that, since Emilio was not generous with words and praise.

To be honest, he showed very solemn appreciation for me at the beginning, when we first started working together (later on he got to know my limitations and defects...). We were in the office at Via Stradella, I think Piero di Iorio was there, and he came out with a Latin phrase about me: '*Homo longus raro sapiens; sed, si sapiens, sapientissimus*'. (A tall man is rarely wise, but, if he is, then he is extremely wise). Another funny anecdote was when I spent Easter at his home in Via Capodistria. He really cared very well for his guests. I popped by his parish church in the morning and they asked me to be a reader for the evening Easter celebration. He was very surprised and told me: "How come? I have been going to this church for years, and they've never asked me to read, and you who go there for the first time and get asked...?"

On many occasions, Emilio compensated with facts for what he couldn't show in relations. When he realised my health was a bit fragile, he would give me advice as a physician with considerable experience of travelling. I still remember one of the funniest tips he gave me, knowing that I travelled regularly both for business and for the Institute. He told me I needed to learn to spend a lot of money (!) to eat, that is I needed to pick good quality restaurants, so it would be more likely the food was of good quality and well prepared. When I told him I had intolerance to different foods, he became extremely meticulous in preparing food at his house. I remember, for instance, that he always tried to provide an appetiser of quail eggs, although they are not particularly common. I must say that almost all the meetings with him were accompanied or I should rather say gravitated around dinner. This happened at first in Milan in the flat in Via Stradella or in Rome at Via Capodistria (but also in Via Aurelia when he left the beautiful house in Capodistria as he waited for the new accommodation) and then in Formello,<sup>5</sup> and then back to Rome in Via Civitavecchia. Many times, though, he would treat me to a restaurant. He really put a lot of care and creativity into the choice of food he would prepare and I used to bring a dessert - I would make sure I got it from a top-notch patisserie and he would really appreciate it.

In our colloquies (Emilio was my director for ten years) I did not have many opportunities to talk about me, but we mainly discussed the Institute, the Church and the world. I felt a bit sorry because I did not examine my own life (although he was very mindful of my professional development), but I understood that Emilio was... well Emilio and his care focused on me learning and opening up my mind, avoiding partial views. He really cared about sharing with me his knowledge and his view on the Church and the world - I am very grateful to him for this. I was particularly surprised by a simple action he made when he left the meeting that elected him President of the Institute for the third consecutive time. We were in the room on the first



floor, now no longer accessible to groups. He passed by me and

patted me on the shoulder. When I was later elected President, he wanted to take me to the Congregation (of consecrated life) to introduce me to the Secretary and the Undersecretary. At that time, I noted that he basically had free access to the offices of the Congregation. In general, people get stopped by the concierge, who actually stood up and came over to welcome Emilio. He was well-known and respected there. He also invited me to participate in his place at the Third Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu (Romania). At other times, I had the opportunity to see for myself that he was known in some ecclesial settings. I remember, for instance, a meeting with Father Cabra<sup>6</sup> who told me, referring to Emilio's professional commitment, that for our vocation a prime job was important. I think he meant that professional success (which depends on many factors and has different

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<sup>5</sup> When he was moving house, I bought from him the wonderful furniture from his study, which is still with me, and then added "pieces" from his library, when he had to move one last time, a few days before he passed away.

<sup>6</sup> Father Pier Giordano Cabra, a father from the Congregation of the Holy Family of Nazareth, wrote many important books on consecrated life and, it is said, that he contributed to the introduction of the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*.

evaluation grids) is an element to confirm one's vocation as a consecrated layperson. I remember his good relationship with the Cardinal and theologian Georges Cottier, whom I was introduced to in 2007 and whom I refer to later. Card. Cottier had told him that, to his mind, the conditions were right to review the question of clerical secular institutes, which Emilio was always critical of (incidentally, as I noted later, his misgivings were shared by the Congregation). During my trip to Nigeria, Emilio had spoken to the Secretary of State and received a message of encouragement, because it was a country of great hope. I remember, on that special occasion, the dinner at the home of the Apostolic Nuncio to Zaire, or his tales of his dinners with eminent figures of the church, like Bishop, then Cardinal Walter Kasper, for whom he wrote a contribution in the book in honour of the Cardinal himself.<sup>7</sup> He was greeted with the utmost respect, if not veneration, at CMIS meetings and even more so in the Asian Conferences (especially Japan<sup>8</sup> and India). Certainly his heart was in India (he told me that when he was very young he had met Raimon Panikkar). He felt proud about being able to merge with the local culture. I too was somehow "infected" with his passion for India. Everything started off in 1992, when I was invited to take part in the session dedicated to the youth, at the CMIS Congress in Rome, during a very hot summer. I shared my room with Robin.<sup>9</sup> Emilio and Robin told me about their first contact, which happened because of a leaflet that Emilio had left in India and Robin picked up casually and answered because he was seeking help for his orphanage. The first meeting took place in a bar on the beach in Goa, sipping a lime drink.



Going back to Emilio's acquaintances, we must remember that he was known everywhere as the former CMO of the Gemelli hospital, where Pope John Paul II was hospitalised after the assassination attempt in 1981. He shared with me some anecdotes about those days. The most important element was Emilio's opposition to turning the Gemelli hospital into a subsidiary of the Holy See - to him it was crystal clear (and fair!) that it had to continue to function as a regular hospital. He told me that once they didn't find the Pope in his room and for a few minutes they were unable to locate him. Eventually, they found him on the hospital

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7 *Divinarum rerum notitia – Studi in onore del Cardinale Walter Kasper*, ed. Studium 2001 - a volume published with the contribution of, among others, Cardinals Lehmann and Martini.

8 He went there for the wedding of his nephew and was totally fascinated by a shintoist wedding ceremony.

9 It was an opportunity to spend a long time together, filled with conversations, Robin's famous jokes (we even talked about a ... statue that we needed to build in the honour of the first non-Italian member of the Institute and at the table many participants approved of this pie in the sky...). On a free day we travelled around Rome and we got to the beach, with a stopover in a town called Ceri. I still remember, even after so many years, how pleasantly surprised we were.

terrace, where he had gone to stretch his legs. He said that he was most surprised by his stubborn determination to regain his physical strength. When Emilio decided to take early retirement, which he did to devote more time to the Institute - I think it was 1994 and many at the Institute were surprised - he told me that rumours had it that he was retiring to become the Pope's personal doctor. The Pope was hospitalised a few times there, when he was the CMO. He said that he was made fun of (or envied...) by his physician colleagues because they said the Pope bowed slightly when he met Emilio...

At the Gemelli hospital, Emilio also met Mother Teresa who sought a financial contribution for her works. Next to Mother Teresa, in the working groups, he participated in the Synod on Consecrated Life in 1994, when he made his "famous" and brave contribution ("when they ask me: 'what do you do?', I naturally answer: 'Nothing') which caused a stir among the participants (and the Pope himself, if I remember correctly).

Of course, Emilio would share with us many of his encounters with Lazzati and Oberti, especially during our last meetings in Rome. Lazzati appreciated him and recommended him as Secretary for the creation of the World Conference, following the first Assembly of Secular Institutes in 1970 (to Armando's surprise). Emilio then became a tireless promoter of CMIS in many countries. He accompanied Lazzati on his journey to Zaire. In his judgement, the Professor fully understood the specificities of other countries and other cultures, but - he told me - he was very careful when Robin Francis D'Souza and Benjamin Boba Mvumbi approached the Institute. When the Institute started to grow outside of Italy, the Professor recommended caution and some trepidation (rightly so!) about making sure those who were far away could receive adequate formation.<sup>10</sup> Emilio admired the "upright back" of the Professor, the awareness of the role and dignity of the laity in the Church and certainly he learned a lot about this. He was a firm believer in Lazzati's holiness,<sup>11</sup> but he was also convinced there was a need to review canonisation procedures. As a physician, he said that many cases of healing can be inexplicable (also) because we don't fully know all of the mechanisms at play in the human body.

He told me about a particularly difficult meeting he had as President of CMIS with the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, when the Prefect himself, by looking at the limited number of Secular Institutes, had basically concluded that they would soon end within the Church. On that occasion, as on many others, Emilio did not take on "subdued" attitudes, but replied there and then and subsequently by taking action. Indeed, he immediately sent a note on Secular Institutes to the Pope (he sent a copy to me as well) and soon after he organised a Symposium for the Sixtieth Anniversary of *Provida Mater*. Its title spoke for itself: "This is the perfect time for us". It took place, despite the Prefect's surprise, in the Synod Room in the Vatican and included an audience with Pope Benedict XVI (again causing great surprise).

He had, I think, a modern vision of the spread of the Christian message. For example, he was convinced that at school there shouldn't be an hour of religion, but the classes of literature (the Bible), history, philosophy etc. should be used to include the teachings of the Christian message and the history of the Church as part of the regular syllabus. His idea was that the Christian faith should not be considered as something outside of daily life.

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<sup>10</sup> Emilio gave me a copy of his answer to a Canadian friend, from a female Secular Institute, who was asking how you could provide formation in a distant country.

<sup>11</sup> A small detail: Emilio told me that Lazzati never spoke badly about people when they were not there. If he had to say something, he would say it to the people in question, and he would do so in a tactful way, so as not to cause any embarrassment.

He also had a modern vision of work. We discussed this when Robin decided to leave his job, although it was very prestigious. According to Emilio, we still have a static idea of work. Competences are important, but you don't always need targeted and specific preparatory studies. He quoted great examples like Giancarlo Brasca, a graduate in philosophy and excellent CFO at the Catholic University or Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, a graduate in literary studies and excellent governor of the Central Bank of Italy.

As he grew older, Emilio started to share a bit more about himself. He told me that one day, at church for Mass, a beautiful girl came to sit on the bench in front of him and he thought: "This girl is really beautiful, but... I have chosen you my Lord!"

He also accepted an invitation to my house. My mum really worked hard to put together a nice lunch, but she did not want to sit with us! She was a "Martha" type of person, all busy preparing and Emilio really wanted to compliment her.

In more recent times he had become more affectionate and was happy to say something about himself (something that did not happen when he was younger). He also told me about his ailments and his failing memory.

I last saw him at his house on 19 November 2019, then the pandemic struck and the opportunities to meet were very limited. That time, I took him a nice cake to celebrate his 60 years at the Institute (however he did not remember that anniversary) and also his sixtieth anniversary as a physician.

In those years, he told me especially about his beginnings at the Institute, for which he was very grateful to Armando Oberti. He had met him at the Diocesan Centre of Catholic Action in Rome, as Emilio was the students' delegate. Armando then introduced him to Lazzati. Emilio continued to see Lazzati on his own. He went to visit him in Via della Chiesa Nuova and one day he went up to Milan and Lazzati was there to pick him up and told him: "There is a friend here with his car, he will drive us to the meeting". The "friend" was Enrico Camurati,<sup>12</sup> who remained as such and indeed took them to the meeting. The house in Via Aldini (the San Benedetto students' residence) was run by Giovanni Tenderini with Antonio De Cesaris as his deputy.

At that time and for many years afterwards, Emilio's spiritual director was Mons. Pericle Felici,<sup>13</sup> who had approved of him joining the Institute (after he had ascertained that it was not the Legionaries of Christ!) He joined the Institute at a very young age (he took his first vows at 24) and this meant he was senior in the Institute to many people who were physically older than him. This caused some awkwardness and Emilio told me about a painful situation linked to his young age when, during a visit to a Community, he told me: "I didn't cry because I never do, but that was one of the most awful experiences in my life."

Emilio noted that being from Rome made him feel somewhat like a bit of a stranger with the "centre" of the Institute that gravitated around Milan. This sort of feeling had to be tackled when Emilio was appointed President. He said that Giorgio Sala helped overcome the hesitation of some Institute members.

He also told me about when he worked as a physician in Gela at the ENI plant. He had got there through 'our' Giuseppe Restelli, at the time of the petrochemical hub of ANIC. His presence in Sicily was also linked to the Institute, since Giuseppe Martini had come back from Sicily in those years and the idea was to accompany the Community that was forming (Emilio told me that Lazzati considered the Institute so

12 Another time Emilio told me that Camurati had acted also as the secretary of the Institute - this is just to show how important this task is (in the past Giuseppe Vassena was also secretary). Emilio remembered that Giulio Gamucci was the first secretary he appointed, at Carlo Prestini's suggestion, who appreciated his discretion.

13 Subsequently Cardinal, remembered for his announcement *Habemus papam* followings the elections of Pope John Paul I and John Paul II.

important that he even thought about changing job to ensure its diffusion, something that actually happened in some cases). When he worked as a physician for ANIC, he clashed with all of the local physicians, with the exception of one - a socialist - who supported him. Thus, it was decided that he would move to the PIME nursing home.<sup>14</sup> However, he kept getting threats, they slashed his car tyres and he even received death threats, so Lazzati decided it was best for him to come back.

We never spoke much about his four-year experience in Somalia, but I know he had kept in touch with his former students who then became physicians and that made him happy. He was also happy to have received, from one of those physicians, an invitation to a medical conference in Eritrea in 2007. He took the opportunity, as he would often do, to meet up with local bishops.

Coming back to the Institute, he told me about his good relationship with Luigi Dossi, who held Emilio in great esteem and even went to see him in Sicily, and with Father Igino Ganzi, a Jesuit Provincial for Italy, who had made available a flat when Emilio did a course to become a medical officer in Florence.

He told me how his time doing his military service in Terni had left a profound mark in him because a series of circumstances, in particular several people resigning at the same time, meant that as a lieutenant medical officer, he also represented the healthcare authority civilly. Indeed, when he finished his military service, they pressured him to continue his military career.

He didn't speak much about his family. I remember seeing Emilio's mum at his house. She had Alzheimer's and was assisted by a carer. Once I went to his brother Alberto's house in Rome, with his wife, who was also suffering from Alzheimer's. He was very happy to have gone to Malaga in his later years to meet his brother Massimo.

Remembering Emilio cannot be done without remembering the difficult moments of his Presidency, when some of his decisions - first and foremost, the one about the initiatives for the youth at the Hermitage - produced misunderstandings and pain, especially because of the way in which they were taken, which cannot be separated from the subject of the decisions. I was pained by this because the people closest to my heart were involved. But, I was partially influenced by the attitude I felt I had towards my superiors thus I was unable, like perhaps I should have, to speak openly and honestly. It is important, however, to remember that, especially after the initial times, Emilio often discussed matters with me (seeking my views) and once, during those difficult years, he told me in a broken voice: "You must tell me if I go wrong." Some opposition he faced really saddened him, so much that one day he told me he was considering resigning. I did not think that would be a good choice and told him so. This helped me gain a different understanding of him, more human than the determined and assertive person I initially met.

Emilio certainly loved the Institute and was convinced of the important role that it has for the Church's mission. However, when things were discussed more recently, he expressed a certain scepticism because it was clear that it had lost authentic laity and openness to the world, as well as its brave, concrete gaze at new countries. Faced with his pessimism, I told him that the Institute was nothing but the reflection of what was going on in the Church, which was clearly withdrawing into itself. He reminded me that in the history of the Church the congregations that focused inwards, on their initial culture, were bound to disappear. This thought clearly drove him to go beyond Italy: if the Institute does not open up, it will die! He asked me, for

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<sup>14</sup> He established a lasting relationship with the sisters at PIME, which continued in the subsequent years. I remember, for instance, that during my first journey in India I was hosted for one night by Sister Bertilla, a contact of Emilio who ran a leprosy clinic. The PIME missionaries called him on several occasions to hold formation sessions on meeting other cultures.

instance, to read very carefully a book by Philip Jenkins<sup>15</sup> to understand how the future of the Church itself was moving towards new cultural and geographical realities.

It seems right, at this point, to share a few words on Emilio's legacy. When he died it is interesting to note that he basically bequeathed nothing material to the Institute (money, etc.), as if to say that his legacy is to be found elsewhere.

Much has already been said on his teachings by the President and Luciano Caimi's article as well as the different testimonies from all over the world. But there is something else.

If we think of our journey as consecrated lay people, it is clear that his life has made a great contribution to the spread and understanding of the vocation of Secular Institutes, not only acting as a Secretary first and then as President of CMIS, but also because of his personal relations with people and priests in many countries. It is a legacy we must pick up and I must confess I feel called into play here. I was saying earlier that Emilio was demanding - he was very demanding with me and sometimes I wasn't up to his expectations. To pick up his baton we must learn to be demanding with ourselves especially on this aspect: we must not give up on setting ambitious goals, particularly when it comes to spreading the Gospel - objectives that are reasonable to set.

A second teaching concerns secularity. Emilio lived secularity as a style, as a way of being and appearing, even before being a commitment. He was capable of thinking out of the box about the Institute (learning Italian, for instance, is a typical requirement of religious institutes, but he never wanted to impose that on non-Italian brothers). He also insisted on building a model of our vocation that is decoupled from religious spirituality. Today, many Secular Institutes are still too influenced and limited by it. He was always trying to separate what is essential to our vocation and what was simply a legacy from the past. He could not stand the religious habits that still exist in some Secular Institutes and perhaps in ours too (there is still a lot of work to be done). He used to tell me that if in a normal setting a young man uses the polite form (*lei*) for addressing someone older than him, he did not see why at the Institute the unnatural informal style (*tu*) had to be used. As regards secularity, that is to say the relationship with the world, Emilio lived its substance intensely, that is, relations. Here it was not easy to decipher him. He often appeared aloof and sometimes sharp in his personal relations, but he had an immense network of people he knew, from east to west worldwide. I'd like to say that he did not simply live these relations, he would chase them and he really felt the need to engage with people from different geographies.

Re-reading the earthly life of Emilio, like that of many brothers who came before us and keep pointing the road ahead, pushes us to tackle our journey as Christians in the world with renewed courage.

And now for some conclusions. I realise I dwelt a bit too much on memories, some of which are very dear to me.

Some of them made me remember how much Emilio trusted me, a trust I was not always able to live up to. Meeting him was crucial to me, not only for the time I spent with him, but also for what he taught me and

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15 The original title is "*The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity*".

the type of relationship we had. My human and Christian sensitivity, on many topics, was undoubtedly different from his, but I learned that you can learn and grow even with diverging views.

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## **Memory of a return to peace**

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**Giulio Gamucci**

I would like to remember Emilio Tresalti as someone who loved the Institute and tirelessly suggested and tried solutions to ensure its development and that it is fully part of the world and today's Church. He certainly had his character: authoritative, decisive and sometimes brusque...

In this piece, I would also like to remember Giorgio Sala, who loved and unconditionally devoted himself to the Institute, suggesting and proposing many activities that he did very well, both in Italy and abroad. From his father - a lawyer - I think he got from his strong, decisive nature, which sometimes made him a grouch, as he himself would admit...

Sometimes it is not easy for people with a decisive and resolute character to live in a community, especially if they have decision-making responsibilities. Emilio and Giorgio spent many years of their lives working side by side "in the vineyard of our Institute" and they both went the extra mile to make it grow. They did not always see eye to eye and, in some cases, they even clashed because they were both seeking to do what they say as best for the Institute.

They were important people for the Institute - they suffered and fought for its good. They worked passionately for it, tirelessly, from its heart, without sitting on their hands waiting for someone to get things done. They were always "going out" as Pope Francis recommends, carrying their ideas in true secular style.

I can still remember that, after they had been part of the Institute for many years, something happened that still fills me with emotion. It was Giorgio Sala's birthday and we met up to Capiago for the Italian Feast of Christ the King. During the prayer of the faithful (if I my memory services me correctly) at Sunday Mass, Emilio took the floor, suddenly, from his seat, to wish Giorgio Sala a happy birthday aloud. This certainly was out of the ordinary for Emilio, and Giorgio really appreciated it.

That day, a creative approach was used to get closer - they probably silenced their proud egos - but that little gesture was clearly sufficient to make them grow close again and spend the remaining years the Lord granted them in serenity and harmony.

Emilio and Giorgio died a handful of days apart, almost a confirmation of that reconciliation that happened on Earth.

How wonderful! Let us always remember that each misunderstanding, contrast or divergence must last at most one night, the following day we need to be ready to make peace.



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## **Goodbye to my dearest Dr. Tresalti**

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**Rickie Lam**

Glad to have a chance in sharing my feelings about my dearest Dr. Tresalti. I believe that it will be the last time that I express my deeper regrets in public. I have to speak or write English in my sharing here because Dr. Tresalti did not like my poor Italian used to make a dialogue with him. It was the similar case that he did not prefer to have any hug greetings with friends face to face like ordinary Italian.

In fact, I was very lucky to have him as my aspirant director. He told me that he did not like saying Rosary in a repetitive way, but God arranged his day of death in the month of Mary and let him hold the Rosary with hands as the photo shown in his coffin. I first heard the news of Dr. Tresalti's death from Giulio, who wrote in my WhatsApp in Italian: "Ti mando questo messaggio perche so quanto bene ti voleva" (English translation: I sent this message to you because I know how he loves you). When I read this message, my tears came out. Now I would like to make witness through my good memories with thanks on how Dr. Tresalti had expressed his deep fraternal love to me.

It was Tresalti who made the first interview with me in Tokyo of Japan, then followed by several times of aspirant formation in Tokyo, then in Taiwan, Hong Kong as well as in Rome later.

It was Tresalti who confirmed that my novice formation can be shortened up to three years which could be held in November of 2015 at that year of consecration, that he proposed to Giorgio, our previous President, about my situation as well as the rite presided by Hong Kong Archbishop Savior Hon, who was the secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda of faith at that time.

It was Tresalti who usually invited me to his house for dinner and chatting, but sometimes he would like to go outside for Chinese and Japanese noodles with me during these six years of my staying in Rome. In his house, I like to check the meal menu that he prepared for me, check the dishes cooked by his maid, particularly hearing his stories in the past with the Popes, Mother Teresa as well as the history of our Community, accompanied with seeing his precious photos.

It was Tresalti who cared about the important historical record of ISCR, and worried about those data being easily forgotten in our community, particular for those young members in Italy and those non-Italian members. Two years ago, I started to make an oral interview with him and tried to do the records that he made. He even asked me to check first with Robin, our previous vice-director, for those records in English. Then, he hoped that the draft could be submitted to our President Anthony for approval and later expanded to the Italian versions and other versions of languages for all the members of the ISCR.

Nevertheless, his fraternal love was also manifested on our conflicts probably with our sincere exposure of ideas. It was Tresalti who had often expressed his subjective comments on my studying, language learning and altitude of the faith, which aroused my passions, comments and arguments even sad feelings. He did not feel appreciated on my doctorate study of pastoral theology in Pontifical Lateran University, but proposed me better in the biblical studying at Gregorian University. He ignored my catechetical approach and the value of Catechism of the Catholic Church for the interpretation of faith, but regarded the priority on the use of Canon Law and Vatican II documents as the sufficient identification of Christian faith today. He kept

saying my action of making a sign with the holy water after Mass which was wrong in contrast of our faith. His subjective and negative criticism was particularly rather strong to me in the historical interview about Lazzati's original companion, Gemelli. He criticized harshly against his consecrated secularity as an Italian Franciscan friar, who focused apostolic dedication strictly tied to the own benefits of the Catholic University as a founder and its first Rector.

Last but not the least, when I met him last year June, I know that it would be the last time to see him. I felt comfort that I was invited to have a last meal in his house, which was about the meal in celebration of his birthday. Before leaving, I kept saying GOODBYE at the stairs of his apartment. In each of our gatherings, the greetings from Dr. Tresalti opened with kind saying with a laugh "Andrew, how are you? You still have a good shape" Dr. Tresalti, now I would like to reply you last and forever that you did win your everlasting life with a good shape forever in union with Christ. Have a eternal rest and peace in God's love.

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**See you soon**

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**Fabio Vescovi**

I met him thirty years ago, when I was an aspirant. Emilio Tresalti, then newly elected President of the Institute, had been invited by the representative for aspirants, Riccardo Salvini, to meet us. Back then, I knew very little about the Institute, but meeting someone like him certainly consolidated my choice for the Institute. I was fascinated by his international experience and the openness to other cultures and people that he could nurture because of his knowledge of foreign languages. With him, the Institute really became international. Back then the media was only starting to use the adjective "global" regularly and we understood this sign of the times under his wise guidance, discovering different cultures and people. So, our "secular" Institute truly became global. Perhaps, Emilio's legacy is more linked to the internationalisation, rather than his Presidency, that we know was far from smooth and had to weather some storms. As a skilful captain, though, he managed to steer our ship with rapid turns to the right, whereas everyone else wanted to go left and there were long periods of silence that we tried to interpret as orders.

Yes, because Emilio was tough, reserved and unpredictable when dealing with others. This was something I learned right from that first meeting thirty years ago. I was enthusiastic about the rapid growth of the Institute in the Congo (then Zaire), New Zealand, Poland and India, so I asked him: "But will these new members be able to follow the Institutes' activities, since they are so far away from us?" (there was no Internet back then). He answered crossly: "Well, what do you do?" as though I had asked that question to criticise his Presidency. I answered: "Here I have my director, the community etc...", he immediately said: "And they too will have their director, their community etc.!" After this, I never found it easy to talk to him.

However, I did not know then that his severity would soften up, a bit later, when he wrote me a nice letter when I was in Mozambique in 1993 for my military service with the UN blue helmets on a peacekeeping

mission. Emilio was one of the first to write to me, about one week after I had left. So, he actually answered my question concerning the life of the Institute in distant countries:

*Dearest Fabio,*

*We have an aspirant in Mozambique! A very special African adventure, since you are wearing a military uniform. How are you doing? In Africa, other brothers are living their faith and their commitment in conditions that vary considerably. Distances are large in geographical terms, but even more so when it comes to communication. However, they disappear in prayer and in the Eucharist.*

*I will be happy to receive news from you. In three days, I will be in Brazil where I will visit our brothers in the Amazon. We will remember you in the Easter Vigil. Hopefully, when I come back a letter from you will be waiting for me.*

*With love, Emilio*

*Rome, 3 April 1993*

I learned from him to give priority to being competent in what we do. Competence must really be at the heart not only of our work, but in general of everything we do, even a hobby, an interest or some news we have to share with others. In this, he really was an example, because he would only say something after collecting accurate information and this, in turn, would prompt him to study even more. He really was interested in many things.

I was really surprised by the quality and the depth of his contributions. However, despite my appreciation for his competence in everything he did, unfortunately he showed, more than once, little or no appreciation at all for my activities and contributions to the Institute. Under his Presidency, some of my articles for "Comunicare" were harshly criticised, whereas in other cases, he asked me to radically change some drafts. But, this "surly" attitude towards myself and others did not lessen the appreciation and affection I felt and still feel for him. It was a sort of unreciprocated love. But it was fine. Others, however, suffered because of this. Over the years, I tried to speak to him only when necessary, and I learned a lot from his communication style that was far from being "Roman", despite his origins. He was very dry, not prone to waste time and words.

His extensive international experience had taught him to be very accommodating of the customs and habits of other peoples and to integrate with them, Christian or not, without disguising his own identity. When he went to visit a village, he sought the market, not the church. He nourished in himself a sense of real freedom in how to interpret Christian life in the various styles of local life - for example, among our many brothers spread across the world - and he encouraged others to do the same. This Christian freedom is one of the aspects I appreciate most at the Institute. As a doctor, he spent much time in Somalia, learning the Somali language and specialising in infectious diseases, which was his field and took him to the very top at the Gemelli Hospital in Rome. A few issues back, he wrote in these pages about his experience during the hospitalisation of Pope John Paul II in 1981, following his attack. This all made him a model for professional and human competence.

I have been to many retreats with the Institute, but I remember two, maybe three, with real intensity. One was in Hong Kong in 2014, which he led. It was the first retreat I went to without a single Mass (the others

would be during Covid). We just had the Lauds in the morning and his speeches. He spoke of programmes and schedules with genuine reluctance: "...no, I'm not doing much." So, with just his short and essential meditations on the Word of God and on our life at the Institute, he prompted in me one of the richest spiritual moments I felt, with a strong experience of God, as I think Robin, Martin and Rickie, who were there, would agree.



*Hong Kong, May 2014: Emilio (in the middle) ate, as usual, with the chopsticks, but I (on the left) never learned to use them, and ended up asking the waiter for a fork! The other guests from the left: Robin Francis D'Souza, Martin Agyemang and Rickie Lam.*

For several years I have drawn intense benefit and peace from it in difficult times. But when, enthusiastically, I told him, he said nothing or perhaps he just dismissed me with the word "good". Still today, given the absence of regular Eucharistic celebrations, for me, those days in Hong Kong are a paradigmatic framework for secular spiritual life during the pandemic. He was a man of God so he did not see, with particular pride, the results he achieved in his spiritual life.

I would like to end with one of the last memories I have of him. When we all met in Rome, if I remember correctly in 2016, in Villa di Sassone, to celebrate the anniversary of *Provida Mater*. After the gathering, I saw him in the courtyard as he was about to leave. I noted he had a new car, but he said he'd only just bought it and it made a strange noise, so he needed to take it to his mechanic in Formello. As he closed the door, he said: "See you soon, okay?"

"Goodbye Emilio!"

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## **In Venezuela with Emilio**

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I had the opportunity to get to know Emilio, as a person and a consecrated layman, during our trips to Venezuela that we started doing together from 2009, a good 12 years ago.

I would like to mention here an aspect of his "vision of life" that, I am sure, was very close to his heart: being up-to-date with modernity, especially when it came to IT so that he could use such technology optimally.

His laptop was equipped with everything he needed for travelling: international keyboard, professional e-dictionaries (for instance the Spanish one from Real Academia Espanola), apps for formation (including spiritual), a programme with the main versions of the Bible in different languages with commentaries, text critiques and so on. I also found out he had a compact printer that was ideal for travelling (it was a PIXMA).

For him, such attention to detail was synonymous with respecting and welcoming people from different cultures (once, as we were waiting to board a plane, he made me understand that learning a language is an act of love). That is why he was particularly strict and demanding with me, not tolerating the slightest hesitation when I spoke Spanish (otherwise, during the return trip, I had to listen to his reprimands... and the flight back from Venezuela is a good 10 hours...).

In 2013, when he was invited, on two occasions, to speak about his service at the Gemelli hospital when Pope John Paul II was hospitalised there (on Union Radio, a national broadcaster, and then at the Basilica of San Francisco in Caracas) he stressed that he performed his professional service with diligence and passion for the "person" (regardless of the fact that it was the Pope).

I will always carry with me his advice and the lively recollection of his example, not only in my life as a consecrated person, but in my profession, trying to imitate - hopefully successfully - his ability to adapt to circumstances - from the most precarious to the most "luxurious" - with equal grace.

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## **Memorial service for Dr. Tresalti**

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**Ivan Netto**

I am happy to speak at this memorial service of late Dr Emilio Tresalti who was one of the nearest and dearest persons to me in my life and who is now forever enshrined in my heart. He was my role model in both my spiritual and professional life as we both were medical doctors and he was also my director in the Institute for many years. I saw in him a beautiful harmony between his spiritual & professional life.

I got to know Dr. Tresalti in 1987, when I joined the 'Christ the King Secular Institute' as a candidate at the age of 29 years about 34 years ago. I was in touch with him regularly till his sad demise a month ago. He was for me the earthly face of Professor Giuseppe Lazzati. He imbibed & lived the spirit of our constitutions which he carried with him during his many travels.

Secular Institutes were unknown in India when I joined the Institute. My parents over a family dinner with Dr T finally got to know about Secular Institutes. After meeting Dr. Tresalti they agreed with my decision that I could join the Institute. If it were not for Dr. Tresalti, I could have been somewhere else.

He was an apostle for Secular Institutes and for our Institute. He travelled along the length & breath of the globe to make members for Secular Institutes.

He was a visionary! He saw the reality very differently. He was the founder & advisor (Asian Conference of SIs) of when I was doing my term as President of ACSI. The general idea was having an ACSI meeting every two years at Bangkok since it was easily approachable for all. He helped us understand and implement that ACSI was meant to help Secular Institutes grow in Asia, so we must try to penetrate all Asian countries even the most unapproachable. So, during my term I organized the meeting in Philippines & Seoul. Now Secular Institutes are growing and organizing meetings all over Asia.

He was always passionate that SI -Christ the King grows all over the world. Whenever he came to India for a study session, retreat or ceremony of the vows he would always get an appointment arranged and personally meet the Cardinal, Archbishop or local bishop of the place which was not always easy. He met them and then described the vocation of Secular Institutes. This is how over the years Secular Institutes got known by the Church leaders and the world at large.

He was one of the most "techno savvy" persons considering his age. He used technology well for the spread of Secular Institutes and our Institute. I used a satellite phone for Institute work to keep in touch with the various zones and communities. Those were the days, when we did not have mobile phones or video conferencing like today.

India which has many poor people. My ideas initially of poverty, were that of Mother Teresa. I was concerned about the foreign travel because of the costs, as in India so many poor were in need of financial aid. I remember he once told me very firmly. "Let us live the poverty of Jesus and not the poverty of Judas." So for Jesus's work of building the Church and the world, he was very clear that we must use our finances. I too got convinced later. If I stayed with those ideas, I would not have been able to go ahead.

He was a great communicator with a respect for people and their cultures. I remember proof reading some of his talks, for the people of Somalia, where he spent many years away from Italy, where they loved him very much. He had friends all over the world. I asked him which was the best country once. He told me "Each country is different, there is no such country which I can say is the best." I know he had a special love for us in India and he told me once that he was planning to immigrate and retire in India. Later however he changed his mind. He liked to wear Indian clothes such as the "kurtas" and "Indian khadi jackets".

He was a man of "secular prayer." I noticed that he did not come across as a "pious" laymen, sitting in the front pews of the Church, but a layman immersed in his duties in the world. He had a love for the scriptures and the daily Eucharist. This was evident when he was giving his spiritual inputs.

He was also well read and had a great personal library. He had a deep knowledge about spiritual, professional and secular affairs. I was happy to download a lot of material from his laptop.. off course with his permission. Most of my presentations related to Secular Institutes are from his notes which I picked up from him during retreats and study sessions especially about the life of Prof. Lazzati.

On a more personal note, I may say that he was a loving and caring director. I was able to remain anchored in my vocation, during the most difficult times because of his support and encouragement. He listened with great patience to all matters which disturbed me and tried to help me see the God's plan for me. One of his penetrating words to me as a new aspirant was "You are never alone, God is always with you." His emails too were short and meaningful. I remember when I sent him my application for "perpetual vows." He replied back 'Remember "perpetual" means "forever." May God bring His work to completion in you'.

I saw him as the role model who I should follow. I was always in touch with him, through skype, till a month before he left us for his heavenly abode. He showed me all the medication he was taking etc. He also told me his memory was not so sharp. When I asked him do you remember me? He exclaimed "Off course!" I was happy to hear that.

They told me he has developed Alzheimer's so I was preparing myself for his good bye. I think the Lord took him at the correct time. I would not like to see him bed ridden etc. In his last years, he showed me how to grow old gracefully with the Lord.

I end with my prayerful condolences to his family members and to all of us whom he loved in the Institute dearly. If he were alive he would say "Just live your vocation...live secularity...don't cry.. we are going to meet soon". For me he is still alive in the Institute and in all of us who received formation from him, I talk to him about important matters and listen to him how he feels about it. Dr Tresalti you will live forever in our hearts, rest in the eternal peace of Christ and pray for us as we pray for you!

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## **Testimony of a colleague at Emilio Tresalti's funeral**

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**Lorenzo Sommella**

I think that the memories that the priest and the President General of the Secular Institute "Christ the King" shared, really show Emilio's spirituality - a consecrated man who was very reserved when it came to his faith.

I would like to share with you the lay - forgive my usage of this term - perspective of someone who worked with him for many years, nearly ten, alongside many friends and colleagues, some of whom are here. I say this because in his lay profession his action was silent. I find what the priest said to be very true. Certainly all of this gave him the strength to work, like he did, in a special context, where we all matured and grew stronger because of his teachings. In truth, I only stopped calling him professor a few years ago, because he was such for so long, but this did stop me from seeing my former boss as a friend or a colleague.

Emilio was a professor for those who learned so much from him and he was a real teacher to me, because at a time when teachings were scant, he taught us a difficult "job" in which you need technical skills and relational capacities, an aspect that requires reflection, an ability to make decisions and to take action.

He was strict and he was known for this. His main criticism of me was my slowness and he was right. Indeed, this is a trait that I tried to change, because in our profession you need to be quick.

He used to say that the Chief Medical Officer is a "big authorised director". This is a sentence that certainly some friends who are here will remember because these three words perfectly summarise his teaching and it is still what, after so many years, I tell medical residents.



*The glorious Tresalti team July 1994*

He was famous for being brusque and often he was, but it also didn't take much for him to soften. He was known for being very formal, but at home he would wear slippers, because they were more comfortable, and for being solitary, when he actually had many friends and people he helped.

So, in a nutshell, he was a difficult man to understand, but when we managed to "sync" with him he would open up and welcome you. He liked playing a "mysterious" role, and you never quite knew what he actually did during his numerous "business" trips to Burkina Faso, Libya or elsewhere.

He was a man of great dignity and this is something he showed clearly when he left his job, when he understood that the wind was changing, he made a decision that honours him: he decided to step aside.

I remember that before leaving the Gemelli hospital, we took a family picture all together. It was beautiful, it captured his team, a strong team, that we called, perhaps a touch over the top, "The glorious Tresalti team".

Of late, I had seen or heard very little of him. However, the few times we got in touch, he would always ask about my daughter and my wife, whom he had met, a token of sincere affection.

I didn't see him for a good number of years. I called him two months ago and he told me that he wouldn't get his Covid jabs.<sup>16</sup> He had never taken anything to protect himself.

He had travelled the world, going to areas that posed serious risks to his health. He had always been fine.

Unfortunately, he was unable to face the ultimate threat.<sup>17</sup>

Ciao Emilio and thank you for your teachings, I will remember you in my prayers.

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## **Sermon by the Parish Priest at Emilio Tresalti's funeral**

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**Father Giuseppe Celano**

Let me start my off from an ancient event - I say ancient because it dates back to the first time I met our brother Emilio.

I didn't know who he was. I was a young university student. It was after the Council and there was great activity and reflection going on in the Church, with the involvement of the laity, priests, religious people ... and there was a national conference on prayer.

Many people took the floor, one of them being Emilio. I was impressed by his personal testimony. He said: "I don't know why I have been invited to talk about prayer." He was already the CMO of the Gemelli hospital in 1972. He said: "The only thing I have to say is that in the morning I get up at 5 am and like everyone else I shave and then, after breakfast, I go to Church. At 6 I am in Church. Then I stay there, in prayer, for an hour." Everyone looked at each other: "One hour?" "I spend the first half hour to meditate on the Gospel, then I take part in Mass. I always take the Eucharist and then I go to the hospital between 7 and 7.30. I can only tell you that, if I didn't have that hour of prayer, my patience in a typical day at the Gemelli hospital would evaporate... Every time someone who might test my patience approaches me that hour of

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<sup>16</sup> Of late, he had told a brother in the Institute that he would get the jab if "it could be an example to others".

<sup>17</sup> Reference to the cardiac arrest that caused his death.

prayer saves my serenity, my peace and I try, as much as possible, to give the best of myself, trusting in the grace of God."

This was my first meeting with our brother Emilio and I always carried it in my heart. In the '80s, I was the Rector of our main seminary on the outskirts of Rome - some of you might be familiar with the area I am referring to - and I worked with another priest Father Ferdinando Fortunato, who also spent time in this community. He was his confessor and Emilio, very punctually every month, would leave Rome to go to the seminary and spend some hours with his spiritual director. Recently he moved to this parish. Every day he would come here, punctually, at 10, at first on his own, but later accompanied by his care-giver Helena. Then he was unable to come and now he has been taken here before the Lord.

Since we are celebrating this moment with faith, I feel I must say that this brother of ours lived his life with the Lord in his heart, and lived and worked in faith.

*"...he who eats this bread will live for ever."*

Emilio lived his life with the Lord and for the Lord. What he did, he did for the glory of the Lord and not for himself. It was to serve the Lord that he carried inside. Receiving the Lord meant to live with Him and for Him. His entire life was a testimony of that. And I like to think of this in evangelical terms, because this is a word that was really embodied in him. The Lord, physician of the souls, taught him to be like Christ in the souls of bodies. He would always bring a word of comfort, which is what Jesus did in his time. So he lived the charism the Lord gave him as a great service to people. This is what makes a person great. Not the prestigious position one might reach. The power of the faithful is the service to those who need it most.

This is the fundamental characteristic of the Christian testimony: being at service of the others and making faith alive through one's actions. Not lip service, but silently spending all of one's energies at the service of those the Lord puts on our path.

*"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"*

This is a shocking question. How can a man give up his entire life for others? This is shocking because surely we must keep something for us, right? Nothing, we must give everything, soul and body. Intelligence, strength, everything we own must be given as a sacrifice, like a victim that offers himself or herself to God.

He was a consecrated man. When we say "consecrated", we must remember that the totality of the person's life is put at God's disposal. After all, through baptism we are all prophets, kings and priests. A priest is someone who offers his life to God, but the baptismal source consecrates all of us to be priests, so a victim and an offering for the others. I believe that this conscience of being a consecrated person for the good of the world always accompanied Emilio.

We would like to thank the Lord for the good this brother did with intelligence, generosity and in silence. We want to thank him because he enriched the Church with a great testimony and we welcome such testimonies so that our life too can become a testimony. This is the true legacy Emilio left us and it is useful to make our world beautiful.

Let us entrust him to the Holy Virgin so that she can embrace him, welcome him, because just like she embraced Jesus dead on the Cross, she may embrace him in the expectation of the resurrection that we celebrate, most specially at Easter, which is light for the world. Amen

Next are some meaningful writings by Emilio Tresalti that also are a historical testimony for our Institute:

1. One article he wrote to comment on the First World Congress of Secular Institutes in 1970 (in 1972 CMIS would be established).
2. An article about Pope John Paul II's stay at the Gemelli hospital following the assassination attempt in 1981.
3. A contribution in 1971 about the growth of the Institute.
4. His important contribution, following his participation as an auditor in the Synod of Bishops in October 1994.
5. His contribution at the Asian Conference of Secular Institutes held in Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam) in September 2018. One of his last before the pandemic. He had been invited as a speaker to the Conference. Some of our brothers also participated.

There is a multi-lingual video of the relevant Eucharist celebration, with the sermon, available at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpfMFtNTgZQ> where Tresalti can be seen in the 20th and 53rd minutes.

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## A close look at the Congress (Comunicare 1970)

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**Emilio Tresalti**

What you felt and saw at the Congress wasn't a sort of pocket-size-ready-to-use Holy Spirit, like the ones that are pulled out at many Christian gatherings, depending on personal or group needs.

Not at all, it was the Spirit that comes from the Father and the Son, the Spirit that the Son sent his Church and that is present in every believer. It is the Spirit which bears the fruits of holiness, unity, joy and peace.

I saw it and felt it during the Congress.

Do not start laughing now. I am serious.

I saw it through the eyes of faith and I felt in my heart.

I saw it and felt it in men, things, people, facts that became transparent to my eyes, that spoke a silent language to my heart. But, just like "diplomatic" work, didn't the Congress consist of the work of thinking, the effort to understand each other, the simultaneous interpretation, the agreements, the disagreements and the group discussions?

No, it was the Spirit.

From the opening speech by Cardinal Antoniutti to the speech by the Pope, with the testimonies of the individual institutes (more than the general speeches), there was a single narrative of consecration and secularity. It was single, but with multiple expressions. Single, for the majority of Institutes, but not identical for everyone. What was the same for everyone was the desire for the love of God and the world, a total dedication to God and men and the salvation of the world, bringing God to the world and the world to God.

The way to achieve this is not acting like outsiders, but from within, consecrating the world, not making it sacred. Also, loving the world with God's love and ordering temporal things according to God.

If somebody was not clear on this, listening to what was being said, they felt their hearts open. "At last we have found a clear, explicit way of framing what we felt with some confusion, but was still inside us. Yes, that

is the way we wanted to live. We could not find the way or the right expression, but now we understand. Help us answer more authentically to our vocation, to what the Lord helps us feel inside."

If Secular Institutes are a grace for today's world, they are and will be in so far as they are truly authentic. The International Congress was a grace today for Secular Institutes. The organisers did real apostolic work, in the deepest sense of the meaning. And, in the name of the Lord, we thank them.

And what about us? Us, at the Secular Institute "Christ the King"?

I heard somebody say they had seen smiles returning to the faces and eyes shining with joy on our Institute representatives.

In the meeting, through dialogue with others, we understood who we are. I am not saying this to show off. But to remind us all of our responsibility.

Look, we have a huge responsibility. Not because Armando organised the Congress. Not because our President is in the Pontifical Commission for Secular Institutes. Not because one of us is the Secretary of the International Commission that will continue the work of the Congress (of course that plays a part).

But, mainly because many Institutes look at us as a model, because we are a benchmark and encourage reflection.

So we have a great responsibility before the Church and God. This responsibility must encourage us to be fully, radically consecrated so as to belong fully to God and be entirely secular. In other words, it is about being faithful to the call. Let's think about that.

Let's live our lives with enthusiasm, joy, renewing them in Christ every day and being open to the world.

The International Congress invites us to do this, regardless of the legal issues (yes, they are somewhat important, since we are made of flesh and bones). We must engage in dialogue with others, with the brothers of other Secular Institutes, with all baptised people and those we call 'distant'.

Would you like some figures? Some data? Here you go, I'll share a few: 420 participants, 92 institutes, representatives from all over the world, from Canada to Chile, from England to Italy, from Spain to Yugoslavia, from Syria to Congo. The only places that were not represented were the Far East and Australia.

Thirty hours of meetings, excluding those of the President Generals, and the spontaneous discussions between institutes or individual participants.

16 hours of common prayer, without considering the silent, individual prayer of each of us.

Five official languages spoken. And the secretary's work? It was 24 hours a day by a truly dedicated team.

Now, the Congress has ended and Domus Mariae is empty. But, the dialogue continues through the international commission. It is a dialogue among Christians, men and women, from all over the world who are committed to full faithfulness in God and the world.

They want to be at the cutting edge, with young people who seek new roads. In the midst of wars that plague the world, they want to bring peace. How? Through their total consecration to God, they bear fruit through secular life, in dealing with temporal affairs and ordering them according to God, and through being the signs of the living God in the world, witnesses of Christ's resurrection.

I don't feel there is any need for me to add more. I don't want to dwell on the details. I don't feel like sharing them. You can ask those people who were at the Congress and they can tell you them first-hand. I only feel like thanking the Lord and living my vocation as authentically as possible.

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## **Wojtyla, the patient (Comunicare, 1981)**

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**Emilio Tresalti**

I received many requests from the press to interview the nurses and staff who looked after the Pope. I would personally have granted such authorisation, within the bounds of professional decency, but the people involved absolutely refused. Their reasons: "These experiences are too personal and deep to share with the press".

I'd say something similar is happening to me as I try to write something for *Comunicare*.

Somehow it felt normal, each day, to take part in the Mass he co-celebrated with his secretaries. I had the chance to admire his faithfulness to "pious practices", which came as a bit of a surprise. Right from the beginning, even when he was in the ICU, he would ask his secretaries to read out the breviary at the correct times, in front of him, so that he could at least follow silently. There were also the two sisters who help him out at home and were present at the hospital right from the beginning of his time there. The night following surgery, it was nearly one in the morning, but they did not go to bed until they had finished the prayer of the liturgy of the hours, vespers and compline, because they hadn't been able to recite these before! A good half hour of prayer after Mass, often accompanied by singing, is the rule. On his bedside table, there is always a Rosary with large beads.

John Paul II is a man of prayer who, through prayer, nourishes his faith and the strength with which he carries out his work of confirming his brothers and sisters. He is an extremely simple man, for whom there are no false problems. He makes everyone feel comfortable with his solid and rich human energy. He was a demanding guest, clearly, in some respects. The security and the media-related issues are two key aspects (on which I have gained considerable experience of late).

A friend wrote to me: "The King has entrusted his Vicar into your hands". This sentence really struck me. Of course, this is no minor responsibility. At times, I have to remind myself of this when I am tempted, either out of pseudo-respect for the 'skills' of others or for other reasons, not to intervene or to let go .... The responsibility to the human family, to the Church in this particular historical moment, to Poland and everything that Poland means vis-a-vis the Soviet empire, all of this can be influenced by my concrete, day-to-day conduct at work. Providence decided to go through this hospital and these people who are called Policlinico Gemelli. "Go and see. See what those in there, the Sanhedrin, decided." This is what the Pope told a sister who came to us the other day as we were having a coordination meeting to organise our daily activities.

Today he was discharged, happy. "You thought you'd made a new man out of me, but instead you have the same old slacker," he told me. Certainly, he and his "family" taught us many things. As I said to Sister Tobiana when she said goodbye and was extremely grateful: "I think we have to thank you for what you gave us, in these days".

Does this apply to any patient, to anyone who needs this hospital? Of course it does. Every person deserves respect - *gloria Dei vivens homo* (the glory of God is the living man) - but the Pope is the Pope after all.

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## **The growth of the Institute is a duty (Comunicare 1971)**

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**Emilio Tresalti**

I asked a friend, who is the President General of a Secular Institute of priests: "What do the priests in your Institute think of institutes of consecrated laymen?" He answered: "They think nothing". Why? "Because they don't know them. Or, perhaps, some know they exist, but in abstract terms, they have never met a layman who is totally consecrated to God in the world, a layman that belongs to a Secular Institute."

I also asked some foreign friends: "How come in your countries there aren't any male Secular Institutes?" They would answer: "We don't know about them. Nobody we know lives this sort of life. Why don't some of you come and teach us about them?"

Don't these answers set you thinking? In my case, they certainly do.

Let's consider ourselves as an Institute or, if you want, as a group. We have a common vocation, a common mission (vocation and mission are never decoupled in the history of salvation). It is the vocation of the lay called to order the temporal realities according to God, a lay person who wants to radically live his baptismal commitment, permanently using the means that enable him to be totally and radically consecrated to the Lord.

In 1952, the Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Schuster, canonically established the Secular Institute Milites Christi Regis in his diocese. What were the implications of this? He told that group of laymen: I, the pastor of God's Church here in Milan, tell you: you are on the good path, you are fully aligned with the Gospel, but I am going to entrust you with a mission for which you are and must be responsible before the Church of Milan.

In 1963, Paul VI approved the "decretum laudis" which established the Institute according to pontifical law. This, in other words, means: I, Paul, who am the pastor of the Church of the Lord that is widespread on the Earth, confirm that you are on the good path; moreover, I entrust to you the mission for which you are responsible, not before the Church of Milan, but before whole of the Church. I open the doors of all the churches and I put you in charge of the mission of the consecrated layman in all churches.

Some years later, when he received us during our Roman pilgrimage, he told us: "Bring your vocation to extreme consequences." I think these words must be interpreted in two senses:

1) in an individual, personal sense; this refers to deepening our baptism, our commitment to the evangelical counsels, to live our presence in the world with increasing awareness (there is no need to dwell on this now);

2) in a collective or community way, to anchor and deepen, in other words, expand our presence in the Church to the "...extreme consequences".

So, if I look around in my working environment, if I read the papers, if I listen to my neighbour, if I travel the world, I see and I feel the needs of the world and the Church, whether these are expressed or silent and I say: the growth of the Institute is a duty, it is a commitment that comes from our vocation and it is part and parcel of the mission Christ gave us, as individuals and as a group, through the pastors he chose for His church. Growing, for the Institute, is not a luxury. It is not a matter of boasting. It is not a consequence of the "spirit of belonging". It is because we are called and we need to answer the call. Let us not just think of Italy. We need to go outside because other cultures and other situations require the presence of our vocation. It is not sufficient to go to Africa to directly help developing countries. It is not sufficient to go to Latin America for the same reason. Those are all good things that need to be encouraged. But the Church must be present in all of its components, everywhere, to fully answer its call and mission. We might say, for instance, the Church is not totally implemented if the contemplative side is missing. The same applies if the church is totally and fully implemented, but there is no consecrated lay life. Who, if not us, must have and actually has the responsibility for this aspect of the Church before the world? I am convinced that Secular Institutes are a grace for the world and the Church today. But there is a bad shortage of male lay Secular Institutes. We certainly have a big responsibility in this sense.

So, we need to go everywhere, with a specific goal: so that the Institute can be well grounded, develop and grow everywhere, bear the fruit that the Lord expects from us, since He has filled us with talents that we cannot bury.

This is not a sort of triumphalist proselytism. No, I am convinced that it is an urgent, pressing duty that we cannot and must not ignore.

It is not just a task for the President or the Council to go out and do. It is our task - for each of us. We need to ask our people to go out with this goal, running some risks, because we are lay people, trusting in the spiritual help the Institute can give us, but not on material certainties. It is worth it.

Some people might object. "But you, who write these things, what are you doing?" My friends, I am ready, I say it loud and clear, if the President so wishes. But, here's my reply to this: you, who are reading, what are you doing? You too, say that you are ready, provided your directors do not see anything against it. And if they do, offer the Lord your pain for not being able to go.

## **SYNOD OF THE BISHOPS - 9TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

### **Contribution of the President General of**

### **the Secular Institute "Christ the King" and member of the**

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## **Executive Council of CMIS - held on 6 October 1994 - afternoon**

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**Emilio Tresalti**

Let me start by thanking the Holy Father for wanting this Synod to deal not only with religious life, but also with consecrated life. I would also like to thank the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life and the General Secretariat of the Synod for taking practical steps to ensure the presence of members of Secular Institutes at this 9th General Assembly.

Hopefully, the presence of us, members of Secular Institutes, will contribute, from our side, to making this Assembly an event full of grace for all God's People.

Given the nature of our vocation, we are well aware that new values and cultures are coming to the fore where consecrated life must bear fruit, as part of the new evangelisation of the contemporary world. We believe that our Institutes can make a specific contribution to the evangelisation of cultures.

We want to be known and recognised for what we are - or should be - according to the design of our founders and the founding documents of the Church Authority.

I would like to emphasise some aspects that relate, more specifically, to lay Secular Institutes, making reference to paragraphs 8, 10, 16 and 33 of *Instrumentum Laboris* and to some excerpts from Cardinal Hume's report.

1 - Members of Secular Institutes are on the level of being, rather than doing. If somebody asks me: What do you do? My spontaneous answer is: "Nothing". We do not have our own works. Each of us has our own profession, our own job. Within our own personal vocation, each of us is committed in social or political affairs, trade union matters, volunteering or ecclesial (diocesan or parochial) activities, like any other "committed" layperson.<sup>18</sup>

This begs the question as to the point of such special consecration, with vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Such an objection is often raised by the ecclesial world. Such an objection is rooted in the tendency for consecration not to be appreciated for what it is, but rather for what it does. It is not yet clear that "Consecrated life has a value per se for the Church and has an impact on its life and its mission, beyond the efficacy of the contribution given to the works."<sup>19</sup>

2 - Members of Secular Institutes have a similar vocation to the laity, as defined/described by *Lumen Gentium* and worded as follows:

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<sup>18</sup> See EN 70, Paul VI, *Speech to the Presidents General of Secular Institutes*, 25/8/1976 John Paul II, *Speech to the Presidents General of Secular Institutes*, 28/8/1980.

<sup>19</sup> See *Relatio ante Disceptationem* 4a

The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God... Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to shine light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.<sup>20</sup>

In order to understand and enable the development of Secular Institutes, it necessary to have a precise understanding of consecrated life and jointly of the lay vocation.

In this sense, I think that Secular Institutes meet the profound needs of today's world, as highlighted by the *Instrumentum Laboris* and by many contributions from the Synodal Fathers.

I am referring especially to evangelisation. It does not "belong" to Secular Institutes to be involved in the pastoral and direct evangelisation. Instead, their members will bring the richness of evangelical virtues, strengthened by special consecration and their commitments in life according to the evangelical counsels, to all settings and situations of today's world. This applies both to countries that have long been evangelised and those of more recent evangelisation. They will do so through their competent commitment to temporal realities and their testimony of a life lived according to the Gospel.

In order to bear fruit, Secular Institutes and their members must be faithful to their own vocation. It is not acceptable to be like (slightly) secularised religious groups. Nor must they be totally absorbed by the spirit of the world, which is at odds with the concept of secularity defined in the Vatican II documents, especially LG and GS.

As such, we are witnessing, not without some concern, attempts made by some bishops to establish Secular Institutes as a more flexible form of religious life, less demanding in canonical terms and more easily manageable. We also see Orders and Congregations that, given the lack of new vocations, try to get involved with the laity, potentially with commitments typical or similar to those of consecrated life, to carry on works for whom manpower is badly needed. I do not think that this renders a good service to the Church or the cause of the Gospel.

We think that we must improve the knowledge of all forms of consecrated life in the vocational pastoral, especially for men, because often the only option for them is to become priests or deacons.

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**Consecrated secularity:**  
**the Church Magisterium and my experience**

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**Emilio Tresalti**



Emilio Tresalti, in the middle, at Mass with the Asian Conference of Secular Institutes, held in Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam), in September 2018.

## ***Introduction***

This is an introductory speech and no attempt at all will be made to make it a keynote speech. I would simply like to share with you some reflections that are linked to the Church Magisterium and my own experience. My hope is to leave you with some food for thought.

For centuries, the adjective "secular" and, above all, the noun "secularity", in the language of the Catholic Church, have been used in a very negative way, with non-religious or anti-religious overtones.

The terms "secular/secularity" only started to gain a positive sense in 1947 and 1948, in the two founding documents of Secular Institutes, that is, "*Provida Mater Ecclesia*" and "*Primo Feliciter*" issued by Pope Pius XII. However, the modern concept of secularity in the Christian sense has been explained only by Vatican II, especially in the dogmatic constitution "*Lumen Gentium*".

*What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature. [...] The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer. [LG 31]*

According to the Catholic Church, Secular Institutes should find a vital blend of secularity and consecration. Here, the word "and" is fundamental. This "and" is expressed and clearly developed in Canon Law (Canon 713, paragraph 2).

*In the world and from the world, lay members participate in the evangelizing function of the Church whether through the witness of a Christian life and of fidelity toward their own consecration, or through the assistance they offer to order temporal things according to God and to inform the world by the power of the gospel.*

Speaking recently to the Presidents of Secular Institutes, Pope Francis said the approval of Secular Institutes has been truly revolutionary.

Now, I would like to give you a bird's-eye view of the concept and the word secularity in the world.

A brief look at history shows us that in early human societies religion was ubiquitous. All of the distinctions we make today among religion, politics, economy and society did not make any sense.

Now, one of the meanings of secularity relates to the public space, that is, secularity means excluding religion from one or more governments, armies, state schools, laws on matrimony, free trade and so on. This is not necessarily against religion or religious institutions, but rather it is done as a distinction. Caesar is not God, or better, his representatives and religious institutions do not interfere with Caesar's competences and vice-versa.

A second meaning of the word secularity could be linked to the progressive loss of religious beliefs and practices, people - both individually and as a group - move away from God and do not go to Church. This notion is close to "secularism".

A third meaning focuses on the conditions for believing. It basically marks the passage from a society in which believing in God is untouchable and actually does not pose any problem, to one where religion is perceived as one of many options. For instance, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the western world it was virtually impossible not to believe in God and not accept His existence. Today, in many western settings, it is really difficult to believe and show it openly, even if often this belief is treated with respect or, at least, tolerated.

The term and concept "secularity" always refers to religion.

In Asia, there are about 40 active Secular Institutes under pontifical law, out of a total of 82 in the world. Two of these were actually founded in Asia: one in Japan and the other in India. I do not have recent figures on Secular Institutes under Diocesan Law.

The Secular Institutes that were founded in Asia were set up by foreign missionaries. Similarly, most of the Secular Institutes now present in Asia were introduced by foreign missionaries. In many cases, they were initially conceived as help for missionary activities. Most of them are female.

The concept of secularity, which animated the founders, was mainly linked to the flexibility of individual members and their works and activities. This concept provided priests with a practical way to understand

Secular Institutes. The theological concept and the understanding of secularity was, in general, not that important, if not totally foreign, to the founders.

Can we still talk of a special role for Secular Institutes in Asia?

Before trying to reply, I would like to express a few considerations about secularity in Asia.

Asia is a massive continent, with many political, cultural, religious and economic differences. However, there are some common aspects that differentiate it from Europe. One of this is religion. Asian people live in an enchanted world, much more than Europeans. Europe started a process of disenchantment many centuries ago.

Religion is everywhere, even in the most technologically advanced areas. Religion takes up all of the public and private spaces. Even in countries that proclaim themselves secular, or that, apparently, managed to "secularise", there is a sort of gaze over the past that translates into public actions or laws.

Secularity, in Christian terms, is linked to the biblical narration of the creation. In most "Asian" religions, the relationship between human beings and nature is different. For instance, in Buddhism and Shinto the divine lies in nature itself, whereas there is no such thing as the concept of a "creator" who created Nature (the Universe) from outside or the top. This is the backdrop for Asian cultures.

Now a big question comes to the fore: is secularity in Asia understood and experienced in the same way in Europe, Africa or America?

Since they are a minority, to what extent can Christians be secular in non-secular societies?

*Knowledge, morality, the arts, government and the economy should become religious, but from within and freely, not by external imposition.*

(M. Epstein quoted by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor in

“A Secular Age”. Belknap Harvard 2007).

### ***What do we mean by "consecrated life" here and now?***

*The Holy Spirit, who wondrously fashions the variety of charisms, has given rise in our time to new expressions of consecrated life, which appear as a providential response to the new needs encountered by the Church today as she carries out her mission in the world.*

John Paul II - Apostolic Exhortation "Vita Consecrata" no. 10

The members of Secular Institutes are seen above all as those who seek their consecration to God in the world through the profession of the evangelical counsels and temporal realities. In this way, they wish to be the leaven of wisdom and witnesses of grace from within cultural, economic and political life. Through their special combination of presence in the world and consecration, they try to make present the newness and the power of Christ's Kingdom in our society, trying to change the world from within with the power of the Beatitudes. So, although they totally belong to God and therefore are entirely consecrated to His service, their daily activities in the world contribute, with the power of the Spirit, to bringing the light of the Gospel

to temporal realities. Secular Institutes, each according to their nature, help guarantee that the Church has a real presence in society. Clerical Secular Institutes play a very important role. In these, priests who belong to the diocesan clergy, even if some of them are incardinated in an institute, are consecrated in Christ through the practice of the evangelical counsels, in full respect of a specific charism.

*Can. 573 §1. The life consecrated through the profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living by which the faithful, following Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, are totally dedicated to God who is loved most of all, so that, having been dedicated by a new and special title to His honor, to the building up of the Church, and to the salvation of the world, they strive for the perfection of charity in the service of the kingdom of God and, having been made an outstanding sign in the Church, foretell the heavenly glory.*

*Can. 712 Without prejudice to the prescripts of cann. 598-601, the constitutions are to establish the sacred bonds by which the evangelical counsels are assumed in the institute and are to define the obligations which these same bonds bring about; the proper secularity of the institute, however, is always to be preserved in its way of life.*

*Can. 713 §1. Members of these institutes express and exercise their own consecration in apostolic activity, and like leaven they strive to imbue all things with the spirit of the gospel for the strengthening and growth of the Body of Christ.*

*§2. In the world and from the world, lay members participate in the evangelizing function of the Church whether through the witness of a Christian life and of fidelity toward their own consecration, or through the assistance they offer to order temporal things according to God and to inform the world by the power of the gospel.*

Secular Institutes, as said before, should bring together in a vital blend secularity and consecration. What Paul VI said in 1972 is still true and current:

*To be in the world, that is, to be committed to secular values, is your way of being the Church, of making the Church present, of working out your own salvation and being heralds of redemption. The condition in which you live, your life description in human society becomes your theological self and your way of bringing salvation into the realm of reality for all the world to see. In this way you are an advance guard of the Church "in the world": you are yourselves an expression of the Church's mind: to be in the world in order to shape it and sanctify it "as from within, like leaven in the dough" (Lumen Gentium, 31) a task, remember which falls mainly on the shoulders of the laity. You are a clear, tangible, telling proof of what the Church sets out to do for the building of the world of "Gaudium et spes".*

Quoting the Canadian philosopher: "Knowledge, morality, the arts, government and the economy should become religious, but from within and freely, not by external imposition".

This is the task of the lay (Christians). What the exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* says about the laity applies directly to the members of Secular Institutes by Paul VI in his speech of 25 August 1976:

*If they remain faithful to the vocation proper to Secular Institutes they will become "an experimental lab" where the Church can test the practical ways its relationships occur in the world. Therefore, they must listen to the appeal contained in the Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi, as it is addressed especially to them: "Their primary and immediate task is to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world. Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media." (no. 70)*

This - being faithful to one's own vocation - is the destiny of all Secular Institutes whose members live both the secular condition and the (special) consecration. Before 1947, this co-existence was unthinkable and even prohibited.

Therefore, adequate discernment of vocations and adequate formation of members are two key objectives for Secular Institutes. Failure to have adequate discernment, which has been reported as an issue for some decades, by some members of the Institutes, often leads to shrinking numbers.

Members of Secular Institutes must be "equipped" to be what they should be. By consequence, their formation must focus on their vocation and it cannot be borrowed, let alone adjusted, from the formation of the religious.

This is a challenge for Secular Institutes in Asia and, above all, for Christians in Asia!

To conclude my speech, I would like to share with you the example of a consecration lived in secularity. In other words, the example of a consecrated man who was also a fully secular man. I could have chosen others, men and women, but this time I have chosen a person who had a special bond with Vietnam.

Giorgio La Pira (1904-1977) was an Italian Professor of Roman Law at Florence University and a politician who was a member of the Constituent Assembly, the body that wrote the Italian Constitution following World War II. He would also become the mayor of Florence twice (1950-1956 and 1960-1964). When La Pira was mayor of Florence, his influence extended well beyond this city.

In his public and private life he was a tireless champion of peace and human rights and he was committed to improving the lives of the poor and those who did not have civil rights. He was member of the Secular Institute "Missionaries of Christ's Kingship". He went, several times, on official visits to Russia, China and Vietnam during the Cold War to promote peace and human rights, topics that western politicians would never mention.

He visited Vietnam in 1965 and met Ho Chi Minh to whom he presented a draft plan for peace. This prepared the groundwork for the agreement that put an end to the Vietnam war.

He was a fully secular and a fully consecrated man. His canonisation cause has been open since 1986.

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## **Condolences**

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CONGREGATIO  
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE  
ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE

Città del Vaticano, 11 maggio 2021

Prot. n. IS 7205/21

Egregio Presidente,

avendo appreso della morte del Professore Emilio Tresalti, desideriamo porgerle le nostre più sentite condoglianze, in unione alla preghiera di suffragio e ad un particolare ricordo al Signore, con la certezza che sicuramente intercederà presso Dio a favore del vostro Istituto.

Per lungo tempo Presidente dell'Istituto Cristo Re, è stato Segretario generale e Presidente della Conferenza Mondiale per gli Istituti secolari (CMS), nonché consultore di codesta Congregazione che gli è particolarmente grata per l'apporto competente e generoso ricevuto.

È stata una personalità di indubbio spessore per gli Istituti secolari, di cui è stato un instancabile promotore nella Chiesa, i suoi scritti hanno contribuito ad illuminare il Magistero della Chiesa sugli Istituti secolari e a far crescere la conoscenza di questa peculiare vocazione.

È stato inoltre consigliere di molti Istituti e ha promosso infaticabilmente la creazione di diverse Conferenze continentali e nazionali.

Grati al Signore per la sua testimonianza di fedeltà alla Chiesa ed alla vocazione secolare ricevuta, vi assicuriamo le nostre preghiere e, continuando ad implorare su tutti voi il dono dello Spirito Consolatore, cogliamo volentieri la circostanza per salutare e benedire ogni membro dell'Istituto con affetto e stima, in Cristo Gesù.

  
João Braz Cubas  
Prefetto

  
\* José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.  
Arcivescovo Segretario

  
Egregio sig. Antonio Vendramin  
Presidente Generale  
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20129 MILANO (MI)

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*"To fully understand the mission of Secular Institutes we need to know and understand the mission of the laity" (Emilio Tresalti).*

We have learned today, with great sadness, that Professor Emilio Tresalti passed away in Rome at 86 years of age. For a long time he was the President of the Secular Institute "Christ the King" and he was the General Secretary (1972-1980) and President of CMIS (1996-2000), Consultant to the Congregation of Consecrated Life and a staunch promoter of Secular Institutes in the Church.

He has been an adviser to many Institutes and has promoted the creation of many continental and national conferences. His personality, dedication, dynamism and kindness were extraordinary. We owe him a lot.

Now he is in the peace and joy of God. Let us pray for him and be thankful.

*The Presidency of CMIS*

Rome, 3 May 2021

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Following Emilio Tresalti's death, many messages of condolences arrived from many Secular Institutes from all over the world.