

To continue to safeguard one another in our journey...

Concluding Message

Dearest Sisters,

In this concluding message, I would first like to express my deep gratitude for your sincere, responsible, and active participation in all the moments of the Consultative Assembly, during which we also had the grace of celebrating the Jubilee of Consecrated Life.

It was an intense time of work for us in the General Council as well, but we received so much—above all, as the fruit of your attentive listening and the Conversations in the Spirit.

I would like to leave you with one final message in this concluding moment, before you return home—back to your daily work, to your own Provinces and Delegations and challenges therein.

I hope that the many graces and inspirations received may be like lights for the road ahead.

I would like to share some words from our Prefect, Sr. Simona Brambilla, who, during the last Plenary meeting of UISG, told us that, as Consecrated Life, we are living in the *time of the moon*.

“Today’s multicolored context, along with a sharper awareness of our smallness—fostered by declining numbers and an aging population—urges us to embrace a **style of synodal presence** in which the expression «**lunar**» happily finds its place: humble stars called to illuminate, along with other stars and planets, the firmament of this night that is our time... In fact, our time can be considered as night: the sun has set, and it is the time of the moon. The real light gives way to reflected light. It is a time when **the contours of reality are not so marked**. It is also a time when slumbering ghosts awaken within and among us, taking the form of **a thousand questions, uncertainty, and fears**: Who are we? Where are we going? What will we be like? Where will we end up? ... Will we come to an end? «»

Night-times can be scary. But **night is also the best time for creativity**. The moon’s discreet glow provides the space for freedom, allowing the seekers not only to see with their eyes but also to imagine, feel, and intuit. The moon **restores inner vision**. The moon leads us to the invisible. It leads to the time of dreaming, to the time of intimacy, and to the time of returning to fundamental questions. It is a time of life and death, of conception and childbirth, a time of hope, expectation, and transformation. We feel this challenge on our skin every day: **the challenge to read the signs of this night-time and to interpret them in accordance with the Gospel**.

This is «our hour.» Not the hour of the blazing, solitary sun, but the hour of the humble and communal star. The night in which we are called **to recover our inner vision in order to perceive the essential, and to free ourselves from the fleeting lights of all that is not the Gospel**. The night in which we sense profoundly the need **to rediscover the authentic values of our consecration**. The night in which, as individuals, as communities, as institutes, as consecrated life, we feel within ourselves, sometimes in an excruciating way, the call to «return to the center,» understood as the **fiery core that animates our vocation**.

This is **our hour**: it is up to us to seize it as a nocturnal time of labour, a prelude to the birth of new life, necessarily small and unarmed. It is night. Blessed night. Night of Advent. Night of Easter. **Night of rebirth**” (Sr. Simona Brambilla).

Sisters, it is difficult to dwell in the night, precisely because in the night things are unclear, and we cannot keep anything under control, as we would like. Indeed, like the world around us, we too are tempted to seek out and create artificial lights—to let ourselves be dazzled by what is not Jesus, by what is not essential.

But we, who—through the various services asked of us—are called to be *custodians of love*, to help our Sisters *walk together in hope*, know that in order not to lose our way, nor lose those who have been entrusted to us, we must follow the Great Shepherd, the One who can guide us even in the night.

He is the Shepherd, the custodian, and the guide; He is also the gate for the sheep: whoever enters through Him will be saved (cf. *Jn* 10:7–9). Let us then follow this Shepherd who promises us life in abundance.

But He is a unique Shepherd—He is the Shepherd who gives His life, the Shepherd who offers His life; no one takes it from Him, but He lays it down by Himself (cf. *Jn* 10:18). It may seem like a contradiction, but this is the true reality: He is the Shepherd who, in order to save our life, became the Lamb—the Lamb who was slain.

“The **Lamb**, at the centre of the throne, **will be their shepherd**,
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (*Ap* 7:17)

So, as we go home, we surely carry with us the image of the Good Shepherd from the Mosaic of Galla Placidia, but let us remember that this Shepherd is the Lamb who gives His life.

To continue being safeguarded along the journey, it is Him we must follow.

O God, Provident and Merciful Father
every day you give us Your Spirit
to follow Your Son, Shepherd and Lamb,
to safeguard and take care of our sheep
and to give our life for them.