



**WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE  
WILL BE CELEBRATED FEBRUARY 2, 2021.**

*We pray for all who have responded to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to the consecrated life. May they continue to be inspired by Jesus Christ and reveal Christ's love to all whom they encounter.*



**Letter to all Consecrated Persons 2021 :  
Congregation for Consecrated Life**

"We draw close to you on the eve of a day dear to us, and to all consecrated men and women. A day dedicated to our wonderful vocation that makes God's love for men, woman and the entire universe shine forth in various ways. On 2 February in St. Peter's Basilica, at 5:30 p.m., we will celebrate the XXV World Day of Consecrated Life. Pope Francis will preside over the Eucharistic Celebration, void of the signs and joyful faces that illuminated it in previous years, yet nonetheless expressing the fruitful gratitude that characterizes our lives.

With this letter, we wish to lessen the physical distance imposed on us for so many months by the pandemic and express to each of you and to every community, our closeness as well as that of those working in this Dicastery. For months we have been following the news coming from the communities in various nations: they speak of bewilderment, the spread of infection, deaths, of human and economic difficulties, institutes that are decreasing in number, fears... but they also speak of a fidelity tested through suffering, courage, a serene witness even

in the midst of pain or uncertainty, sharing every affliction and every wound, caring for and being close to the most needy, charity and service at the cost of one's life (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, ch. II).

We cannot mention all your names, but we ask the Lord's blessing on each and every one of you, so that you may be able to move from "I" to "we", realizing "that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together" (Pope Francis, Extraordinary moment of prayer, Friday, 27 March 2020). Be the Samaritans of these days, overcoming the temptation to turn inward and weep for yourselves, or to close your eyes to the pain, suffering, and poverty of so many men and women throughout the world.

In the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis invites us to act together, to bring about a rebirth in everyone "a universal aspiration to fraternity" (n. 8), to dream together (n. 9) so that "in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship..." (n. 6).

Consecrated men and women in religious, monastic and contemplative institutes, in secular institutes and new institutes, members of the *ordo virginum*, hermits, members of societies of apostolic life, we ask all of you to place this Encyclical at the center of your life, formation and mission. We cannot disregard this truth any more: we are all brothers and sisters, as, in fact, we pray, not necessarily consciously of it, in the Our Father, that "without an openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity" (n. 272).

This Encyclical, written in a historical moment that Pope Francis himself has called "the hour of truth," is a precious gift for every form of consecrated life that, without denying the many wounds to fraternity, can find in it the roots of prophecy.

We are faced with a new call from the Holy Spirit. In light of the doctrine on the Church-communion, just as St. John Paul II urged consecrated persons to "be true experts of communion and to practice the spirituality of communion" (*Vita consecrata*, n. 46), Pope Francis, drawing inspiration from St. Francis, founder and inspirer of so many institutes of consecrated life, broadens the perspective and invites us to be architects of

universal brotherhood, custodians of the common home: of the earth and of every creature (cf. Encyclical *Laudato si'*).

Brothers and sisters towards all, regardless of faith, culture and traditions, because the future is not “monochrome” (n. 100) and the world is like a polyhedron that lets its beauty shine through its different facets.

It is a question, then, of creating ways of accompanying, transforming and creating; of developing projects to promote a culture of encounter and dialogue between different peoples and generations; of starting with one’s own vocational community and then reaching to every corner of the earth and every creature, because, never as during this pandemic, have we experienced how everything is linked, everything is related, everything is connected (cf. Encyclical *Laudato si'*).

“Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all” (FT n. 8). Therefore, in light of this dream that is entrusted to our hands, to our passion,

and to our perseverance, this coming 2 February will once again be a beautiful feast to praise and thank the Lord for the gift of our vocation and mission!

To Mary, our Mother, Mother of the Church, faithful woman, and in this year dedicated to Saint Joseph, her spouse, we entrust each of you. May you be strengthened in your living and loving faith, certain and joyful hope, humble and active charity.

We invoke the blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, our merciful God, on each of you.”

*João Braz Card. de Aviz Prefect*

*José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M. Archbishop Secretary*

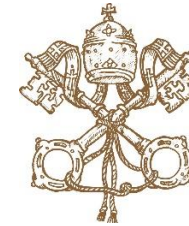


### REFLECTION

*“Why did you do this? Because you fell in love with Jesus, you saw everything in him, and enraptured by his gaze, you left the rest behind. Religious life is this vision. It means seeing what really matters in life. It means welcoming the Lord’s gift with open arms”*

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
 24th World Day for Consecrated Life, Vatican Basilica  
 Saturday, 1 February 2020

*The Full Homily from Pope Francis, Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020  
 on the 24<sup>th</sup> World Day for Consecrated Life, Vatican Basilica.*



“My eyes have seen your salvation” (Lk 2:30). These are the words of Simeon, whom the Gospel presents as a simple man: “righteous and devout”, says the text (v. 25). But among all at the temple that day, he alone saw Jesus as the Saviour. What did he see? A child: a small, vulnerable, simple child. But in him he saw salvation, for the Holy Spirit allowed him to recognize in that tender newborn “the Lord’s Christ” (v. 26). Taking him in his arms, he sensed by faith that in him God was bringing his promises to fulfilment. And that he, Simeon, could now go in peace: he had seen the grace that was worth more than life (cf. Ps 63:4), and there was nothing further to wait for.

You too, dear consecrated brothers and sisters, you are simple men and women who caught sight of the treasure worth more than any

worldly good. And so you left behind precious things, such as possessions, such as making a family for yourselves. Why did you do this? Because you fell in love with Jesus, you saw everything in him, and enraptured by his gaze, you left the rest behind. Religious life is this vision. It means seeing what really matters in life. It means welcoming the Lord's gift with open arms, as Simeon did. This is what the eyes of consecrated men and women behold: the grace of God poured into their hands. The consecrated person is one who every day looks at himself or herself and says: "Everything is gift, all is grace". Dear brothers and sisters, we did not deserve religious life; it is a gift of love that we have received.

My eyes have seen your salvation. These are the words we repeat each evening at Night Prayer. With them, we bring our day to an end, saying: "Lord, my salvation comes from you, my hands are not empty, but are full of your grace". Knowing how to see grace is the starting point. Looking back, rereading one's own history and seeing there God's faithful gift: not only in life's grand moments, but also in our fragility and weakness, in our insignificance. The tempter, the devil focuses on our "poverty", our empty hands: "In all these years you haven't got any better, you haven't achieved what you could have, they haven't let you do what you were meant to do,

you haven't always been faithful, you are not capable..."and so on. Each of us knows this story and these words very well. We see this is true in part, and so we go back to thoughts and feelings that disorient us. Thus we risk losing our bearings, the gratuitous love of God. For God loves us always, and gives himself to us, even in our poverty. Saint Jerome offered much to the Lord and the Lord asked for more. He said to the Lord: "But Lord, I have given you everything, everything, what else is lacking?" "Your sins, your poverty, offer me your poverty". When we keep our gaze fixed on him, we open ourselves to his forgiveness that renews us, and we are reassured by his faithfulness. We can ask ourselves today: "To whom do I turn my gaze: to the Lord, or to myself?" Whoever experiences God's grace above all else can discover the antidote to distrust and to looking at things in a worldly way.

There is a temptation that looms over religious life: seeing things in a worldly way. This entails no longer seeing God's grace as the driving force in life, then going off in search of something to substitute for it: a bit of fame, a consoling affection, finally getting to do what I want. But when a consecrated life no longer revolves around God's grace, it turns in upon itself. It loses its passion, it grows slack, becomes stagnant. And we know what happens then:

we start to demand our own space, our own rights, we let ourselves get dragged into gossip and slander, we take offence at every small thing that does not go our way, and we pour forth litanies of lamentation – lamentation, “Father Lamentation”, “Sister Lamentation” – about our brothers, our sisters, our communities, the Church, society. We no longer see the Lord in everything, but only the dynamics of the world, and our hearts grow numb. Then we become creatures of habit, pragmatic, while inside us sadness and distrust grow, that turn into resignation. This is what a worldly gaze leads to. The Great Saint Teresa once said to the sisters: “woe to the sister who repeats these words, ‘they have treated me unjustly’, woe to her!”

To have the right kind of view on life, we ask to be able to perceive God’s grace for us, like Simeon. The Gospel says three times that he was intimately familiar with the Holy Spirit, who was upon him, inspired him, roused him (cf. v. 25-27). He was intimately familiar with the Holy Spirit, with the love of God. If consecrated life remains steadfast in love for the Lord, it perceives beauty. It sees that poverty is not some colossal effort, but rather a higher freedom that God gives to us and others as real wealth. It sees that chastity is not austere sterility, but the way to love 2 without possessing. It

sees that obedience is not a discipline, but is victory over our own chaos, in the way of Jesus. In one of the regions affected by earthquake in Italy – speaking of poverty and community life – there was a Benedictine monastery that was destroyed and another monastery that invited the Sisters to come and stay with them. But they were only there for a short while: they were not happy, they were thinking about their monastery, about the people there. In the end, they decided to go back to their monastery, which is now two caravans. Instead of staying in this big, comfortable monastery; they were like flies there, all of them together, but happy in their poverty. This happened just last year. It is a beautiful thing!

My eyes have seen your salvation. Simeon sees Jesus as small, humble, the one who has come to serve, not to be served, and defines himself as servant. Indeed he says: “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace” (v. 29). Those who see things as Jesus does, learn how to live in order to serve. They do not wait for others to take the initiative, but themselves go out in search of their neighbour, as did Simeon who sought out Jesus in the temple. Where is one’s neighbour to be found in the consecrated life? This is the question: Where is one’s neighbour to be found? First of all in one’s own community. The grace must be

sought to know how to seek out Jesus in the brothers and sisters we have been given. And that is precisely where we can begin to put charity into practice: in the place where you live, by welcoming brothers and sisters in their poverty, as Simeon welcomed Jesus meek and poor. Today, so many see in other people only hindrances and complications. We need to have a gaze that seeks out our neighbour, that brings those who are far-off closer. Men and women religious, who live to imitate Jesus, are called to bring their own gaze into the world, a gaze of compassion, a gaze that goes in search of those far-off; a gaze that does not condemn, but encourages, frees, consoles; a gaze of compassion. That repeated phrase in the Gospel, which, speaking about Jesus, says: “He had compassion”. This is the stooping down of Jesus towards each one of us. My eyes have seen your salvation. The eyes of Simeon saw salvation because they were expecting it (cf. v. 25). They were eyes that were waiting, full of hope. They were looking for the light and then saw the light of the nations (cf. v. 32). They were aged eyes, but burning with hope. The gaze of consecrated men and women can only be one of hope. Knowing how to hope. Looking around, it is easy to lose hope: things that don’t work, the decline in vocations... There is always the temptation to have a worldly gaze, one devoid of hope. But let us look to the Gospel and see Simeon and Anna: they

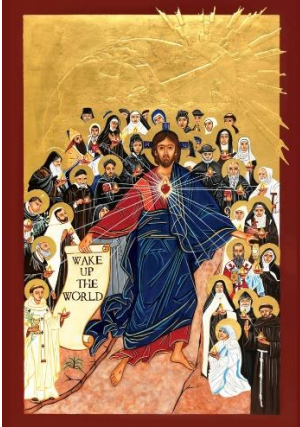
were elderly, alone, yet they had not lost hope, because they remained in communion with the Lord. Anna “did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day” (v. 37). Here is the secret: never to alienate oneself from the Lord, who is the source of hope. We become blind if we do not look to the Lord every day, if we do not adore him. To adore the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us thank God for the gift of the consecrated life and ask of him a new way of looking, that knows how to see grace, how to look for one’s neighbour, how to hope. Then our eyes too will see salvation.”

**The following recent Church documents are helpful in understanding vocations to religious life.**

- \*Amoris Laetitia      \* Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People
- \*Laudato Si            \*Misericordiae Vultus      \*Rejoice!
- \*Evangelii Gaudium                                      \*Lumen Fidei





"... May you continue to be inspired by Jesus Christ and respond generously to God's gift of your vocation..."

**PRAYER:**

Loving and Generous God,  
it is You who call us by name  
and ask us to follow You.  
Help us to grow in the Love  
and Service of our Church  
as we experience it today.

Give us the energy and courage of  
your Spirit to shape its future.  
Grant us faith-filled leaders  
who will embrace Christ's Mission  
of love and justice.

Inspire us to know you better  
and open our hearts to hear your  
call.

We ask this through our Lord.

Amen

(adapted from USCCB.org)

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS GO FORTH!**

Remember the beauty of your first call.

Jesus continues to call you today with the same full love and untamed grace.

**GO FORTH!** There is always more to do, to encounter, to be grateful for, to be astonished by. Begin and end with the joy of prayer—the marrow of consecrated life.

**GO FORTH!** Each of us has a role to play in the Church. Witness and sow well each day, and look to tomorrow with hope.

**GO FORTH!** Grow in love for God so that others will be attracted by the divine light in you. Welcome the new vocations the Lord sends to continue the work of consecration. We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of God and first disciple of her son, Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.