



The Holy See

**VIDEO MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE VIRTUAL
CONTINENTAL CONGRESS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE,
ORGANIZED BY CLAR**

[13-15 August 2021]

[Multimedia]

Greetings to all of you who are participating in this Virtual Continental Congress of Religious Life, organized by clar, on the theme “Toward an Intercongregational, Intercultural and Itinerant Religious Life”.

Thank you for your participation I would like to remind how important the challenge of inculturating the faith is to consecrated life. How much good it would do for us to discover that unity is not uniformity but a multifaceted harmony (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *[Evangelii Gaudium](#)*, 220). And let us not forget that it is the Holy Spirit who creates harmony. A multifaceted harmony allowing us to accept differences and appreciate particularities, in the spirit of a healthy and open interculturality.

Your presence is necessary so that an inculturated theology can be offered and developed, one that can, of course, be adapted to local situations and can be a vehicle for evangelization. Let us not forget that a faith that is not inculturated is not authentic. For this reason, I invite you to enter into what will provide us that reality, that will provide us the true sense of a culture that exists in the soul of the people. Enter into the life of the people of faith; enter with respect for their customs, their traditions, seeking to carry out the mission of inculturating the faith and of evangelizing the culture. It is a pairing, to inculturate the faith and to evangelize the culture. Appreciate what the Holy Spirit has sown in the peoples, which is a gift for us as well (*[ibid.](#)*, 246).

When this inculturation does not take place, Christian life, and even more so consecrated life, ends up with the most aberrant and ridiculous Gnostic tendencies. We have seen this, for

example, in the misuse of the liturgy. What matters is ideology rather than the reality of the people. This is not the Gospel. Do not forget the pairing: inculturate the faith and evangelize the culture.

Consecrated life is expert in communion. Consecrated life is itinerant; it is a promoter of fraternity. Nevertheless, in our time one has to face the temptation to “survive”. How often do you count how many men or women religious are in my congregation, and calculate the decline. Survival is a temptation. It is good to renounce the criterion of numbers, of efficiency, which could turn you into fearful disciples, locked in the past and giving in to nostalgia. This nostalgia is fundamentally the siren song of religious life.

Given this, the wisest strategy and decision would be to take advantage of the opportunity to journey with the Lord on the paths of hope, aware that the fruit is under the exclusive guidance of the Holy Spirit.

So, what do we have to do? Join the holy people of God, respect the holy people of God, evangelize, give witness and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit.

To help achieve the goal you have set for yourselves, I would like to remind you that joy, the highest expression of life in Christ, is the greatest witness we can offer the holy people of God, whom we are called to serve and accompany on their pilgrimage toward the encounter with the Father.

Joy, joy in many forms. Peace, joy, a sense of humour. Please ask for this grace. [In the Exhortation on holiness I wanted to include a chapter on the sense of humour](#). It is so sad to see consecrated men and women who have no sense of humour, who take everything so seriously! Please. To be with Jesus is to be joyful; it is also having the capacity for this sense of humour that holiness gives. Read this chapter in my Exhortation on holiness.

I hope you have a good virtual meeting. May God bless you all and may the Holy Spirit grant you the light of his grace so you may always be men and women of encounter and of fraternity. May the Blessed Virgin watch over you. She knows what encounter, fraternity, patience, inculturation are. She knows all this. May she watch over you. And now, as is customary, ... it is up to you: do not forget to pray for me, I really need it. Have a good meeting.

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