



The Holy See

SPECIAL MESSAGE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II FOR WORLD DAY OF CONSECRATED LIFE

Archbishop Franc Rodé, C.M., Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, presided at the traditional Mass for consecrated persons in St Peter's Basilica. Here is a translation of Archbishop Rodé's brief introduction in Italian to the Holy Father's Message for the Day.

"On the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, the day on which the Son of God, conceived in eternity, is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit as "a light for revelation to the Gentiles' and the "glory for your people Israel', we are gathered here to renew our consecration to the Lord. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I convey to you all the personal greeting of the Holy Father, who thanks you for the affection you have shown him and for your fervent prayers. He joins us here at this moment with his prayers and he sends us his Blessing. Let us listen with grateful hearts to his Message to the consecrated men and women of the world".

Archbishop Rodé then read the Pope's Message:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Today, we are celebrating the *Day of Consecrated Life*, a favourable occasion for thanking the Lord together with all who are called by him "to the practise of the evangelical counsels, and who make faithful profession of them, bind[ing] themselves to the Lord in a special way. They follow Christ who, virginal and poor (cf. Mt 8: 20; Lk 9: 58), redeemed and sanctified men by obedience unto death on the cross (cf. Phil 2: 8)" (*Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 1). This year the celebration acquires special importance because we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the promulgation of the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, through which the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council updated the guidelines for the renewal of the consecrated life.

During these 40 years, in obedience to the directives of the Church's Magisterium, Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life have followed a fertile path of renewal, marked on the one hand by the desire to be faithful to the gift received from the Holy Spirit through their

Founders and Foundresses and, on the other, by concern to adapt their way of living, praying and acting to "the present-day physical and psychological condition of the members. It should also be in harmony with the needs of the apostolate, in the measure that the nature of each Institute requires, with the requirements of culture and with social and economic circumstances" (*ibid.*, n. 3).

How could we not thank the Lord for this timely "updating" of consecrated life? I am certain that it will also lead to the multiplication of the fruits of holiness and missionary activity, on condition that consecrated persons keep their ascetic zeal unaltered and instil it in their apostolic works.

2. The secret of this spiritual ardour is the Eucharist. In this year specially dedicated to the Eucharist, I would like to urge all men and women religious to establish an ever more profound communion with Christ by sharing daily in the sacrament which makes him present, in the sacrifice which actualizes the gift of his love on Golgotha, the banquet which nourishes and sustains God's pilgrim people. "By its very nature", as the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* affirms, "the Eucharist is at the centre of the consecrated life, both for individuals and for communities" (n. 95). Jesus gives himself as Bread "broken" and Blood "poured out" so that all may "have life, and have it abundantly" (cf. Jn 10: 10). He offers himself for the salvation of all humanity. Taking part in his sacrificial banquet does not only entail repeating his gestures but also means drinking the same cup and taking part in the same immolation. Just as Christ makes himself "bread broken" and "blood poured out", so each Christian, and especially every consecrated man and every consecrated woman, is called to give his or her life for the brethren, in union with the life of the Redeemer.

3. The Eucharist is the inexhaustible source of fidelity to the Gospel, for in this sacrament, the heart of ecclesial life, the deep identification and total conformation with Christ to which consecrated persons are called, is completely fulfilled. "In the Eucharist all forms of prayer come together, the Word of God is proclaimed and received, relationships with God, with brothers and sisters, with all men and women are challenged. It is the Sacrament of filiation, of communion and of mission. The Eucharist, the Sacrament of unity with Christ, is at the same time the Sacrament of Church unity and community unity for the consecrated person. Clearly it is "the source of spirituality both for individuals and for communities" (*Starting Afresh from Christ*, n. 26). Consecrated people learn from the Eucharist "a greater freedom in the exercise of the apostolates, a flourishing with greater awareness, a solidarity expressed through knowing how to stand with the people, assuming their problems, in order to respond to them, paying close attention to the signs of the times and to their needs" (*ibid.*, n. 36).

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us penetrate the mystery of the Eucharist guided by the Blessed Virgin Mary and following her example! May Mary, Woman of the Eucharist, help all who are called to special intimacy with Christ to participate diligently in Holy Mass and obtain for them the gift of prompt obedience, faithful poverty and fruitful virginity; may she make them holy disciples of Christ

in the Eucharist.

With these sentiments, as I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, I willingly bless all consecrated persons and the Christian communities in which they are called to carry out their mission.

From the Vatican, 2 February 2005

JOHN PAUL II

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