



DICASTERO

PER GLI ISTITUTI DI VITA CONSACRATA  
E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA

Vatican City, 25 January 2023

Prot. n. Sp.R. 2930/23

To all consecrated persons,

At this time when a synodal spirit is being breathed into the Church, we have the joy of celebrating on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the feast of the Presentation, the 27<sup>th</sup> Day of Consecrated Life, with a Eucharistic Celebration in the Basilica of St. Mary Major. In the absence of the Holy Father due to his apostolic journey to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, the celebration will be presided over by His Eminence Cardinal João Braz de Aviz. Through this day we gratefully recall the immense grace of our vocation to be “a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting” (*Vita Consecrata* n. 22) and, aware that his grace is sufficient for us (cf. 2 *Cor* 12:9), we ask him with humility and trust, to live the gift of fidelity and the joy of perseverance.

On this day we are united with all the communities of consecrated life scattered throughout the world, pilgrims in the same land that sustains us and in which we live this history that challenges us. God continues to call us to consecrate our lives in the different forms that complement and enrich each other, and that are above all a gift for the Church. Institutes of consecrated life (religious, monastic, contemplative, secular, “new institutes”), the *Ordo virginum*, hermits and societies of apostolic life express the whole of consecrated life that translates the Gospel into a particular form of life, that knows how to read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith and that seeks to respond with dynamic fidelity (cf. *VC* 37) to the needs of the Church and the world.

The synodal journey has guided our previous messages, in which we emphasized communion and participation. In this message we focus on mission: “widening the tent” is an attitude at the heart of missionary action, as the title of the Working Document for the continental phase of the synod reminds us. Mission leads us to the fullness of our Christian vocation; it gives us the opportunity to return to God’s style that “is closeness, compassion, and tenderness” which is expressed in words, presence, and bonds of friendship. We cannot separate ourselves from life; it is necessary for someone to care for “the frailties and poverties of our time, healing wounds and healing broken hearts with the balm of God” (Pope Francis, *Beginning of the Synodal Journey*, 9 October 2021).

“Mission is the oxygen of the Christian life: it invigorates and purifies it” (Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 11 January 2023). To live mission in God’s way as consecrated persons, we need the breath of the Spirit, who oxygenates our consecration, who widens our tent, who does not allow the desire to go out and reach out to others to proclaim the Gospel fade or be eclipsed, who rekindles the missionary fire in us. He is the real protagonist of the mission and at the same time the one who maintains the freshness of our faith so that it does not wither away.

This day prompts us as consecrated persons to ask ourselves questions: do we powerfully and frequently invoke the Spirit and ask him to rekindle in our hearts a missionary fire, apostolic zeal, passion for Christ and for humanity? Are we impelled to "speak of what we have seen and heard" (1 Jn 1:3)? Do we feel a longing for Christ? Do we suffer and risk in harmony with his pastoral heart? Are we willing to "widen our tent," to walk together? Above all, we ask ourselves: is it the Person of Jesus, his feelings, his compassion, that excites our hearts?

Always, even in recent years, consecrated sisters and brothers have taken on the same sentiments as Jesus that led them to give their lives for their sisters and brothers. On this day we celebrate their blood shed in union with Christ, which is more eloquent than any talk of mission. Alongside them is also the blood shed by the victims of war, violence, hunger and injustice.

We who touch God's salvation day by day experience mission as a free gift to others of all that we are and have. We who "touch the sorrowful and glorious flesh of Christ in daily history" widen our tent and thus share "a destiny of hope, that unquestionable note that comes from knowing we are accompanied by the Lord." We Christians cannot keep the Lord to ourselves: the Church's evangelizing mission expresses its total and public involvement in the transformation of the world and the care of creation (cf. Pope Francis, *Message for World Mission Day*, 6 January 2021).

No matter where we are, if God's Love is in our hearts, we are living our consecrated mission. This mission enlarges the space of our tent and teaches us to grow in sincere harmony, strengthening bonds, walking together, with Mary's solicitude and her deep joy.

Together, in fellowship and participation, we are God's Mission!

May Mary accompany us on our missionary journey.

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

João Braz Card. de Aviz  
Prefect