

PROGRAM OF VIGILS BEFORE THE BEATIFICATION OF FR. FOUNDER

Dear Confreres,

The “Program of Vigils” is prepared for the 12-month period and embraces all Marian communities. It also shows the community’s designated day of the month in every month and the appropriate liturgical texts for an hour-long meditation/adoration, our guiding principle being that every community should hold a prayerful vigil once a month on the designated day. Please make sure that the “vigil” takes place on your designated day/night. Naturally, if one month it should become difficult to accomplish it is better to move it to another day than to abandon your turn altogether.

The vigils’ outlines are prepared by Fr. Dr Maciej Zachara, M.I.C., a Liturgist. However, it is possible for a community to hold this prayerful meeting in a different way, should they wish so. The important part is to hold the vigil regularly, on the designated day. It is understood that a community may hold on this day their monthly day of recollection. The Polish translation of Fr. Founder’s writings is the fruit of work of Frs. W. Makos, M.I.C., R. Pietka, M.I.C., and C. Krzyzanowski, M.I.C.

Fr. Andrzej Pakula, M.I.C.

DESIGNATION OF VIGIL DAYS TO EACH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY:

1. Rome, Melbourne, Adelaide
2. Warsaw–Stegny
3. Chicago, Puszcza Marianska
4. Curitiba, Mongaguá, Marijampole
5. Nyakinama, Kibeho, Marianapolis, Kenosha
6. Plano, Darien, Gora Kalwaria + Marianki
7. Gozlin, Avellaneda
8. Rosario, Kaunas + Panevezis
9. Warsaw – Praga
10. Warsaw – Marymont, Vilani
11. Skorzec
12. Grudziadz + residence in Koscielna, Chicago III
13. Lichen
14. Stoczek Warminski, Rezekne, Izvalta
15. Lublin Seminary +House of Studies + Kostomloty
16. Lublin II, Rdzawka
17. Elblag, Vilnius,
18. Sulejowek, Eden-Hill
19. Zakopane, Rzepiska, Atok
20. Steubenville, Grzybowo
21. Fawley-Court, Curitiba, Adrianópolis
22. Curitiba III +Novo Mundo + Mafra
23. Manoel Ribas, + Barra Santa Salete
24. Orsha, Druya + Rosica
25. Balsamao, Hradek + Praha
26. Fatima, Brumov-Bylnice + Dudince
27. Khmelnicky, Vilgertshofen + Epfach
28. Cherniovtsy + Sevastopol, Obermedlingen
29. London, Karaganda, Mohyliv
30. Gorodok, Kharkiv, Turvo
31. Rio de Janeiro, Barysau + Zhodino.

OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS FOR THE DAY OF RECOLLECTION

Opening Prayers

For good preparation and experience of Fr. Founder's beatification

Let us pray for the Servant of God, Fr. Stanislaus Papczynski's elevation to the altars. Let us also pray for his intercession for us that we may be worthily prepared for the grace of his beatification and put it to a fruitful use for the benefit of our sanctification.

O God, Father of Mercy, You called Your Servant Stanislaus to found the Congregation of the Immaculate Mother of Our Lord; grant that he be elevated to the altars and that his work may grow unhindered worldwide.

Hear us, o Lord!

O Lord Jesus, in Your Servant Stanislaus You gave us an example of giving proper honor to Your Mother, Mary; grant us through his example the longing and strength to imitate her virtues.

Hear us, o Lord!

O Holy Spirit, You are the inspiration of the shepherds of the Church; teach us by the example of Your Servant, Stanislaus, to faithfully and zealously assist them in spreading of the Gospel, particularly in places where the need is greatest.

Hear us, o Lord!

O God, Just and Merciful Judge, You filled the heart of Your Servant, Stanislaus, with love for the dying and the souls suffering in Purgatory; grant us the zeal to assist the dying and the deceased through prayers, penance, and sacrifice.

Hear us, o Lord!

O Lord of the Harvest, You call workers to Your Vineyard; in trust we ask You to send our community new vocations so that, in response to the needs of the Church, we may fulfill Your work for Your greater glory and the honor of Mary Immaculately Conceived.

Hear us, o Lord!

O God, in Your unfathomable mercy You do not reject anyone but embrace them with love; grant us through the intercession of Your Servant, Stanislaus, the grace of a good preparation for his beatification.

Hear us, o Lord!

May the example of his life wholly and trustfully given to the Lord in every circumstance along with his care for people in great need and deprived of spiritual and financial help, as well as his faithful love for the Crucified Christ, and his imitation of His Immaculate Mother be our incentive for renewing the grace of our vocation and our faithful perseverance in the Religious Family, which he started.

Hear us, o Lord!

May his apostolic fervor ignite our pastoral zeal and may his desire to sanctify all the children of the Church awaken our diligence; may his persevering prayer for the souls in Purgatory strengthen our efforts in helping the faithful to attain the eternal homeland and rejoice in the contemplation of Your Image. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Prayer for the Congregation, according to Bl. George Matulewicz-Matulaitis

Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, graciously look upon this Congregation founded in your Name and in the name of your Immaculate Mother. Gaze upon, visit, and perfect that which your right hand engrafted. Multiply its company and augment its joys. Gather us from all tribes, peoples, and nations. This in your house, O Lord Jesus, your house. Let no stone be found in it, which your sacred Hand would not have placed therein. Preserve and sanctify us, whom You have called, that we may praise your holy Name, accomplish your works, and courageously wage your battles. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

LITURGICAL OUTLINE OF THE VIGIL

Version I

- a. Beginning of the day of recollection (according to the house custom).
- b. Communal reading of the Church Magisterium's documents and Fr. Founder's writings (instead of a conference).
- c. Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament (at least 30 minutes long) with reading of the designated biblical passages.

NB: Adoration may take place immediately after the reading of the Magisterium's documents and Fr. Founder's writings. It may be also held at the community's convenience, i.e. at the end of the day of recollection.

Version II (for communities that start their day of recollection on the previous night)

- a. Beginning of the day of recollection (on the previous night).
- b. Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament (at least 30 minutes long) with reading of the designated biblical passages (on the previous night).
- c. Communal morning prayers with a time for reflection, during which the Magisterium's documents are read, (a while later) followed by Fr. Founder's writings

Version III (for communities where the Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament cannot take place for whatever reason)

- a. Beginning of the day of recollection.
- b. Communal reading of the Magisterium's documents and Fr. Founder's writings (instead of a conference).
- c. Communal morning prayers with a time for reflection, during which the biblical texts are read.

TOPICS FOR VIGIL REFLECTION FOR EVERY DAY OF THE MONTH

Topic I – EVANGELICAL VOCATION

The Word of the Lord (Mk 10:17-22)

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answered him, “Why do you call me good?” No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.’ ” He replied and said to him, “Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Church’s Documents (RD=Redemptionis donum, No. 3)

“And Jesus, Looking Upon Him, Loved Him”

3. “Jesus, looking upon him, loved him,”(6) and said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”(7) Even though we know that those words, addressed to the rich young man, were not accepted by the one being called, their content deserves to be carefully reflected upon, for they present the interior structure of a vocation.

“And Jesus, looking upon him, loved him.” This is the love of the Redeemer: a love that flows from all the human and divine depths of the Redemption. This love reflects the eternal love of the Father, who “so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”(8) The Son, invested with that love, accepted the mission from the Father in the Holy Spirit and became the Redeemer of the world. The Father's love was revealed in the Son as redeeming love. It is precisely this love that constitutes the true price of the Redemption of man and the world. Christ’s Apostles speak of the price of the Redemption with profound emotion: “You were ransomed...not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot,”(9) writes St. Peter And St. Paul states: “You were bought with a price.”(10)

The call to the way of the evangelical counsels springs from the interior encounter with the love of Christ, which is a redeeming love. Christ calls precisely through this love of His. In the structure of a vocation, the encounter with this love becomes something specifically personal. When Christ “looked upon you and loved you,” calling each one of you, dear religious, that redeeming love of His was directed towards a particular person, and at the same time it took on a spousal character: it became a love of choice. This love embraces the whole person, soul and body, whether man or woman, in that person’s unique and unrepeatable personal “I.” The One who, given eternally to the Father, “gives” Himself in the mystery of the Redemption, has now called man in order that he in his turn should give himself entirely to the work of the Redemption through membership in a community of brothers or sisters, recognized and approved by the Church. Surely it is precisely to this call that St. Paul’s words can be applied: “Do you not know

that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...? You are not your own; you were bought with a price.”(11)

Yes, Christ's love has reached each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, with that same “price” of the Redemption. As a consequence of this, you have realized that you are not your own, but belong to Christ. This new awareness was the fruit of Christ's “loving look” in the secret of your heart. You replied to that look by choosing Him who first chose each one of you, calling you with the measurelessness of His redeeming love. Since He calls “by name,” His call always appeals to human freedom. Christ says: “If you wish...” And the response to this call is, therefore, a free choice. You have chosen Jesus of Nazareth, the Redeemer of the world, by choosing the way that He has shown you.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, f. 135r–136r)

Topic II: RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION

The Word of the Lord (Rm 6:1-14)

What then shall we say? Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound? Of course not! How can we who died to sin yet live in it? Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.

For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as [being] dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires. And do not present the parts of your bodies to sin as weapons for wickedness, but present yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life and the parts of your bodies to God as weapons for righteousness. For sin is not to have any power over you, since you are not under the law but under grace.

Church's Documents (RD, 7)

Religious Profession is a "Fuller Expression" of Baptismal Consecration

7. Your vocation, dear brothers and sisters, has led you to religious profession, whereby you have been consecrated to God through the ministry of the Church, and have been at the same time incorporated into your religious family. Hence, the Church thinks of you, above all, as persons who are "consecrated": consecrated to God in Jesus Christ as His exclusive possession. This consecration determines your place in the vast community of the Church, the People of God. And at the same time this consecration introduces into the universal mission of this people a special source of spiritual and supernatural energy: a particular style of life, witness and apostolate, in fidelity to the mission of your institute and to its identity and spiritual heritage. The universal mission of the People of God is rooted in the messianic mission of Christ Himself-Prophet, Priest and King-a mission in which all share in different ways. The form of sharing proper to "consecrated" persons corresponds to your manner of being rooted in Christ. The depth and power of this being rooted in Christ is decided precisely by religious profession.

Religious profession creates a new bond between the person and the One and Triune God, in Jesus Christ. This bond develops on the foundation of the original bond that is contained in the Sacrament of Baptism. Religious profession "is deeply rooted in baptismal consecration and is a fuller expression of it." (25) In this way religious profession, in its constitutive content, becomes a new consecration: the consecration and giving of the human person to God, loved above all else. The commitment undertaken by means of the vows to practice the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, according to the determinations proper to each religious family as laid down in the constitutions, is the expression of a total consecration to God and, at the same time, the means that leads to its achievement. This is also the source of the manner proper to consecrated persons of bearing witness and of exercising the apostolate. And yet it is necessary to seek the roots of that conscious and free consecration and of the subsequent giving of self to

God as His possession in Baptism, the sacrament that leads us to the Paschal Mystery as the apex and center of the Redemption accomplished by Christ.

Therefore, in order to highlight fully the reality of religious profession, we must turn to the vibrant words of St. Paul in the letter to the Romans: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ...we too might walk in newness of life” (26); “Our old self was crucified with him so that...we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (27); “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (28)

Upon the sacramental basis of Baptism in which it is rooted, religious profession is a new “burial in the death of Christ”: new, because it is made with awareness and by choice; new, because of love and vocation; new, by reason of unceasing “conversion.” This “burial in death” causes the person “buried together with Christ” to “walk like Christ in newness of life.” In Christ crucified is to be found the ultimate foundation both of baptismal consecration and of the profession of the evangelical counsels, which – in the words of the Second Vatican Council – “constitutes a special consecration.” It is at one and the same time both death and liberation. St. Paul writes: “Consider yourselves dead to sin.” At the same time he calls this death “freedom from the slavery of sin.” Above all, though, religious consecration, through its sacramental foundation in holy Baptism, constitutes a new life “for God in Jesus Christ.”

In this way, simultaneously with the profession of the evangelical counsels, in a much more mature and conscious manner, “the old nature is put off” and likewise “the new nature is put on, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness,” to use once more the words of the letter to the Ephesians.(29)

From Founder’s Writings (*Oblatio*)

Topic III: EVANGELICAL COUNSELS

The Word of the Lord (Phil 3:7-21)

Righteousness from God. *[But] whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith to know him and the power of his resurrection and [the] sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

Forward in Christ. *It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ [Jesus]. Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus. Let us, then who are "perfectly mature" adopt this attitude. And if you have a different attitude, this too God will reveal to you. Only, with regard to what we have attained, continue on the same course.*

Wrong Conduct and Our Goal. *Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself.*

Church's Documents (RD, 9)

The Economy of Redemption

9. Through your profession, the way of the evangelical counsels opens up before each one of you. In the Gospel there are many exhortations that go beyond the measure of the commandment, indicating not only what is "necessary" but what is "better." Thus, for example, the exhortation not to judge, (42) to lend "expecting nothing in return," (43) to comply with all the requests and desires of our neighbor, (44) to invite the poor to a meal, (45) to pardon always (46) and many other invitations. If, in accordance with Tradition, the profession of the evangelical counsels has concentrated on the three points of chastity, poverty and obedience, this usage seems to emphasize sufficiently clearly their importance as key elements and in a certain sense as a "summing up" of the entire economy of salvation. Everything in the Gospel that is a counsel enters indirectly into the program of that way to which Christ calls when He says: "Follow me." But chastity, poverty and obedience give to this way a particular Christocentric characteristic and imprint upon it a specific sign of the economy of the Redemption.

Essential to this "economy" is the transformation of the entire cosmos through the heart of man, from within: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. . . and will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." (47) This transformation takes place in step with that love, which Christ's call infuses in the depth of the individual—that love which constitutes the very substance of consecration: a man or

woman's vowing of self to God in religious profession, on the foundation of the sacramental consecration of Baptism. We can discover the bases of the economy of Redemption by reading the words of the first letter of St. John: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." (48)

Religious profession places in the heart of each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, the love of the Father: that love which is in the heart of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world. It is love which embraces the world and everything in it that comes from the Father, and which at the same time tends to overcome in the world everything that "does not come from the Father." It tends therefore to conquer the threefold lust. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" are hidden within man as the inheritance of original sin, as a result of which the relationship with the world, created by God and given to man to be ruled by him,(49) was disfigured in the human heart in various ways. In the economy of the Redemption the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience constitute the most radical means for transforming in the human heart this relationship with "the world": with the external world and with one's personal "I" –which in some way is the central part "of the world" in the biblical sense, if what "does not come from the Father" begins within it.

Against the background of the phrases taken from the first letter of St. John, it is not difficult to see the fundamental importance of the three evangelical counsels in the whole economy of Redemption. Evangelical chastity helps us to transform in our interior life everything that has its sources in the lust of the flesh; evangelical poverty, everything that finds its source in the lust of the eyes; and evangelical obedience enables us to transform in a radical way that which in the human heart arises from the pride of life. We are deliberately speaking here of an overcoming as a transformation, for the entire economy of the Redemption is set in the framework of the words spoken in the priestly prayer to the Father: "I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to guard them from the evil one." (50) The evangelical counsels in their essential purpose aim at "the renewal of creation": "the world," thanks to them, is to be subjected to man and given to him in such a way that man himself may be perfectly given to God.

From Founder's Writings (*Rule of Life*, chapter III)

Obedience, Poverty, Chastity

1. In first place you ought to obey God, the Roman pontiff, the bishops, superiors of your Order; then, their vicars, local officials, the bell calling you to common exercises. This you ought to do quickly, promptly, perfectly, patiently, humbly, decisively, perseveringly. Nor should you be ashamed to be subject – to men, since the Apostle [Peter] would wish us to be subject to all! creatures, more so to every authority (Rm 13:1-7; 1 Pt 2:13; 1 Tim 2:2). For there is no authority, he says, unless it is from God. He who resists this authority, resists the divine Will, which is the highest form of stupidity. You should assume the motive and example of obedience of our Redeemer himself, who "humbled himself, being made obedient unto death, even death on the Cross" (Philip 2:8) He who would refuse to imitate [Christ] would appear not to want to reign with Christ if he did not obey due authority who takes the place of Christ. The following order must be kept in obeying: the lesser power should yield to the greater power, nor should that lesser power attempt to weaken the greater. [Concerning what has been ordered:] if a previous

order will clearly have been revoked, a later order should be given adherence. You should all respect the Ordinaries of the locality with due submission and be most ready to obey them. Nonetheless, in order to avoid confusion in jurisdiction and many disorders, only the superiors will attend to the just orders of the Bishops. The members, on the other hand, will obey the superiors and the laws without any reluctance and pretense. Nor should they believe they have any right or privilege to take the superior to an outside court. This is stated to avoid many quarrels, scandals and rebellions. If ever any [of these] controversies should happen, or any less notable deficiency, then it should be settled and corrected within the congregation itself, in an ordinary way, peacefully and justly. Through this rule we nonetheless do not intend to contradict anything of Canon law, nothing regarding the decrees and views of the Roman Church. If anyone among you has been found stubbornly disobedient, or a firebrand, or a wicked agitator of others, let him be restrained by the common action of all those who favor interior peace and good government (first, however, having given the possibility for a just defense and apology and due process of law having been kept). If necessary, even the force of civil authorities may be employed. Truly it is right that a servant of God be a peaceful man. Should he consider the person he should obey? Or shouldn't he consider love on account of which he obeys? You should fulfill, with divine assistance, humbly and joyfully, all penances and mortifications assigned by a superior, although they may seem burdensome. You should not murmur against the superiors, or complain, but you should love and honor them. But if anyone should have been truly burdened by some superior, let him either endure patiently what he finds oppressive for the merit of eternal life, or by himself or through another present with greatest meekness and humility, a petition to the superior, by whom he is pressed, so that he might use due moderation in the situation.

2. The essence of your poverty is found in this: that no one keeps anything privately without the consent of the Superiors, nor would he dare to call anything his own. However, those things given for his use let him preserve them neatly, carefully and for as long as possible. Let all income be turned over for common use whether it comes from alms or other sources. Let them observe absolutely and strictly the manner of collecting, saving and dispensing this income, the manner contained in the papal decrees under the penalties specified there. Without the permission of the superior, let none keep with himself either money or food or drink, under the penalty of losing active and passive voice. Such permission could be granted only for some good reason and for a short time, for all ought to live in common resources and the common table. However, foreseeing all the harm [that could come from its use], this permission is to be granted chiefly and only to the aged and the sick. No member should receive anything from anybody without the permission of the superiors whether it be from a house member or an outsider; nor should he give anything to anyone. Before profession he should dispose of his inheritance and his goods in the world, if he had any. If he was hindered by something, then he should settle his affairs as quickly as possible after profession, since our Lord openly stated: None of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions (Lk 14:33b). The superiors will provide the members, as much as they will be able in the Lord, sufficiently in all things according to our norms, no superfluously however. Otherwise, on account of more rigorous want the members would be found slothful in their service of God. It is fitting for each one to be mindful that he is rather the imitator of the heavenly King in need, who, it is said, had neither his own home (Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58), nor when he was thirsty, was ashamed to have asked for water (Jn 4:7). So you once you find yourself in a situation of utmost poverty, rejoice exceedingly, because then you can be the true disciples and followers of Christ the Lord.

3. Obedience guards chastity, and poverty nourishes chastity. Therefore, the one eager for purity exercises himself in obedience and poverty, and then he will possess chastity. The following means will be able to greatly aid anyone to preserve this angelic virtue [of chastity]: modesty of the eyes and the constant elevation of the mind to God; the flight from laziness, idle conversations, useless reading; prudent avoiding of dangerous company; love of one's cell, and respect for the cloister; an ardent invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mother of God, your guardian angel, St. Joseph, the holy virgins. The superiors will take pains lest they throw anyone into a situation endangering so great a virtue, or that they would neglect someone so endangered, seeing that they will have to render to God a most strict accounting of those entrusted to them.

Topic IV: EVANGELICAL PURITY

The Word of the Lord (1 Cor 7:29-35)

I tell you, brothers, the time is running out. From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, those using the world as not using it fully. For the world in its present form is passing away.

I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. And unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

Church's Documents (VC=Vita Consecrata, No. 88)

The challenge of consecrated chastity

88. The first challenge is that of a hedonistic culture which separates sexuality from all objective moral norms, often treating it as a mere diversion and a consumer good and, with the complicity of the means of social communication, justifying a kind of idolatry of the sexual instinct. The consequences of this are before everyone's eyes: transgressions of every kind, with resulting psychic and moral suffering on the part of individuals and families. The reply of the consecrated life is above all in the joyful living of perfect chastity, as a witness to the power of God's love manifested in the weakness of the human condition. The consecrated person attests that what many have believed impossible becomes, with the Lord's grace, possible and truly liberating. Yes, in Christ it is possible to love God with all one's heart, putting him above every other love, and thus to love every creature with the freedom of God! This testimony is more necessary than ever today, precisely because it is so little understood by our world. It is offered to everyone — young people, engaged couples, husbands and wives and Christian families — in order to show that the power of God's love can accomplish great things precisely within the context of human love. It is a witness, which also meets a growing need for interior honesty in human relationships.

The consecrated life must present to today's world examples of chastity lived by men and women who show balance, self-mastery, an enterprising spirit, and psychological and affective maturity. Thanks to this witness, human love is offered a stable point of reference: the pure love which consecrated persons draw from the contemplation of Trinitarian love, revealed to us in Christ. Precisely because they are immersed in this mystery, consecrated persons feel themselves capable of a radical and universal love, which gives them the strength for the self-mastery and discipline necessary in order not to fall under the domination of the senses and instincts. Consecrated chastity thus appears as a joyful and liberating experience. Enlightened by faith in the Risen Lord and by the prospect of the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Rev 21:1), it offers a priceless incentive in the task of educating to that chastity which corresponds to other states of life as well.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 163r–164r)

Topic V: EVANGELICAL POVERTY

The Word of the Lord (Mt 19:23-30)

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and said, "who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible." Then Peter said to him in reply, "We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you that you who have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

Church's Documents (VC, 89-90)

The challenge of poverty

89. Another challenge today is that of a materialism which craves possessions, heedless of the needs and sufferings of the weakest, and lacking any concern for the balance of natural resources. The reply of the consecrated life is found in the profession of evangelical poverty, which can be lived in different ways and is often expressed in an active involvement in the promotion of solidarity and charity. How many Institutes devote themselves to education, training and professional formation, preparing young people and those no longer young to become builders of their own future! How many consecrated persons give themselves without reserve in the service of the most disadvantaged people on earth! How many of them work to train future educators and leaders of society, so that they in turn will be committed to eliminating structures of oppression and to promoting projects of solidarity for the benefit of the poor! Consecrated persons fight to overcome hunger and its causes; they inspire the activities of voluntary associations and humanitarian organizations; and they work with public and private bodies to promote a fair distribution of international aid. Nations truly owe a great deal to these enterprising agents of charity, whose tireless generosity has contributed and continues to contribute greatly to making the world more human.

Evangelical poverty at the service of the poor

90. Even before being a service on behalf of the poor, evangelical poverty is a value in itself, since it recalls the first of the Beatitudes in the imitation of the poor Christ. Its primary meaning, in fact, is to attest that God is the true wealth of the human heart. Precisely for this reason evangelical poverty forcefully challenges the idolatry of money, making a prophetic appeal as it were to society, which in so many parts of the developed world risks losing the sense of proportion and the very meaning of things. Thus, today more than in other ages, the call of evangelical poverty is being felt also among those who are aware of the scarcity of the planet's resources and who invoke respect for and the conservation of creation by reducing consumption, by living more simply and by placing a necessary brake on their own desires.

Consecrated persons are therefore asked to bear a renewed and vigorous evangelical witness to self-denial and restraint, in a form of fraternal life inspired by principles of simplicity and

hospitality, also as an example to those who are indifferent to the needs of their neighbor. This witness will of course be accompanied by a preferential love for the poor and will be shown especially by sharing the conditions of life of the most neglected. There are many communities which live and work among the poor and the marginalized; they embrace their conditions of life and share in their sufferings, problems and perils. Outstanding pages in the history of evangelical solidarity and heroic dedication have been written by consecrated persons in these years of profound changes and great injustices, of hopes and disappointments, of striking victories and bitter defeats. And pages no less significant have been written and are still being written by very many other consecrated persons, who live to the full their life "hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3) for the salvation of the world, freely giving of themselves, and spending their lives for causes which are little appreciated and even less extolled. In these various and complementary ways, the consecrated life shares in the radical poverty embraced by the Lord, and fulfils its specific role in the saving mystery of his Incarnation and redeeming Death.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 164r–165r)

Topic VI: EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE

The Word of the Lord (Mk 14:32-39)

The Agony in the Garden. Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch.” He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.” When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing.

Church’s Documents (VC, No.91)

The challenge of freedom in obedience

91. The third challenge comes from those notions of freedom which separate this fundamental human good from its essential relationship to the truth and to moral norms. In effect, the promotion of freedom is a genuine value, closely connected with respect for the human person. But who does not see the aberrant consequences of injustice and even violence, in the life of individuals and of peoples, to which the distorted use of freedom leads?

An effective response to this situation is the obedience, which marks the consecrated life. In an especially vigorous way this obedience re-proposes the obedience of Christ to the Father and, taking this mystery as its point of departure, testifies that there is no contradiction between obedience and freedom. Indeed, the Son’s attitude discloses the mystery of human freedom as the path of obedience to the Father’s will, and the mystery of obedience as the path to the gradual conquest of true freedom. It is precisely this mystery which consecrated persons wish to acknowledge by this particular vow. By obedience they intend to show their awareness of being children of the Father, as a result of which they wish to take the Father’s will as their daily bread (cf. Jn 4:34), as their rock, their joy, their shield and their fortress (cf. Ps 18:2). Thus they show that they are growing in the full truth about themselves, remaining in touch with the source of their existence and therefore offering this most consoling message: “The lovers of your law have great peace; they never stumble” (Ps 118:165).

From Founder’s Writings (Inspectio cordis, f. 170r–171r)

Topic VII: FRATERNAL LIFE

The Word of the Lord (Acts 2:42-47)

Communal Life. *They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

Church's Documents (VC 41)

In the image of the Trinity

41. During his earthly life, the Lord Jesus called those whom he wished in order to have them at his side and to train them to live, according to his example, for the Father and for the mission which he had received from the Father (cf. Mk 3:13-15). He thus inaugurated the new family which down the centuries would include all those ready to “do the will of God” (cf. Mk 3:32-35). After the Ascension, as a result of the gift of the Spirit, a fraternal community formed around the Apostles, gathered in the praise of God and in a concrete experience of communion (cf. Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). The life of that community and, even more, the experience of complete sharing with Christ lived out by the Twelve, have always been the model to which the Church has looked whenever she has sought to return to her original fervour and to resume with fresh evangelical vigour her journey through history. The Church is essentially a mystery of communion, “a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”. The fraternal life seeks to reflect the depth and richness of this mystery, taking shape as a human community in which the Trinity dwells, in order to extend in history the gifts of communion proper to the three divine Persons. Many are the settings and the ways in which fraternal communion is expressed in the life of the Church. The consecrated life can certainly be credited with having effectively helped to keep alive in the Church the obligation of fraternity as a form of witness to the Trinity. By constantly promoting fraternal love, also in the form of common life, the consecrated life has shown that sharing in the Trinitarian communion can change human relationships and create a new type of solidarity. In this way it speaks to people both of the beauty of fraternal communion and of the ways which actually lead to it. Consecrated persons live “for” God and “from” God, and precisely for this reason they are able to bear witness to the reconciling power of grace, which overcomes the divisive tendencies present in the human heart and in society.

From Founder's Writings (*Rule of Life*, chapter II)

Love

1. [St. Paul] the Teacher of the Gentiles has best compared a servant of God who is not glowing with true love to a tinkling bell and a clanging cymbal (1 Cor 13:1). For attainment of eternal life – and the value of meritorious works – is rooted in love. Therefore, more than any other good, any of you should try to gain for himself [this love], this pearl of great price, this treasure hidden in the field (Mt 13:44-46). Although love is a gift of God, it is obtained and preserved however,

by constancy of prayer and mortification. Therefore, let everything you do, be done in love (1 Cor 16:14).

2. The commandments of God, and the Gospel counsels, the laws of the Roman Catholic Church, its prescriptions, decrees, rites, usages, dogmas; also this present Rule, (and if at some time further prescriptions are given) let all of these be observed out of the love, of God. This is what [Jesus Christ] the heavenly Lawgiver said: “Anyone who loves me, will be true to my word.” (*Jn 14:23) And this is to be understood not only of his teaching and of Scripture, but equally of his Church, which he himself forms and governs by his Holy Spirit, and its orders and documents, and the dispositions of the superiors which flow from her or are confirmed by her.

3. Out of the love of God, you will perform every good, and escape every evil; you will exercise every virtue possible, and detest every vice and sin. Out of the love of God, you will bear with willingness and fortitude mortifications, afflictions, reproofs, injuries, calumnies, labors, pains, destitution, austerity, and other situations like these. Out of the love of God you will carry out in a most perfect way your exercises, duties, jobs entrusted to you, and whatever concerns your state and vocation. You will consecrate to divine Love all of your entire life, daily actions and sufferings, and each and every moment, particulars, circumstances, changes. Each and every action and suffering by due submission, confidence, and piety [will be consecrated] for all eternity on the altar of love, by a pure heart joined to the merits of Christ the Lord, his Immaculate Mother, all of the Saints, and the universal Church.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength“ (Dt 6:5; Mt 22:37) This, which Divine Wisdom wanted to be most recommended in both [Old and New] Testaments, (Mk 12:30, Lk 10:27) should be your common rule and the safest way to heaven.

4. Concerning mutual love: let it be known that the one who excels in mutual love is more dear to the Divine Majesty. Each of you should keep in mind that the soul of his Institute is love, and to the extent that he withdraws from love, he withdraws from life. Therefore, even as he will promote the good, reputation, integrity and holiness of the whole Congregation, so he will render to the individual members of this same Congregation all those things, which he would wish for himself. And so he will avoid this contagious disease very opposed to love: envy, hatred, rancor, rivalry, suspicion, calumny, exclusive attachment, antipathy, jealousy, secret accusation, jeering, whispering, verbal abuse, annoyance, ambition, contempt for others, disturbances, agitations, quarrels, contentions. As he will watch over the tranquility of his own spirit, so the zealous guardian of love will also give great care to guarding the tranquility of others and of the whole house. He will suitably drive away any evil both from the whole Congregation and from each of its members. Call to mind the love of the early Church, about which the writer of the Acts of the Apostles says, “The community of believers were of one heart and one mind” (Acts 4:32).

5. You should always be mindful- of the works of mercy which, done to his members, are done to Christ the Head. On all (Mt 25:31-46) occasions you will not neglect to show outsiders every possible love. You will surround with devoted love not only those you find benevolent to you, but adversaries as well, and enemies (whom our Lord rightly commanded us to love). These works alone will triumph at the final Judgement. (cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27-35)

Topic VIII: PRIMACY OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

The Word of the Lord (Rm 8:2-13)

For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death. For what the law weakened by the flesh, was powerless to do, this God has done: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the sake of sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous decree of the law might be fulfilled in us, who live not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. For those who live according to the flesh are concerned with the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the spirit with the things of the spirit. The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the spirit is life and peace. For the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you. Consequently, brothers, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Church's Documents (VC 93)

A decisive commitment to the spiritual life

93. One of the concerns frequently expressed at the Synod was that the consecrated life should be nourished from the wellspring of a sound and deep spirituality. This is a primary requirement, inscribed in the very essence of the consecrated life by the fact that, just as every other baptized person, and indeed even more so, those who profess the evangelical counsels must aspire with all their strength to the perfection of charity. This commitment is clearly evidenced in the many examples of holy founders and foundresses, and of so many consecrated persons who have borne faithful witness to Christ to the point of martyrdom. To tend towards holiness: this is in summary the program of every consecrated life, particularly in the perspective of its renewal on the threshold of the Third Millennium. The starting point of such a program lies in leaving everything behind for the sake of Christ (cf. Mt 4:18-22, 19:21,27; Lk 5:11), preferring him above all things, in order to share fully in his Paschal Mystery.

Saint Paul understood this well when he said: "Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection" (Phil 3:8,10). This is the path marked out from the beginning by the Apostles, as testified to in the Christian tradition of the East and the West: "Those who now follow Jesus, leaving everything for his sake, remind us of the Apostles who, in answer to his invitation, gave up everything. As a result, it has become traditional to speak of religious life as *apostolica vivendi forma*". The same tradition has also emphasized in the consecrated life the aspect of a particular covenant with God, indeed of a spousal covenant with Christ, of which Saint Paul was a master by his example (cf. 1 Cor 7:7) and by his teaching, proposed under the Spirit's guidance (cf. 1 Cor 7:40). We may say that the spiritual life, understood as life in Christ or life according to the Spirit, presents itself as a path of increasing faithfulness, on which the consecrated person

is guided by the Spirit and configured by him to Christ, in full communion of love and service in the Church. All these elements, which take shape in the different forms of the consecrated life, give rise to a specific spirituality, that is, a concrete program of relations with God and one's surroundings, marked by specific spiritual emphases and choices of apostolate, which accentuate and re-present one or another aspect of the one mystery of Christ. When the Church approves a form of consecrated life or an Institute, she confirms that in its spiritual and apostolic charism are found all the objective requisites for achieving personal and communal perfection according to the Gospel. The spiritual life must therefore have first place in the program of Families of consecrated life, in such a way that every Institute and community will be a school of true evangelical spirituality. Apostolic fruitfulness, generosity in love of the poor, and the ability to attract vocations among the younger generation depend on this priority and its growth in personal and communal commitment. It is precisely the spiritual quality of the consecrated life which can inspire the men and women of our day, who themselves are thirsting for absolute values. In this way the consecrated life will become an attractive witness.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, 28r-29r)

Topic IX: PRAYER AND ASCETICISM

The Word of the Lord (Mt 16:21-27)

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

The Conditions of Discipleship. *Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct."*

Church's Documents (VC 38)

Prayer and asceticism: spiritual combat

38. The call to holiness is accepted and can be cultivated only in the silence of adoration before the infinite transcendence of God: "We must confess that we all have need of this silence, filled with the presence of him who is adored: in theology, so as to exploit fully its own sapiential and spiritual soul; in prayer, so that we may never forget that seeing God means coming down the mountain with a face so radiant that we are obliged to cover it with a veil (cf. Ex 34:33); in commitment, so that we will refuse to be locked in a struggle without love and forgiveness. All, believers and non-believers alike, need to learn a silence that allows the Other to speak when and how he wishes, and allows us to understand his words". In practice this involves great fidelity to liturgical and personal prayer, to periods devoted to mental prayer and contemplation, to Eucharistic adoration, to monthly retreats and to spiritual exercises.

There is also a need to rediscover the ascetic practices typical of the spiritual tradition of the Church and of the individual's own Institute. These have been and continue to be a powerful aid to authentic progress in holiness. Asceticism, by helping to master and correct the inclinations of human nature wounded by sin, is truly indispensable if consecrated persons are to remain faithful to their own vocation and follow Jesus on the way of the Cross. It is also necessary to recognize and overcome certain temptations, which sometimes, by diabolical deceit, present themselves under the appearance of good. Thus, for example, the legitimate need to be familiar with today's society in order to respond to its challenges can lead to a surrender to passing fashions, with a consequent lessening of spiritual fervor or a succumbing to discouragement. The possibility of a deeper spiritual formation might lead consecrated persons to feel somehow superior to other members of the faithful, while the urgent need for appropriate and necessary training can turn into a frantic quest for efficiency, as if apostolic service depended primarily on human means rather than on God. The praiseworthy desire to become close to the men and women of our day, believers and non-believers, rich and poor, can lead to the adoption of a secularized lifestyle or the promotion of human values in a merely horizontal direction. Sharing in the legitimate aspirations of one's own nation or culture could lead to embracing forms of nationalism or accepting customs which instead need to be purified and elevated in the light of the Gospel. The

path to holiness thus involves the acceptance of spiritual combat. This is a demanding reality, which is not always given due attention today. Tradition has often seen an image of this spiritual combat in Jacob's wrestling with the mystery of God, whom he confronts in order to receive his blessing and to see him (cf. Gen 32:23-31). In this episode from the beginnings of biblical history, consecrated persons can recognize a symbol of the asceticism, which they need in order to open their hearts to the Lord and to their brothers and sisters.

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 29v–30v)

Topic X: APOSTOLATE

The Word of the Lord (Mt 28:16-20)

The Commissioning of the Disciples. *The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

Church’s Documents (RD, 15)

Apostolate

15. From this witness of spousal love for Christ, through which the entire salvific truth of the Gospel becomes particularly visible, there also comes, dear brothers and sisters, as something proper to your vocation, a sharing in the Church’s apostolate, in her universal mission which is accomplished contemporaneously in every nation in many different ways and through many different charisms. Your specific mission is in harmony with the mission of the Apostles, whom the Lord sent “to the whole world” to “teach all nations,” (95) and it is also linked to the mission of the hierarchical order. In the apostolate which consecrated persons exercise, their spousal love for Christ becomes, in an organic way as it were, love for the Church as the Body of Christ, for the Church as the People of God, for the Church which is at one and the same time Spouse and Mother.

It is difficult to describe, or even to list, the many different ways in which consecrated persons fulfill their love for the Church through the apostolate. This apostolate is always born from that particular gift of your founders, which, received from God and approved by the Church, has become a charism for the whole community. That gift corresponds to the different needs of the Church and the world at particular moments of history, and in its turn it is extended and strengthened in the life of the religious communities as one of the enduring elements of the Church’s life and apostolate. In each of these elements, in each field—both of contemplation, so fruitful for the apostolate, and of direct apostolic action – the Church’s constant blessing accompanies you, as does at the same time her pastoral and maternal solicitude, with regard to the spiritual identity of your life and the correctness of your activity in the midst of the great universal community of the vocations and charisms of the whole People of God. Through each of the institutes separately and through their organic integration in the whole of the Church’s mission, special emphasis is given to that economy of the Redemption, the profound sign of which each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, bears within himself or herself through the consecration and profession of the evangelical counsels.

And thus, even though the many different apostolic works that you perform are extremely important, nevertheless the truly fundamental work of the apostolate remains always what (and at the same time who) you are in the Church. Of each one of you can be repeated, with special appropriateness, these words of St. Paul: “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (96) And at the same time this “being hidden with Christ in God” makes it possible to

apply to you the words of the Master Himself: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” (97)

For the sake of this light with which you must “shine before men,” of great importance among you is the witness of mutual love, linked to the fraternal spirit of each community, for the Lord has said: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (98)

The fundamentally community nature of your religious life, nourished by the teaching of the Gospel, by the sacred liturgy and above all by the Eucharist, is a special way of accomplishing this interpersonal and social dimension: by caring for one another, by bearing one another's burdens, you show by your unity that Christ is living in your midst. (99) Important for your apostolate in the Church is every kind of sensitivity to the needs and sufferings of the individual, which are seen so clearly and so movingly in today's world. For the Apostle Paul teaches: “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ,” (100) and he adds that “love is the fulfilling of the law.” (101)

Your mission must be seen! Deep, very deep must be the bond, which links it to the Church! (102) Through everything that you do, and especially through everything that you are, may the truth be proclaimed and reconfirmed that “Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (103): the truth that is at the basis of the whole economy of the Redemption. From Christ, the Redeemer of the world, may the inexhaustible source of your love for the Church pour forth!

From Founder's Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 38v–54v)

Topic XI: RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

The Word of the Lord (Ga 2:1-10)

The Council of Jerusalem. *Then after fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. I went up in accord with a revelation, and I presented to them the gospel that I preach to the Gentiles – but privately to those of repute – so that I might not be running, or have run, in vain. Moreover, not even Titus, who was with me, although he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised, but because of the false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might enslave us – to them we did not submit even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain intact for you. But from those who were reputed to be important (what they once were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) – those of repute made me add nothing. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter to the circumcised, for the one who worked in Peter for an apostolate to the circumcised worked also in me for the Gentiles, and when they recognized the grace bestowed upon me, James and Kephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas their right hands in partnership, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, we were to be mindful of the poor, which is the very thing I was eager to do.*

Church's Documents (VC 46)

"Sentire cum Ecclesia"

46. A great task also belongs to the consecrated life in the light of the teaching about the Church as communion, so strongly proposed by the Second Vatican Council. Consecrated persons are asked to be true experts of communion and to practice the spirituality of communion as “witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God's design”. The sense of ecclesial communion, developing into a spirituality of communion, promotes a way of thinking, speaking and acting which enables the Church to grow in depth and extension. The life of communion in fact “becomes a sign for all the world and a compelling force that leads people to faith in Christ ... In this way communion leads to mission, and itself becomes mission”; indeed, “communion begets communion: in essence it is a communion that is missionary”. In founders and foundresses we see a constant and lively sense of the Church, which they manifest by their full participation in all aspects of the Church's life, and in their ready obedience to the Bishops and especially to the Roman Pontiff. Against this background of love towards Holy Church, “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), we readily understand the devotion of Saint Francis of Assisi for “the Lord Pope”, the daughterly outspokenness of Saint Catherine of Siena towards the one whom she called “sweet Christ on earth”, the apostolic obedience and the *sentire cum Ecclesia* of Saint Ignatius Loyola, and the joyful profession of faith made by Saint Teresa of Avila: “I am a daughter of the Church”. We can also understand the deep desire of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus: “In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love”. These testimonies are representative of the full ecclesial communion which the Saints, founders and foundresses, have shared in diverse and often difficult times and circumstances. They are examples which consecrated persons need constantly to recall if they are to resist the particularly strong centrifugal and disruptive forces at work today. A distinctive aspect of ecclesial communion is allegiance of mind and heart to the Magisterium of the Bishops, an allegiance which must be lived honestly and clearly testified to

before the People of God by all consecrated persons, especially those involved in theological research, teaching, publishing, catechesis and the use of the means of social communication. Because consecrated persons have a special place in the Church, their attitude in this regard is of immense importance for the whole People of God. Their witness of filial love will give power and forcefulness to their apostolic activity which, in the context of the prophetic mission of all the baptized, is generally distinguished by special forms of cooperation with the Hierarchy. In a specific way, through the richness of their charisms, consecrated persons help the Church to reveal ever more deeply her nature as the sacrament “of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind”.

From Founder’s Writings (*Inspectio cordis*, k. 165r–166r)

Topic XII: IN FOLLOWING CHRIST WITH MARY

The Word of the Lord (Mk 3:31-35)

Jesus and His Family. *His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, “Your mother and your brothers [and your sisters] are outside asking for you.” But he said to them in reply, “Who are my mother and [my] brothers?” and looking around at those seated in the circle he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. [For] whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Church’s Documents (John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter To all consecrated persons belonging to religious communities and secular institutes on the occasion of the Marian Year [May 22, 1988]

Ad omnes personas consecratas

While from a human point of view a person's consecration can be compared to “losing one’s life”, it is also the most direct way of “finding” it. For Christ says: “He who loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 10:39). These words certainly express the radical nature of the Gospel. At the same time we cannot fail to notice how much they apply to the human being, and what a unique anthropological dimension they have. What is more fundamental for a human being – man or woman – than precisely this: finding oneself, finding oneself in Christ, since Christ is the “whole fullness” (cf. Col 2:9)?

These thoughts concerning the consecration of the person through the profession of the evangelical counsels keep us constantly within the sphere of the Paschal Mystery. Together with Mary, let us seek to be sharers in this death which brought forth fruits of “new life” in the Resurrection: a death like this on the Cross was infamous, and it was the death of her own Son! But precisely there, at the foot of the Cross, “where she stood, not without a divine plan”, (4) did not Mary realize in a new way everything that she had already heard on the day of the Annunciation? Precisely there, precisely through “the sword which pierced her soul” (cf. Lk 2:35), through an incomparable “kenosis of faith”, (5) did not Mary perceive completely the full truth about her motherhood? Precisely there, did she not definitively identify herself with that truth, “rediscovering her soul”, the soul which, in the experience of Golgotha, she had to “lose” in the most painful way for the sake of Christ and the Gospel?

It is precisely into this complete “rediscovery” of the truth about her divine motherhood which became Mary’s “part” from the moment of the Annunciation that there fit Christ’s words on the Cross, the words referring to the Apostle John, referring to a man: “Behold, your son!” (cf. Jn 19:26).

Dear brothers and sisters: let us constantly return, with our vocation, with our consecration, to the depths of the Paschal Mystery. Let us present ourselves at Christ’s Cross next to his Mother. Let us learn our vocation from her. Did not Christ himself say: “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Mt 12:50)?

From Founder’s Writings (excerpts from *Orator Crucifixus* [Crucified Preacher])