



GOSPEL WITHOUT BORDERS

*A time of prayer
journeying with young people
in the Year of Consecrated Life*

Missionaries of St. Charles – Scalabrinians
General Administration

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journeying with young people
in the Year of Consecrated Life*



How to use this booklet

This booklet was drafted to be easily adapted to various places where the missionaries are and is especially made for young people on a journey. The prayer is divided in five parts and could be utilized during the week prior to the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Candlemas) and could be personalized in the choice of the biblical passage, maybe inserting the Gospel of the day in place of the Scripture passage proposed or one of the Gospels about Jesus' call. In Appendix 1, two readings are suggested from the writings of *Bishop Scalabrini*, which could replace those proposed.

Each daily prayer could be concluded with a passage taken from *Pope Francis's* letter to the Consecrated. For this reason some of the passages of the letter, which is reported in full in Appendix 2, have been highlighted.

The vocational petitions, written for the liturgy of Lauds and Vespers, can be included in the daily prayer or replace the invocation proposed.

The Eucharistic adoration and the vocational vigil prayer which could be included in a vocation week or during a weekend gathering with youth, can also be used by themselves. The adoration, focused on the Gospel of the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, is written for multiple voices. The vocational vigil, centered on *Isaiah 43*, contains a testimony by *Fr. Tarcisio Rubin*, a Scalabrinian missionary in Argentina. To this catching and special testimony other voices more relevant to the local situation could be added.

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1 WE BEGIN OUR JOURNEY

LEADER: the Church is called to proclaim to each man and woman that it is possible to return to one's own true Source: this is the vocation of every baptized person. The universal mission of the Church is to show the true meaning of humanity's journey through time and history: the return of all creation to Christ.



SONG

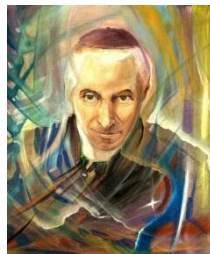


THE WORD OF GOD TODAY: *“This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”* (Jn 13, 35)

SCALABRINI'S VOICE

In the midst of the terrible trials afflicting the Church today, in the midst of the even more frightening storms threatening it, how beautiful it is to watch the calm, the unruffled calm, with which she continues her civilizing work throughout the world!...

Sure of herself and of the help that comes from above, the Church every day detaches from her peaceful army certain platoons chosen from the bravest and sends them forth to the four corners of the world. She flings them upon the remotest shores, beyond the seas, beyond the immense deserts that are more frightening than the seas themselves, to bring the faith to new peoples, to preserve and increase it in those that already have it, to save souls.



[Address to departing missionaries in 1888, in: A LIVING VOICE]

INVOCATIONS

Let us God that he will accept our hopes, fears, joys and pains on behalf of those who in their witness of the gospel are living in conditions of suffering:

At each invocation we repeat:

Lord, hear our prayer

For those who are despised
for those who are not listened to
for those who are persecuted
for those who are oppressed
for those who are mocked
for those who are unjustly accused
for those who are forgotten
for those who are jailed
for those subjected to torture
for those were being killed

OUR FATHER



SONG

2

VOCATION

LEADER: Christ calls, justifies, sanctifies and sends his disciples to announce the kingdom of God so that all nations may become God's People. Only in the light of this mission can we understand and authenticate humanity's journey throughout history.



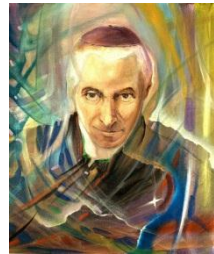
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THE WORD OF GOD TODAY: “*Consider your own calling, brothers*” (1 Cor 1, 26a)

SCALABRINI'S VOICE

Awaiting you, I know, are immense labors, untold dangers, many difficulties, constant struggles and sacrifices. But these are the very things that validate the work you are doing and awaken enthusiasm in your heart. Find your solace, your guidance, your surest defense in the Cross I have just handed you: the Cross! It is the light of the humble, the support of the weak, the wood of life, the key of heaven, the sign of victory, the terror of Satan, the power of God. With this sword in hand - I feel I can say this to you - you shall overcome.



[*Address to departing missionaries in 1888, in: A LIVING VOICE*]

INVOCATIONS

To Jesus, who is the obedient answer of the Son to the call of the Father, we raise our prayer:

*At each invocation we respond:
Strengthen Our Call*

Lord, you awaken in us the longing for the Father
Lord, you make us partakers of Your Love for humanity
Lord, you gather all nations into one People
Lord, you desire that all men and women be Saved
Lord, you give the Church holy vocations
Lord, you asked the rich young man to follow you
Lord, you assist the Shepherds of your Church
Lord, you inspire hearts that are generous and ready for the mission
Lord, you invite each of us to serve our brothers and sisters
Lord, you make us witnesses of Your Gospel
Lord, you never abandon those who consecrate themselves to You
Lord, in our baptism you sanctify us and send us
Lord, you give us the sacraments for our journey
Lord, through your missionaries you're present among all peoples
Lord, you reach out to the weak and to the least of the earth

OUR FATHE



SONG

3

RESPONSIBILITY

LEADER: the Universal Church, not bound by borders or frontiers, feels the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel before entire peoples (*see Evangelii nuntiandi, n. 53*). She, the seed of hope by vocation, must continue Christ's service to the world. The Church's mission, therefore, is to call all peoples to the salvation brought about by God through his Son. It is necessary to renew the commitment to proclaim the Gospel which is "leaven of liberty and progress..., of brotherhood, of unity and of peace" (*see Ad Gentes, 8*). What is at play is the eternal salvation of every person, the very goal and fulfillment of the history of humanity and of the universe.



SONG



THE WORD OF GOD TODAY: *"If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me"* (1 Cor 9, 16 a)

SCALABRINI'S VOICE

What does the shoot need to bring forth fruit? That it remain attached to the vine. Now the vine is Jesus and you, beloved ones, are the shoots. As long as you remain in Him, you will feel full of superhuman energy, and the results you will reap cannot but be fruitful and lasting. Everything will be possible to you, even when faced with the most serious difficulties. Instead, detached from him you will become like a body



without a soul, destitute of all good works. You will be like branches good for nothing except to be cast into the fire.

[*Letter to the Missionaries for the Italians in the Americas, Piacenza 1892, in A LIVING VOICE*]

INVOCATIONS

Every baptized person bears the responsibility to be a missionary, the main actor, however, is the Holy Spirit, to whom we turn for the success of our mission:

Come, Holy Spirit
Come, Father of the poor
Come, Giver of all gifts
Come, enlighten our hearts.

Of all consolers you're the best
Of our soul's sweet guest
Solace in the midst of woe
Your refreshing peace bestow
In our toil you are comfort sweet,
Pleasant coolness in the heat.

Light immortal, Light divine,
Wash the stains of guilt away.
Bend the stubborn heart and will,
Melt the frozen, warm the chill.
Guide the steps that go astray
Visit these hearts of yours,
And our inmost being fill.
If you take your grace away,
Nothing pure in man will stay;
All his good is turned to ill.
Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew.

On us who evermore
confess and adore you,
your seven gifts do send.
Give us comfort when we die;
Give us life with you on high;
Give us joys that never end.

OUR FATHER



SONG

4

CHARITY

LEADER: The Church seeks to transform the world by preaching the Gospel of love, “which can constantly illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working... In this way it causes the light of God to enter into the world.” (*Deus Caritas est*, n.39). It is important to give a credible sign of communion among churches, by any means possible, especially in the critical phase humanity is now facing, to empower the young local Churches making them capable of enlightening the people with the Gospel of charity.



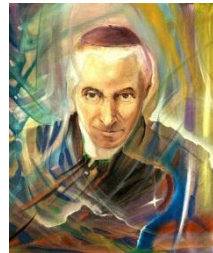
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THE WORD OF GOD TODAY: *"Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called children of God" (Mt 5,9).*

SCALABRINI'S VOICE

Jesus is our Redeemer, our Teacher, our Advocate, our Exemplar, our Doctor, our Head, our Companion, our Brother, our Friend, our Comfort, our Refuge, our Glory, our Joy, and our Greatness. He is the High Priest of the new covenant, the eternal Priest, the Mediator between God and man, the victim for our sins, our true and only happiness. He is the door we must enter to reach his kingdom, the Cornerstone and Foundation on which the spiritual edifice must be built. He is the Bread of our souls, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, our Reward, our Crown, our Life, and our All. [Pastoral Letter for Lent 1878, in A LIVING VOICE].



INVOCATIONS

No announcement is valid without charity, without helping a brother in need, without a boundless capacity to love:

*At each invocation we respond:
grants us, O Lord, a big heart*

Lord, you love us one by one
Lord, you offered up yourself for us
Lord, you give us your Mother
Lord, for our sake you became a servant
Lord, you wash the feet of your disciples
Lord, you invite us to be servants
Lord, you are infinite mercy
Lord, you ask us to love our enemies
Lord, you ask us to forgive always
Lord, you want us to bless those who curse us
Lord, you understand our weaknesses
Lord, you want the salvation of the world
Lord, in the Church you continue the Father's mission
Lord, in the Eucharist you offer us the Model of Love
Lord, you turned the cross into an instrument of Love
Lord, the mission you give us is to announce your Love



SONG

5

THANKSGIVING

LEADER: Dispersion, multiplicity, conflict, enmity will be put to rest and reconciled through the blood of the Cross, and will be led to unity. The new beginning is already underway with the resurrection and the exultation of Christ, who draws all things to himself, makes them new, and leads them to share in God's eternal happiness. The future of the new creation is already shining in our world and is in kindling, albeit the contradictions and suffering, the hope of new life. The Church's mission is to infect with hope all peoples.



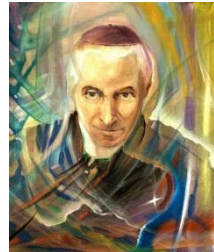
SONG



THE WORD OF GOD TODAY: *“I thank you for you answered me; you have been my savior.”*
(Psalm 118, 21)

SCALABRINI'S VOICE

To Jesus, and to Him alone, we owe the grace and friendship of the Father, the confidence and freedom of the sons and daughters of God. To Jesus we owe all the gifts we receive from God: the gifts of nature, grace, and glory. We owe it to Jesus if God preserves us, sustains us, and defends us; if he does not punish us as we deserve; if he continues to bear with us and wait for us. From Jesus we get all wisdom and prudence, all inspirations and good thoughts, all pious desires. From Jesus comes courage in time of danger, strength in time of temptation, long-suffering in time of pain, patience in time of adversity, and perseverance in doing good. Yes, we have



everything in Jesus, we can do everything in Jesus, we can hope everything and obtain everything from Jesus, since it was Jesus who wanted to humiliate himself for us, sacrifice himself for us, and become all things for us.

[Pastoral Letter for Lent 1878, in A LIVING VOICE]

INVOCATIONS

Drawing inspiration from a prayer that Pope John Paul II wrote in 1996, we express our boundless gratitude to the Lord for the gift of life:

At every invocation we repeat:

We thank you, Lord

We praise You and bless You, O God
We proclaim You Father and Lord of life
Creator of every form of life
We acknowledge You, O Most Holy Trinity
The womb and source of every vocation
You, Father have thought of us from all eternity
You, Father have wanted us and loved us
You, Son, have chosen us and called us
You, Holy Spirit, filled us with your gifts
You have consecrated us with Your holy anointing
You, Lord of time and history
Come, O Creator Spirit
All the earth adores You
With Your Mother, Mary
With her, who, under the cross, has embraced us in John
Be always by our side to guide us.

OUR FATHER



SONG

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION



WE ARE ALL MIGRANTS

[The lights are dimmed in the place of worship, some lamps are placed in sanctuary next to the image of the face of Christ. Objects symbolizing migration, such as suitcases, boxes etc., can be placed next to the lamps.]



SONG

Greeting and Introduction



EXPOSITION SONG

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

*At each invocation we respond together:
My Lord and my God*

You are one with the Father
You came from the Father and entered the world
You make the Father known to us
You are changeless Truth
You are the good Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep
You came to bring fire to the earth
You came to seek and say what was lost
You are the bread who gives life to the world

Biblical prayer

1st Choir: Then all peoples of the earth will know that the Lord is God and there is no other (1 Kgs 8, 60)

2nd Choir: that all peoples of the earth may know your name (2 Cr 6, 33)

All: “May all the peoples praise you, oh God, made all the peoples praise you.”

1st Choir: On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples of feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. (Is 25, 6-7)

2nd Choir: All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. (Is 52, 10)

All: “May all the peoples praise you, oh God, made all the peoples praise you.”

1st Choir: Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. (Is 56, 7)

2nd Choir: As the earth puts out its growth, and as a garden grows its seeds, so the Lord God will grow righteousness and praise before all the nations. (Is 61, 11)

All: “May all the peoples praise you, oh God, made all the peoples praise you.”

1st Choir: All nations, peoples and tongues will serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, that shall not pass away, his kingship one that shall not be destroyed. (Dn 7, 14)

2nd Choir: For then I will make pure the speech of the of the peoples, that they all may call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one accord; from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia and as far as the recesses of the North they shall bring me offerings. (Zeph 3,9)

All: “May all the peoples praise you, oh God, made all the peoples praise you.”

1st Choir: Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

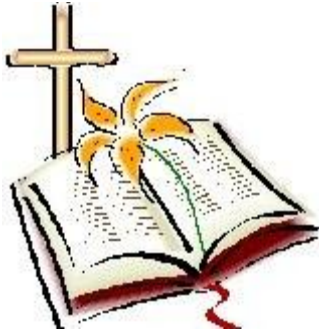
2nd Choir: you are God's field, God's building. (1 Cor 3,9)

All: “May all the peoples praise you, oh God, made all the peoples praise you.”

1st Choir: So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. (Eph 3, 19)

2nd Choir: I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them [as their God]. (Rev 21, 2-3)

All: “May all the peoples praise you, oh God, made all the peoples praise you.”



From the holy Gospel according to John (6, 1 – 12)

After this, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee [of Tiberias].*A large crowd followed him, because they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. The Jewish feast of Passover was near. When Jesus raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip: «Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?». He said this to test him, because he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him: «Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little [bit]». One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him: «There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?». Jesus said: «Have the people recline». Now there was a great deal of grass in that place. So the men reclined, about five thousand in number. Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples: «Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted».

LEADER: Let us meditate on the Word of the Lord we have heard.

COMMENT BY SEVERAL VOICES

Jesus is surrounded by “a great crowd”.

But who is this “great crowd” of which the Gospel of John is speaking? They are the peoples of the world, especially those to whom we missionaries (men and women) have been sent and those who have come among us through migration. And then there are also those peoples, who, in this critical historical moment, are being tested more dramatically... And we know well who they are. Jesus always has this crowd in front of him; actually he has it in his heart. Upon each and all of them he showers constantly his “compassion”.

Jesus said to Philip: «Where could we buy bread for all these people to eat?».

The crowd Jesus is facing is a hungry crowd: hungry for bread and hungry for God. As it was then, so it is today. There are the immediate physical and bodily needs but, at the same time, and just as strong and real, there are the needs of the soul and of the spirit. Jesus satisfies both needs.

Philip responds: «200 denarii worth of bread wouldn't even give them each a small piece».

The disciples are aware of their limits and don't know what to do. Jesus tests them to see what is in their heart (see Dt 8, 2); but he gives them the chance to take a step forward in faith. Jesus attempts to lead their answer beyond human wisdom: for Philip and Andrew the problems of the people are basically the quantity of the means available. “The numbers don't jive” and they give up before even trying. There is need of someone, like the boy, who offers what little he has, and the problem is resolved.

Then Jesus took the breads and, having given thanks, he gave them those who were seated, and he did the same with the fish, as much as they wanted.

John synthesizes the action of Jesus in three verbs “he took the bread, gave thanks and distributed”, which clearly call to mind the Eucharist, but could also make of our whole life a sacrament: taking, giving thanks, giving of ourselves. By thanking the Father for the small amount of bread in his hands, Christ acknowledges that our food comes from Him as a free gift; he takes those breads from their human owner and places them again under the Father's domain. It is then that the miracle of the multiplication takes place. The Father multiplies that which one person holds as his or her possession for the benefit of all. The Eucharist will grow out of this important premise: the subjective expropriation, the surrender in the hands of the Father, the enrichment of the Church. The Father is the true owner of all that exists; the multiplication, as a result of this humble human realization. The next step is that of partaking.

And when they had all eaten, he said to his disciples: «Gather the pieces that are leftovers, so that nothing will go to waste».

In addition to feeding the hungry, partaking with others also assures an overabundance of bread. What, at first sight, seemed insufficient now becomes abundant. And Jesus then asks to go as far as picking up what remains: there will be other hungers, other hungry people to encounter and to serve in the course of history, and they mustn't find a community that is unprepared and empty-handed.

Those fragments, which the disciples picked up carefully, will become for them like a sacrament that will keep them attuned to human hunger, and will remind them at the same time of the path to follow to satisfy all the hungers they will meet as history unravels.



SONG FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

(Eucharistic song)

LEADER. O Lord, let our prayer rise humbly from our hearts, touched by the power of your Word.

Lord Jesus, to feed a hungry crowd you make use of a few breads and two fish; you ask for a sign of our willingness to share, albeit insufficient to meet the need; the small sign, however, grows large if we open ourselves to your person. We bless you, because what you did with your hands is now entrusted to our hands and to those of all your disciples. Thank you, Lord, for that bread which is a sign of Another who gives himself to a needy crowd. That bread now has become the sign of a new bread to which we draw near only through faith.

To you, present in this bread, which satisfies the desire of salvation of each man and woman under heaven, we wish to entrust our lives, our missionary commitment and the lives of all peoples whom we encounter in our journey along the pathways of our world.

To each invocation we respond:

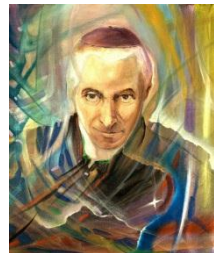
Hear us, O Lord

- For the Scalabrinian family
- for the young priests
- for the priests who have been serving for a long time
- for those who are tired, that the Lord may renew and revive their enthusiasm
- so that the Scalabrinian Charism may be known as relevant in the world

Spontaneous petitions

SCALABRINI SPEAKS TO US

We need faith for our present state, just as one who wants to look at the sun must use smoked glass to keep from being blinded. We need faith because, since God is infinite and we are finite, faith must reach where our reason cannot. Faith is to reason what the telescope is to our weak



sight. If you look up to the skies on a clear night, you see an infinite number of stars. But where the eye cannot make out anything, the telescope discovers new worlds and unknown wonders. In the same way, we know little or nothing about the great problems of life. It is faith that reveals to us the supernatural world, where every problem finds its natural and reasoned solution. It is faith that enlightens the mind and teaches us about our existence and our future destiny. Rather than lessening our faith, the shadows of mystery will increase it (...). Though in themselves the mysteries of faith are impenetrable, they are nonetheless bursting with indescribable splendor, and, like the column that led the people of God in the desert, they send forth lights and shadows.

[Pastoral Letter for Lent 1881, in A LIVING VOICE]

POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE

(From the Message on the 100th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014)

The Church, responding to Christ's command to "go and make disciples of all nations", is called to be the People of God which embraces all peoples and brings to them the proclamation of the Gospel, for the face of each person bears the mark of the face of Christ! Here we find the deepest foundation of the dignity of the human person, which must always be respected and safeguarded. It is less the criteria of efficiency, productivity, social class, or ethnic or religious belonging which ground that personal dignity, so much as the fact of being created in God's own image and likeness (cf. *Gen 1:26-27*) and, even more so, being children of God. Every human being is a child of God! He or she bears the image of Christ! We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that Providence gives us to help build a more just society, a more perfect democracy, a more united country, a

more fraternal world and a more open and evangelical Christian community. Migration can offer possibilities for a new evangelization, open vistas for the growth of a new humanity foreshadowed in the paschal mystery: a humanity for which every foreign country is a homeland and every homeland is a foreign country.

OUR FATHER

Benediction



FINAL SONG

*We are all migrants
In our life journey*



VOCATION PRAYER VIGIL



OPENING SONG

Greeting and introduction

Invocation to the Holy Spirit

Soloist: Holy Spirit create in us the silence we need to listen and to recognize your voice. Uproot from our hearts all that is an obstacle to authentic, free and creative listening.

All: Come, Holy Spirit, send us from heaven a ray of your light. Come father of the poor; come giver of gifts; come, enlighten our hearts.

Soloist: Holy Spirit, with your Word you help us to be welcoming and trusting.

All: Perfect consoler, welcomed guest of our souls, relief most sweet. Rest in our labor; shelter in the heat; comfort us in our sorrow.

Soloist: Holy Spirit, guide and enlighten our minds, grant us the wisdom to help us relish and understand all that lives.

All: O most blessed light, enter deeply the hearts of your faithful. Without your strength nothing is a man, nothing without guilt.

Soloist: Holy Spirit, grant us to respond faithfully to our daily calls, and the strength to choose you every day.

*All: Grant to your faithful, who only trust you, your holy gifts.
Grant virtue and reward, grant a holy death, and everlasting
joy. Amen*

PRAYER:

*At each invocation we respond together:
We thank you, O Lord.*

Lord, we have listened to you voice and acknowledged you as
the Lord of our life.

Lord, you called and we answered: Here I am!

Lord, like the fishermen on the lake shore, we met your eyes
and, leaving behind our nets, we have followed you.

Lord, we have listened to the cry of the poor, and to the sigh of
the migrant, and in them we heard your voice.

ENTHRONEMENT OF THE WORD



SONG

LEADER: Through the words of the prophet Isaiah, we
receive from God a message of love: "Do not fear, for I have
redeemed you;

I have called you by name: you are mine.... Because you are
precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you." (Is 43, 1&2)
we ask for the grace not to forget our true identity: we belong
only to the Lord and the purpose of obligation is to continue
discovering the presence of Jesus in our life so as to share it
with others.

Isaiah 43, 1-7

But now, thus says the LORD,
who created you, Jacob, and formed you, Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name: you are mine.
When you pass through waters, I will be with you;
through rivers, you shall not be swept away.
When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned,
nor will flames consume you.
For I, the LORD, am your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your savior.
I give Egypt as ransom for you,
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.
Because you are precious in my eyes
and honored, and I love you,
I give people in return for you
and nations in exchange for your life.
Fear not, for I am with you;
from the east I will bring back your offspring,
from the west I will gather you.
I will say to the north: Give them up!
and to the south: Do not hold them!
Bring back my sons from afar,
and my daughters from the ends of the earth:
All who are called by my name
I created for my glory;
I formed them and made them.

EXPLANATION – SILENCE

Let us pray in two choirs:

Remember, Lord, that I am your creature
remember that you called me to life.
Before I was, you thought of me; you called me from nothing
and by your gift I responded: I am.

With your hidden Providence,
you guided the path of my existence,
you set the stages of my journey.
You called me from afar
so that I could respond from up close.

And behold, I am a creature of your hand
defective clay and image of your face.
Reshape me, O Lord, in your likeness,
do not judge me, if I lost sight of it.
In your powerful hands I am fragile.
Your hands uphold and sustain,
your hands cast down and exult.
In them I will surrender my life,
the gift you gave me, I will entrust it to you;
where nothing is lost, I will lose my being,
in you, Lord, my beginning and my end. Amen amen
(*Blessed Paul VI*)

SALM 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?
The Lord is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid?
Though an army encamp against me, my heart does not fear;
Though war be waged against me, even then do I trust.

For God will hide me in his shelter in time of trouble,
He will conceal me in the cover of his tent;
and set me high upon a rock.
Hear my voice, Lord, when I call;
have mercy on me and answer me.

“Come,” says my heart, “seek his face”;
your face, Lord, do I seek!
Do not hide your face from me;
do not repel your servant in anger.
You are my salvation; do not cast me off;

do not forsake me, God my savior!
Even if my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will take me in.

Lord, show me your way;
lead me on a level path...
I believe I shall see the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord, take courage;
be stouthearted, wait for the Lord!



SONG

*At each invocation we repeat together:
Lord, faithful God, hear us!*

We are not afraid to walk unknown paths, to learn new languages, to touch the flesh of the poor. Help us, Lord, to persevere in our choice, may we never stop seeing your face in our brothers and sisters.

Send, oh Lord, young men and women who are enthusiastic, strong, willing and able to sustain and guide the migrants who are in need. Give them a heart as wide as the ends of the world.

The offer you, O Lord, our daily suffering so that your kingdom may come in all hearts, and every man and woman may have bread and dignity, and all kinds of slavery may cease to be.

Grant, O Lord, to the whole Scalabrinian Family the gift of ongoing daily renewal that it be attentive to the signs of the time and each consecrated member may become a living Gospel.



TESTIMONY of Fr. Tarcisio Rubín *Scalabrinian missionary in Argentina*

He was born in 1929 and, from 1953 to 1973, he was a Scalabrinian missionary in Switzerland, Germany and Italy, where he was deeply involved in assisting young immigrants. In 1974 he was sent to Argentina where he served mostly Bolivian seasonal immigrants in the northern districts of the country (Salta, Tucuman, Jujuy).

His word was powerful and he had the courage to face up to the "important people", who often oppressed the weak. His jovial personality, the long hours spent in prayer and his "prophetic garb" (long beard, white cassock, crucifix hanging from his neck and poncho) attracted the simple people as well as many priests who would turn to him for their spiritual needs. He met with them often during their spiritual retreats in Mendoza. He even preached retreats to bishops. His heart failed him on October 3, 1983 as he was in the small village of Alto Calilegua (Jujuy) high in the Andes of northern Argentina.

“I believe we need to have the courage to put into practice the Gospel for real: blessed are the poor, blessed are those who work for peace, blessed are they who know how to accept misjudgment and undergo conversion in their heart. Violence originates when we let affections be replaced by ideas, and love to be supplanted by programs that reduce the human person to an object. [...] Maybe we are neither well-educated nor simple enough like the illiterate, because the one who was truly educated, the true professor, is the crucified one. One who puts his trust in science, and ideas, and programs cannot savor true love for people. All our writings, all our science is like scribbling in the sand as Jesus did before the woman caught in adultery. All that is written will pass and all that will endure is

the encounter of divine mercy with human misery. The Christian, the priest, they like trees whose roots are in heaven. And the longing of the Bible's last words is the best wish for all Christian feasts: "Come, Lord Jesus"."

(Mendoza, May 10, 1978)

FR. TARCISIO'S PRAYER

Flood my soul, O Jesus,
with your spirit and with your life.
Permeate all my being and take possession of it,
that my life may be nothing but a radiation of yours.
Rest within my heart with such an intimate union
that the souls who come in contact with mine,
may perceive in me your presence
and, looking at me, forget that I exist.

OUR FATHER



FINAL SONG



Vocation Intentions

to be added to the invocations in the liturgy of LAUDS

Sunday: O Lord, with the splendor of your resurrection, shine on those who lie in darkness and in the shadow of death / Assist today our missionaries that they may be faithful apostles and a comfort to migrants.

Monday: O Jesus, by choosing to live in poverty, chastity and obedience, you inspired a life consecrated to the service of every man and woman / By being faithful every day to our promises, may we live intensely side-by-side with our brothers and sisters.

Tuesday: O Holy Father, you called the Scalabrinian seminarians and novices to become neighbor to every migrant / Like the good Samaritan, may we know how to best respond to the sigh of pain of those who suffer.

Wednesday: O God, you inspire in the heart of families the desire to become migrants with the migrants / Don't let them be deprived of your Holy Spirit and grant them courage and hope.

Thursday: O Lord, in Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, you gave your Church a teacher of generosity and hope / Grant every man and woman the ability to love and to welcome those who are in need.

Friday: O Lord, through your passion and death you have gained the redemption of the world / May all missionaries be ever ready to forgive and to dialogue with everyone.

Saturday: O Jesus, you wished to appoint Mary as mother of the Church / Grant to every consecrated person the strength to overcome barriers of incomprehension and hatred.

Vocation Intentions

to be added to the invocations in the liturgy of VESPERS

Sunday: O Lord, you inspired Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini to found a congregation for the migrants / Enkindle in the young the desire to follow in his footsteps to become apostles of hope and faithful witnesses of the Gospel.

Monday: O Lord, you revealed your love by giving up your life for all / Warm the heart of those who love you that they may follow you closely on the way of the evangelical counsels.

Tuesday: O Lord, you give the young men and women of today teachers and priests to accompany them / Assist every educator to help the young discover their own vocation.

Wednesday: You loved the rich young man and called him to follow you / Grant that the attachment to material wealth and worldly comforts may not be an obstacle to embracing joyously your plan of salvation.

Thursday: O Lord, at the Last Supper you washed the feet of your disciples / Enkindle in the heart of the young a loving desire to serve the poor, the humble and the last.

Friday: We entrust to you the missionaries and all the workers of the Gospel you called from this world to yourself / May they receive from you the promised reward and sing forever your praises.

Saturday: On the cross you gave us the Virgin Mary as a mother to all of us / May all the baptized turn to her to find comfort in adversity.



PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Loving Father,
you guide your people with love and strength
and, in every time and place,
you call men and women willing to give themselves
totally to you and to their brothers and sisters,
inspire in the heart of many young men and women
the desire, the readiness and the willingness
to follow you closely all their lifelong.
With insistence and trust we ask you
to awaken and fill the hearts and minds
of those you have called,
so that your invitation
may find good and fertile ground.
Once again, O Lord of the harvest,
Grant joyful perseverance to those who
have already responded to your call.
To Mary, the faithful disciple,
model and aid to everyone who is called,
we entrust this our prayer,
that she may intercede with Jesus your Son,
who is the source, the reason
and the reward of every vocation.
Amen.

APPENDIX 1

Blessed Scalabrini's Pastoral Letter for Lent 1883

"Making ourselves copies of him"

What does a painter do if he wants to faithfully portray a beloved person on canvass? He keeps his eyes constantly fixed on that person so as not to make one stroke of the brush that does not help in depicting some trait of the original. In some way, this is what we have to do. All our thoughts, all our words, all our actions, all our aspirations, all our dispositions, all our suffering must be strokes of the brush that form and depict in us some trait of the life of Jesus Christ, to the point of making ourselves other copies of him, as it were.

And would you like to know when this will happen? When we will judge all things the way Jesus Christ himself judged them; when we will love what he loved and in the very way he loved; when we will have in our hearts the very sentiments and dispositions he had in his heart.

Not all of us, of course, are obliged to live in such great exterior poverty as was the poverty Jesus lived in. Nor are we all obliged to suffer the indescribable torments he suffered. But all of us, great and small, rich and poor, priests and lay people, are obliged to have the same interior dispositions of poverty, humility, charity, sacrifice and all the other Christian virtues, so as to be ready to sacrifice everything and suffer everything, even death, rather than betray his holy law. Aut we must not deceive ourselves, beloved. We will never have this interior conformity with Jesus Christ, if we do not have even some exterior conformity with Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus Christ, says the Apostle St. Paul, must manifest itself in our mortal flesh.

"Love never says: enough"

He is ablaze with the most burning love for us. Love never says: enough. Christ lived a life of continual hardship for us. He cannot wait to sacrifice this life for us (*Lk 12, 50*). And his hour did arrive. The hour of his sacrifice arrived, and the world beheld the tragic scene of a God who dies, who dies crucified for his people (*Rom 5, 9*)! Can we think of anything more marvelous, more awesome than this extravagant love?

Surely, no one, as Jesus Christ himself assures us, no one can show greater love than to give up one's life for one's friends (*Jn 15, 3*). But how much he must have loved us to want to die for us his enemies, he who is our God, our Creator whom we have offended and insulted! With this thought in mind, the Apostle said that only with difficulty does one die for a just person. But God, he says, proves his love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (*Rom 5, 7*). And why did he die? Because he himself wanted to (*Is 53, 7*): no one could force him to do this, as he himself said (*Jn 10, 17*). But why did he want to do this? For one simple reason: he loved us.

APPENDIX 2

APOSTOLIC LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO ALL CONSECRATED PEOPLE ON THE OCCASION OF THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Consecrated Life,

I am writing to you as the Successor of Peter, to whom the Lord entrusted the task of confirming his brothers and sisters in faith (cf. *Lk 22:32*). But I am also writing to you as a brother who, like yourselves, is consecrated to God.

Together let us thank the Father, who called us to follow Jesus by fully embracing the Gospel and serving the Church, and poured into our hearts the Holy Spirit, the source of our joy and our witness to God's love and mercy before the world.

In response to requests from many of you and from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, I decided to proclaim a Year of Consecrated Life on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, which speaks of religious in its sixth chapter, and of the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* on the renewal of religious life. The Year will begin on 30 November 2014, the First Sunday of Advent, and conclude with the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple on 2 February 2016.

After consultation with the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, I have chosen as the aims of this Year the same ones which Saint John Paul II proposed to the whole Church at the beginning of the third millennium, reiterating, in a certain sense, what he had earlier written in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*: “You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things” (No. 110).

I. Aims of the year of consecrated life

1. **The first of these aims is to look to the past with gratitude.** All our Institutes are heir to a history rich in charisms. At their origins we see the hand of God who, in his Spirit, calls certain individuals to follow Christ more closely, to translate the Gospel into a particular way of life, to read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith and to respond creatively to the needs of the Church. This initial experience then matured and developed, engaging new members in new geographic and cultural contexts, and giving rise to new ways of exercising the charism, new initiatives and expressions of apostolic charity. Like the seed which becomes a tree, each Institute grew and stretched out its branches.

During this Year, it would be appropriate for each charismatic family to reflect on its origins and history, in order to thank God who grants the Church a variety of gifts which embellish her and equip her for every good work (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 12).

Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging. More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities. In this way we come to see how the charism has been lived over the years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it encountered and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted. We may also encounter cases of inconsistency, the result of human weakness and even at times a neglect of some essential aspects of the charism. Yet everything proves instructive and, taken as a whole, acts as a summons to conversion. **To tell our story is to praise God and to thank him for all his gifts.**

In a particular way we give thanks to God for these fifty years which followed the Second Vatican Council. The Council

represented a “breath” of the Holy Spirit upon the whole Church. In consequence, consecrated life undertook a fruitful journey of renewal which, for all its lights and shadows, has been a time of grace, marked by the presence of the Spirit.

May this Year of Consecrated Life also be an occasion for confessing humbly, with immense confidence in the God who is Love (cf. 1 *Jn* 4:8), our own weakness and, in it, to experience the Lord’s merciful love. May this Year likewise be an occasion for bearing vigorous and joyful witness before the world to the holiness and vitality present in so many of those called to follow Jesus in the consecrated life.

2. **This Year also calls us to live the present with passion.** Grateful remembrance of the past leads us, as we listen attentively to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today, to implement ever more fully the essential aspects of our consecrated life.

From the beginnings of monasticism to the “new communities” of our own time, **every form of consecrated life has been born of the Spirit’s call to follow Jesus as the Gospel teaches** (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2). For the various founders and foundresses, the Gospel was the absolute rule, whereas every other rule was meant merely to be an expression of the Gospel and a means of living the Gospel to the full. For them, the ideal was Christ; they sought to be interiorly united to him and thus to be able to say with Saint Paul: “For to me to live is Christ” (*Phil* 1:21). Their vows were intended as a concrete expression of this passionate love.

The question we have to ask ourselves during this Year is if and how we too are open to being challenged by the Gospel; whether the Gospel is truly the “manual” for our daily living and the decisions we are called to make. The Gospel is demanding: it demands to be lived radically and sincerely. It is not enough to read it (even though the reading and study of Scripture is essential), nor is it enough to meditate on it (which

we do joyfully each day). Jesus asks us to practice it, to put his words into effect in our lives.

Once again, we have to ask ourselves: Is Jesus really our first and only love, as we promised he would be when we professed our vows? Only if he is, will we be empowered to love, in truth and mercy, every person who crosses our path. For we will have learned from Jesus the meaning and practice of love. We will be able to love because we have his own heart.

Our founders and foundresses shared in Jesus' own compassion when he saw the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd. Like Jesus, who compassionately spoke his gracious word, healed the sick, gave bread to the hungry and offered his own life in sacrifice, so our founders and foundresses sought in different ways to be the service of all those to whom the Spirit sent them. They did so by their prayers of intercession, their preaching of the Gospel, their works of catechesis, education, their service to the poor and the infirm... The creativity of charity is boundless; it is able to find countless new ways of bringing the newness of the Gospel to every culture and every corner of society.

The Year of Consecrated Life challenges us to examine our fidelity to the mission entrusted to us. Are our ministries, our works and our presence consonant with what the Spirit asked of our founders and foundresses? Are they suitable for carrying out today, in society and the Church, those same ministries and works? Do we have the same passion for our people, are we close to them to the point of sharing in their joys and sorrows, thus truly understanding their needs and helping to respond to them? "The same generosity and self-sacrifice which guided your founders – Saint John Paul II once said – must now inspire you, their spiritual children, to keep alive the charisms which, by the power of the same Spirit who awakened them, are constantly being enriched and adapted, while losing none of their unique character. It is up to you to place those charisms at

the service of the Church and to work for the coming of Christ's Kingdom in its fullness".[1]

Recalling our origins sheds light on yet another aspect of consecrated life. Our founders and foundresses were attracted by the unity of the Apostles with Christ and by the fellowship which marked the first community in Jerusalem. In establishing their own communities, each of them sought to replicate those models of evangelical living, to be of one heart and one soul, and to rejoice in the Lord's presence (cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 15).

Living the present with passion means becoming "experts in communion", "witnesses and architects of the 'plan for unity' which is the crowning point of human history in God's design".[2] In a polarized society, where different cultures experience difficulty in living alongside one another, where the powerless encounter oppression, where inequality abounds, we are called to offer a concrete model of community which, by acknowledging the dignity of each person and sharing our respective gifts, makes it possible to live as brothers and sisters. So, be men and women of communion! Have the courage to be present in the midst of conflict and tension, as a credible sign of the presence of the Spirit who inspires in human hearts a passion for all to be one (cf. *Jn* 17:21). Live the *mysticism of encounter*, which entails "the ability to hear, to listen to other people; the ability to seek together ways and means".[3] Live in the light of the loving relationship of the three divine Persons (cf. 1 *Jn* 4:8), the model for all interpersonal relationships.

3. *To embrace the future with hope* should be the third aim of this Year. We all know the difficulties which the various forms of consecrated life are currently experiencing: decreasing vocations and aging members, particularly in the Western world; economic problems stemming from the global financial crisis; issues of internationalization and globalization; the threats posed by relativism and a sense of isolation and social irrelevance... But it is precisely amid these uncertainties, which

we share with so many of our contemporaries, that we are called to practice the virtue of hope, the fruit of our faith in the Lord of history, who continues to tell us: “Be not afraid... for I am with you” (*Jer* 1:8).

This hope is not based on statistics or accomplishments, but on the One in whom we have put our trust (cf. *2 Tim* 1:2), the One for whom “nothing is impossible” (*Lk* 1:37). This is the hope which does not disappoint; it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future that we must always look, conscious that the Holy Spirit spurs us on so that he can still do great things with us.

So do not yield to the temptation to see things in terms of numbers and efficiency, and even less to trust in your own strength. In scanning the horizons of your lives and the present moment, be watchful and alert. Together with Benedict XVI, I urge you not to “join the ranks of the prophets of doom who proclaim the end or meaninglessness of the consecrated life in the Church in our day; rather, clothe yourselves in Jesus Christ and put on the armour of light – as Saint Paul urged (cf. *Rom* 13:11-14) – keeping awake and watchful”.^[4] **Let us constantly set out anew, with trust in the Lord.**

I would especially like to say a word to those of you who are young. You are the present, since you are already taking active part in the lives of your Institutes, offering all the freshness and generosity of your “yes”. At the same time you are the future, for soon you will be called to take on roles of leadership in the life, formation, service and mission of your communities. This Year should see you actively engaged in dialogue with the previous generation. In fraternal communion you will be enriched by their experiences and wisdom, while at the same time inspiring them, by your own energy and enthusiasm, to recapture their original idealism. In this way the entire community can join in finding new ways of living the Gospel

and responding more effectively to the need for witness and proclamation.

I am also happy to know that you will have the opportunity during this Year to meet with other young religious from different Institutes. May such encounters become a regular means of fostering communion, mutual support, and unity.

II. Expectations for the year of consecrated life

What in particular do I expect from this Year of grace for consecrated life?

1. That the old saying will always be true: “Where there are religious, there is joy”. We are called to know and show that God is able to fill our hearts to the brim with happiness; that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere; that the authentic fraternity found in our communities increases our joy; and that our total self-giving in service to the Church, to families and young people, to the elderly and the poor, brings us life-long personal fulfilment.

None of us should be dour, discontented and dissatisfied, for “a gloomy disciple is a disciple of gloom”. Like everyone else, we have our troubles, our dark nights of the soul, our disappointments and infirmities, our experience of slowing down as we grow older. But in all these things we should be able to discover “perfect joy”. For it is here that we learn to recognize the face of Christ, who became like us in all things, and to rejoice in the knowledge that we are being conformed to him who, out of love of us, did not refuse the sufferings of the cross.

In a society which exalts the cult of efficiency, fitness and success, one which ignores the poor and dismisses “losers”, we can witness by our lives to the truth of the words of Scripture: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10).

We can apply to the consecrated life the words of Benedict XVI which I cited in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: “It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but by attraction” (No. 14). The consecrated life will not flourish as a result of brilliant vocation programs, but because the young people we meet find us attractive, because they see us as men and women who are happy! Similarly, the apostolic effectiveness of consecrated life does not depend on the efficiency of its methods. It depends on the eloquence of your lives, lives which radiate the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full.

As I said to the members of ecclesial movements on the Vigil of Pentecost last year: “Fundamentally, the strength of the Church is living by the Gospel and bearing witness to our faith. The Church is the salt of the earth; she is the light of the world. She is called to make present in society the leaven of the Kingdom of God and she does this primarily by her witness, her witness of brotherly love, of solidarity and of sharing with others” (18 May 2013).

2. I am counting on you “to wake up the world”, since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy. As I told the Superiors General: “Radical evangelical living is not only for religious: it is demanded of everyone. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way.” This is the priority that is needed right now: “to be prophets who witness to how Jesus lived on this earth... a religious must never abandon prophecy” (29 November 2013).

Prophets receive from God the ability to scrutinize the times in which they live and to interpret events: they are like sentinels who keep watch in the night and sense the coming of the dawn (cf. *Is* 21:11-12). Prophets know God and they know the men and women who are their brothers and sisters. They are able to discern and denounce the evil of sin and injustice. Because they are free, they are beholden to no one but God, and they have no interest other than God. Prophets tend to be on the side of the

poor and the powerless, for they know that God himself is on their side.

So I trust that, rather than living in some utopia, you will find ways to create “alternate spaces”, where the Gospel approach of self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences, and love of one another can thrive. Monasteries, communities, centres of spirituality, schools, hospitals, family shelters – all these are places which the charity and creativity born of your charisms have brought into being, and with constant creativity must continue to bring into being. They should increasingly be the leaven for a society inspired by the Gospel, a “city on a hill”, which testifies to the truth and the power of Jesus’ words.

At times, like Elijah and Jonah, you may feel the temptation to flee, to abandon the task of being a prophet because it is too demanding, wearisome or apparently fruitless. But prophets know that they are never alone. As he did with Jeremiah, so God encourages us: “Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you” (*Jer* 1:8).

3. Men and women religious, like all other consecrated persons, have been called, as I mentioned, “experts in communion”. So I am hoping that the “spirituality of communion”, so emphasized by Saint John Paul II, will become a reality and that you will be in the forefront of responding to “the great challenge facing us” in this new millennium: “to make the Church the home and the school of communion.”[5] I am sure that in this Year you will make every effort to make the ideal of fraternity pursued by your founders and foundresses expand everywhere, like concentric circles.

Communion is lived first and foremost within the respective communities of each Institute. To this end, I would ask you to think about my frequent comments about criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy, hostility as ways of acting which have no place in our houses. This being the case, the path of charity open before us is almost infinite, since it entails mutual acceptance and concern, practicing a communion of goods both material

and spiritual, fraternal correction and respect for those who are weak ... it is the “mystique of living together” which makes our life “a sacred pilgrimage”.[6] We need to ask ourselves about the way we relate to persons from different cultures, as our communities become increasingly international. How can we enable each member to say freely what he or she thinks, to be accepted with his or her particular gifts, and to become fully co-responsible?

I also hope for a growth in communion between the members of different Institutes. Might this Year be an occasion for us to step out more courageously from the confines of our respective Institutes and to work together, at the local and global levels, on projects involving formation, evangelization, and social action? This would make for a more effective prophetic witness.

Communion and the encounter between different charisms and vocations can open up a path of hope. No one contributes to the future in isolation, by his or her efforts alone, but by seeing himself or herself as part of a true communion which is constantly open to encounter, dialogue, attentive listening and mutual assistance. Such a communion inoculates us from the disease of self-absorption.

Consecrated men and women are also called to true synergy with all other vocations in the Church, beginning with priests and the lay faithful, in order to “spread the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries”.[7]

4. I also expect from you what I have asked all the members of the Church: to come out of yourselves and go forth to the existential peripheries. “Go into all the world”; these were the last words which Jesus spoke to his followers and which he continues to address to us (cf. *Mk* 16:15). A whole world awaits us: men and women who have lost all hope, families in difficulty, abandoned children, young people without a future, the elderly, sick and abandoned, those who are rich in the

world's goods but impoverished within, men and women looking for a purpose in life, thirsting for the divine...

Don't be closed in on yourselves, don't be stifled by petty squabbles, don't remain a hostage to your own problems. These will be resolved if you go forth and help others to resolve their own problems, and proclaim the Good News. **You will find life by giving life, hope by giving hope, love by giving love.**

I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor, and finding creative ways to catechize, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach others how to pray. Consequently, I would hope that structures can be streamlined, large religious houses repurposed for works which better respond to the present demands of evangelization and charity, and apostolates adjusted to new needs.

5. I expect that each form of consecrated life will question what it is that God and people today are asking of them.

Monasteries and groups which are primarily contemplative could meet or otherwise engage in an exchange of experiences on the life of prayer, on ways of deepening communion with the entire Church, on supporting persecuted Christians, and welcoming and assisting those seeking a deeper spiritual life or requiring moral or material support.

The same can be done by Institutes dedicated to works of charity, teaching and cultural advancement, to preaching the Gospel or to carrying out specific pastoral ministries. It could also be done by Secular Institutes, whose members are found at almost every level of society. The creativity of the Spirit has generated ways of life and activities so diverse that they cannot be easily categorized or fit into ready-made templates. So I cannot address each and every charismatic configuration. Yet during this Year no one can feel excused from seriously examining his or her presence in the Church's life and from responding to the new demands constantly being made on us, to the cry of the poor.

Only by such concern for the needs of the world, and by docility to the promptings of the Spirit, will this Year of Consecrated Life become an authentic *kairos*, a time rich in God's grace, a time of transformation.

III. The horizons of the year of consecrated life

1. In this letter, I wish to speak not only to consecrated persons, but also to *the laity, who share with them the same ideals, spirit and mission*. Some Religious Institutes have a long tradition in this regard, while the experience of others is more recent. Indeed, around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a “charismatic family”, which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality.

I urge you, as laity, to live this Year for Consecrated Life as a grace which can make you more aware of the gift you yourselves have received. Celebrate it with your entire “family”, so that you can grow and respond together to the promptings of the Spirit in society today. On some occasions when consecrated men and women from different Institutes come together, arrange to be present yourselves so as to give expression to the one gift of God. In this way you will come to know the experiences of other charismatic families and other lay groups, and thus have an opportunity for mutual enrichment and support.

2. **The Year for Consecrated Life concerns not only consecrated persons, but the entire Church.** Consequently, I ask the *whole Christian people* to be increasingly aware of the gift which is the presence of our many consecrated men and women, heirs of the great saints who have written the history of Christianity. What would the Church be without Saint Benedict and Saint Basil, without Saint Augustine and Saint Bernard, without Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Angelica Merici and Saint Vincent de

Paul. The list could go on and on, up to Saint John Bosco and Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. As Blessed Paul VI pointed out: “Without this concrete sign there would be a danger that the charity which animates the entire Church would grow cold, that the salvific paradox of the Gospel would be blunted, and that the “salt” of faith would lose its savour in a world undergoing secularization” (*Evangelica Testificatio*, 3).

So I invite every Christian community to experience this Year above all as a moment of thanksgiving to the Lord and grateful remembrance for all the gifts we continue to receive, thanks to the sanctity of founders and foundresses, and from the fidelity to their charism shown by so many consecrated men and women. I ask all of you to draw close to these men and women, to rejoice with them, to share their difficulties and to assist them, to whatever degree possible, in their ministries and works, for the latter are, in the end, those of the entire Church. Let them know the affection and the warmth which the entire Christian people feels for them.

I thank the Lord that the Year of Consecrated Life coincides with the Synod on the Family. Family life and consecrated life are both vocations which bring enrichment and blessings for all. They are spaces where human growth comes about through relationships, and they are also places of evangelization. Each can help the other.

3. In this letter I do not hesitate to address a word to the consecrated men and women and to the members of fraternities and communities who belong to Churches of traditions other than the Catholic tradition. Monasticism is part of the heritage of the undivided Church, and is still very much alive in both the Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church. The monastic tradition, and other later experiences from the time when the Church in the West was still united, have inspired analogous initiatives in the Ecclesial Communities of the reformed tradition. These have continued to give birth to further expressions of fraternal community and service.

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life has planned a number of initiatives to facilitate encounters between members of different expressions of consecrated and fraternal life in the various Churches. I warmly encourage such meetings as a means of increasing mutual understanding, respect and reciprocal cooperation, so that the ecumenism of the consecrated life can prove helpful for the greater journey towards the unity of all the Churches.

4. Nor can we forget that the phenomenon of monasticism and of other expressions of religious fraternity is present in all the great religions. There are instances, some long-standing, of inter-monastic dialogue involving the Catholic Church and certain of the great religious traditions. I trust that the Year of Consecrated Life will be an opportunity to review the progress made, to make consecrated persons aware of this dialogue, and to consider what further steps can be taken towards greater mutual understanding and greater cooperation in the many common areas of service to human life.

Journeying together always brings enrichment, and can open new paths to relationships between peoples and cultures, which nowadays appear so difficult.

5. Finally, in a special way, I address my brother bishops. May this Year be an opportunity to accept institutes of consecrated life, readily and joyfully, as a spiritual capital which contributes to the good of the whole body of Christ (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 43), and not simply that of the individual religious families. “Consecrated life is a gift to the Church, it is born of the Church, it grows in the Church, and it is entirely directed to the Church”.^[8] For this reason, precisely as a gift to the Church, it is not an isolated or marginal reality, but deeply a part of her. It is at the heart of the Church, a decisive element of her mission, inasmuch as it expresses the deepest nature of the Christian vocation and the yearning of the Church as the Bride for union

with her sole Spouse. Thus, “it belongs... absolutely to the life and holiness” of the Church (*ibid.*, 44).

In the light of this, I ask you, the Pastors of the particular Churches, to show special concern for promoting within your communities the different charisms, whether long-standing or recent. I ask you to do this by your support and encouragement, your assistance in discernment, and your tender and loving closeness to those situations of suffering and weakness in which some consecrated men or women may find themselves. Above all, do this by instructing the People of God in the value of consecrated life, so that its beauty and holiness may shine forth in the Church.

I entrust this Year of Consecrated Life to Mary, the Virgin of listening and contemplation, the first disciple of her beloved Son. Let us look to her, the highly -beloved daughter of the Father, endowed with every gift of grace, as the unsurpassed model for all those who follow Christ in love of God and service to their neighbour.

Lastly, I join all of you in gratitude for the gifts of grace and light with which the Lord graciously wills to enrich us, and I accompany you with my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 21 November 2014, Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Francis




humilitas