



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

The Church in Central and Southern Indiana

Leadership Briefing

By Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

A Light for Revelation to the Gentiles, the glory of your people Israel (Lk 2:32)

On Wednesday, February 2, our Church celebrated The Presentation of the Lord and the World Day of Consecrated Life. On this feast day, which is also known as Candlemas, candles are blessed to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. His light dispels the world's darkness and brings hope to all peoples regardless of their race, religion, social or economic status.

It is most appropriate that we recognize on this day the witness given by Consecrated Women and Men here in our archdiocese and throughout the Universal Church. As we read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:



From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels. They led lives dedicated to God, each in his own way. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits or founded religious families. These the Church, by virtue of her authority, gladly accepted and approved (#918).

The lives of holy men and women such as Saints Benedict and Scholastica, Francis and Clare, Francis Xavier and Mother Theodore Guerin stand out as lights in the world's darkness. We are truly blessed here in central and southern Indiana to have communities of women and men dedicated to a special intimacy with Christ through their observance of the evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity and obedience) and through their particular religious charisms.

In his message for the World Day of Consecrated Life two years ago, Pope Francis, who many years ago professed vows as a member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), praised the witness of religious communities in these words:

You too, dear consecrated brothers and sisters, you are simple men and women who caught sight of the treasure worth more than any worldly good. And so, you left behind precious things, such as possessions, such as making a family for yourselves. Why did you do this? Because you fell in love with Jesus, you saw everything in him, and enraptured by his gaze, you left the rest behind. Religious life is this vision. It means seeing what really matters in life. It means welcoming the Lord's gift with open arms, as Simeon did. This is what the eyes of consecrated men and women behold: the grace of God poured into their hands. The consecrated person is one who every day looks at himself or herself and says: "Everything is gift, all is grace". Dear brothers and sisters, we did not deserve religious life; it is a gift of love that we have received.

All Christians are called to intimacy with Jesus, a "treasure worth more than any worldly good," but some women and men experience this call more intensely. Their way is not "better" than the way of life that all of us who are baptized Christians are called to live, but it is distinctly different. Consecrated Life is a way of living the Gospel that stands out and provides inspiration and encouragement to all.

"If consecrated life remains steadfast in love for the Lord," Pope Francis says, "it perceives beauty. It sees that poverty is not some colossal effort, but rather a higher freedom that God gives to us and others as real wealth. It sees that chastity is not austere sterility, but the way to love without possessing. It sees that obedience is not a discipline, but is victory over our own chaos, in the way of Jesus." This is the Light of Christ (Lumen Christi) shining in the world's darkness. It is love expressed with immense joy and gratitude that welcomes God's gifts with open hearts and shares them generously with others.

Those of us who have experienced firsthand the ministry of the consecrated women in our archdiocese know that God's grace has granted them a freedom that flows from their poverty. We who have come to know the consecrated men who serve in central and southern Indiana have seen with our own eyes that God's love is what moves them to give up everything and follow Jesus. How blessed we are to have celebrated this day in honor of all consecrated men and women worldwide!

"Men and women religious, who live to imitate Jesus, are called to bring their own gaze into the world," Pope Francis teaches. We, who as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ have been blessed to share in the ministry of Religious Orders serving our archdiocese, are also called to look at the world we live in with new eyes. We are invited to bring with us "a gaze of compassion, a gaze that goes in search of those far off; a gaze that does not condemn, but encourages, frees, consoles; a gaze of compassion." In short, whether ordained ministers, consecrated men and women, or lay faithful, we are called to reflect the light of Christ and to reveal Him to all our sisters and brothers everywhere.

“My eyes have seen your salvation” (Lk 2:30) said the old man, Simeon, when the infant Jesus was presented in the temple. May we also see Him, and reflect His light, to others.

+Charles C. Thompson
Archbishop of Indianapolis

Religious Men and Women in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

The following information is taken from the archdiocesan Directory and Yearbook. *(Unless otherwise noted, all statistics are current as of October 1, 2020.)*

Men Religious

- Order of St. Benedict (OSB)
 - Priests - 37
 - Brothers - 27
- Franciscans of the Immaculate (FI)
 - Priests - 2
 - Brothers - 2
- Glenmary Home Missioners (GHM)
 - Priests - 1
 - Brothers - 3
- Order of Friars Minor Conventual (OFM Conv)
 - Priests - 16
 - Brothers - 6
 - Deacons - 1
- Order of Friars Minor (OFM) Albuquerque Province
 - Priests - 1
- Order of Friars Minor (OFM) Cincinnati Province
 - Priests - 4
- Order of Friars Minor (OFM) St. Louis Province
 - Priests - 4
 - Brothers - 2
- Order of Preachers (OP)
 - Priests - 4
- Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP)
 - Priests - 1

- Society of Jesus (SJ)
 - Priests - 3
 - Brothers - 1
- Society of the Divine Savior (SDS)
 - Priests - 2
- Society of the Divine Word (SVD)
 - Brother - 1
- **Total of Religious Men - 116**

Women Religious

- Sisters of St. Benedict (OSB), Beech Grove - 47
- Sisters of St. Benedict (OSB), Ferdinand - 5
- Congregation of St. Joseph (CSJ) - 2
- Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross (CSC) - 3
- Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis (OSF), Oldenburg - 137
- Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy (DMMM) - 10
- Discalced Carmelites (OCD), Oldenburg - 4
- Discalced Carmelites (OCD), Terre Haute - 17
- Dominican Sisters (OP), Adrian Dominicans - 1
- Dominican Sisters (OP), Houston Dominicans - 1
- Franciscan Religious of Our Lady of Refuge (RFR) - 1
- Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (FIH) - 12
- Little Sisters of the Poor (LSP) - 8
- Missionaries of Charity (MC) - 4
- Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA) - 1
- New Evangelization Sisters of Mother of Perpetual Help (NES) - 2
- Servants of the Gospel of Life (SGL) - 1
- Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (SCN) - 1
- Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross (SL) - 1
- Sisters of Notre Dame (SND) - 1
- Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods (SP) - 159
- Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration (OSF) - 4
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet (CSJ) - 4
- **Total of Religious Women (living/working in the Archdiocese) - 426**

Religious life

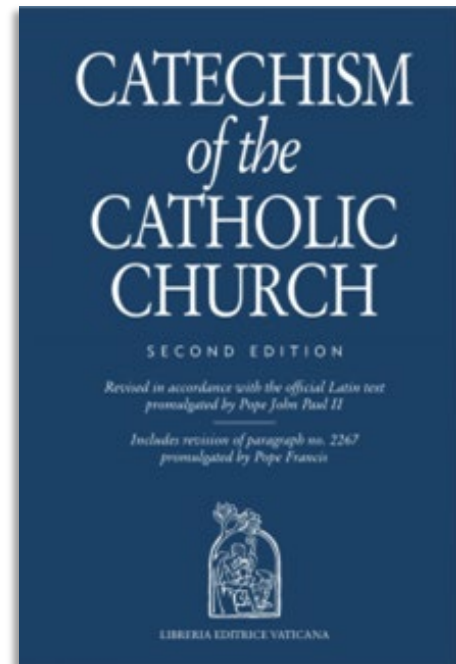
925 Religious life was born in the East during the first centuries of Christianity. Lived within institutes canonically erected by the Church, it is distinguished from other forms of consecrated life by its liturgical character, public profession of the evangelical counsels, fraternal life led in common, and witness given to the union of Christ with the Church.

926 Religious life derives from the mystery of the Church. It is a gift she has received from her Lord, a gift she offers as a stable way of life to the faithful called by God to profess the counsels. Thus, the Church can both show forth Christ and acknowledge herself to be the Savior's bride. Religious life in its various forms is called to signify the very charity of God in the language of our time.

927 All religious, whether exempt or not, take their place among the collaborators of the diocesan bishop in his pastoral duty. From the outset of the work of evangelization, the missionary "planting" and expansion of the Church require the presence of the religious life in all its forms. "History witnesses to the outstanding service rendered by religious families in the propagation of the faith and in the formation of new Churches: from the ancient monastic institutions to the medieval orders, all the way to the more recent congregations."

Consecration and mission: proclaiming the King who is coming

931 Already dedicated to him through Baptism, the person who surrenders himself to the God he loves above all else thereby consecrates himself more intimately to God's service and to the good of the Church. By this state of life consecrated to God, the Church manifests Christ and shows us how the Holy Spirit acts so wonderfully in her. And so the first mission of those who profess the evangelical counsels is to live out their consecration. Moreover, "since members of institutes of consecrated life dedicate themselves through their consecration to the service of the Church they are obliged in a special manner to engage in missionary work, in accord with the character of the institute."



932 In the Church, which is like the sacrament- the sign and instrument - of God's own life, the consecrated life is seen as a special sign of the mystery of redemption. To follow and imitate Christ more nearly and to manifest more clearly his self- emptying is to be more deeply present to one's contemporaries, in the heart of Christ. For those who are on this "narrower" path encourage their brethren by their example, and bear striking witness "that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes."

933 Whether their witness is public, as in the religious state, or less public, or even secret, Christ's coming remains for all those consecrated both the origin and rising sun of their life:

For the People of God has here no lasting city, . . . [and this state] reveals more clearly to all believers the heavenly goods which are already present in this age, witnessing to the new and eternal life which we have acquired through the redemptive work of Christ and prelude our future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom.

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

There once was a young religious woman who had just entered the novitiate. She was happy... She found a kind, holy, elderly religious woman... "How are you?" — "This is paradise, Mother!" said the young woman enthusiastically. "Wait a little," the elderly woman said. "This is also purgatory!" Consecrated life, community life: there is a purgatory here, and it takes patience to carry on.

I would like to point out two things that may help: please flee from gossip. What kills community life is gossip. Do not speak ill of others. "It is not easy, Father, because sometimes it comes from the heart!" Yes, it comes from the heart, it comes from envy, it comes from many capital sins that we have within. Flee from these! "But tell me Father, is there not some medicine? Prayer, kindness...?" Yes, there is a medicine which is very "homemade": bite your tongue. Before speaking ill of others, bite your tongue so that it will swell and fill up your mouth and you will be unable to speak badly. Please, flee from gossip which destroys a community!



And then, the other thing that I suggest for community life: there are always many things that do not go well. From the superior, the consultor, the other one... There are always things we do not like, right? Do not lose your sense of humor, please: this helps us so much. It is the anti-gossip: to know how to laugh at oneself, at situations and also at others with a good heart, but do not lose your sense of humor. And fleeing from gossip. What I am suggesting now is not very clerical advice, let us say, but it is human: it is human in order to carry on with patience. Never speak ill of others: bite your tongue. And then, do not lose your sense of humor: it will greatly help us.

To all Consecrated Women and Men: Thank you for what you do, thank you for your witness. Thank you, many thanks for your difficulties, for how you bear with them and for the great suffering due to the lack of vocation

My Prayer for You

Please join me in praying with these words of Pope Francis:

At times, whether we are ordained, consecrated religious, or lay faithful, our hard work fails to achieve the desired results, the seeds we sow seem not to bear sufficient fruit, the ardor of our prayer cools, and we are not always immune to spiritual aridity. In our lives as missionary disciples of Christ, it can happen that hope slowly fades as a result of unmet expectations. We have to be patient with ourselves and await in hope God's own times and places, for he remains ever faithful to his promises.

+ Charles C. Thompson