

Vatican City, 18 January 2021

Prot. n. Sp.R. 2559/21

To all consecrated persons,

We draw close to you on the eve of a day dear to us, and to all consecrated men and women. A day dedicated to our wonderful vocation that makes God's love for men, woman and the entire universe shine forth in various ways. On 2 February in St. Peter's Basilica, at 5:30 p.m., we will celebrate the XXV World Day of Consecrated Life. Pope Francis will preside over the Eucharistic Celebration, void of the signs and joyful faces that illuminated it in previous years, yet nonetheless expressing the fruitful gratitude that characterizes our lives.

With this letter, we wish to lessen the physical distance imposed on us for so many months by the pandemic and express to each of you and to every community, our closeness as well as that of those working in this Dicastery. For months we have been following the news coming from the communities in various nations: they speak of bewilderment, the spread of infection, deaths, of human and economic difficulties, institutes that are decreasing in number, fears... but they also speak of a fidelity tested through suffering, courage, a serene witness even in the midst of pain or uncertainty, sharing every affliction and every wound, caring for and being close to the most needy, charity and service at the cost of one's life (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, ch. II).

We cannot mention all your names, but we ask the Lord's blessing on each and every one of you, so that you may be able to move from "I" to "we", realizing "that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together" (Pope Francis, *Extraordinary moment of prayer*, Friday, 27 March 2020). Be the Samaritans of these days, overcoming the temptation to turn inward and weep for yourselves, or to close your eyes to the pain, suffering, and poverty of so many men and women throughout the world.

In the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis invites us to act together, to bring about a rebirth in everyone "a universal aspiration to fraternity" (n. 8), to dream together (n. 9) so that "in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship..." (n. 6).

Consecrated men and women in religious, monastic and contemplative institutes, in secular institutes and new institutes, members of the *ordo virginum*, hermits, members of societies of apostolic life, we ask all of you to place this Encyclical at the center of your life, formation and mission. We cannot disregard this truth any more: we are all brothers and sisters, as, in fact, we pray, not

necessarily consciously of it, in the Our Father, that “without an openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity” (n. 272).

This Encyclical, written in a historical moment that Pope Francis himself has called “the hour of truth,” is a precious gift for every form of consecrated life that, without denying the many wounds to fraternity, can find in it the roots of prophecy.

We are faced with a new call from the Holy Spirit. In light of the doctrine on the Church-communion, just as St. John Paul II urged consecrated persons to “be true experts of communion and to practice the spirituality of communion” (*Vita consecrata*, n. 46), Pope Francis, drawing inspiration from St. Francis, founder and inspirer of so many institutes of consecrated life, broadens the perspective and invites us to be architects of universal brotherhood, custodians of the common home: of the earth and of every creature (cf. Encyclical *Laudato si'*). Brothers and sisters towards all, regardless of faith, culture and traditions, because the future is not “monochrome” (n. 100) and the world is like a polyhedron that lets its beauty shine through its different facets.

It is a question, then, of creating ways of accompanying, transforming and creating; of developing projects to promote a culture of encounter and dialogue between different peoples and generations; of starting with one’s own vocational community and then reaching to every corner of the earth and every creature, because, never as during this pandemic, have we experienced how everything is linked, everything is related, everything is connected (cf. Encyclical *Laudato si'*).

“Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all” (*FT* n. 8). Therefore, in light of this dream that is entrusted to our hands, to our passion, and to our perseverance, this coming 2 February will once again be a beautiful feast to praise and thank the Lord for the gift of our vocation and mission!

To Mary, our Mother, Mother of the Church, faithful woman, and in this year dedicated to Saint Joseph, her spouse, we entrust each of you. May you be strengthened in your living and loving faith, certain and joyful hope, humble and active charity.

We invoke the blessing of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, our merciful God, on each of you.

João Braz Card. de Aviz
Prefect

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