



Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious

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Consecrated Life and The Year Of Faith – April 2013

By Sister Joyce Marie Candidi, OSHJ

“What would become of the world if there were no religious” (VC 105)? Many of us have heard this challenging question posed by Blessed John Paul II. Drawing on Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica Testificatio*, Blessed John Paul II describes the lacunae that would ensue, should religious life ever be extinguished. He laments, “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, that the ‘salt’ of faith would lose its savor in a world undergoing secularization” (ET 3 in VC 105). Hence, how beneficial for the Church to reflect again, within the context of the *Year of Faith*, on the crucial mission that God has given to consecrated religious life.

Let us begin by recalling that His Holiness Benedict XVI opened the *Year of Faith* on October 11, 2012; and that our newly elected Holy Father Francis will conclude the Year when he celebrates the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, November 24, 2013. Let us also recall that October 11, 2012 likewise marks the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated to illustrate for all the faithful the power and the beauty of the faith (*Porta Fidei*, 4).

Consequently, from May through November of this year, the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious will feature on its website a monthly article highlighting how consecrated life “is not something isolated and marginal, but a reality which affects the whole Church” (VC 3). These articles will underscore the teaching of *Vita Consecrata* that consecrated life “manifests the inner nature of the Christian calling and the striving of the whole Church as Bride toward union with her one Spouse” (VC 3).

The articles will draw from Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s Apostolic Letter, *Porta Fidei* article 13 which beautifully underscores *faith* as the tap root from which Mary drew her strength to say “Yes” to the voice of God throughout her life (PF 13). *Porta Fidei* # 13 continues to remind us that the same tap root of faith gave life to the Church throughout the centuries as evidenced in the life and witness of the Apostles, disciples, martyrs, consecrated men and women, and faith filled laity (PF 13). Beginning with Mary and continuing with each of the mentioned groups each article will highlight a characteristic of their faith and show how consecrated persons live and model this faith for the world.

As we celebrate the gift of consecrated life to the Church and to the world within the frame of the Church’s faith, let us look at the Second Vatican Council’s *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)* and remember: By faith consecrated persons totally dedicate themselves to God by an act of supreme love lived out in a life of pure service to God and to God’s people (LG 44). By faith consecrated

persons follow the example of the poor, chaste, and obedient Christ so as to direct the gaze of the Church to the lasting city prepared for the faithful by God from all eternity (LG 44). By faith consecrated persons seek to give an increasingly clear revelation of Christ by mirroring and perpetuating his ministries (LG 46). By faith consecrated persons work to build up the earthly city founded and tending toward Christ the Lord (LG 46). By faith consecrated persons will in fact succeed in bringing about a “vigorous flowering of the Church’s holiness and the greater glory of the one and undivided Trinity which in Christ and through Christ is the foundation and wellspring of all holiness” (LG 47). τ

Through these articles we intend to invite all, and in a special way those of you whom God might be calling to a life of deepening faith as a consecrated person, taking heed anew of that venerable Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* which assures us that living a life in imitation of the poor, chaste, and obedient Jesus does not detract from a genuine development of one’s human personality, but rather becomes a profound means by which one may attain a most pure heart and spiritual liberty beyond all measure (LG 46). If you are wondering if anything good can come from a life fully consecrated to the Lord, then listen and act on the words of Phillip to Nathanael, “Come and see” (Jn. 1: 47).

“Come and see” the CMSWR website for the next several months and delve more deeply into the witness of faith that religious life offers to the Church by reading the monthly articles titled, “Consecrated Life and the Year of Faith.” Come and see consecrated life as it is lived and celebrated by hundreds of religious, by exploring the religious congregations featured on our website and lived by these generous women on a day-to-day basis by visiting them at their convent. Contact Information with the names and locations of various religious congregations are also available on this website. And together let us thank God for the gift of consecrated life rooted in the faith of the Catholic Church.