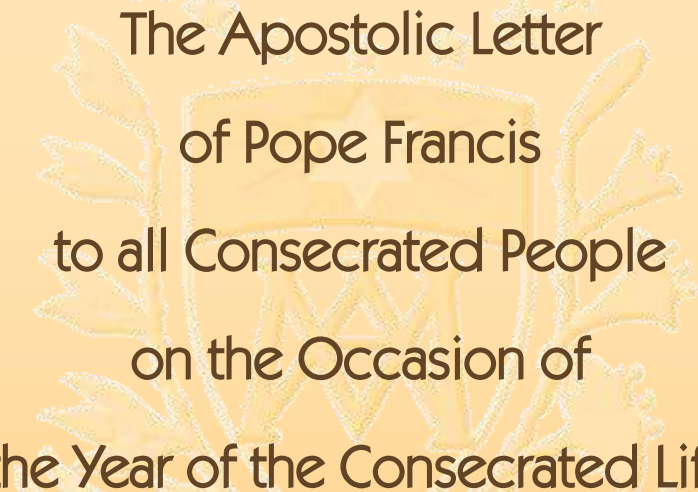




The Full text of the Apostolic Letter for the Year of the Consecrated Life can be found on:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20141121_lettera-consacрати.html



The Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of the Consecrated Life

A set of five Reflections for Marists



~ Notes ~

~ Reflection~

A. To look to the past with gratitude -

Reflect on what you believe to have been the principal impact of the Society of Mary in the life story of your local Church.

B. To live the present with passion -

Reflect on the presence of the Society of Mary in your local Church now: are you responding to the real needs of God's people – what are they, have you the means of addressing them, with other Marists, religious, laity?

C. To embrace the future with hope -

In the light of the Holy Father's letter, reflect on how you, individually and as a community, might best make it possible for you to allow you to be open to the Spirit, making this time one rich in grace and transformation.



Dear confreres,

To assist Marists, individually and in community, to mark the year of Consecrated Life in a prayerful and reflective way, the General Administration offers this set of five reflections.

Each text for reflection is taken from the five **expectations for the Year of Consecrated Life** set out by the Holy Father in his Apostolic Letter sent to all consecrated people at the start of the year.

The three foci of each reflection arise out of **the aims of the Year of Consecrated Life**: to look to the past with gratitude, to live the present with passion, to embrace the future with hope.

Yours fraternally in Christ,

Anthony Corcoran sm
Secretary General

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

authentic fraternity found in our communities increases our joy.

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).

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

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).

~ Reflection~

~ Notes ~

A. To look to the past with gratitude -

Reflect on a time in the past when you can say you truly experienced authentic fraternity: what was it that made it so?

B. To live the present with passion -

Reflect on how attractive you think our present manner of living the Marist religious life is, how eloquent our life and work together is of the joy of the gospel: what is “salty”, what has lost its saltiness?

C. To embrace the future with hope -

Reflect on what is possible for us as Marist communities to make us the leaven of the Kingdom of God: what concrete means can we take to be unambiguous witnesses to the world that the kingdom of God is present in our midst?

~ Reflection~

A. To look to the past with gratitude -

Reflect on a time in the past when you can say you experienced “the joy of the gospel “ in your service of God’s people –when you found life by giving life.

B. To live the present with passion -

Reflect on how you and your community can be held hostage to your own problems – what ways you can take in the circumstances of your present existence today “to find life by giving life, hope by giving hope and love by giving love”?

C. To embrace the future with hope -

Reflect on what is possible for us as a religious congregation with our Marist charism to come out of ourselves, to free ourselves from what retrains us from creatively going forth to the “existential peripheries”, adjusting our apostolate to new needs.

~ Notes ~

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

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.

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 be-

holden 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,

purposed for works which better respond to the present demands of evangelization and charity, and apostolates adjusted to new needs.

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.

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 re-

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.

They should increasingly be the leaven for a society inspired by the Gospel, a “city on a hill”.

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*).

~ Reflection~

A. To look to the past with gratitude -

Reflect on a time in the past when you can say that Marists have acted prophetically within your world.

B. To live the present with passion -

Reflect on how you and your community today are challenged “to wake up the world”, testifying to the truth and power of Jesus’ words.

C. To embrace the future with hope -

Reflect on what is possible for us as Marist communities to create “alternate spaces” where the Gospel approach to self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences, and love of one another can thrive.

~ Notes ~

~ Reflection~

A. To look to the past with gratitude -

Reflect on a time in the past when you can say you truly experienced authentic community: what was it that made it so?

B. To live the present with passion -

Reflect on how destructive criticism, gossip, hostility, etc., are destructive of community at all levels: make an honest examination of conscience on this matter – how can I contribute to the building-up of communion?

C. To embrace the future with hope -

Reflect on what is possible for us to become truly international and inclusive in the way we see, judge and act in the Society of Mary.

~ Notes ~

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.” 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.

It is the “mystique of living together” which makes our life “a sacred pilgrimage”

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”. 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.

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.

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”.