

THE CALL TO CONSECRATED LIFE*

The world and the Church seek “authentic witnesses to Christ,” in the persons of men or women called to consecrated life. The totality of religious consecration requires that the witness to the Gospel be given publicly by the whole of the life. Those called to consecrated life accept a call of selfless service to bear witness to Christ by their life, works, and words. They do so by fulfilling the charism of the founder or foundress of their particular communities so as to be living witnesses of the love of Christ in the community, in the Church, and in the world served.

Members of religious life make faithful profession of the evangelical counsels, and so “bind themselves to the Lord in a special way.... Under the impulse of love, which the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts (cf. Rom.5:5), they live more and more for Christ and for his Body, the Church (cf. Col. 1:24).”

The vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience are not the only expression of the consecrated life. In addition, those living a consecrated life and a specific vocation given by God, accept “an ecclesial consecration” evident in a “stable form of community life approved by the Church, fidelity to a specific founding gift and sound traditions, a sharing in Christ’s mission..., personal and liturgical prayer – especially Eucharistic worship. They are also called to “public witness, lifelong formation, a form of government calling for religious authority based on faith, a specific relation to the Church”

Each person called by God to a life of consecration is given a special gift to achieve God’s own kind purposes: the reconciliation and salvation of the human race. Therefore, an essential element of consecrated life is a recognition that God not only chooses, sets apart, and dedicates the person to himself, but he engages him or her in his own divine work. Consecration inevitably implies mission, commitment to the mission of Christ, begun in Baptism and ratified in profession of vows.

* Adapted from *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod on Consecrated Life by Sr. M. Eugenia Ziegler, CSAC