



## *The Different Forms of Consecrated Life?*

The Church recognizes several forms of what today is called Consecrated Life:

### *Monastic life*

Instituted in the very early days of Christianity, and still existing today. Monastic men and women dedicate themselves to prayer and work, either in communities which reside in monasteries, or in the solitude of hermitages. The most well known monastic communities follow the example of St. Benedict.

### *Contemplative Institutes*

Dedicated wholly to contemplation, these religious live in communities characterized by silence, prayer, and asceticism. There are contemplative communities that follow the example of St. Benedict, St. Clare of Assisi, and St. Dominic among others.

### *Apostolic Religious Life*

These are the religious communities with which most people are familiar. The first apostolic institutes were established in the Middle Ages. They were and are characterized by their work in the towns and villages as teachers, health care workers, preachers and missionaries. Some familiar apostolic communities include the Franciscans, Carmelites, Jesuits, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Mercy Sisters, or Christian Brothers.

### *Secular Institutes*

Members of secular institutes follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, celibacy and obedience while living in their own homes and working in varied professions. They fulfill their mission by bringing the Gospel to the cultural, economic and political life of their cities and communities. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of this way of consecrated life was observed in 1997. Some secular institutes are Caritas Christi, Heart of Jesus, the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate.

### *Societies of Apostolic Life*

A fine distinction exists between the apostolic religious life that grew up in the Middle Ages and more modern societies of apostolic life. These groups were often founded for a specific missionary or apostolic purpose. Maryknoll Missioners, the Society of St. Paul, the Society of the Sacred Heart, the Sulpicians and our own Pallottine Fathers and Brothers are some of the societies of apostolic life.

### *Hermits and Anchorites*

Hermits and Anchorites lead solitary lives. They were very common in the Middle Ages and some religious today seek to live out their consecration as hermits.

### *Order of Virgins*

The Church recently re-established the Order of Virgins by which single women dedicate their lives to Christ and to follow Him more closely. They are consecrated by their Bishop who approves their life style.