



CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES
OF CONSECRATED LIFE
AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

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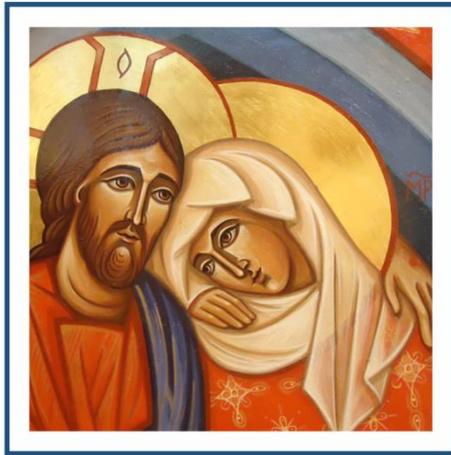


ET SPIRITUS
ET SPONSA
DICUNT:
VENI!

AP 22, 17

PRAYER VIGIL
CELEBRATION FOR THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE RITE OF CONSECRATION OF VIRGINS

MAY 31, 1970 – MAY 31, 2020





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MAY 31, 1970 – MAY 31, 2020

On 31 May 1970, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, by mandate of Pope St. Paul VI, promulgated the new Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity, renewed according to the provisions of the Second Vatican Council. Since then, as in the early Church, it is possible to celebrate the solemn consecration to a life of virginity of women who remain in their own normal life context, rooted in the local Church. In the fifty years that have passed since this renewal, the ancient form of life of the Ordo virginum has once again flourished, with its vitality being



manifested by the great richness of personal charisms put into service for the building up of the Church and for the renewal of society according to the spirit of the Gospel.

The pandemic has forced the postponement of the International Meeting organized in Rome for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Rite, but it does not prevent us from joining in prayer no matter where we find ourselves, thereby drawing us together in a profound communion.

Let us open ourselves to meditating on the Word of God, walking through the Rite of Consecration, and listening once more to the teachings of the Popes who have accompanied the journey of the Ordo virginum during these past fifty years.

We allow ourselves to be guided by four words, fundamental for every path of following the Lord: gratitude, courage, fatigue, and praise. Pope Francis offered these to all the People of God in the Message for the 57th world day of prayer for vocations this past 3 May.



Opening song

Presider: In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen.**

Presider: The Lord be with you.

All: **And with your spirit.**

LUCERNARIO

The *Lucernario* ("service of light") invites us to direct our hope to the light that knows no sunset.

Leader: Giving voice to the Church as bride of Christ, and with words suggested by a homily of St. Paul VI, we join the Spirit in crying out: **Come, Lord Jesus!**

(The first lamp is lit)

Reader 1: Jesus, You are the Christ, Son of the living God. You reveal the invisible God, the firstborn of all creatures, the foundation of everything created. You are the Teacher of mankind, and its Redeemer. You were born, You died, You rose again for us. You are the centre of history and the world.

Come, Lord Jesus!

(The second lamp is lit)

Reader 2: You are the one who knows us and loves us. You are the companion and friend of our life, You are the man of



sorrows and of hope, You are the one who will come and who one day will be our judge and, we hope, our happiness.

Come, Lord Jesus!

(The third lamp is lit)

Reader 1: I could never finish speaking about You: You are the light, the truth, indeed, You are “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6). You are the Bread and the spring of living water to satisfy our hunger and our thirst; You are our shepherd, our guide, our model, our comfort, our brother.

Come, Lord Jesus!

(The fourth lamp is lit)

Reader 2: You are the beginning and the end; the Alpha and the Omega. You are the king of the new world, You are the secret of history. You are the key to our destinies. You are the mediator, the bridge between heaven and earth.

Come, Lord Jesus!

(The fifth lamp is lit)

Reader 1: You are more perfectly than anyone else the Son of Man, because You are the Son of God, eternal, infinite; You are the son of Mary, blessed among all women, your mother according to the flesh, and our mother through the sharing in the Spirit of the Mystical Body.

Come, Lord Jesus!

(The sixth lamp is lit)

Reader 2: Jesus Christ, You are our perennial good news. You are our Saviour. We need You.

Come, Lord Jesus!

(The seventh lamp is lit)



GRATITUDE FOR THE CALL

From the Message of Pope Francis for the 2020 World Day of Vocations

The first word of vocation [...] is *gratitude*. [...] How we find fulfilment in life is more than a decision we make as isolated individuals; above all else, it is a response to a call from on high. [...] Every vocation is born of that gaze of love with which the Lord came to meet us [...]. “Vocation, more than our own choice, is a response to the Lord’s unmerited call” (*Letter to Priests*, 4 August 2019). We will succeed in discovering and embracing our vocation once we open our hearts in gratitude and perceive the passage of God in our lives.

From the Book of Revelation

(Rev. 19:6-9)

Then I heard something like the sound of a great multitude or the sound of rushing water or mighty peals of thunder, as they said:

“Alleluia! The Lord has established his reign,
[our] God, the almighty.

Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory.

For the wedding day of the Lamb has come,
his bride has made herself ready.

She was allowed to wear
a bright, clean linen garment.”

(The linen represents the righteous deeds of the holy ones.)

Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed* are those
who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.”

And he said to me, “These words are true;
they come from God.”



From the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginitas

Come, listen to me, my children;
I will teach you reverence for the Lord.

Now with all our hearts we follow you, we reverence you and seek your presence. Lord, fulfil our hope: show us your loving kindness, the greatness of your mercy.

From the address of St. John Paul II to consecrated virgins

This renewed rite, and the reinstated “Ordo” are a two-fold gift of the Lord to His Church. You exult at such a gift, thanking the Lord for it. On this occasion, you seek to draw from it a motive and inspiration for renewing your fervour and commitment. [...] Yet consecrated virginitas is not a privilege, but rather a gift of God, which implies a strong commitment in following Him and being His disciple.

From the address of Benedict XVI to consecrated virgins

Your charism must reflect the intensity but also the freshness of its origins. It is founded on the simple Gospel invitation: “He who is able to receive this, let him receive it” (Mt 19: 12), and on St Paul’s recommendations of virginitas for the Kingdom (I Cor 7: 25-35). Yet the whole of the Christian mystery shines out in it.



Invocation

Leader: Following the movements of the Spirit who prays in us and with us, we express our gratitude to the Lord for the vocation we have received: ***Thank you, Lord!***

- Thank you, Lord, for having called me: my life is in your hands.
- Thank you, Lord, because the Church has made your invitation resound in the depths of my heart.
- Thank you, Lord, for the Pastors of the Church, who have accompanied me on my journey.

Prayer

Presider: Grant, we pray, O Father,
to these your servants,
in whom you have instilled
a resolve to live in virginity,
that the work you have begun in them
may be brought to fulfilment,
and that they may be found worthy
to complete what they have now begin,
so as to bring you a full and perfect offering.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Song



THE COURAGE OF THE CHOICE

From the Message of Pope Francis for the 2020 World Day of Vocations

This, then, is the second word I wish to offer you: *encouragement*. [...] When we are called to [...] embrace a state of life – like marriage, ministerial priesthood, consecrated life – our first reaction is often from the “ghost of disbelief”. Surely, this vocation is not for me! Can this really be the right path? Is the Lord really asking me to do this? [...]

[...] We think we might be wrong, not up to the challenge, or simply glimpsing a ghost to be exorcized.

The Lord [...] knows the questions, doubts and difficulties that toss [...] our heart, and so he reassures us: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear!” We know in faith that he is present and comes to meet us, that he is ever at our side.

From the Book of Revelation

(Rev. 22:12-17)

“Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with me the recompense I will give to each according to his deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Blessed are they who wash their robes so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates. Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the unchaste, the murderers, the idol-worshippers, and all who love and practice deceit. I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star.”

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let the hearer say, “Come.” Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water.



From the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity

Father, receive my resolution to follow Christ in a life of perfect chastity which, with God's help, I here profess before you and God's holy people.

From the address of St. John Paul II to consecrated virgins

The following of the Lamb in Heaven (cf. Rev. 14:6) begins on earth, walking down the narrow path (cf. Mt. 7:14). Your *sequela Christi* will be more radical, the greater your love is for Christ and the more lucid your awareness of the meaning of virginal consecration.

From the address of Benedict XVI to consecrated virgins

[The roots of the Order of Virgins] are ancient; they date back to the dawn of apostolic times when, with unheard of daring, certain women began to open their hearts to the desire for consecrated virginity, in other words, to the desire to give the whole of their being to God, which had had its first extraordinary fulfilment in the Virgin of Nazareth and her "yes." In the thought of the Fathers Mary was the prototype of Christian virgins and their perception highlighted the newness of this new state of life, to which a free choice of love gave access.



Invocation

Leader: Following the motions of the Spirit who prays in us and with us, we renew our “yes” to the Lord, repeating:

Here I am, Lord!

- Here I am, Lord: I want to serve You and Your Church.
- Here I am, Lord: I want to follow you as the Gospel proposes.
- Here I am, Lord: I want to love You and be united with You forever.

Prayer

Presider: O Father, hear the prayers of your Church.
Look with favor on your handmaids
whom you have called in your love.
Set them on the way of eternal salvation;
may they seek only what is pleasing to you,
and fulfil it with watchful care.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Song



FATIGUE IN PERSEVERANCE

From the Message of Pope Francis for the 2020 World Day of Vocations

Every vocation brings with it a responsibility. The Lord calls us because he wants to enable us [...] to take charge of our lives and place them at the service of the Gospel, in the concrete and everyday ways that he shows us [...]. Our desire and enthusiasm coexist with our failings and fears. [...] I am conscious of your hard work, the sense of isolation that can at times weigh upon your hearts, the risk of falling into a rut that can gradually make the ardent flame of our vocation die down, the burden of the uncertainty and insecurity of the times, and worry about the future. Take heart, do not be afraid! Jesus is at our side, and if we acknowledge him as the one Lord of our lives, he will stretch out his hand [...] and save us.

From the Book of Revelation

(Rev. 2:1-5)

To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write this:

The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks in the midst of the seven gold lampstands says this “I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate the wicked; you have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and discovered that they are impostors. Moreover, you have endurance and have suffered for my name, and you have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. Realize how far you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”



From the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity

Be yourself their glory, their joy, their whole desire.
Be their comfort in sorrow, their wisdom in perplexity,
their protection in the midst of injustice,
their patience in adversity,
their riches in poverty, their food in fasting,
their remedy in time of sickness.

From the address of St. John Paul II to consecrated virgins

It is also the task of virgins to become an active hand of the generosity of the local church, the voice of its prayer, an expression of its mercy, a help for its poor, a consolation for its afflicted sons and daughters, and a support for its orphans and widows. We could say that at the time of the Father the *pietas* and *caritas* of the Church were expressed to a great part through the heart and hands of consecrated virgins. These are lines of commitment that still remain valid today.

From the address of Benedict XVI to consecrated virgins

The choice of virginal life, in fact, is a reference to the transient nature of earthly things and an anticipation of future rewards. Be witnesses of attentive and lively expectation, of joy, and of the peace that characterizes those who abandon themselves to God's love. May you be present in the world, yet pilgrims bound for the Kingdom. Indeed, the consecrated virgin is identified with that bride who, in unison with the Spirit, invokes the coming of the Lord: "*The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'*" (Rev. 22:17).



Invocation

Leader: Following the motions of the Spirit, who prays in us and with us, and entrusting ourselves to love of the Lord, we proclaim: ***Your love is stronger than death.***

- You who give vigor, overcome any tiredness that oppresses us.
- You who give joy, overcome every sadness that besieges us.
- You who give peace, overcome every anguish that assails us.

Prayer

Presider: O Lord, grant generously
to these your servants
perseverance in the resolve
they have made their own,
so that when the doors are opened
at the coming of the most high King,
they may merit to enter with joy
into the heavenly Kingdom.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song



SONG OF PRAISE

From the Message of Pope Francis for the 2020 World Day of Vocations

Then, our lives become open to *praise*. This is the last of our vocation words, and it is an invitation to cultivate the interior disposition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Grateful that Lord gazed upon her, faithful amid fear and turmoil, she courageously embraced her vocation and made of her life an eternal song of praise to the Lord.

From the Book of Revelation

(Rev. 5:8-14)

When he took it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones. They sang a new hymn: “Worthy are you to receive the scroll and to break open its seals, for you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God those from every tribe and tongue, people and nation. You made them a kingdom and priests for our God, and they will reign on earth.”

I looked again and heard the voices of many angels who surrounded the throne and the living creatures and the elders. They were countless in number, and they cried out in a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing.”

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: “To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb



be blessing and honor, glory and might,
forever and ever.” The four living creatures answered,
“Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

From the Rite of Consecration to a Life of Virginity

I am espoused to him whom the angels serve;
sun and moon stand in wonder at his glory.

From the address of St. John Paul II to consecrated virgins

Be with Mary in the nuptial room where there is rejoicing and where Christ manifests Himself to His disciples as the messianic Spouse. Be with Mary at the foot of the Cross, where Christ offers His life for the Church. Remain with her in the Cenacle, the house of the Spirit, who is poured out as divine Love in the Church, His Spouse.

From the address of Benedict XVI to consecrated virgins

I entrust you to Mary; and I make my own the words of St. Ambrose, who sung the praises of Christian virginity, addressing them to you: “May there be in each one the soul of Mary to magnify the Lord; may there be in each one the Spirit of Mary to exult in God. If there is only one Mother of Christ according to the flesh, Christ on the other hand, according to the faith, is the fruit of all, since every soul receives the Word of God so that, immaculate and immune to vice, she may preserve her chastity with irreproachable modesty” (*Comment on St Luke, 2, 26: PL 15, 1642*).



Canticle of Mary

Leader: With Mary, woman of the Covenant, woman of waiting and fulfillment, we sing the Magnificat, the canticle of messianic times and of jubilation, as we lift up to the Lord our inner hymns of thanksgiving for all his blessings:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord*
My spirit rejoices in God my savior,

For he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.*
From this day all generations
Will call me blessed:

The Almighty has done great things for me*
And holy is his name.

He has mercy on those who fear him*
In every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,*
He has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,*
And has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,*
And the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant, Israel*
For he has remembered his promise of mercy,

The promise he made to our fathers,*
To Abraham and his children forever.

Glory to the Father...



Intercessions

Presider: United in fraternal joy, with hearts grateful and full of praise, let us turn to the Lord with the expression of our faith:

Jesus, reward and crown of virgins, hear our prayer.

Christ, beautiful Shepherd of the sheep, who longs for the Church to be always holy and immaculate in love, look upon our Holy Father Francis, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons: renew each day, by the power of your Spirit, their enthusiasm and the intensity of their faith.

Christ, source of all mercy, in the trial of this pandemic, comfort the families of the sick and the dying; open their hearts to hope. Protect doctors, health care workers, and volunteers: grant them strength, kindness, and health. Inspire confidence in those who are anxious about the future because of the consequences to their employment and on the economy. Assist the leaders of the nations, so that they may work with wisdom, concern, and generosity, and will come to the aid of those who lack what is necessary to live.

Christ, awaited by the wise virgins, guide and support us on our journey. Be for us “husband, brother, friend, inheritance, sure reward, Lord and God.” Admit to the eternal wedding banquet our sisters who have already reached the heavenly Jerusalem, meeting you with the lamps alight.

Christ, Prince of Peace and Father of the poor, may every man and woman pursue the gift of peace in a wounded world; protect life and the family; and promote responsibility towards the gifts of creation. As brothers and sisters capable of genuine solidarity, may everyone be committed to closeness with the



poor, the sick, prisoners, the persecuted, and the lonely who have lost their sense of purpose in life.

Our Father...

Concluding prayer

Presider: O Father, we humbly pray
that the life of perpetual virginity
embraced by your servants
may constantly benefit
the advancement of human society
and unceasingly profit the growth of the Church.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

The almighty Father has poured into your hearts
the desire to live a life of holy virginity.
May he keep you safe under his protection. **Amen.**

May the Lord Jesus Christ,
with whose sacred heart the hearts of virgins are united,
fill you with his divine love. **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit, by whom the Virgin Mary
conceived her Son, today consecrate your hearts
and fill you with a burning desire to serve God and his Church.
Amen.

May almighty God, the Father, † and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, bless all of you
who have taken part in this celebration. **Amen.**



Closing song

CHRISTI SPONSA GAUDE

$\text{♩} = 100$

Soprano $E\flat$ Cm Fm $B\flat$
Chri - sti Spon - sa, gau - de et ex - sul - ta,

Contralto
Chri - sti Spon - sa, gau - de et ex - sul - ta,

5 Cm $E\flat$ Fm $B\flat$
S. qui - a di - le - xit te Do - mi - nus!
A. qui - a di - le - xit te Do - mi - nus!

9 $A\flat$ Fm $B\flat$ $E\flat$
S. Pro ti - bi tra - di - dit se - ip - sum:
A. Pro ti - bi tra - di - dit se - ip - sum:

13 $A\flat$ $B\flat$ Cm
S. my - ste - rium hoc ma - gnum est!
A. my - ste - rium hoc ma - gnum est!

17 $A\flat$ $B\flat$ $E\flat$
S. my - ste - rium hoc ma - gnum est!
A. my - ste - rium hoc ma - gnum est!

Christi Sposa gaude et exsulta - quia dilexit te Dominum.
Pro tibi dedit seipsum. - Misterium hoc magnum est!

*Rejoice and exult, bride of Christ, - because the Lord loved you.
He handed Himself over for you. - This is a great mystery!*



MAGISTERIAL TEXTS:

PAUL VI, *Homily* on the occasion of the Apostolic Pilgrimage in East Asia, Oceania, and Australia; Manila (Philippines), 29 November 1970.

JOHN PAUL II, *Address* to the participants in the International Pilgrimage of the *Ordo virginum* on the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the Rite, Rome, 2 June 1995.

BENEDICT XVI, *Address* to the participants in the meeting of the *Ordo virginum* on the theme “Consecrated virginity in the world: a gift for the Church and within the Church,” 15 May 2008.

FRANCIS, *Words of Vocation*, Message of Pope Francis for the 57th World Day of Vocations, Rome, 3 May 2020.



The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" (Rev 22:17). Attracted by the mystery of Christ and the Church, consecrated virgins are called to be the image of the Bride Church.

To the Son of God who loved humanity *to the end* (Jn 13:1), they respond with the total gift of themselves in virginity, symbolized by the petals of a lily which merge with the cross, on which only the wounds remain: Jesus indeed is risen and invites them to recognize him as incarnate in history.

Through the wounded side, the ring is given to them by the Spirit, who leads them *where he wills* (cf. Jn 3:8), as a pledge of eternal espousal. Thus, the charismatic richness of the *Ordo virginum* becomes a prophetic sign, an active and vigilant expectation of the fulfilment of the Father's plan.

