

- Introduction
  - Year of Faith
    - Renewal in Faith and its role in the Christian life
    - Life long pilgrimage, following Mary's pilgrimage of faith, which is a maternal and filial fiat.
    - It's supposed to be an intensification of our baptismal consecration. Hence plenary indulgence for the pilgrimage to the place of our baptism.
    - For those of us with the special consecration in the Church, it's also meant to be a renewal, an intensification, of that fiat, of that Amen, as well.
    - The new encyclical Lumen Fidei talks about four senses in the faith.
      - Seeing. We're called to see everything with Christ's eyes. The light of the faith comes from looking at things from Christ's perspective. Likewise, we need to look at our consecration from Christ's perspective and within Christ's own consecration. We'll talk about that further.
      - Hearing. Faith comes from hearing. We're supposed to listen anew not only to the word of God but principally to the voice of the Good Shepherd calling us to follow him, reminding us that he loves us just as the Father loves him. In this Year of Faith, we're called to have a renewed hearing to the voice of God so that our whole life can be an echo of it.
      - Touching. We're touched on the inside by God and that leads us in faith to reach out to touch Jesus, like the woman with the hemorrhage. We're supposed to grow in our sense of being loved by God, especially with regard to his touching us particularly in the Sacraments. Consecrated in both and in heart, not just in the ears and the eyes.
        - With regard to all three, we're supposed to be able to say in a more intense way in faith what we have seen with our eyes, heard with our ears and touched concerning the word of life we now announce to others.
      - Memory. Faith is a memory of all that the Lord has done as a promise for the future. The memory of faith is a memory of the future. In this Year of Faith, we're supposed to reflect on the graces that led us to discover our vocation within a vocation, and to know that the same Lord who gave us those graces continues to give.
    - What I'd like to do in this brief talk:
      - What consecration is, basing myself of Benedict XVI's and John Paul II's insights. Focus how in the Year of Faith the greater our faith, the greater we will be able to live our consecration
      - We can then look at how faith can nourish our living the evangelical counsels, which are the conspicuous sign of our consecration.
      - Finish by turning to the New Evangelization. Year of Faith is to help us become fully evangelized so that we can in turn evangelize others. We'll speak a little about how the world needs our consecration in order to better live by faith.
- What consecration is.
  - Pope-emeritus Benedict used to preach often about consecration. He would ground in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of St. John's Gospel when Jesus, praying for the apostles and all of us who would come to faith through their work, speaks of his consecration and asks the Father to consecrate us in the truth. "For their sake I consecrate myself that they also may be consecrated in truth."
  - He makes several points:
    - We cannot understand our consecration apart from Christ.

- Our entire life is supposed to be a living by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself up for us; likewise our consecration takes place within Christ's own.
- Only God, B16 says, "consecrated" or "Holy."
- Consecrated life is founded in the special relationship Jesus established with some of his disciples.
- To be consecrated means to "transfer" a person or thing to become the property of God. Two complementary elements.
  - Removing from ordinary things, segregating, setting them apart, so that they can be totally given to God. "Sacer" means to cut off and "con" means with, so the first element is to be cut off from other things and realities to be immersed in God. This, he says, requires sacrifice. To be consecrated means to be offered to God. This requires a great faith, a deep trust in God to whom we freely give ourselves.
  - Sending. The cutting off, the segregation, the transfer to God has the meaning of sending, of mission. Because a person or thing is given to God it is meant to exist "for" others. Giving to God means no longer existing for oneself, but for everyone. Those consecrated are meant to continue Jesus' mission, to be given to God and on mission for all. "Just as the Father sent me, so I send you." This likewise requires great faith, because we realize our own limitations so readily before such a task.
- We can add here that John Paul II added a third element, but, to be properly understood, it needs to be connected to these two. He said that the three elements of consecration (confession of the Trinity), community, and mission. This third element of communion indicates to us that our being cut off to be with the Lord is not an individual act, but one done together with others. Likewise our mission, our being for others, is not done individualistically, but also done for others. This, likewise, requires faith, faith in the Lord's call of others, faith in the Lord's commissioning others. To recognize our own consecration is to recognize in a sense the Lord's calling of others and to treasure others' consecration.
- "Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth."
  - Consecration means sanctification. The Lord asks for our sanctification in the truth.
  - God's word purifies us, sets us apart, helps us to become fully and fulfill the mission, where we say let it be done to me according to your word. We must, first, come to know God speaking to us in this word, which points back to faith as hearing. The word of God is meant to shape our entire life, our thinking, our willing, our consecration.
  - Jesus said, "I am the truth." He is the living word of God. To be consecrated means to "make them one with me," to ask the Father to bind them to Christ. To be consecrated means to be united in a radical way to Jesus. It implies a renunciation of our own ways, a "hating" of our own life, so that he may reign. The yes of our consecration at the day we made our profession must be lived in many little "yeses" and small sacrifices.
  - Alongside the sacrifice of consecration that can sometimes involve pain is the joy of a deepening friendship with the Lord who is our portion and cup. True love doesn't come cheap. It can cost a lot, but what we gain in the friendship with the Lord far outweighs the pains, we see in faith. That friendship continues in our contact with Christ in the suffering, the poor, the little ones of the world.
  - To be immersed in the truth, in Christ, means to be immersed in prayer, consecrated in the prayer of the Lord, something that touches the depth of our being.
- Consecration and the Evangelical Counsels
  - Overview
    - The way consecration is lived out, the belonging and the mission, is shown in a the "worthy program of life" that is called the evangelical counsels, which reproduce as far as possible Jesus' own consecrated life.

- **VC 16:** By professing the evangelical counsels, consecrated persons not only make Christ the whole meaning of their lives, but strive to reproduce in themselves as far as possible "that form of life which he, as the Son of God, accepted in entering this world."

  - By embracing <chastity>, they make their own the pure love of Christ and proclaim to the world that he is the Only Begotten Son, who is one with the Father (cf. Jn. 10:30, 14:11).
  - By imitating Christ's <poverty>, they profess that he is the Son who receives everything from the Father and gives everything back to the Father in love (cf. Jn. 17:7, 10).
  - By accepting through the sacrifice of their own freedom the mystery of Christ's filial <obedience>, they profess that he is infinitely beloved and loving, as the one who delights only in the will of the Father (cf. Jn. 4:34), to whom he is perfectly united and on whom he depends for everything.
- **VC 18.** The Son, who is the way which leads to the Father (cf. Jn. 14:6), calls all those whom the Father has given to him (cf. Jn. 17:9) to make the following of himself the whole purpose of their lives. But of some, those called to the consecrated life, he asks a total commitment, one which involves leaving everything behind (cf. Mt. 19:27) in order to live at his side and to follow him wherever he goes (cf. Rv. 14:4). In the countenance of Jesus, the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and the reflection of the Father's glory (cf. Heb. 1:3), we glimpse the depths of an eternal and infinite love which is at the very root of our being. Those who let themselves be **seized by this love cannot help abandoning everything to follow him** (cf. Mk. 1:16-20; 2:14; 10:21, 28). Like St. Paul, they consider all else as loss "because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ, by comparison with which they do not hesitate to count all things as refuse, in order that they "may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8). They strive to become one with him, taking on his mind and his way of life. This leaving of everything and following the Lord (cf. Lk. 18:28) is a **worthy program of life** for all whom he calls in every age. The **evangelical counsels**, by which Christ invites some people to share his experience as the chaste, poor and obedient one, call for and make manifest in those who accept them **<an explicit desire to be totally conformed to him>**. Living "in obedience, with nothing of one's own and in chastity, consecrated persons profess that Jesus is the model in whom every virtue comes to perfection. His way of living in chastity, poverty and obedience appears as the most radical way of living the Gospel on this earth, a way which may be called <divine>, for it was embraced by him, God and man, as the expression of his relationship as the Only Begotten Son with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. ... Nor can it be denied that the practice of the evangelical counsels is also a particularly profound and fruitful way of sharing in <Christ's mission>, in imitation of the example of Mary of Nazareth, the first disciple, who willingly put herself at the service of God's plan by the total gift of self. Every mission begins with the attitude expressed by Mary at the Annunciation: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk. 1:38).
- **VC 22.** The consecrated life, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, "constitutes a closer imitation and an abiding reenactment in the Church" of the way of life which Jesus, the **supreme consecrated one and missionary of the Father** for the sake of his Kingdom, embraced and proposed to his disciples (cf. Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:10-11; Jn. 15:16). ... **Accepting his consecration by the Father, the Son in turn consecrates himself to the Father for the sake of humanity** (cf. Jn. 17:19). **His life of virginity, obedience and poverty expresses his complete filial acceptance of the Father's plan** (cf. Jn. 10:30; 14:11). His perfect offering confers an aspect of consecration upon all the events of His earthly existence. Jesus is <the exemplar of obedience>, who came down from heaven not to do his own will but the will of the one who sent him (cf. Jn. 6:38; Heb. 10:5, 7). He places his way of living and acting in the hands of the Father (cf. Lk. 2:49). In filial obedience, he assumes the condition of a servant: He "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant ... and

became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). In this attitude of submissiveness to the Father, Christ lives his life as a virgin even while affirming and defending the dignity and sanctity of married life. He thus reveals <the sublime excellence and mysterious spiritual fruitfulness of virginity>. His full acceptance of the Father's plan is also seen in his detachment from earthly goods: "Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). <The depth of his poverty> is revealed in the perfect offering of all that is his to the Father. **The consecrated life truly constitutes <a living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting>** as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren. It is a living tradition of the Savior's life and message.

○ Poverty

- We are called to be with poor Christ and to be sent out to materialist, consumerist world.
- Poverty requires a faith that leaves material possessions behind to be with Christ and find in him the pearl of great price
- **VC 89.** (The challenge of poverty) [One] challenge today is that of a <that which craves possessions>, heedless of the needs and sufferings of the weakest, and lacking any concern for the balance of natural resources. **The <reply> of the consecrated life** is found in the profession of <evangelical poverty>, which can be lived in different ways and is often expressed in an active involvement in the promotion of solidarity and charity.
- **VC 90.** (Evangelical poverty at the service of the poor) Even before being a service on behalf of the poor, <evangelical poverty is a value in itself>, since it recalls the first of the Beatitudes in the imitation of the poor Christ. Its primary meaning, in fact, is to attest that **God is the true wealth of the human heart**. Precisely for this reason evangelical poverty forcefully challenges the idolatry of money, making a prophetic appeal as it were to society, which in so many parts of the developed world risks losing the sense of proportion and the very meaning of things. Thus, today more than in other ages, the call of evangelical poverty is being felt also among those who are aware of the scarcity of the planet's resources and who invoke respect for and the conservation of creation by reducing consumption, by living more simply and by placing a necessary brake on their own desires.

○ Chastity

- To be with Christ in all-encompassing love and to be sent out to show another way that that of a pleasure-seeking culture.
- It requires a faith that leaves the goods of marriage and family behind in order to enter into a spousal union with Christ.
- **VC 88.** (The challenge of consecrated chastity) The <first challenge> is that of a <hedonistic culture> which separates sexuality from all objective moral norms, often treating it as a **mere diversion and a consumer good** and, with the complicity of the means of social communication, justifying a kind of idolatry of the sexual instinct. The consequences of this are before everyone's eyes: transgressions of every kind, with resulting psychic and moral suffering on the part of individuals and families. **The <reply> of the consecrated life** is above all in the <joyful living of perfect chastity> as a witness to the power of God's love manifested in the weakness of the human condition. The consecrated person attests that what many have believed impossible becomes, with the Lord's grace, possible and truly liberating. Yes, **in Christ it is possible to love God with all one's heart, putting him above every other love, and thus to love every creature with the freedom of God!** This testimony is more necessary than ever today, precisely because it is so little understood by our world. It is offered to everyone—young people, engaged couples, husbands and wives and Christian families—in order to show that <the power of God's love can accomplish great things> precisely within the context of human love. It is a witness which also meets a growing need for interior honesty in human relationships. The consecrated life must present to today's world examples of chastity lived by men and women who show balance, self-mastery, an enterprising spirit, and psychological and affective maturity. [224] Thanks to this witness, human love is offered a stable point of reference: the

pure love which consecrated persons draw from the contemplation of Trinitarian love, revealed to us in Christ. Precisely because they are immersed in this mystery, consecrated persons feel themselves capable of a radical and universal love, which gives them the strength for the self-mastery and discipline necessary in order not to fall under the domination of the senses and instincts. Consecrated chastity thus appears as a joyful and liberating experience. Enlightened by faith in the Risen Lord and by the prospect of the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Rv. 21:1), it offers a priceless incentive in the task of educating to that chastity which corresponds to other states of life as well.

○ Obedience

- To be with Christ in all encompassing identification with his will. Thy will be done.
- It requires faith to forsake independence and enter into Christ's own existential yes to the Father.
- **VC 91.** (The challenge of freedom in obedience) [Another] challenge comes from those <notions of freedom> which separate this fundamental human good from its essential relationship to the truth and to moral norms. In effect, the promotion of freedom is a genuine value closely connected with respect for the human person. But who does not see the aberrant consequences of injustice and even violence in the life of individuals and of peoples to which the distorted use of freedom leads? **An effective <response> to this situation is the <obedience which marks the consecrated life>**. In an especially vigorous way this obedience repropose the obedience of Christ to the Father and, taking this mystery as its point of departure, testifies that there is <no contradiction between obedience and freedom>. **Indeed, the Son's attitude discloses the mystery of human freedom as the path of obedience to the Father's will and the mystery of obedience as the path to the gradual conquest of true freedom**. It is precisely this mystery that consecrated persons wish to acknowledge by this particular vow. **By obedience they intend to show their awareness of being children of the Father, as a result of which they wish to take the Father's will as their daily bread** (cf. Jn. 4:34), as their rock, their joy, their shield and their fortress (cf. Ps. 18:2). **Thus they show that they are growing in the full truth about themselves, remaining in touch with the source of their existence and therefore offering this most consoling message: "The lovers of your law have great peace; they never stumble"** (Ps. 118:165).

• Consecration and the New Evangelization

- VC 72. In the image of Jesus, the beloved Son "whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world" (Jn. 10:36), those whom God calls to follow him are also consecrated and sent into the world to imitate his example and to continue his mission. Fundamentally, this is true of every disciple. In a special way, however, it is true of those who, in the manner that characterizes the consecrated life, are called to follow Christ "more closely" and to make him the "all" of their lives. The task of <devoting themselves wholly to "mission"> is therefore included in their call; indeed, by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, consecrated life itself is a mission, as was the whole of Jesus' life. The profession of the evangelical counsels, which makes a person totally free for the service of the Gospel, is important also from this point of view. ... More than in external works, the mission consists in making Christ present to the world through personal witness. This is the challenge, this **is the primary task of the consecrated life!**
- VC 76. The specific contribution of consecrated persons, both men and women, to evangelization is first of all the witness of a life given totally to God and to their brothers and sisters in imitation of the Savior, who out of love for humanity made himself a servant. In the work of salvation, in fact, everything comes from sharing in the divine <agape>. Consecrated persons make visible in their consecration and total dedication the loving and saving presence of Christ, the one consecrated by the Father, sent in mission. Allowing themselves to be won over by him (cf. Phil. 3:12), they prepare to become in a certain way a prolongation of his humanity. The consecrated life eloquently shows that the more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve him in others, going even to the furthest missionary outposts and facing the greatest dangers.

- VC 81. If the great challenges which modern history poses to **the new evangelization** are to be faced successfully, **what is needed above all is a consecrated life which is continually open to challenge by the revealed word and the signs of the times.** The memory of the great evangelizers, both men and women, who were themselves profoundly evangelized, shows that in order to face the world of today it is necessary to have people who are lovingly dedicated to the Lord and his Gospel. ... The new evangelization, like that of all times, will be effective if it proclaims from the rooftops what it has first lived in intimacy with the Lord. It calls for strong personalities inspired by saintly fervor. The new evangelization demands that consecrated persons have a thorough awareness of the theological significance of the challenges of our time.
- VC 85. In our world, where it often seems that the signs of God's presence have been lost from sight, a convincing prophetic witness on the part of consecrated persons is increasingly necessary. In the first place this should entail <the affirmation of the primacy of God and of eternal life>, as evidenced in the following and imitation of the chaste, poor and obedient Christ, who was completely consecrated to the glory of God and to the love of his brethren. The fraternal life is itself prophetic in a society which, sometimes without realizing it, has a profound yearning for a brotherhood which knows no borders. Consecrated persons are being asked to bear witness everywhere with the boldness of a prophet who is unafraid of risking even his life.
- VC 87. The prophetic task of the consecrated life is brought into play by <three major challenges> addressed to the Church herself: They are the same challenges as ever, posed in new ways and perhaps more radically by contemporary society.... These challenges relate directly to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, impelling the Church and consecrated persons in particular to clarify and testify to the <profound anthropological significance> of the counsels. ... Thus, while those who follow the evangelical counsels seek holiness for themselves, they propose, so to speak, a spiritual "therapy" for humanity, because they reject the idolatry of anything created and in a certain way they make visible the living God. The consecrated life, especially in difficult times, is a blessing for human life and for the life of the Church.
- Community life: VC 92: This testimony of consecration takes on special meaning ... because of the <community dimension> which marks it. The fraternal life is the privileged place in which to discern and accept God's will, and to walk together with one mind and heart. ... Life in community is thus the particular sign before the Church and society. ...
- A sign of unbounded generosity: VC 104. Many people today are puzzled and ask: What is the point of the consecrated life? Why embrace this kind of life when there are so many urgent needs in the areas of charity and of evangelization itself to which one can respond even without assuming the particular commitments of the consecrated life? Is the consecrated life not a kind of "waste" of human energies which might be used more efficiently for a greater good, for the benefit of humanity and the Church? These questions are asked more frequently in our day as a consequence of a utilitarian and technocratic culture that is inclined to assess the importance of things and even of people in relation to their immediate "usefulness." But such questions have always existed, as is eloquently demonstrated by the Gospel episode of the anointing at Bethany: "Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment" (Jn. 12:3). When Judas, using the needs of the poor as an excuse, complained about such waste, Jesus replied: "Let her alone!" (Jn. 12:7). This is the perennially valid response to the question which many people, even in good faith, are asking about the relevance of the consecrated life. ... Those who have been given the priceless gift of following the Lord Jesus more closely consider it obvious that he can and must be loved with an undivided heart, that one can devote to him one's whole life and not merely certain actions or occasional moments or activities. The precious ointment poured out as a pure act of love and thus transcending all "utilitarian" considerations is a sign of <unbounded generosity> as expressed in a life spent in loving and serving the Lord in order to devote oneself to his person and his Mystical Body. From such a life "poured out" without reserve there spreads a fragrance which fills the whole house. The house of God, the Church, today no less than in the past is adorned and enriched by the presence of the consecrated life.

- VC 109: The consecrated life is a gift that God offers in order that everyone can recognize the "one thing necessary" (cf. Lk. 10:42). To bear witness to Christ by one's life, works and words is the particular mission of the consecrated life in the Church and in the world.
- Finishing with Faith
  - VC 109: You know the one in whom you have put your trust (cf. 2 Tm. 1:12): Give him everything! Young people will not be deceived; When they come to you, they want to see what they do not see elsewhere. An immense task awaits you in the future: In a special way young consecrated persons, by witnessing to their consecration, can, can lead their contemporaries to a renewal of their lives.[260] An impassioned love of Jesus Christ is a powerful attraction for those other young people whom Christ in his goodness is calling to follow him closely and forever. Our contemporaries want to see in consecrated persons the joy that comes from being with the Lord. Consecrated women and men, old and young alike, live faithfully your commitment to God in mutual edification and mutual support! Despite the difficulties you may occasionally encounter, and despite the lessening of esteem for the consecrated life in certain quarters, you have the task of once more inviting the men and women of our time to lift their eyes, not to let themselves be overwhelmed by everyday things, to let themselves be captivated by the fascination of God and of his Son's Gospel. Do not forget that you, in a very special way, can and must say that you not only belong to Christ but that "you have become Christ!"
  - Living by faith in the Son of God.
  - Model of Mary
    - Model of faith and of complete dedication to Christ, “ever ready in obedience, courageous in poverty and receptive in fruitful virginity.”
    - Transfigured life of belonging to the Lord, treasuring in her heart, and bringing Christ to others.