



CONGREGATIO
PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSECRATAE
ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE

Prot. n. Sp.R. 2760/2022

Vatican City, 25 January 2022

To all consecrated persons,

On the **26th Day of Consecrated Life**, we will have the joy here in Rome of participating in the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica. We are certain that in the various communities and dioceses of the world, the 2nd of February will be an opportunity for gatherings marked by God's fidelity manifested in the joyful perseverance of so many consecrated men and women of all times, in religious, monastic, and contemplative institutes, secular institutes and new institutes, members of the *ordo virginum*, hermits, and members of societies of apostolic life.

The invitation we extended to you last year on this same occasion was to *practice* the spirituality of communion (*Vita consecrata*, n. 46) in order to be builders of a universal aspiration to fraternity and to dream together (*Fratelli Tutti* n. 8). Words that have in some way prepared the ecclesial journey that we have recently begun, entitled *For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission*.

This year's focus is on the second word of the synod theme which invites each of us to do our part, to participate. Let no one, exclude themselves or feel excluded from this journey, let no one think "it doesn't concern me." Everyone is asked to enter into a "*dynamic of mutual listening, carried out at all levels of the Church, involving all God's people*" (Pope Francis to the Diocese of Rome, 18 September 2021).

It is primarily a journey that challenges every vocational community in its visible expression of a communion of love, a reflection of the Trinitarian relationship, of its goodness and beauty, its capacity of awakening new energies to concretely face the present moment. If we reconsider our vocational call, we rediscover the joy of being part of a project of Love for which brothers and sisters before us and with us, have offered their lives. There was such great enthusiasm at the beginning of our vocational stories, such amazement at discovering that *the Lord is also calling me* to realize this dream of doing good for humanity! Let us revive and take care of our commitment because, as we well know, it risks losing its strength over time, especially when we replace the attractiveness of the *we* with the strength of the *I*.

The first characteristic of participation is that of belonging. I cannot participate if I consider myself as *the whole*, if I don't recognize myself *as part* of a shared project, and if I'm not firmly rooted in the convictions that the "*body and members, in order to live, must be united!*" and that "*unity is superior to conflict, always!*" (Pope Francis, Audience 19 June 2013).

As we travel along this ecclesial path, let us ask ourselves, dear brothers and sisters: in our communities, what kind of listening do we engage in: who are the sisters and brothers we listen to, and why are we listening to them in the first place? This is a question that, once again, each and every one of us is called to examine. We cannot call ourselves a vocational community, and even less so, a community of life if we lack the participation of anyone at all.

Let us enter into this journey of the whole church, with the richness of our charisms and our lives, without hiding fatigue and wounds, strong in the conviction that we can only receive and give that which is Good because *"Consecrated life is born in the Church, it grows and can bear evangelical fruit only in the Church, in the living communion of the faithful People of God"* (Pope Francis, 11 December 2021).

Participation then becomes responsibility: we cannot fail to be among others and with others, and even more so in this call to become a synodal church! We are well aware that synodality begins from within: from a change of mentality, from a personal conversion, in our community, in the home, in the workplace, in our structures, extending into ministries and mission.

It is a dynamic engraved in our lives, it is like an echo of that first response to the Love of the Father that we received. It is in that dynamic of the call and commitment that lies the root of this attitude of being part of the processes that affect the life of the community and of each person. That is, to feel the wounds and the expectations in our flesh, to do what we can, putting everything in God's hands through prayer, not shirking the effort of bearing witness to hope, willing to lose as long as we nourish the shared journey that begins with listening. This entails making room for the other person in our life by taking seriously what is important to them.

Participation thus takes on the style of a co-responsibility that is related not only to the organization and workings of the Church, but also to its very nature, communion, and its ultimate meaning: the missionary dream of reaching out to all, of caring for all, of feeling that we are all brothers and sisters, united in life and in the history that is salvation history.

Let us walk together!

Let us entrust our steps to Mary, woman of thoughtful care. Upon each one, we invoke the Lord's blessing.


João Braz Card. de Aviz
Prefect


✠ José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Archbishop Secretary

