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MESSAGE

POPE FRANCIS AND THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

Being a Christian means believing in Christ, accepting His word, and following His example. The teaching and example of Jesus Christ provided the foundation for the evangelical counsels of chastity (cf. Mt 19: 12), of poverty (cf. Mt 8: 20; Lk 9: 58), and of obedience (cf. Phil 2: 8). The apostles as well as the Fathers of the early Church recommended this type of life as an ideal of life. This motivated many to live evangelical counsel in a literal manner. Like martyrdom, virginity for love of Christ is also considered as heroism.

This style of life contributed towards enabling the Church not merely to be equipped for every good work (cf. 2 Tim 3: 17) and to be prepared for the work of the ministry unto the building up of the Body of Christ (cf. Eph 4:12), but also to appear adorned with the manifold gifts of her children, like a bride adorned for her husband (cf. Apoc. 21: 2), and to manifest in herself the multiform wisdom of God (cf. Eph 3: 10) (Perfectae Caritatis, 1). Therefore, the Church from its very beginning took maximum care to give a right interpretation of the evangelical counsels, to regulate their practice, and also to set up stable forms of living embodying them (Lumen Gentium, 43). Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, soon this style of life got institutionalized. Various forms of religious life lived in solitude or in community were emerged.

This type of life is known today as 'consecrated life'. Although it is already present in the teachings of Second Vatican Council, the term 'consecrated life' seems rather new to many people. Some think the designation is not entirely appropriate and even discriminatory, as if to say through its use that other Christians are not "consecrated" in their baptism. The terms 'consecration' and 'consecrated life' are taken here in their precise theological and juridical meaning. The Code of Canon Law defines it as follows: "Life consecrated through profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living, in which the faithful follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, and are totally dedicated to God, who is supremely loved. By a new and special title they are dedicated to seek the perfection of charity in the service of God's kingdom, for the honour of God, the building up of the Church and the salvation of the world. They are a splendid sign in the

Church, as they foretell the heavenly glory" (Can 573). So as per the existing law, only Religious Institutes (Can. 607) and Secular Institutes (Can 710) fall under this category. In other words, Societies of Apostolic Life (Can 731) and Associations (Can 298) do not fall under this category. However taking into consideration of the vital presence of consecrated life in the global Catholic Church and their inevitable contribution for the edification of the Church, Pope Francis decided to proclaim a Year of Consecrated Life. Moreover, this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, which speaks of religious in its sixth chapter, and of the Decree Perfectae Caritatis on the renewal of religious life. Therefore, it was opportune to call for a year of Consecrated Life. This Year was formerly opened on 30th November 2014, the First Sunday of Advent. The Year will be concluded with the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple on 2 February 2016.

Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People presents three aims of the year of consecrated life, such as;

- a) **To look to the past with gratitude:** For each institute, it is a call for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities. In this way each member come to see how the Charism has been lived over the years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it had encountered and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted. This will help the members to preserve their identity, to strengthen their bonds and their sense of belonging.
- b) **To live the present with passion:** Grateful remembrance of the past leads the consecrated person to implement ever more fully the essential aspects of his/her consecrated life. Living the present with passion means becoming "experts in communion", "witnesses and architects of the 'plan for unity' which is the crowning point of human history in God's design".
- c) **To embrace the future with hope:** Amidst of all types of challenges and future uncertainties, each consecrated person is called to look ahead with hope. This hope calls one not to yield to the temptation to see things in terms of numbers and efficiency, or to trust in one's own strength. Rather it invites the consecrated person to put

his/her trust (cf. 2 Tim 1:12) on the One for whom "nothing is impossible" (Lk 1: 37).

In this apostolic letter, Pope Francis also highlights five expectations from this year of grace for consecrated life. They are: a) to discover 'perfect joy', imitating Christ who out of love for human beings, did not refuse the sufferings on the cross; b) to be deeply aware of the prophetic role, by knowing the mind of God and to be on the side of the poor and the powerless; c) to be experts in communion which should be lived first and foremost within the respective communities of each institute by avoiding criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy, hostility etc., but rather seeing himself or herself as part of a true communion which is constantly open to encounter, dialogue, attentive listening and mutual assistance; d) to come out of oneself and go forth to the existential peripheries to see the face of Christ in the persons of poor; and, e) to ask the question what it is that God and people today are asking from each one and to respond in accordance with the promptings of the Spirit.

To mark this year a time of grace and an occasion for renewal, Pope Francis calls the active involvement of not only the consecrated person but also all the laity, the leaders of the Church and above all the entire Church. Pope Francis concludes his apostolic exhortation by projecting Blessed Virgin Mary as a model and asks every consecrated person to imitate her example of giving herself to God, fully and totally.

The Vincentian Family is extremely glad to welcome the year of the consecrated life and take whole heartedly the invitation of Pope Francis. While congratulating the members of the Vincentian Family who belong to the institutes of consecrated life, praying for them so that they may be faithful to the urgent call of the Church. May God help them take earnest care to persevere and excel still more in the life in which God has called him or her, for the increase of holiness of the Church, to the greater glory of the One undivided Trinity, which in Christ and through Christ is the source and origin of all holiness. And especially during this season of Easter, may the Risen Christ help them to realize that they are to be filled with 'joy and comfort' and at the same time they are to be the carriers of 'joy and comfort'.

**Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil, CM
National Coordinator, VFI**

NEWS - NATION



Very Rev. Fr. Gregory G. Gay, lighting the lamp and inaugurating the Annual General Body Meeting of the VFI



Very Rev. Fr. Gregory G. Gay and Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas Thiruthalil CM, together with the General Body of the VFI

1. Visit of the General Coordinator of Vincentian Family

The long awaited meeting of the major superiors/heads of the various branches of Vincentian Family in India with Very Rev. Fr. Gregory G. Gay CM, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity was held at Karunalaya, Mysore (Karnataka) on February 21-22, 2015. It was also the ninth annual gathering of the General Body of the VF in India and was the golden opportunity for the participants to know more about the VF worldwide from Rev. Fr. Gregory as well as to plan for a better collaboration among the various branches to promote the Vincentian Charism i.e., to evangelize the poorest of the poor. Nine branches of the VF such as CM, DC, VC, SCN, SCV (Manathavady, Kerala), SCV (Ranchi), SSVP, AMM, and VMY were represented.

The meeting commenced with a prayer dance by the students of De Paul International, Mysore. Rev. Fr. Devasia Pudussery CM, the regional co-ordinator of Karnataka region welcomed the participants for the aforesaid meeting. Very Rev. Fr. Mathew Onatt CM, the Visitor of the South Indian Province gave an inaugural address. Each participant introduced himself/herself and also shared about the branch to which he or she belonged. They also revealed the variety of activities performed by the respective branches to alleviate the pain of the poor and also told of their relentless efforts to eradicate poverty. While the self-introduction of each member was over, Rev. Fr. Gregory inspired the participants on the relevance

of Vincentian Family today. He accentuated that to enliven the Vincentian charism in the present day, a joint concerted action is needed. In his sharing he invited every one for a greater collaboration between the different branches of the VF. Accordingly, the spirit of St. Vincent shall survive and shall continue.

He also reminisced the origin of the Vincentian Family in the worldwide. It was Very Rev. Fr. Robert P. Maloney, the then Superior General of the Congregation of Mission who had initiated the launch of Vincentian Family in 1992 at the international level. In 2007 Rev. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil, CM along with Bro. T. Joseph Pandian the then National President of SSVP and his team initiated the installation of VF in India. In his sharing, Fr. Gregory reviewed the activities of the VF in India for the last nine years. He highlighted the important achievements of the VF in India. He also called for the need to bring about better organization and for a common formation programme to intensify the Charism as well as to get to know one another closely. He also whole-heartedly welcomed the idea of having VF secretariat in India and appreciated the gesture of South Indian Province of the Congregation of the Mission for allotting sufficient land for the purpose at Mysore. Bro. Joseph Pandian SSVP, the International Territorial Vice-President volunteered to thank the participants, especially Fr. Gregory G. Gay for his gracious presence and brainstorming sharings with the members of the VFI. He thanked each and every one for

sparing their valuable time to be with all the members of the family. On behalf of all present, he thanked Very Rev. Fr. Mathew Onatt CM for hoisting the meeting and for making such excellent arrangements which made the participants to stay in comfort.

2. Workshop on Systemic Change

The Systemic Change Commission in its meeting held at the Provincialate of Daughters of Charity, Bangaluru on 26th August 2014 decided to organize Workshops at all the Regional Centres. As per the decision the first Workshop was organized for Karnataka region at Nazareth School, Chandapura, Bangaluru from 25 to 27 January, 2015. And the second Workshop was organized for Kerala region at Vincentian Generalate, Edapally, Ernakulam from 28 to 31 January, 2015. The following topics were taken up during the Workshop: 1. Why Systemic Change? 2. What is Systemic Change? 3. Social Analysis leading to Systemic Change. 4. Systemic Change: the seeds found in the Holy Bible, in the teachings of the Church and in the life and works of the Founders. 5. Strategies for Systemic Change. The presentations were made through Power Point. Fr. Francis Puthenthayil CM, Sr. Manisha SCN and Bro. Joseph Pandian SSVP were the resource persons who dealt with the above said topics. After each presentation, there were small group discussions. Movies and PPTs on Systemic Change Projects were also screened to provide exposure into the practical aspects of Systemic Change Projects.

NEWS – REGIONAL

Karnataka Region

1. Workshop on Systemic Change:

Together with the Regional Coordinator of Karnataka region, Fr. Devasia Pudussery, the National Commission for systemic change conducted a three - day workshop for the region of Karnataka. Members from three branches participated in the workshop. It was conducted at the Provincial House of SCN sisters in Chandapura, Bangalore. The members expressed their extreme happiness to know more about the relevance of the systemic change. At the end of workshop, there was a proposal of selecting five members who could take the responsibility of disseminating the concept in the Karnataka region. The following were volunteered to be the members – Sr. Sheela Palamoottil SCN, Rev. Fr. Saji Pathrapankal CM, Rev. Fr. Tharthees CM, Sr. Maria Kallurthottiyil DC, and Sr. Mary Juliet DC. The members of the National Commission for Systemic Change and the participants expressed their sincere thanks to Sr. Ann Palatty SCN, the Provincial of the Bangalore province of SCN and her team for sponsoring the food and lodging for the participants.



Participants in the Systemic Change Workshop from Karnataka Region

2. New Visitatrice of South Indian Province of the Daughters of Charity

Sr. Rose Kidengean DC who was the 2nd Visitatrice of the South Indian Province of Daughters of the Charity from 2006 to 2015 is replaced by Sr. Rose Chirayil DC. Sr. Kidengean guided the province for 9 years and tirelessly worked for the integral development of the province. Her humble, serene, but

firm attitude and approach to every sister of the province endeared her to all. She was also one among the pioneers to bring together different branches of Vincentian Family working in India. Her contribution to build up VF in India is indeed remarkable. Vincentian Family in India is immensely grateful to her sincere and dedicated services and hope to have her continued supports and service. VF in India is immensely happy to welcome Sr. Rose Chirayil, DC, the new Visitatrice of the South Indian Province. She took charge of piloting the ship of the province on February 20, 2015 on the auspicious occasion of the august presence of our very Rev. Fr. Gregory Gay the Superior General of the Daughters of Charity and the CM. While congratulating Sr. Rose Chirayil, we assure her our sincere prayers which will help her fulfill her ministry diligently and follow the footsteps of Sts. Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac.

**Sr. Anne Muttathil DC
Kerala Region**

1. Workshop on Systemic Change:

The Workshop for Kerala Region was organised by Rev. Fr. James Chelapurth VC together with the members of the National Commission for Systemic Change at the Generalate of the Vincentian Congregation in Edapally, Kochi, Kerala from January 28 to 31, 2015. There were 27 participants from 7 branches. Very Rev. Fr. Varghese Parapuram VC, the Superior General of VC inaugurated the Workshop while appreciating the concept of Systemic Change, highlighted its relevance in our Mission and Charity. The participants found the Workshop very useful and informative. At the end of the workshop the participants were awarded with Certificates. Together with Fr. James Chelapurath VC, the following members were volunteered to disseminate the concept of systemic change in Kerala region.



Participants in Workshop on Systemic Change from Kerala Region

Rev. Fr. Mathew Vattakuzhy VC (the Asst. Superior General of VC), Sr. Beena Puthiyaparambil DC, Sr. Pauline Chitteen DC, Sr. Sr. Arpitha CSN, Bro. Adv. Sebastian Philip Puthenpurayil SSVP, and Bro. Tomy Varghese Cheeramkunnel SSVP. The members of the National Commission for Systemic Change and the participants expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Very Rev. Fr. Varghese Parapuram VC, the superior General of VC and his team for sponsoring the food and lodging for the participants. All the participants enjoyed the hospitality of the VC fathers, the excellent accommodation and sumptuous meals provided to them.



**Christ has Risen
Halleluiah**

BLESSED MARGUERITE RUTAN, DC (1736 – 1794)

Throughout her life, Marguerite Rutan dedicated her self- her human, spiritual and professional gifts to the service of poor persons. Each day she served with passion and perseverance, seeking to lovingly accept God's will. Sister Marguerite carried her cross as Christ carried his suffering because of his love for the Father. She chose to remain faithful to her religious convictions at a time when it was not possible to do so, and therefore she had to endure the same lot as Christ underwent. She was a martyr and her death was the crowning act of a life lived to the fullest.

HER EARLY YEARS.

On April 23rd, 1736, Marguerite Rutan was born in Metz, France into a family with 15 children-4 boys and 11 girls. She was baptized on the same day of her birth and received the sacrament of Confirmation on August 9th 1743. She was the eighth child and grew up with her brothers and sisters in a happy home in an atmosphere of honesty, courage and Christian convictions. Her father was a hardworking manual laborer who later became a stone-cutter, progressed to being a master stone- mason, then an architect and contractor. Marguerite learned hard work and developed a well-balanced personality.

Knowing her abilities her father taught her the principles of his trade. She learned mathematics, liner design and the basic principles of architecture. Marguerite grew up in a setting where the name of St. Vincent de Paul was well-known. In her Christian family atmosphere she learned to focus on her love of Jesus and as a child she was already thinking of others, and little by little, her entire being became filled with Christ. At the same time she discovered the works of the Daughters of Charity in her city. Gradually she developed a desire to serve God and her brothers and sisters. By 18 years of age her life was marked with a desire to serve the poorest of the poor. She wrote a letter asking permission to enter the Daughters of Charity. After a delay of three years she was finally able to see her dream fulfilled, she began her petulancy at St. Nicholas Hospital in Metz.

HER LIFE AS A DAUGHTER OF CHARITY.

On April 23rd 1757 at the age of 21 Marguerite Rutan was admitted to the

Company the Daughters of Charity and began her seminary formation at the Mother house in Paris. She learned to give her life to God totally for the service of those who are poor. Throughout her life as a Daughter of Charity she responded to various missions whole heartedly. After her seminary formation she was sent to a house where the sisters were serving the patients in a hospital. Her organizational and management skills were highly commendable. Later on she was sent to a hospital in Dax. Sr. Marguerite Rutan later became the Sister superior of the community of the hospital. She began to organize everything systematically. All the patients and people loved Sr. Marguerite and they all saw her as "an angel sent by God" to bring them joy and comfort.

Besides the hospital ministry, she was concerned about the education of the poor children and she made arrangements for their studies. The economic crisis of France in the year 1788 affected the life of the hospital too and it worsened the political situation of France. On July 14, 1789, the French Revolution broke out and it badly affected her ministry. By the end of 1790 the Catholic Church in the city of Dax was attacked by the supporters of the Revolution and there was real tug of war between the State and the Church. A certain Pierre Saurine made himself the Bishop and wanted to overpower the hospital of the sisters where Sr. Rutan was working. Sr. Rutan showed that she was impervious to his tricks as well as his threats. She was trying to encourage the sisters to bear the tribulation with courage and perseverance, attributing to the will of God and submission to it.

On April 6, 1792 the revolutionaries declared the suppression of all ecclesial and lay corporations and forbade the wearing of religious garb. Within a short time the community had to be dissolved and Sr. Rutan was threatened by the revolutionaries that she would be expelled. In August 1792 the Company of the Daughters of Charity was suppressed. Having lost their legal standing, the Sisters decided to establish themselves as a sort of association under the title of "Ladies of Charity" in order to continue their dedicated service to the poor patients. In 1793 the reign of terror began. The revolutionaries began to imprison people. Neither threats nor promises weakened her resolution.

IMPRISONMENT OF SR.RUTAN IN DECEMBER 1793.

The revolutionaries made up false accusation against Sr. Rutan and she was arrested and was imprisoned on December 24, 1793. Since she refused to take the oath, she was declared "unpatriotic, and contrary to the principles of the Revolution". On January 15, 1794 the revolutionaries arranged a court appearance for Sr. Rutan then aged 57. On April 8, 1794 the judges in the revolutionary commission brought to trial Sr. Rutan. She was falsely accused and was awarded with death sentence. Sr. Rutan without a word, without showing any indignation or resistance accepted the judgment. The next day, Tuesday of the Holy Week, Sister Rutan prepared herself to follow in the footsteps of the suffering Jesus. On Wednesday of the Holy Week 1794 the condemned Sister Rutan was tied back to back with the priest who was condemned with her, in the cart and to the accompaniment of drum beat made the journey with astounding calmness and bravery. When her turn came, she climbed up the scaffold without betraying any emotion. She knelt down, leaned over and peacefully received the final blow and yielded her beautiful soul to God!

END OF THE REIGN OF TERROR.

Four months after the death of Sister Rutan the fall of the revolutionaries brought an end to the reign of terror. A year after the guillotining of Sr. Rutan, the principal civil authority of the district declared that "the Commune of Dax regretted the loss of this virtuous woman called Sr. Marguerite Rutan and said she upheld her religious convictions and was inhumanly sacrificed".

She spent 40 long years of her life taking care of people with the most repugnant forms of human illness. She considered her suffering and martyrdom a gift from the hands of God and her death was an expression of her life of union with the charity of Jesus Crucified. She gave radical witness to the gospel of Love. Her example is a beacon of hope for all Christians. Like St. Paul, She said "in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body the Church. (Col.1.24). Sr. Marguerite Rutan who was guillotined on April 9, 1794 was beatified on July 1, 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI.

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