



A Christmas Message



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Special Points of interest

- Wake up the world
- Pray for those grieving
- Think of the homeless
- Pray for the seriously ill
- Be people of peace and joy for others
- Witness during Christmas



“Glory to God, peace to men of good will.”

Dear friends,

It is a joy for me to greet you at this time of preparation for the coming of Our Lord on Christmas Day. The prophet Isaiah said that the child would be known as the Prince of Peace. The angels brought a message of praise and peace to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born: “Glory to God, peace to men of good will.” And Jesus, in his last discourse, promised us peace as his farewell gift to us. What a precious gift!

When do you feel the most peaceful? I invite you to ponder this question during the remaining days leading up to Christmas. For me, it is when I receive the Holy Eucharist.

Pope Francis dedicated the year 2015 to consecrated life. This is an opportune time for us to witness to the world by spreading the message of our wonderful vocation in a Secular Institute. Let us “Wake up the World” to this reality.

How will we as a Conference celebrate this important event? The Executive Committee welcomes *your* ideas. Please send them to either me or Jessica by January 10. This item will be on our agenda when we meet in San Antonio on January 23 for our Executive Committee meeting.

May the remaining days of Advent be an opportunity to say: Thank you, Lord, for having chosen me and then ask him: “Lord, has my FIAT made a difference in my life and in the world?”

Thank you to all who attended the Annual Meeting held in Dolce, CT in September. Your participation made our meeting a success!

Let’s not forget to pray for those in need especially during the Christmas Season. Let us pray for those who are grieving over the loss of a loved one. Let us think of the homeless who will be without shelter and food. Let us pray for those who are seriously ill. Let us be people of peace and joy for others to witness during the Christmas Season in spite of our own needs known to us alone. Let us offer prayers of thanksgiving for the many blessings we received throughout the year 2014.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2015!

Beatrice (Bea) Caron, OMMI
President



Pope Francis' Address to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

"Do not forget to thank the Owner of the vineyard who has called you to this exalted task"

VATICAN CITY,
November 27, 2014

(Zenit.org) - Here is a translation of the Pope's address to the participants of the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on the theme: "New Wine in New Wineskins" (November 25-29, 2014).

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With joy I meet today with you, participants of the Congregation's Plenary Assembly, and with all those of you who give your service in the Dicastery. In particular, I welcome the Cardinals and Bishops, who have become members recently, and I thank the Cardinal Prefect for the greeting he addressed to me on behalf of you all. I find the title, which you have chosen for this session, "New Wine in New Wineskins," beautiful and significant. In the light of this evangelical word, you reflected on the

today of consecrated life in the Church, 50 years since the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* and the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*.

After the Second Vatican Council, the wind of the Spirit has continued to blow with strength. On one hand driving Institutes to implement the spiritual, charismatic and institutional renewal, which the Council itself requested, and on the other, arousing in men's and women's hearts new ways of responding to Jesus' invitation to leave everything to dedicate their life to following him and to the proclamation of the Gospel.

In the part of the Lord's vineyard, represented by those who have chosen to imitate Christ more closely through the profession of the evangelical counsels, new grapes have matured and new wine has been distilled. During these days you have proposed to discern the quality and the maturing of the "new wine" that was prepared in the long season of renewal, and at the same time to confirm that the wineskins that contain it, represented by the institutional forms present today in consecrated life, are adequate to contain this "new wine" and to foster its full maturation. As I have reminded at other times, we must not be afraid to

leave the "old wineskins," that is, to renew those habits and structures that, in the life of the Church and, therefore, also in consecrated life, we recognize as no longer responding to what God asks today for his Kingdom to advance in the world: the structures that give us false protection and that condition the dynamism of charity; the habits that distance us from the flock to which we are invited and impedes us from hearing the cry of all those awaiting the Good News of Jesus Christ. While you do not hide the areas of weakness that it is possible to verify today in consecrated life (such as the resistance to change of some sectors, the diminished force of attraction, the number—not irrelevant—of abandonments, the fragility of certain formative itineraries, the anxiety over institutional and ministerial tasks at the expense of the spiritual life, the difficult integration of the cultural and generational diversities, a problematic balance in the exercise of authority and in the use of goods) you wish to be listening to the signs of the Spirit, who opens new horizons and pushes to new ways, always beginning from the supreme rule of the Gospel and inspired by the creative audacity of your founders. In the demanding

...continued from page two

Pope Francis on Consecrated Life . . .

task that sees you come together, in order to evaluate the new wine and to test the quality of the wineskins that must contain it, you are guided by some orientating criteria: the evangelical originality of the choices, charismatic fidelity, the primacy of service, care of the littlest and fragile, respect of the dignity of every person.

I encourage you to continue to work with generosity and enterprise in the Lord's vineyard, to foster the growth and maturation of lush bunches, from which to be able to extract that generous wine, which will be able to reinvigorate the life of the Church and rejoice the heart of so many brothers and sisters in need of your solicitous and maternal care. As you well pointed

out, the substitution of the old wineskins with the new also does not happen automatically, but calls for commitment and ability, to offer the ideal space to receive and bear fruit - the new gifts with which the Spirit continues to beautify the Church, his Bride. Do not forget to thank the Owner of the vineyard who has called you to this exalted task. Go forward on the path of renewal, undertaken and to a great extent acted on during these 50 years, sifting every novelty in the light of the Word of God and in listening to the needs of the Church and of the contemporary world, and using all the means that the wisdom of the Church makes available to advance on the path of your personal

and communal holiness.

The Plenary Assembly of your Congregation is situated, in fact, on the eve of the Year of Consecrated Life. Let us pray together to the Lord to help us in this Year to put "new wine in new wineskins"!

I thank you for the work you are doing during these days, and for the service you give as members and collaborators of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. May the Virgin Mary accompany you and obtain for you a new revived ardor and the holy audacity to seek new ways. May the Holy Spirit assist and illumine you. [Original text: Italian] [Translation by ZENIT]

Pope's Video Message at Vigil for Beginning of Year of Consecrated Life



"May this be an 'intense time' to celebrate with the whole Church the gift of your vocation and to revive your prophetic mission." Pope Francis

VATICAN CITY, November 30, 2014 ([Zenit.org](http://zenit.org)) - Here is a translation of Pope Francis' video message by which he participated in Saturday evening's prayer vigil to begin the Year of Consecrated Life. The Pope was unable to lead the celebrations since today he is returning from a three-day visit to Turkey.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Even though physically far away

because of my service to the universal Church, I feel profoundly united to all consecrated men and women at the beginning of this year, which I wish to have dedicated to consecrated life.

I greet affectionately all the members of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and all those present in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, under the tender gaze of the Blessed Virgin,

Continue from page 3... Pope Francis' Words for Vigil of Consecr.Year

Salus Populi Romani, for this Vigil of Prayer. With you I also greet all the consecrated men and women who live and work in the world.

My first words, on this occasion, are of gratitude to the Lord for the precious gift of consecrated life to the Church and to the world. May this Year of Consecrated Life be an occasion for all members of the People of God to thank the Lord, from whom every good comes, for the gift of consecrated life, appreciating it appropriately. To you equally, dear brothers and sisters, goes my gratitude for what you are and what you do in the Church and in the world. May this be an "intense time" to celebrate with the whole Church the gift of your vocation and to revive your prophetic mission.

I repeat to you today what I have said at other times: "Awake the world! Awake the world!" How?

Put Christ at the center of your existence. The essential norm of your life being to "follow Christ as taught by the Gospel" (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 2), consecrated life consists essentially in personal adherence to Him. Seek Christ constantly, dear consecrated, seek his face, may he occupy the center of your life in order to be transformed in "living memory of Jesus' way of living and acting, as

Incarnate Word before the Father and before brothers" (*Vita Consecrata*, 22). Like the Apostle Paul, let yourselves be conquered by him, assume his sentiments and his way of life (cf. *Ibid.*, 18); let yourselves be touched by his hand, led by his voice, sustained by his grace (cf. *Ibid.*, 40).

It is not easy; let yourselves be touched by his hand, led by his voice, sustained by his grace. And, with Christ, begin always from the Gospel! Assume it as a way of life and translate it into daily gestures marked by simplicity and coherence, thus overcoming the temptation to transform it into an ideology. The Gospel will keep your life and mission "young," and it will render it timely and attractive. May the Gospel be the solid terrain where you advance with courage. Called to be "living exegesis" of the Gospel, may that be, dear consecrated, the foundation and ultimate reference of your life and mission.

Come out of your nest to the fringes of the man and woman of today! Therefore, let yourselves be encountered by Christ. The encounter with him will drive you to encounter others and will lead you to the neediest, to the poorest. Reach the fringes that await the light of the Gospel (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 20).

Inhabit the frontiers. This will require your vigilance to discover the novelties of the Spirit; lucidity to recognize the complexity of the new frontiers; discernment to identify the limits and the appropriate way to proceed; and immersion in reality, "touching the suffering flesh of Christ in the people" (*Ibid.*, 24).

Dear brothers and sisters: presented before you are many challenges, but these exist to be surmounted. "Let us be realistic, but without losing joy, audacity and dedication full of hope! Let us not be robbed of the missionary force!" (*Ibid.*, 109).

May Mary, woman in contemplation of the mystery of God in the world and in history, diligent woman in helping others with haste (cf. *Luke* 1:39) and, therefore, model of every missionary-disciple, accompany you in this Year of Consecrated Life, which we put under her maternal gaze.

To all of you, participants in the Vigil of Prayer at Saint Mary Major, and to all consecrated men and women, I impart my heartfelt Blessing, and I ask you, please, to pray for me.

May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady protect you.

[Original text: Italian]

[Translation by ZENIT]

“Wake up the world!”

This theme is Pope Francis's challenge for the Year of Consecrated Life, which began on November 29 and runs through Feb 2016. "Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world," he says.

What is the difference?
Jesus Christ.

A vocation flows from an encounter, "the joy of the moment when Jesus looked at me.... a response to a call, a call of love" (Pope Francis). St. Angela Merici spoke of it as a call to enter deep into a relationship of love as "spouses of the Son of God."

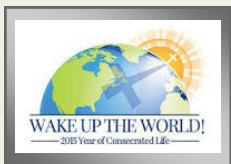
In founding the Company of St. Ursula in 1535, Angela invented consecration in the world, a form of life now termed a "secular institute."

One seeker who is exploring this vocation says, "I am attracted to consecrated life because I am attracted to the person of Jesus Christ.... Consecrated life is one way to follow him and to imitate him.... If it is God's holy will, I hope to journey in company with other women who are walking the same path to union with Jesus."

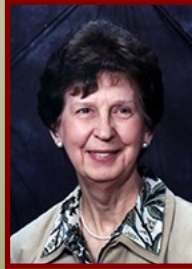
In whatever calling we have received, let us radiate the love with which He has first loved us: that's living differently in the world! Lord, you have come to the seashore....

Jesus, how are you calling me to follow you?

Mary-Cabrini Durkin,
Company of St.
Ursula



In Memoriam



Gabrielle Lachance, Oblate Missionary of Mary Immaculate, passed away on October 24, 2014 unexpectedly as a result of a massive coronary. Her sudden death left all Oblates in a state of disbelief.

Some of you may remember Gabrielle who was the featured speaker at the USCSI Annual Meeting held in Jacksonville, Florida. At the suggestion of the Executive Committee, we are sharing some of the highlights of Gabrielle's accomplishments as a consecrated secular. The following are excerpts from the letter our President, Anita Plourde, sent to all Oblates.

At the time of her passing, "Gabrielle was still energetic, enthusiastic and intellectually vibrant with a deep love and appreciation for our secular institute. Her life-long apostolic project was the development of peoples for the common good of all their members to bring about peace in the world following the initiatives of Vatican Council II and Pope Paul VI.

Gabrielle became an Oblate in April of

1953 when the Institute was not even one year old. Her presidency (1968-74) was a turning point in the life of the Institute due to the confluence of many factors, not the least of which was her profound understanding of secularity and the vision to see its concrete application in a secular institute.

Notwithstanding her role on the international stage as a founding member of the World Conference of Secular Institutes and member on its first executive council (1970-76), Director General of Development and Peace (1988-96), a member of the Vatican Pontifical Council Cor Unum for human and Christian development (1989-96) and positions in many other organizations whose focus are justice and peace, Gabrielle was always first and foremost an Oblate Missionary of Mary Immaculate. In her relations with the Oblates, she was just one of us, gracious, attentive, simple, even humble, a person of integrity. May her legacy to secular institutes and to human development continue to bear fruit."

May she rest in peace. May she watch over us and bless us with the passion she had for social justice and her love for the poor.

NEWS:

The OMMI's celebrated the 60th anniversary of their arrival in Lowell, MA, in November 1954. To read the article on this celebration, visit the link at:

communications@ommi-is.org

SAVE THE DATE

Sept 18 - 20, 2015, is the Annual Meeting Dates in San Antonio, Texas, at the Oblate Theology Center.

There were two direct questions from SIs who wished to see if there could be a more **relaxing vacation type day** scheduled in the warm context of the "SI Family Meeting." This could possibly be Sunday afternoon through Monday, September 21st, as for some it will be the first time in "San Antonio"... Please let Jessica know if you would be interested:

Jessica@schsrsm.org

CCVL & USCCB 2014

November 7-12, 2014

Once again I can share with you from the Fall Assembly of the US Conference of Bishops (USCCB) with the committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (CCLV) as an observer for the US Conference of Secular Institutes. Bishop Michael Burbidge, Diocese of Raleigh, CCLV Committee Chair for these next three years, started with introductions at 8:15 flowing into four small group discussions until 10:15 break and the large group meeting to finish the productive morning. Seventeen CCLV Consulting Organizations join the 8 bishops from this committee. I will share details with you at our Annual Meeting.

This year the Fall Plenary Assembly of the Bishops in the USA began 9-10:00 am with 12 Regional Meetings; at 10:15 am Archbishop Kurtz introduced the five new bishops, recognized the "seniors," prayed for the deceased bishops, and read the message from the Holy Father. Remarks by Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, Apostolic Nuncio, the presidential Address by Archbishop Joseph Kurtz and the National Advisory Council report, Update on the 8th World Meeting of Families taking place September 22-27, 2015 in Philadelphia, and a witty report by Cardinal Dolan highlighting his attendance at "the other" Third Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome ended by 12:30 pm.

During the Lunch break, as an example, I met Laurie Goodstein National Religion Correspondent for The New York Times and could answer her question, "I'm Catholic for so many years and never hear of secular institutes; what are they?" Bishop Arthur Serratelli took the podium for Action Items on Divine Worship during the 2-3:00 pm session. By 5:00 pm, after a timely police escort for the six buses, a beautiful Mass was celebrated for the 225th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Baltimore at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Archbishop William Lori made us proud of the historical foundation and offered ideas to further the heritage to faith, worship, and witness.

Tuesday began with a concelebrated 6:30 am Mass, breakfast and general sessions 9-12:30 and 2-4:30 pm with elections, reports, Canonization Cause for Fr Paul Wattson from NYC, updates and PowerPoints from

Catholic Relief Services, Church in Africa, and the Prayer Pilgrimage for Peace in the Holy Land. Bishop Burbidge gave a presentation on the observance of the Year of Consecrated Life. As we know this will be opened by Pope Francis on November 30, 2015 and run through February 2 of 2016. Via the three major conferences of consecrated life in the USA, three dates have been highlighted: Sunday, February 8, 2015 Day of Open Houses; Summer 2015 Day of Service and Mission and September 13, 2015 Day of prayer with religious. He urged vicars of dioceses to help pastors and bishops announce and promote consecrated life; as well as visit the web (www.usccb.org/consecrated-life). Let's celebrate consecrated persons in our own dioceses to wake up the world and give new hope. Two suggestions from the floor are that bishops make time to dialogue with major superiors in or who have members present in their dioceses; and Archbishop Tobin said it would be a good time to name a Vicar or Delegate for Religious in your diocese if the office is lacking.

It is always a privilege and joy, as well as an awesome event to observe and meet some of the 250 bishops. I could bring Bishop Olmsted up to date with our USCSI. Every break found me chatting with bishops to make our vocation better known and understood!

Jessica Swedzinski

NEWS BITS:

The Schoenstatt Movement celebrated its 100th anniversary on October 18, 2014, at the place of origin in Vallendar, Germany, as well as all over the world. Pope Francis met with over 7000 members on October 25, 2014, at Pope Paul VI Hall in Rome. Ann Astell and Danielle Peters, University of Notre Dame, have co-authored an article which was printed in *Claritas*. It is entitled: Schoenstatt's Shrine for the Pilgrim People of God, found in Vol 3, No 2, October 2014, pages 68-85.

