



The Franciscan Legionnaire

Newsletter of the Friars Legion of St. Peter's Church in the Loop

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The Year of Consecrated Life 2014 - 2016

Fr. Bob Hutmacher, ofm

Dear brothers and sisters in consecrated life,

I am writing to you as the Successor of Peter, to whom the Lord entrusted the task of confirming his brothers and sisters in faith. But I am also writing to you as a brother who, like yourselves, is consecrated to God. Together let us thank the Father, who called us to follow Jesus by fully embracing the Gospel and serving the Church, and poured into our hearts the Holy Spirit, the source of our joy and our witness to God's love and mercy before the world.

In response to requests from many of you and from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, which speaks of religious in its sixth chapter, and the Decree Perfectae Caritatis on the renewal of religious life. The Year will begin on 30 November 2014, and will conclude with the Feast of the Presentation on 2 February 2016.

After consultation with the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, I have chosen as the aims of this Year the same ones which St. John Paul II proposed to the whole Church at the beginning of the third millennium, reiterating, in a sense, what he had earlier written in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrate: "You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things." (No. 110).

This is the introduction of the Apostolic letter of his Holiness Pope Francis to all consecrated people on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life. I want

to draw your attention to this special year in the life of the Church because it will be highlighted and celebrated with events throughout the year. In fact, we friars at St. Peter's have already begun discussing how we can help people understand our vowed way of life. First of all, let me point out that you can easily access the Pope's letter on line at the Vatican's web site.

Pope Francis outlines three aims for this Year of Consecrated Life. The first aim is to look to the past with gratitude. "At their origins we see the hand of God who, in his Spirit, calls certain individuals to follow Christ more closely, to translate the Gospel into a particular way of life, to read the signs of the times with the eyes of faith and to respond creatively to the needs of the Church." We in the Franciscan Order have over 800 years of history for which we constantly praise God.

Libraries have been written about Sts. Francis and Clare of Assisi. Their examples of faith and devotion to the Gospel life have touched millions of people, both Christian and those who are not.



The response I hear most often about Francis and why he touches hearts as he does is "his simplicity of life." Clare has proven to be a splendid and powerful example for women and men who seek a place in the Church that allows them to use their own gifts freely for the common good.

Pope Francis encourages all in religious life to look to their past history because that is how we learn about ourselves. It's possible to see human weakness and "encounter cases of inconsistency" that reveal how the ideals of consecrated life may or may not have been embraced appropriately. In confessing those weaknesses, we see how much God has blessed us throughout our history with his love.

The **second aim** of the Year of Consecrated Life is to live the present with passion. Religious life began with monasticism in the earliest centuries of Christianity as a means of holding on to the ideals of Christian, common life with the Gospel at its center. “For to me, to live is Christ.” (Phil. 1:21) During this year religious orders are challenged to be open to the Gospel, or as Pope Francis writes: “whether the Gospel is truly the manual for our daily living and the decisions we are called to make.”

The Gospel at its heart is demanding. Remember He said “Take up your cross each day and follow me.” That’s clearly not an injunction to get a Serta Perfect Sleeper and be comfortable for the rest of one’s life. The Gospel pushes us into new ways of being, new ways of witnessing to the power and grace of God in our lives. This Year challenges us to examine our fidelity to the mission entrusted to us. St. John Paul II once wrote that “our founders must now inspire you, their spiritual children, to keep alive the charisms, which by the same Spirit are constantly being enriched and adapted while losing none of their unique character.”

We friars of the Sacred Heart Province have been talking among ourselves about how we may consolidate our presence in the Midwest. Painful decisions face us with the diminishment of our numbers. When I entered the Order in 1968 our Province had over 800 members. Now we are just over 200. And we’re a microcosm of the universal Order throughout 107 countries. We all face the same questions: how can we live as brothers and express the unique character Francis handed on to us? How can we continue to be at the service of the Church?

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”. In a polarized society, where different cultures experience difficulty in living alongside one another, where the powerless encounter oppression, where inequality abounds, we are called to offer a concrete model of community which, by acknowledging the dignity of each person and sharing our respective gifts, makes it possible to live as brothers and sisters.

Passion for the Crucified is what drove Francis to be a mirror of Christ for the 20 years he lived after his

conversion, and Clare lived likewise in different style. The pope’s call implies and demands that we friars respond to the critical situations in our world today. In the U.S. alone we face the green monster of racism as we have never done before. Immigration to the Land of the Free is always before us, as is economic injustice and imbalance. We religious are challenged to become “experts in communion” that will counter the polarized culture in which we live. On the one hand, we have many freedoms in the U.S. On the other, babies are not free to play in their yards, some people cannot hold a job because of corporate greed, others feel ostracized from the Catholic Church...how are the little friars, the Lesser Brothers to live in such a world?

The **third aim** of this year is to embrace the future with hope. *This hope is not based on statistics or accomplishments, but on the One in whom we have put our trust (2 Tim 1:2), the One for whom “nothing is impossible” (Lk 1:3-7). This is the hope which does not disappoint; it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future that we must always look, conscious that the Holy Spirit spurs us on so that he can still do great things with us.*

St. Francis wrote that the Holy Spirit is the Minister General of the entire Order. Our own General, Michael Perry, carries on with that spiritual stance. Many of you are now aware of the financial crisis and scandal facing the Order. Michael sent me a letter just the other day in response to my letter to him when I mentioned “we do live in the light always.” His words: *As for the light, we all need it, and the world needs it more now than ever. It is here. I hope all of us might feel its energy and warmth.* And there you see a concrete response to not just my letter but to the difficulties we constantly face in a world set against our Christian principles.

Pope Francis encourages us to “not be prophets of doom but “to clothe yourselves in Jesus Christ and put on the armor of light.” I wrote about the ‘Joy of Christmas’ in December. That joy in the Incarnation is the joy that permeates our Franciscan way of life each and every day. Yes, we are surrounded by problems unimaginable even five years ago. Yes, we are surrounded by evangelicals who spread negativity and gloom. Our world appears at times to be in the grips of terrorism, hatred and outright evil. But Christ entered human existence to reveal God as love

AND to reveal what it means to be authentically human. We are creatures of compassion because we are from the heart of God. We are people of faith who choose to live in the Light. We must look to our young and support their idealism and enable them to live out dreams. Religious life is not lived in a bubble of protection but in the muck and mire of human frailty. The joy that flows from the heart of God must continue to flow from our Franciscan hearts to bring the Light of Love to others.



The pope outlines his expectations and the first resonates with what I just wrote. He expects religious to be HAPPY! People are attracted to religious life when they see that members enjoy their lives. Francis expects us to “wake up the world” because consecrated life is prophecy. We boldly go where others do not. There are friars living bravely in South Sudan, Syria and other hot spots of religious hatred and atrocious crimes. He calls us to “scrutinize the times and interpret events.” He expects us to grow in communion with one another as different institutes but having one goal in common. *I also expect from you what I have asked all the members of the Church: to come out of yourselves and go forth to the existential peripheries.* And finally, Pope Francis asks that all members of religious orders question what it is that God and people today are asking of them.

This papal exhortation about the Year of Consecrated Life ends with his horizons for the year, his hopes that, by every means available, those in religious life commune with all members of the Church and her leaders. So look for many ways you can learn about religious life in the days of 2015. We friars want you

to know about our daily life, our personal calls to religious life, the realities of what it means to live our tradition. We appreciate our history and look realistically at life around us today, and bravely stick one foot into the future as we consider what God may be calling us to do next. Our life is always fascinating, and when we surrender each day to God, are guaranteed a richly rewarding and happy life.

I fell in love with Francis and the friars when I was in elementary school. The love that Francis had for God and the happiness friars express in so many ways are two things that drew me into religious life in the Franciscan tradition. Pope Francis, as a Jesuit with years of experience in the consecrated life, knows what the vowed life can be. It’s easy to understand why he wants the universal Church to appreciate, embrace and encourage all those in religious life. The love of Christ is our center though we have many, many ways to express that love in our own traditions.

I am reminded of profound words in a homily by St. Peter Chrysologus (380-450). *Love is unreasonable and knows no moderation. Love refuses to be consoled when its goal proves impossible, despises all hindrances to the attainment of its object. Love destroys the lover if he cannot obtain what he loves.* That is passion! Peter was addressing the love of God that flows through all of salvation history. Pope Francis is challenging those of us in religious life to rediscover and fire up the passion planted in our hearts when we embraced the Franciscan life. Watch for events here at St. Peter’s and throughout the Church universal during The Year of Consecrated Life.

May our God of Love fill you with peace and all good things in 2015. You remain in our daily prayers of gratitude for your support of our Franciscan ministry at St. Peter’s. Your love allows us to offer a positive model of the consecrated life. Together we show the world what the Church truly can be when we honor and cherish one another, blessed with many ways to live the Gospel. Be blessed and happy in the Lord always!

Friar Bob Hutmacher, ofm

Your Personal Financial Considerations

Retirees face longevity and reinvestment risks. The right strategy can help you enjoy your retirement years. Here are some questions you might want to consider in shaping a financially comfortable retirement.

- 1) What options do I have to maximize Social Security benefits?
- 2) How can I supplement my Social Security and my pension?
- 3) How can I allocate my investments to help reduce risk while maximizing return potential?
- 4) If you could get a strong income in retirement, how long would you like it to last?
- 5) How much of your retirement savings can you afford to lose?
- 6) How important are guarantees to you?
- 7) If you could get a guaranteed income for the rest of your life, how much of that income would you like to guarantee?
- 8) Is income for life that is safe, predictable and guaranteed of prime importance to you?

9) Have you considered strategies to make the most of your “just in case” funds?

10) Is your Single Sum meeting your legacy needs for family and/or your favorite charity?

If you would like a free meeting to discuss any of the above considerations or other ideas/strategies you would like to pursue, call Peter Wells at 847-543-4886.

Leaving a Legacy for St. Peter Church in the Loop

St. Peter Church in the Loop is a sacred space where much healing and spiritual comfort and rejuvenation occur. Would you please consider leaving a legacy in your will or estate plan for St. Peter Church in the Loop? Would you like to leave St. Peter Church say \$10,000 or \$25,000 or \$50,000 or more from your current assets or *create* such an asset for a fraction of the ultimate gift? For ideas on how to create your dream gift to St. Peter Church in the Loop call Peter Wells at 847-543-4886.

APPLICATION FOR YEAR-LONG MEMORIAL CANDLE

(Please print, leaving a space between each word.)

To be lit in honor of:
Living _____ Deceased _____

Requested by:

Date candle is to be lit: Immediately _____ Specific Date _____

The offering for the Memorial Candle is \$150.00. Please enclose a check for the full amount with this form.

APPLICATION FOR PERPETUAL ENROLLMENT IN THE FRIARS LEGION

(Please print, leaving a space between each word.)

Please Enroll:

as a Perpetual Member of the Saint Peter's Friars Legion.

Living _____ Deceased _____

Your Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip Code: