



Rome 07 November 2022

Dearest Holy Father,

We are immensely grateful for this audience that you have granted us on a day after your return from an exhausting visit to Bahrain. We have come to you on the occasion when two of our Institutes of Consecrated life have completed 50 years of humble service to Consecrated life: Claretianum in Rome an Institute *ad instar facultatis* in the Lateran university and the Institute in Madrid affiliated to the Pontifical University of Salamanca.

I have the joy of presenting you a special group of people who are committed to the cause of consecrated life in the Church. First of all, we have with us our beloved Cardinal, his eminence Aquilino Bocos, who was among the pioneer Claretians who founded these Institutes 50 years ago, and his eminence persevered in his efforts and encouraged the founding of two other institutes: ICLA in Manila 25 years ago and Sanyasa in Bangalore 20 years ago. In the recent years, we founded one institute in Bogota in Colombia for America and another in Abuja in Nigeria for Africa. Fr. Fernando Prado, the designated bishop of San Sebastian who has contributed to consecrated life through Claretian publications, is also present here.

Next I present the treasures of the Institute: the students of Claretianum, consecrated women and men, who seek and find the “hidden treasure” in the field. Last year there were 145 students from 48 congregations hailing from 35 countries. In Spirit, the students here represent Claretianum as well as the students of all the six institutes. The fruits of the Institutes are their committed life and qualified mission in the Church in different parts of the world. With them, here are their professors and mentors with the Preside, Fr. Maurizio Bevilaqua of Claretianum and the *Rettore Magnifico* of the Lateran university, Mr. Vincenzo Buonomo. The director of the institute of Madrid, Fr. Antonio Bellella, could not be present due to his ill health. Fr. Fernando Prado represents him. Present here are also the director of ICLA, in Manila, Fr. . Augustinus Supur, Superior of the Institute Giuridicum in Rome, Fr. Jose Felix Valderrabano and some of my Claretian confreres.

The impulse to commit ourselves to the formation of consecrated persons through the Institutes of Consecrated life came from two sources: the spirit of the founder St. Anthony Mary Claret, a lover of consecrated life who valued their evangelizing role in the Church and dedicated time and energy to support them through his preaching and spiritual accompaniment. The second source of inspiration came from the teaching of the second Vatican council on religious life and the call to “return to the sources of all

Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time” (PC 2).

The Institutes also profit from two of the preferred means our Founder used in his missioning. 1) do it with others. All the institutes carry out their service always jointly with experts belonging to many congregations and also laity. 2) Using all means possible. The service of the Institute of Giuridicum in Rome and the publication of different reviews and books started with a view to weave the different means harmoniously in this area, though we have not always succeeded in finding the right balance.

Your Holiness,

We are at a time, consecrated life, like other life-long commitments, is also going through a time of trial. While there are fewer vocations in some continents, there is growth in others, and both realities pose many challenges. In our faith, we know that Consecrated life is a great treasure for the Church, and there are new opportunities in epochs of change and transition, even when we do not clearly see it.

We want to thank you for your wisdom and guidelines enshrined in *Veritatis Gaudium*. We are grateful for the guidance we receive from the Dicastery for culture and education as well as Lateran university which has granted Claretianum the status of an institute *ad instar facultatis*.

The institutes, with the collaboration of other congregations, intend to update their offers with a view to offering integral formation in an interdisciplinary way using the means available today. We hope to find a way with the help of Lateran university and the Dicastery, to coordinate and reinforce the service of all six claretian institutes of consecrated life, journeying together with other centers of ecclesiastical studies.

In the name of all of us, I solicit your guidance and blessings on the all the institutes, the students, professors and all those associated with them.

On our part, Your Holiness, we assure you our prayers and total availability for the mission of the Church.

Fr. Mathew Vattamattam, CMF.
Superior General