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Archdiocese of St. Louis Advent Day of Prayer and Reflection

“Waking Up the World! Pope Francis and the Joy-Filled Missionary Transformation of Religious Life”

Cardinal Rigali Center, St. John Paul II Auditorium

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Pope Francis and Religious, Living and Preaching the Gospel with Joy

- Introduction

- We spoke earlier on this retreat about the importance of joy in the missionary transformation of the Church that Pope Francis is trying to catalyze. Evangelization is about sharing our joy with others. It's about drinking of the joy brimming from the overflowing heart of Jesus who came into the world so that his joy might be ours and our joy complete. Church history, Pope Francis says, is meant to be a “great stream of joy,” flowing from the personal encounter with Christ and our participation in his joy, a joy we can't keep to ourselves but feel impelled by the very nature of the joy we have to share it with others.
- Two weeks ago, in his Letter to Consecrated Men and Women on the eve of beginning the Year for Consecrated Life, Pope Francis wrote, “What in particular do I expect from this Year of grace for consecrated life? That the old saying will always be true: ‘Where there are religious, there is joy.’ We are called to know and show that God is able to fill our hearts to the brim with happiness; that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere; that the authentic fraternity found in our communities increases our joy; and that our total self-giving in service to the Church, to families and young people, to the elderly and the poor, brings us life-long personal fulfillment. None of us should be dour, discontented and dissatisfied, for ‘a gloomy disciple is a disciple of gloom.’ Like everyone else, we have our troubles, our dark nights of the soul, our disappointments and infirmities, our experience of slowing down as we grow older. But in all these things we should be able to discover ‘perfect joy.’ For it is here that we learn to recognize the face of Christ, who became like us in all things, and to rejoice in the knowledge that we are being conformed to him who, out of love of us, did not refuse the sufferings of the cross. We can apply to the consecrated life the words of Benedict XVI that I cited in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: ‘It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but by attraction’ (No. 14). The consecrated life will not flourish as a result of brilliant vocation programs, but because the young people we meet find us attractive, because they see us as men and women who are happy! Similarly, the apostolic effectiveness of consecrated life does not depend on the efficiency of its methods. It depends on the eloquence of your lives, lives which radiate the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full.”
- Consecrated men and women are especially called to live and experience that joy that comes from entering into Jesus' consecration to the Father. On February 27 this year, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life released a letter (dated February 2) to the 900,000 consecrated men and women of the world in anticipation of the upcoming Year of Consecrated Life that began this November 30 and will extend through February 2, 2016. The letter was entitled “Rejoice!” and was based on reflections on the teachings of Pope Francis and a meditation on the theme of joy in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. It provides a high diving board for us to plunge into the missionary transformation of consecrated life so that consecrated men and women will be ever more joyful.
- What I'd like to do in this second conference is a sort of *lectio divina* on many of the insights in this 9,000 Word document. The letter is broken up into three main sections: first, how consecrated men and women are called to “be glad, rejoice and radiate joy,” how they're supposed to experience the joy of the Lord; second, how consecrated men and women are called to “comfort, comfort [God's] people” with the joy that brims from within them; and third, a sort of examination of conscience based on the many questions Pope Francis has asked over the course of his pontificate as well as by comparing one's own consecrated life to that of the Mother of Joy.

- The letter begins with the first words of EG: “The joy of the Gospel fills the heart and lives of all who encounter Jesus. With Jesus Christ joy is constantly born anew.” As Christians we’re called to become a “parable of joy”: “our meeting with Jesus lights up in us its original beauty, the beauty of the face on which the Father’s glory shines (cf. *2Cor* 4:6), radiating happiness.”
- Pope Francis has provocatively called religious to “wake up the world!” in a special way by “prophetic” joy and charity. “Evangelical radicalness is not only for religious: it is demanded of all. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way. It is this witness that I expect of you. Religious should be men and women able to wake the world up.” In every day life, “consecrated men and women live out their fidelity, giving a reason for the joy that lives in them.”
- The Congregation prepared this letter “as a simple tool for examining our lives honestly in the light of the Gospel” in anticipation of the Year of Consecrated life so that “courageous evangelical decisions leading to revitalization, bearing fruits of joy” can be made. Let’s enter into their reflection.
- On the Joy that should characterize consecrated life:
 - This first section begins with Isaiah’s words on joy in Is 66: “Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her all you who mourn over her. For this is what the Lord says: ‘I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem. When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the Lord will be made known to his servants.’”
 - There are 13 different words in the Bible to describe the joy of God, of people and of creation itself:
 - The joy of the nearness of God
 - The delight in what God has created
 - The Psalms show that joy is “the fruit of the benevolent presence of God, the jubilant echo that it gives rise to, as well as a declaration of the great promise that lies in the future for the people.”
 - Joy begins the Good News (Annunciation)
 - Joy is the messianic gift par excellence (Jn 15:11).
 - Paul teaches that joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), that it’s strengthened by trials (Titus 1:6, 2 Cor 6;10).
 - “Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her”
 - End of the third part of the Prophet Isaiah, where God is inviting his people to forget the past because he wants to make a new light shine. God intends to make “Jerusalem a delight and its people a joy” (65:18). Jerusalem will become an exultant mother as her children return. God redeems his people from the infidelity and lack of love that led to sadness and sterility. He gives a heartfelt joy — your heart will rejoice” — radiates through the people.
 - The document quotes Pope Francis saying, “This is the beauty of consecration: it is joy, joy...”
 - Joy is not a “useless ornament,” the Congregation says. “It is a necessity, the foundation of human life. In their daily struggles, every man and woman tries to attain joy and abide in it with the totality of their being. In the world there is often a lack of joy. We are not called to accomplish epic feats or to proclaim high-sounding words, but to give witness to the joy that arises from the certainty of knowing we are loved, from the confidence that we are saved.”
 - Pope Paul VI wrote in *Gaudete in Domino*, a 1975 exhortation on Christian joy that expressing this joy is central to the Christian life: “Beloved brethren and sons and daughters, is it not normal that joy should dwell in us, when our hearts contemplate or rediscover, in faith, the fundamental and simple reasons for joy? God has so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; through His Spirit, God’s presence does not cease to enfold us with His tenderness and to fill us with His life; and we are journeying towards the blessed transfiguration of our life in the path of the resurrection of Jesus. Yes, it would be very strange if this Good News, which evokes the alleluia of the Church, did not give us the look of those who are saved. The joy of being Christian, of being united with the Church, of being “in Christ,” and in the state of grace with God, is truly able to fill the human heart.”

- I'd like to share the longer quotation from Pope Francis that he said to seminarians and novices last July.
 - I wanted to say a word to you and the word is “joy”. Wherever there are consecrated people, seminarians, men and women religious, young people, there is joy, there is always joy! It is the joy of freshness, the joy of following Jesus; the joy that the Holy Spirit gives us, not the joy of the world. There is joy! but — where is joy born? Some will say: joy is born from possessions, so they go in quest of the latest model of the smartphone, the fastest scooter, the showy car.... but I tell you, it truly grieves me to see a priest or a sister with the latest model of a car: but this can't be! It can't be. ... I think that cars are necessary because there is so much work to be done, and also in order to get about... but choose a more humble car! And if you like the beautiful one, only think of all the children who are dying of hunger. That's all! Joy is not born from, does not come from things we possess! Others say it comes from having the most extreme experiences for the thrill of the strongest sensations: young people like to walk on a knife edge, they really like it! Yet others like the trendiest clothes, entertainment in the most fashionable places — but I am not saying that sisters go to those places, I am saying it of young people in general. Yet others say joy comes from success with girls or with boys, and even from switching from one to another or from one to the other. This is insecurity in love, which is not certain: it is “experimenting” with love. And we could go on.... You too are in touch with this situation that you cannot ignore. We know that all this can satisfy some desires or create some emotions, but in the end it is a joy that stays on the surface, it does not sink to the depths, it is not an intimate joy: it is momentary tipsiness that does not make us really happy. Joy is not transitory tipsiness: it is something quite different!
 - True joy does not come from things or from possessing, no! It is born from the encounter, from the relationship with others, it is born from feeling accepted, understood and loved, and from accepting, from understanding and from loving; and this is not because of a passing fancy but because the other is a person. Joy is born from the gratuitousness of an encounter! It is hearing someone say, but not necessarily with words: “You are important to me.” This is beautiful.... And it is these very words that God makes us understand. In calling you God says to you: “You are important to me, I love you, I am counting on you”. Jesus says this to each one of us! Joy is born from that! The joy of the moment in which Jesus looked at me. Understanding and hearing this is the secret of our joy. Feeling loved by God, feeling that for him we are not numbers but people; and hearing him calling us....
 - Goodness spreads. And joy also spreads. Do not be afraid to show the joy of having answered the Lord's call, of having responded to his choice of love and of bearing witness to his Gospel in service to the Church. And joy, true joy, is contagious; it is infectious... it impels one forward. Instead when you meet a seminarian who is excessively serious, too sad, or a novice like this, you think: but something has gone wrong here! The joy of the Lord is lacking, the joy that prompts you to serve, the joy of the encounter with Jesus which brings you to encounter others to proclaim Jesus. This is missing! There is no holiness in sadness, there isn't any! St Teresa — there are many Spaniards here and they know it well — said: “a saint who is sad is a sad saint”. It is not worth much.... When you see a seminarian, a priest, a sister or a novice with a long face, gloomy, who seems to have thrown a soaking wet blanket over their life, one of those heavy blankets... which pulls one down.... Something has gone wrong! But please: never any sisters, never any priests with faces like “chilis pickled in vinegar” — never! The joy that comes from Jesus.
 - Think about this: when a priest — I say a priest, but also a seminarian — when a priest or a sister lacks joy he or she is sad; you might think: “but this is a psychological problem”. No. It is true: that may be, that may be so, yes, it might. It might happen, some, poor things, fall sick.... It might be so. However in general it is not a psychological problem. Is it a problem of dissatisfaction? Well, yes! But what is at the heart of this lack of joy? It is a matter of celibacy. I will explain to you. You, seminarians, sisters, consecrate your love to Jesus, a great love. Your heart is for Jesus and this leads us to make the vow of chastity, the vow of

celibacy. However the vow of chastity and the vow of celibacy do not end at the moment the vow is taken, they endure.... A journey that matures, that develops towards pastoral fatherhood, towards pastoral motherhood, and when a priest is not a father to his community, when a sister is not a mother to all those with whom she works, he or she becomes sad. This is the problem. For this reason I say to you: the root of sadness in pastoral life is precisely in the absence of fatherhood or motherhood that comes from living this consecration unsatisfactorily which on the contrary must lead us to fertility. It is impossible to imagine a priest or a sister who are not fertile: this is not Catholic! This is not Catholic! This is the beauty of consecration: it is joy, joy. ... You find examples like this, many sisters, many priests who are joyful, it is because they are fertile, they give life, life, life.... They give this life because they find it in Jesus! In the joy of Jesus! Joy, no sadness, pastoral fecundity.

- Memory and the word of God helps us to grow in joy
 - Our short memories and flimsy experiences often prevent us from searching for the ‘lands of joy’ where we can relish God’s reflection. We have a thousand reasons for remaining in joy. Its roots are nourished by listening with faith and perseverance to the Word of God.
- Memories of our vocation ought of with joy.
 - July 6: “In calling you God says to you: ‘You are important to me, I love you, I am counting on you’. Jesus says this to each one of us! Joy is born from that! The joy of the moment in which Jesus looked at me. Understanding and hearing this is the secret of our joy. Feeling loved by God, feeling that for him we are not numbers but people; and we know that it is he who is calling us.”
 - May 8, 2013 to Religious Superiors: “Jesus, at the Last Supper, turns to the Apostles with these words: *You did not choose me, but I chose you* (Jn 15:16). They remind us all, not only those of us who are priests, that vocation is always an initiative of God. It is Christ who called you to follow him in the consecrated life and this means continuously making an ‘exodus’ from yourselves in order to center your life on Christ and on his Gospel, on the will of God, laying aside your own plans, in order to say with St Paul: *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me* (Gal 2:20).
 - The Pope invites us on a pilgrimage in reverse, a pathway of knowledge to discover ourselves on the streets of Palestine or near the boat of the humble fisherman of Galilee. He invites us to contemplate the beginnings of a journey or rather, of an event initiated by Christ, when the nets were left on the lake shore, the tax collector’s desk by the side of the road, the ambitions of the zealot among discarded plans. He invites us to remain for a long time, on an interior pilgrimage, before the dawn, when, in a warm environment of friendly relationships, the intellect is led to open itself to mystery, the decision is made that it is good to set out to follow this Master who alone has *the words of eternal life* (cf. Jn 6:68). He invites us to make our whole “life a pilgrimage of loving transformation” (Aug 22 to Carmelites)
 - It is about being reborn through vocation. EG 3: “I invite all Christians [...] at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ today, at least to an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day.” The word ‘vocation’ indicates a free gift, like a reservoir of life that never ceases renewing humanity and the Church in the depths of their being.
 - The Pope asks us to re-read our own personal story and to scrutinise it in the light of God’s loving gaze, because if a vocation is always his initiative, it is up to us freely to accept the divine-human economy as a relationship of life in *agape*, the path of discipleship, the “beacon on the Church’s journey”
 - Consecrated life is a call to incarnate the Good News, to *follow Christ*, the crucified and risen one, to take on “Jesus’s way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brothers and sisters” (Nov 1 2013 Angelus).
 - In practical terms, it is a call to take up his way of life, to adopt his interior attitude, to allow oneself to be invaded by his Spirit, to absorb his surprising logic and his scale of values, to share in his risks and his hopes. “Be guided by the humble yet joyful certainty of those who

have been found, touched and transformed by the Truth who is Christ, ever to be proclaimed” (WYD to Bishops, Priests, Religious and Seminarians, July 27, 2013).

- We can't be afraid of God's tenderness, which fills us with joy
 - July 7: Every Christian, and especially you and I, we are called to be bearers of this message of hope giving serenity and joy, God's consolation, his tenderness towards all. But if we first experience the joy of being consoled by him, of being loved by him, then we can bring that joy to others. [...] I have occasionally met consecrated persons who are afraid of the consolations of God. They were tormented, because they were afraid of this divine tenderness. But be not afraid. Do not be afraid, because the Lord is the Lord of consolation, the Lord of tenderness. The Lord is a Father and he says that he will be for us like a mother with her baby, with a mother's tenderness. Do not be afraid of the consolations of the Lord.
- To be joyful we must follow the Lord on an exodus from self-absorption
 - Meeting the Lord gets us moving, urges us to leave aside self-absorption (EG 265).
 - A relationship with the Lord is not static, nor is it focused on self. “Because when we put Christ at the center of our life, we ourselves don't become the center! The more that you unite yourself to Christ and he becomes the center of your life, the more he leads you out of yourself, leads you from making yourself the center and opens you to others” (Sept 27 to catechists) “We are not at the center; we are, so to speak, ‘relocated’. We are at the service of Christ and of the Church.” (July 31, 2013 with Jesuits)
 - “Augustine did not stop, he did not give up, he did not withdraw into himself like those who have already arrived, but continued his search. *The restlessness of seeking the truth*, of seeking God, became restlessness to know him ever better and to come out of himself to make others know him. It was precisely the restlessness of love” (To Augustinians, Aug 28, 2013)
 - “Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption” (EG 8)
 - When we are called, we are called out of ourselves. ... Perhaps it is not unwarranted to say that the crisis of consecrated life results from the inability to recognize such a profound call, even in those who are already living this vocation. We are experiencing a crisis of fidelity, understood as a conscious adherence to a call that is a pathway, a journey from its mysterious beginnings to its mysterious end. Perhaps we are also in a crisis of humanization. We are experiencing the limitations of complete consistency, wounded by our incapacity to lead our lives as an integrated vocation and as a faithful journey. This daily journey, both personal and communal, marked by discontent and a bitterness that encloses us in remorse, and almost in a permanent longing for unexplored paths and unfulfilled dreams, becomes a lonely road. Our call to live in relationship, in the fulfillment of love, can be transformed into an uninhabited wilderness. At every age we are invited to revisit the deep center of our personal life, where the motivation of our life with the Master, as disciples of the Master, finds its meaning and truth. Faithfulness is the awareness of a love that points us towards the “Thou” of God and towards every other person, in a constant and dynamic way when we experience within ourselves the life of the Risen One. Faithful discipleship is grace and love in action; it is the practice of sacrificial charity.
 - To persevere all the way to Golgotha, to experience the lacerations of doubts and denial, to rejoice in the marvel and wonder of the Paschal event, up to the manifestation of Pentecost and the evangelization of the peoples, these are milestones of joyful fidelity because they are about self-emptying, experienced throughout life, even in the sign of martyrdom, and also sharing in the life of the risen Christ.
 - The interior pilgrimage begins with the journey of prayer. “The first thing for a disciple is to be with the Master, to listen to him and to learn from him. This is always true, and it is true at every moment of our lives. [...] If the warmth of God, of his love, of his tenderness is not in our own hearts, then how can we, who are poor sinners, warm the heart of others” (Catechists, Sept 27). This is a life-long journey, as in the humility of prayer the Holy Spirit convinces us of the Lordship of Christ within us. Being with Jesus in prayer shapes a

contemplative approach to history which knows how to see and hear the presence of the Spirit everywhere and, in a special way, how to discern the Spirit's presence in order to live in time as God's time.

- Fidelity in discipleship occurs through and is demonstrated by the experience of community, a theological reality in which we are called to support each other in our joyful 'yes' to the Gospel.
- I'd like to finish this section with an extended quotation from Blessed Paul VI in *Gaudete in Domino*, which helps us to ponder the joy of Jesus and enter into that joy:
 - No one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord. The great joy announced by the angel on Christmas night is truly for all the people, both for the people of Israel then anxiously awaiting a Savior, and for the numberless people made up of all those who, in time to come, would receive its message and strive to live by it. The Blessed Virgin Mary was the first to have received its announcement, from the angel Gabriel, and her *Magnificat* was already the exultant hymn of all the humble. Whenever we say the rosary, the joyful mysteries thus place us once more before the inexpressible event which is the center and summit of history: the coming on earth of Emmanuel, God with us. John the Baptist, whose mission is to point Him out to the expectation of Israel, had himself leapt for joy, in His presence, in the womb of his mother. When Jesus begins His ministry, John "rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice."
 - Let us now ... contemplate the person of Jesus during His earthly life. In His humanity He had experienced our joys. He has manifestly known, appreciated, and celebrated a whole range of human joys, those simple daily joys within the reach of everyone. The depth of His interior life did not blunt His concrete attitude or His sensitivity. He admires the birds of heaven, the lilies of the field. He immediately grasps God's attitude towards creation at the dawn of history. He willingly extols the joy of the sower and the harvester, the joy of the man who finds a hidden treasure, the joy of the shepherd who recovers his sheep or of the woman who finds her lost coin, the joy of those invited to the feast, the joy of a marriage celebration, the joy of the father who embraces his son returning from a prodigal life, and the joy of the woman who has just brought her child into the world. For Jesus, these joys are real because for Him they are the signs of the spiritual joys of the kingdom of God: the joy of people who enter this kingdom return there or work there, the joy of the Father who welcomes them. And for His part Jesus Himself manifests His satisfaction and His tenderness when He meets children wishing to approach Him, a rich young man who is faithful and wants to do more, friends who open their home to Him, like Martha, Mary and Lazarus. His happiness is above all to see the Word accepted, the possessed delivered, a sinful woman or a publican like Zacchaeus converted, a widow taking from her poverty and giving. He even exults with joy when He states that the little ones have the revelation of the kingdom which remains hidden from the wise and able.(20) Yes, because Christ was "a man like us in all things but sin," He accepted and experienced affective and spiritual joys, as a gift of God. And He did not rest until "to the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation...and to those in sorrow, joy." The Gospel of Saint Luke particularly gives witness to this seed of joy. The miracles of Jesus and His words of pardon are so many signs of divine goodness: all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by Him, and gave glory to God.(23) For the Christian as for Jesus, it is a question of living, in thanksgiving to the Father, the human joys, that the Creator gives him.
 - But it is necessary here below to understand properly the secret of the unfathomable joy which dwells in Jesus and which is special to Him. It is especially the Gospel of Saint John that lifts the veil, by giving us the intimate words of the Son of God made man. If Jesus radiates such peace, such assurance, such happiness, such availability, it is by reason of the inexpressible love by which He knows that He is loved by His Father. When He is baptized on the banks of the Jordan, this love, which is present from the first moment of His Incarnation, is manifested: "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on you." This certitude is inseparable from the consciousness of Jesus. It is a presence which never leaves

Him all alone. It is an intimate knowledge which fills Him: "...the Father knows me and I know the Father." It is an unceasing and total exchange: "All I have is yours and all you have is mine." The Father has given the Son the power to judge, the power to dispose of life. It is a mutual indwelling: "...I am in the Father and the Father in me..." In return, the Son gives the Father immeasurable love: "...I love the Father.... I am doing exactly what the Father told me." He always does what is pleasing to His Father: it is His food and drink. His availability goes even to the gift of His human life; His confidence goes even to the certitude of taking it up again: "The Father loves me because I lay down my life in order to take it up again." In this sense He rejoices to go to the Father. For Jesus it is not a question of a passing awareness. It is the reverberation in His human consciousness of the love that He has always known as God in the bosom of the Father: "...you loved me before the foundation of the world." Here there is an uncommunicable relationship of love which is identified with His existence as the Son and which is the secret of the life of the Trinity: the Father is seen here as the one, who gives Himself to the Son, without reserve and without ceasing, in a burst of joyful generosity, and the Son is seen as He who gives Himself in the same way to the Father, in a burst of joyful gratitude, in the Holy Spirit.

- And the disciples and all those who believe in Christ are called to share this joy. Jesus wishes them to have in themselves His joy in its fullness. "I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them."
- This joy of living in God's love begins here below. It is the joy of the kingdom of God. But it is granted on a steep road which requires a total confidence in the Father and in the Son, and a preference given to the kingdom. The message of Jesus promises above all joy—**this demanding joy**; and does it not begin with the beatitudes? "How happy are you who are poor: yours is the kingdom of God. Happy you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied. Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh."
- In a mysterious way, Christ Himself accepts death at the hands of the wicked and death on the cross, in order to eradicate from man's heart the sins of self-sufficiency and to manifest to the Father a complete filial obedience. But the Father has not allowed death to keep Him in its power. The resurrection of Jesus is the seal placed by the Father on the value of His Son's sacrifice: it is the proof of the Father's fidelity, according to the desire expressed by Jesus before He enters into His passion: "Father...glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you." Henceforth, Jesus is living forever in the glory of the Father, and this is why the disciples were confirmed in an ineradicable joy when they saw the Lord on Easter evening.
- It remains that, here below, the joy of the kingdom brought to realization can only spring from the simultaneous celebration of the death and resurrection of the Lord. This is the paradox of the Christian condition which sheds particular light on that of the human condition: neither trials nor sufferings have been eliminated from this world, but they take on a new meaning in the certainty of sharing in the redemption wrought by the Lord and of sharing in His glory. This is why the Christian, though subject to the difficulties of human life, is not reduced to groping for the way; nor does he see in death the end of his hopes. As in fact the prophet foretold: "The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone. You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase...." The Easter Exultet sings of a mystery accomplished beyond the hopes of the prophets: in the joyful announcement of the resurrection, even man's suffering finds itself transformed, while the fullness of joy springs from the victory of the Crucified, from His pierced heart and His glorified body. This victory enlightens the darker souls. ... Here below this joy will always include to a certain extent the painful trial of a woman in travail and a certain apparent abandonment, like that of the orphan: tears and lamentation, while the world parades its gloating satisfaction. But the disciples' sadness, which is according to God and not according to the world, will be promptly changed into a spiritual joy that no one will be able to take away from them.
- Such is the situation of Christian existence, and very particularly of the apostolic life. This

life, being animated by a zealous love of the Lord and His brethren, is necessarily exercised under the standard of the paschal sacrifice, going through love to death, and through death to life and love. Hence the condition of the Christian, and above all of the apostle, who must become the "model of the flock" and associate himself freely with the Redeemer's passion. The apostolic life thus corresponds to what was described in the Gospel as the law of Christian blessedness, in continuity with the destiny of the prophets: "Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you."(45)

- Comforting God's people with joy.
 - The second part of Isaiah (chapters 40-55) focused on the comforting message Isaiah preached to those in Babylon about their incoming liberation and return to Jerusalem. It's language that should be interpreted in the context of love, God's spousal, merciful love calling his bride home along rediscovered faithful pathways.
 - It's a joy to bring this comfort to others. "People today certainly need words, but most of all they need us to bear witness to the mercy and tenderness of the Lord which warms the heart, rekindles hope, and attracts people towards the good. What a joy it is to bring God's consolation to others!" (July 7 to seminarians and novices).
 - Consecrated men and women have the mission to "discover the Lord who comforts us like a mother, and to comfort the people of God" with the consolation and mercy of God (July 6). This is a work of the Holy Spirit with which we collaborate.
 - In a world of distrust, discouragement and depression, in a culture in which men and women are enveloped by fragility and weakness, individualism and self-interest, we are asked to introduce belief in the possibility of true happiness, in the feasibility of hope that does not depend solely on talent, superiority or knowledge, but on God. ... The men and women of our time are waiting for words of consolation, the availability of forgiveness and true joy. Consecrated men and women, signs of the fullness of humanity, are called to bring to everyone the embrace of God, who bends with a mother's tenderness over us.
 - Blessed Paul VI analyzed the signs of the times and diagnosed the genesis of the lack of joy that was so present 40 years ago in many ways and remains ever present today. In *Gaudete in Domino*, he said:
 - How can we ignore the additional fact that joy is always imperfect, fragile and threatened? By a strange paradox, the consciousness of that which, beyond all passing pleasure, would constitute true happiness, also includes the certainty that there is no perfect happiness. ... This paradox, and this difficulty in attaining joy, seem to us particularly acute today. This is the reason for our message. Technological society has succeeded in multiplying the opportunities for pleasure, but it has great difficulty in generating joy. For joy comes from another source. It is spiritual. Money, comfort, hygiene and material security are often not lacking; and yet boredom, depression and sadness unhappily remain the lot of many. These feelings sometimes go as far as anguish and despair, which apparent carefreeness, the frenzies of present good fortune and artificial paradises cannot assuage. Do people perhaps feel helpless to dominate industrial progress, to plan society in a human way? Does the future perhaps seem too uncertain, human life too threatened? Or is it not perhaps a matter of loneliness, of an unsatisfied thirst for love and for someone's presence, of an ill-defined emptiness? On the contrary, in many regions and sometimes in our midst, the sum of physical and moral sufferings weighs heavily: so many starving people, so many victims of fruitless combats, so many people torn from their homes! These miseries are perhaps not deeper than those of the past but they have taken on a worldwide dimension. They are better known, reported by the mass media—at least as much as the events of good fortune—and they overwhelm people's minds. Often there seems to be no adequate human solution to them. ...
 - The problem seems to be, above all, of the spiritual order. It is man—in his soul—who finds himself without the means to take on himself the sufferings and miseries of our time. These sufferings and miseries crush him all the more to the extent that the meaning of life escapes

him, that he is no longer sure of himself or of his transcendent calling and destiny. He has desacralized the universe and now he is desacralizing humanity; he has at times cut the vital link that joined him to God. Hope, and the value of individuals, are no longer sufficiently ensured.

- We are called to share Christ's joy in Community
 - Community is the first and most believable gospel that we can preach. We are asked to humanize our community.
 - Francis to Poor Clares (Aug 4): "Build friendship between yourselves, family life, love among you. May the monastery not be a Purgatory but a family. There are and there will be problems but like in a family, with love, search for a solution with love; do not destroy this to resolve that; do not enter competitions. Build community life, because in the life of a community it is this way, like a family, and it is the very Holy Spirit who is in the middle of the community. [...] And community life always with a big heart. Let things go, do not brag, be patient with everything, smile from the heart. And a sign of this is joy."
 - Joy is confirmed in the experience of community, that theological space where each one is responsible for their fidelity to the Gospel and for the growth of all. When a community is fed by the same Body and Blood of Jesus, it gathers around the Son of God, to share the journey of faith, guided by the Word. It becomes one with him, together in communion, experiencing the gift of love and festive celebration in freedom and joy, full of courage.
 - "A joyless community is one that is dying out. [...] A community rich in joy is a genuine gift from above to brothers and sisters who know how to ask for it and to accept one another, committing themselves to community life, trusting in the action of the Spirit (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, Feb 2, 1994).
 - "It is a communion that is born of faith" that makes "the Church, in her most profound truth, communion with God, intimacy with God, a communion of love with Christ and with the Father in the Holy Spirit, which extends to brotherly communion" (Oct 30, 2013 audience)
- We will find joy in Closeness and Companionship
 - We are called to undertake an exodus out of our own selves, setting out on a path of adoration and service.
 - "Be servants of communion and of the culture of encounter! I would like you to be almost obsessed about this" (WYD July 27, 2013)
 - "Joy is born from the gratuitousness of an encounter! ...And the joy of the encounter with him and with his call does not lead to shutting oneself in but to opening oneself; it leads to service in the Church. St Thomas said: *bonum est diffusivum sui*. Good spreads. And joy also spreads. Do not be afraid to show the joy of having answered the Lord's call, of having responded to his choice of love and of bearing witness to his Gospel in service to the Church. And joy, true joy, is contagious; it is infectious... it impels one forward" (July 6).
 - Faced with this contagious witness of joy, serenity, fruitfulness, the testimony of tenderness and love, humble charity, without arrogance, many people feel the need to "come and see" (Oct 1, 2013 homily)
 - Entrusting to us the task of *waking up the world* (Nov 27), the Pope urges consecrated men and women to approach the stories of the men and women of today in the light of two pastoral categories that have their roots in the newness of the Gospel: *closeness and encounter*, two ways through which God himself is revealed in history culminating in the Incarnation. Jesus drew close in Emmaus and we need to welcome others' joys and sorrows in daily companionship, warming their hearts, tenderly caring for the tired and the weak, as spiritual fathers and mothers.
- The Holy restlessness of love
 - The Pope invites us *not to privatize love*, but with the restlessness of the seeker: "Tirelessly seeking the good of the other, of the beloved" (Aug 28 to Augustinians)

- We are called now, as the Church, to go outside in order to arrive at the margins, geographic, urban and existential – the margins of the mystery of sin, pain, injustice and misery –, to the hidden places of the soul where each person experiences the joys and sufferings of life (May 18, 2013, Pentecost Vigil)
 - To experience in one’s own life the beatitude of the poor means to be a sign that the anguish of loneliness and limitation has been conquered by the joy of the person who is indeed free in Christ and has learned how to love.
 - During his pastoral visit to Assisi, Pope Francis was asked what the Church must strip away. And he replied: “[Strip away] every action that is not for God, is not of God; strip away the fear of opening the doors and going out to encounter all, especially the poorest of the poor, the needy, the remote, without waiting. Certainly not to get lost in the shipwreck of the world, but to bear with courage the light of Christ, the light of the Gospel, even in the darkness, where one can’t see, where one might stumble. Strip away the seeming assurance structures give, which, though certainly necessary and important, should never obscure the one true strength it carries within: God. He is our strength!”
 - Besides the challenge of the beatitude of the poor, the Pope invites us to visit the frontiers of thought and culture, to promote dialogue, even at the intellectual level, to give reasons for hope on the basis of ethical and spiritual criteria, questioning ourselves about what is good. An authentic cultural process “promotes an integral humanism and the culture of encounter and relationship: this is the Christian way of promoting the common good, the joy of living. Here, faith and reason unite, the religious dimension and the various aspects of human culture – art, science, labour, literature...” (July 27, Brazilian leaders)
- Questions for Reflection
 - We are invited to promote a generative, not simply administrative, dynamic to embrace the spiritual events present in our communities and in the world, movements and grace that the Spirit works in each individual person, viewed as a person.
 - Pope Francis invites us to a wisdom that should be demonstrated by flexible consistency, the ability of consecrated people to respond in accord with the Gospel, to act and to choose in accord with the Gospel, without losing ourselves among the different spheres of life, language or relationships, maintaining an awareness of responsibility, of the networks that bind us together, of the finitude of our limits, of the infinite number of ways in which life is expressed.
 - A missionary heart is a heart that has known the joy of Christ’s salvation and shares it as consolation “even if in the process, its shoes get soiled by the mud of the street” (EG 45).
 - Questions
 - Where is joy born? (July 6)
 - Do you have a heart that desires something great, or a heart that has been lulled to sleep by things? (Aug 28)
 - How can I break free from this “culture of the temporary”? (July 6)
 - Do we want consistent young people? Are we consistent? (July 6)
 - Am I anxious for God, anxious to proclaim him, to make him known? Or do I allow that spiritual worldliness to attract me which impels people to do everything for love of themselves? (Aug 28)
 - Have I, so to speak, made myself ‘comfortable’ in my Christian life, in my priestly life, in my religious life, and also in my community life? Or do I retain the force of restlessness for God, for his Word that makes me “step out” of myself towards others?(Aug 28)
 - Do we believe in love for God and for others? Or are we unconcerned by this? Not in an abstract manner, not only in words, but the real brother we come across, the sister who is beside us! (Aug 28)
 - Do we know how to wait for God’s tomorrow? Or do we want it today? (Nov 21 with Camaldolese Nuns)

- Do we also have great vision and impetus? Are we also daring? Do our dreams fly high? Does zeal consume us (cf. *Ps* 68:10)? Or are we mediocre and satisfied with our “made in the lab” apostolic programs? (July 31 with Jesuits)
- Mother of Joy
 - Rejoice, full of grace. “The greeting of the angel to Mary is an invitation to joy, to a deep joy, announcing the end of sadness” (Dec 19 Audience)
 - With Mary joy expands. The Son she carries in her womb is the God of joy, of contagious, engaging delight.
 - Mary throws open the doors of her heart and runs to Elizabeth. She went *in great haste* (*Lk* 1:39) to bring the happy news to the world, to bring all the uncontainable joy she held in her womb: Jesus, the Lord.
 - The Lord’s handmaid ran *in great haste* — not just speed but with diligence and enthusiasm — to become the servant of all people
 - In Mary the Church is all who journey together: in the love of those who go out to the most fragile; in the hope of those who know that they will be accompanied in their going out and in the faith of those who have a special gift to share.
 - Paul VI gave us a beautiful section on our Lady’s joy: “She, accepting the announcement from on high, the Servant of the Lord, Spouse of the Spirit and Mother of the Eternal Son, manifests her joy before her cousin Elizabeth who celebrates her faith: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...henceforth all generations will call me blessed.’ She has grasped, better than all other creatures, that God accomplishes wonderful things: His name is holy, He shows His mercy, He raises up the humble, He is faithful to His promises. Not that the apparent course of her life in any way departs from the ordinary, but she meditates on the least signs of God, pondering them in her heart. Not that she is in any way spared sufferings: she stands, the mother of sorrows, at the foot of the cross, associated in an eminent way with the sacrifice of the innocent Servant. But she is also open in an unlimited degree to the joy of the resurrection; and she is also taken up, body and soul, into the glory of heaven. The first of the redeemed, immaculate from the moment of her conception, the incomparable dwelling-place of the Spirit, the pure abode of the Redeemer of mankind, she is at the same time the beloved Daughter of God and, in Christ, the Mother of all. She is the perfect model of the Church both on earth and in glory. What a marvelous echo the prophetic words about the new Jerusalem find in her wonderful existence as the Virgin of Israel: ‘I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garment of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.’ With Christ, she sums up in herself all joys; she lives the perfect joy promised to the Church: *Mater plena sanctae laetitiae*. And it is with good reason that her children on earth, turning to her who is the mother of hope and of grace, invoke her as the cause of their joy: *Causa nostrae laetitiae*”
 - Prayer from EG 288: “Star of the new evangelization, help us to bear radiant witness to communion, service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love of the poor, that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth, illuminating even the fringes of the world. Mother of the living Gospel, wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones, Pray for us. Amen. Alleluia!”