



The Holy See

FIRST VESPERS OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

*Saint Peter's Basilica
Saturday, 1st February 2025*

[Multimedia]

“See... I have come to do your will, O God” (*Heb* 10:7). With these words, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews describes Jesus’ complete obedience to the Father’s plan. We read those words on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the World Day for Consecrated Life, in this Jubilee of Hope and in a liturgical setting marked by the symbolism of light. All of you, dear sisters and brothers who have chosen the path of the evangelical counsels, have devoted yourselves, like a “Bride before her Spouse... surrounded by his light” (SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata, 15); you have devoted yourselves to that same luminous plan of the Father, which goes back to the origins of the world. It will be fully accomplished at the end of time, but even now it is made visible through “the marvels wrought by God in the frail humanity of those who are called” (*ibid.*, 20). Let us reflect, then, on how, through the vows of *poverty*, *chastity* and *obedience* that you have professed, you can bring its light to the women and men of our time.

First: by the *light of your poverty*, which is rooted in the very life of God, in the eternal and total mutual gift of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (*ibid.*, 21). By the practice of poverty, consecrated persons, by their free and generous use of all things, become bearers of blessing for them. They manifest the goodness of those things in the order of love, rejecting everything that can obscure their beauty – selfishness, greed, dependence, violent use and misuse for the purpose of death and destruction – and embracing instead all that can highlight that beauty: simplicity, generosity, sharing and solidarity. And Paul says: “All [things] belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God” (*1 Cor* 3:22-23). This is *poverty*.

Second, by the *light of your chastity*. This too has its origin in the Trinity and is “a reflection of the infinite love which links the three divine Persons” (*Vita Consecrata*, 21). The profession of this vow, renouncing conjugal love and following the path of continence, reaffirms the absolute primacy of God’s love, to be received with an undivided and spousal heart (cf. *1 Cor* 7:32-36), and points to it as the source and model of every other love. We know that we are living in a world often marked by distorted forms of affectivity, in which the principle of pleasure - that principle - drives people to seek in others the satisfaction of their own needs rather than the joy born of a fruitful encounter. It is true. In relationships this gives rise to superficial and unstable attitudes, selfishness and hedonism, immaturity and moral irresponsibility. The chosen spouse of a lifetime is replaced by the “partner” of the moment, while children freely accepted as a gift are replaced by those demanded as a “right” or eliminated as “unwanted”.

Sisters, brothers, in light of this situation, and the “growing need for inner honesty in human relationships” (*Vita Consecrata*, 88) and greater human bonds between individuals and communities, consecrated chastity shows us and points out to the men and women of the twenty-first century a way to heal the malady of isolation through the exercise of a free and liberating way of loving. A way of loving that accepts and respects everyone, while coercing or rejecting no one. What a balm it is for the soul to encounter religious women and men capable of a mature and joyful relationality of this kind! They are a reflection of God’s own love (cf. *Lk* 2:30-32). To this end, however, it is important that our communities provide for the spiritual and affective growth of their members, already during initial formation as well as in ongoing formation. In this way, chastity can truly reveal the beauty of a self-giving love, and avoid such harmful phenomena as the souring of the heart or questionable choices that are a symptom of unhappiness, dissatisfaction, and lead at times, in more fragile individuals, to living “double lives”. Daily there is a battle against the temptation of a double life. It is every day.

Third, by the *light of your obedience*. The reading we have heard also speaks of this, since it shows us, in the relationship between Jesus and the Father, the “liberating beauty of a dependence which is filial and non-servile, marked by a deep sense of responsibility and animated by mutual trust” (*Vita Consecrata*, 21). It is precisely in the light of God’s word that your obedience becomes a gift and a response of love, and a sign for our society. Today we tend to talk much but listen little, in our families, our workplaces and especially on social networks, where we can exchange floods of words and images without really encountering others, since we do not truly interact with them. This is something interesting. Many times, in everyday dialogue, before one finishes speaking, an answer already comes out because the other does not listen. We need to listen before responding. Welcome the other person’s word as a message, as a treasure, even as a help for me. Consecrated obedience can act as an antidote to this isolated individualism, for it promotes an alternative model of relationship marked by active listening, where “speaking” and “listening” are followed by the concreteness of “acting”, even at the cost of setting aside our own tastes, plans and preferences. Only in this way, in fact, can a person fully experience the joy of gift, overcoming loneliness and discovering the meaning of his or her existence in God’s greater

plan.

I would like to conclude by mentioning something further. Nowadays in consecrated life there is much talk about “*returning to the origins*”. But not a return to the origin as in going back to a museum, no. A return to the very origin of our life. The word of God that we have heard reminds us that the first and most important “return to the origins” in every consecration and for every one of us, is the return to Christ and to his “yes” to the Father. It reminds us that renewal, even before meetings and “round tables” – which must be done, they are useful – takes place in front of the tabernacle, in adoration. Sisters, brothers, we have somewhat lost the sense of adoration. We are too practical, we want to do things, but...adore. Adore. There must be the capacity for adoration in silence. And in this way we come to appreciate our Founders above all as women and men of deep faith, repeating with them, in prayer and in oblation: “See... I have come to do your will, O God” (*Heb 10:7*).

Thank you very much for your witness. It is a leaven in the Church. Thank you.