

The Church as Midwife of Religious Vocation

A religious vocation is a gift of God, and God's gifts are infinite. Vocation to the religious life is greatly the work of the Holy Spirit, who bestows divine gifts to the Church. However, it is difficult to define the nature of the future of religious life in Canada. Since God's gifts attend to the deepest yearnings of humanity, it is certain that the future will fulfill the dreams of both religious communities and the Church in Canada.

The Sacred Duty of the Church

At this particular time in our history, the Church cannot remain indifferent to the future of religious communities. The dwindling of new religious vocations is a 'sign of the times' for the Church in Canada, requiring attentiveness, understanding, discernment and action in the light of faith.

The Church has a sacred duty of solidarity with religious communities, and of serving as a midwife for the birthing of religious vocations. This summons the Church to foster a culture celebrating consecrated life, empowering the faithful to respond to God's invitation as religious. The future of religious life in Canada is in the hands of the Lord, who never fails to send laborers to his harvest. (Matthew 9:37-38)

Consecrated Life, a Gift to the Church

Vita Consecrata (VC), the 1996 post-synod Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, speaks of the consecrated life as an essential element of the life of the Church, and affirms it as a gift to the Church, which must nurture vocations to this way of life.

In light of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, "it has been recognized that the profession of the evangelical counsels indisputably belongs to the life and holiness of the Church. This means that the consecrated life, present in the Church from the beginning, can never fail to be one of her essential and characteristic elements, for it expresses her very nature." (VC no. 29)

"The whole Church finds in her hands this great gift and gratefully devotes herself to promoting it with respect, with prayer and with the explicit invitation to accept it. It is important that bishops, priests and deacons, convinced of the evangelical [excellence] of this kind of life, should strive to discover and encourage the seeds of vocation through preaching, discernment and wise spiritual guidance." (VC no. 105)

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