



## Readings for Participants

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## PREPARING FOR EACH SESSION

Before each session of Walk with Wisdom, please prepare yourself by reading the materials outlined in the following pages. While we have included the text of everything here, we encourage you to go to the source material as well for greater context.

Bring this document to each session along with a journal and pen.

### **You can download the following materials from the websites listed below.**

Medaille, Jean-Pierre, S.J. "Maxims of the Little Institute." 1650. [url from WwW website].

Pope Francis. "Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World." *Vatican Press*. 2013.

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)

Carballo, José Rodríguez, O.F.M. "Rejoice! A letter to consecrated men and women." *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. 2014.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccsclife\\_doc\\_20140202\\_rallegratevi-lettera-consacrati\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc_con_ccsclife_doc_20140202_rallegratevi-lettera-consacrati_en.html).

Pope Francis. "Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to All Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life." *Vatican Press*. 2014.

[https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_lettera-ap\\_20141121\\_lettera-consacrati.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20141121_lettera-consacrati.html).

### **We strongly encourage you to purchase this book.**

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.

[Purchase online](#)

## MODULE 1: LIVING CHARISM

### Video:

- Introduction to Walk with Wisdom

### Readings:

- Introduction to Walk with Wisdom
- Maxims 35
- *Rejoice!* Section 5 “Found, Touched, Transformed”
- *Evangelii Gaudium/The Joy of the Gospel*, paragraphs 1-3, 8, 11-12, 24-25, 111-114
- *The Prophetic Imagination*, pages 1-4, 14-17

## MAXIMS

**35** Convince yourself that wherever you are and whatever you do God sees you clearly and distinctly; do not do in his presence what you would not dare do in the presence of a person you should esteem.

EXCERPT FROM *REJOICE!* LETTER BY JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ CARBALLO, O.F.M.

### **Found, touched, transformed**

5. The Pope asks us to re-read our own personal story and to scrutinize it in the light of God’s loving gaze, because if a vocation is always his initiative, it is up to us to freely accept the divine-human economy as a relationship of life in *agape*, the path of discipleship, the “beacon on the Church’s journey”.<sup>21</sup> Life in the spirit is never completed, but is always open to mystery, as we discern in order to know the Lord and to perceive reality beginning with him. When God calls us he lets us enter into his rest and invites us to repose in him, in a continuous process of loving understanding. We hear the Word *you are worried and upset about many things* (Lk 10:41).

On the path of love we go forward through rebirth: the old creation is born anew. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation* (2 Cor 5:17). Pope Francis points out the name of this rebirth. “This path has a name and a face: the face of Jesus Christ. He teaches us to become holy. In the Gospel he shows us the way, the way of the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:1-12). This is the life of the Saints, people who for love of God did not place conditions on him during their life”. [22]

Consecrated life is a call to incarnate the Good News, to the following of Christ, the crucified and risen one, to take on Jesus’ way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brothers and sisters”. [23] 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”. [24]

Remaining in Christ allows us to grasp the presence of the Mystery which lives in us and expands our hearts to the measure of his Son’s heart. Those who remain in his love, like the branch attached to the vine (cf. Jn 15:1-8), enter into intimacy with Christ and bear fruit. “Remain in Jesus! This means remaining attached to him, in him, with him, talking to him”. [25] “Christ is the seal on our foreheads, he is the seal on our hearts: on the forehead because we always profess him; on the heart because we always love him; he is the seal on our arms because we are always working for him.” [26] Consecrated life is in fact a continuous call to follow Christ, and to be made like him. “Jesus’s whole life, his way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity, his simple daily generosity, and finally his complete self-giving, all this is precious and relates to our personal lives.” [27]

Meeting the Lord gets us moving, urges us to leave aside self-absorption. [28] A relationship with the Lord is not static, nor is it focused on self. “Because when we put Christ at the centre of our life, we ourselves don’t become the centre! The more that you unite yourself to Christ and he becomes the centre of your life, the more he leads you out of yourself, leads you from making yourself the centre and opens you to others”. [29] “We are not at the centre; we are, so to speak, relocated. We are at the service of Christ and of the Church”. [30]

Christian life is defined by verbs of movement. Even when it is lived in the context of a monastery or contemplative cloister it is a life of continual searching. “It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelization unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear his word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to do so. It is not the same thing to try to build the world with his Gospel as to try to do so by our own lights. We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything”. [31]

Pope Francis recommends for us *the restlessness of the search*, as it was for Augustine of Hippo: a “restlessness in his heart which brought him to a personal encounter with Christ, brought him to understand that the remote God he was seeking was the God who is close to every human being, the God close to our heart, who was more inward than our innermost self”. This is an on-going search. “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 the restlessness to know him ever better and of coming out of himself to make others know him. It was precisely the restlessness of love.”

### Introduction

1. The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come.

2. The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a very real danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God's will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ.

3. I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: "Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace". How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another "seventy times seven" (*Mt* 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew. Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards!

....

8. 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. We

become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?

...

### **Eternal newness**

11. A renewal of preaching can offer believers, as well as the lukewarm and the non-practicing, new joy in the faith and fruitfulness in the work of evangelization. The heart of its message will always be the same: the God who revealed his immense love in the crucified and risen Christ. God constantly renews his faithful ones, whatever their age: "They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not be faint" (*Is* 40:31). Christ is the "eternal Gospel" (*Rev* 14:6); he "is the same yesterday and today and forever" (*Heb* 13:8), yet his riches and beauty are inexhaustible. He is for ever young and a constant source of newness. The Church never fails to be amazed at "the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God" (*Rom* 11:33). Saint John of the Cross says that "the thicket of God's wisdom and knowledge is so deep and so broad that the soul, however much it has come to know of it, can always penetrate deeper within it". Or as Saint Irenaeus writes: "By his coming, Christ brought with him all newness". With this newness he is always able to renew our lives and our communities, and even if the Christian message has known periods of darkness and ecclesial weakness, it will never grow old. Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world. Every form of authentic evangelization is always "new".

12. Though it is true that this mission demands great generosity on our part, it would be wrong to see it as a heroic individual undertaking, for it is first and foremost the Lord's work, surpassing anything which we can see and understand. Jesus is "the first and greatest evangelizer". In every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit. The real newness is the newness which God himself mysteriously brings about and inspires, provokes, guides and accompanies in a thousand ways. The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that "he has loved us first" (*1 Jn* 4:19) and that he alone "gives the growth" (*1 Cor* 3:7). This conviction enables us to maintain a spirit of joy in the midst of a task so demanding and challenging that it engages our entire life. God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us.

...

## **Taking the first step, being involved and supportive, bearing fruit and rejoicing**

24. The Church which “goes forth” is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn 4:19*), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet. He tells his disciples: “You will be blessed if you do this” (*Jn 13:17*). An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time. Faithful to the Lord’s gift, it also bears fruit. An evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants her to be fruitful. It cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds. The sower, when he sees weeds sprouting among the grain does not grumble or overreact. He or she finds a way to let the word take flesh in a particular situation and bear fruits of new life, however imperfect or incomplete these may appear. The disciple is ready to put his or her whole life on the line, even to accepting martyrdom, in bearing witness to Jesus Christ, yet the goal is not to make enemies but to see God’s word accepted and its capacity for liberation and renewal revealed. Finally an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization. Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.

25. I am aware that nowadays documents do not arouse the same interest as in the past and that they are quickly forgotten. Nevertheless, I want to emphasize that what I am trying to express here has a programmatic significance and important consequences. I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. “Mere administration” can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be “permanently in a state of mission”.

...



## **The entire people of God proclaims the Gospel**

111. Evangelization is the task of the Church. The Church, as the agent of evangelization, is more than an organic and hierarchical institution; she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God. She is certainly a mystery rooted in the Trinity, yet she exists concretely in history as a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary. I would like to dwell briefly on this way of understanding the Church, whose ultimate foundation is in the free and gracious initiative of God.

### **A people for everyone**

112. The salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy. No human efforts, however good they may be, can enable us to merit so great a gift. God, by his sheer grace, draws us to himself and makes us one with him. He sends his Spirit into our hearts to make us his children, transforming us and enabling us to respond to his love by our lives. The Church is sent by Jesus Christ as the sacrament of the salvation offered by God. Through her evangelizing activity, she cooperates as an instrument of that divine grace which works unceasingly and inscrutably. Benedict XVI put it nicely at the beginning of the Synod's reflections: "It is important always to know that the first word, the true initiative, the true activity comes from God and only by inserting ourselves into the divine initiative, only begging for this divine initiative, shall we too be able to become – with him and in him – evangelizers". This principle of the primacy of grace must be a beacon which constantly illuminates our reflections on evangelization.

113. The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone. God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age. He has chosen to call them together as a people and not as isolated individuals. [83] No one is saved by himself or herself, individually, or by his or her own efforts. God attracts us by taking into account the complex interweaving of personal relationships entailed in the life of a human community. This people which God has chosen and called is the Church. Jesus did not tell the apostles to form an exclusive and elite group. He said: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (*Mt* 28:19). Saint Paul tells us in the people of God, in the Church, "there is neither Jew or Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (*Gal* 3:28). To those who feel far from God and the Church, to all those who are fearful or indifferent, I would like to say this: the Lord, with great respect and love, is also calling you to be a part of his people!

114. Being Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.

EXCERPTS FROM *THE PROPHETIC IMAGINATION* BY WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

- **Page 1, paragraphs 2 through page 2, paragraph 2**, from “The contemporary American church is so largely enculturated” to “for discerning prophetic ministry in this way.”
- **Page 3, paragraph 1 through page 4, paragraph 1**, from “The hypothesis I will explore here” to “and reformation of alternative community.”
- **Page 14, paragraph 3**, from “First, energy comes from the embrace” to “than the one who ostensibly rules the light.
- **Page 17, paragraph 2**, from “Prophecy cannot be separated” to “know no justice or compassion.”

## MODULE 2: CHARISM AND WORLDVIEW

### Readings:

- Maxims 24 and 73
- *Apostolic Letter Of His Holiness Pope Francis To All Consecrated People On The Occasion Of The Year Of Consecrated Life, Section II*
- *Evangelii Gaudium/The Joy of the Gospel*, paragraphs 52, 67, 74
- *The Prophetic Imagination*, Chapter 2, pages 35-37

### MAXIMS

**24** Be utterly given to God by a holy self-surrender, utterly for God by a love pure completely unselfish, utterly in God by a continuing effort to be more conscious of his presence, utterly according to God by a will, a life and everything conformed to him.

**73** Live out your life with one desire only: to be always what God wants you to be, in nature, grace, and glory, for time and eternity.

### EXCERPT FROM THE LETTER FOR THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE BY POPE FRANCIS

#### II. EXPECTATIONS FOR THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

What in particular do I expect from this Year of grace for consecrated life?

1. 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 fulfilment.

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.

In a society which exalts the cult of efficiency, fitness and success, one which ignores the poor and dismisses “losers”, we can witness by our lives to the truth of the words of Scripture: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10).

We can apply to the consecrated life the words of Benedict XVI which 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.

As I said to the members of ecclesial movements on the Vigil of Pentecost last year: “Fundamentally, the strength of the Church is living by the Gospel and bearing witness to our faith. The Church is the salt of the earth; she is the light of the world. She is called to make present in society the leaven of the Kingdom of God and she does this primarily by her witness, her witness of brotherly love, of solidarity and of sharing with others” (18 May 2013).

2. I am counting on you “to wake up the world”, since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy. As I told the Superiors General: “Radical evangelical living is not only for religious: it is demanded of everyone. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way.” This is the priority that is needed right now: “to be prophets who witness to how Jesus lived on this earth... a religious must never abandon prophecy” (29 November 2013).

Prophets receive from God the ability to scrutinize the times in which they live and to interpret events: they are like sentinels who keep watch in the night and sense the coming of the dawn (cf. Is 21:11-12). Prophets know God and they know the men and women who are their brothers and sisters. They are able to discern and denounce the evil of sin and injustice. Because they are free, they are beholden to no one but God, and they have no interest other than God. Prophets tend to be on the side of the poor and the powerless, for they know that God himself is on their side.

So I trust that, rather than living in some utopia, you will find ways to create “alternate spaces”, where the Gospel approach of self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences, and love of one another can thrive. Monasteries, communities, centres of spirituality, schools, hospitals, family shelters – all these are places which the charity and creativity born of your charisms have brought into being, and with constant creativity must continue to bring into being. They should increasingly be the leaven for a society inspired by the Gospel, a “city on a hill”, which testifies to the truth and the power of Jesus’ words.

At times, like Elijah and Jonah, you may feel the temptation to flee, to abandon the task of being a prophet because it is too demanding, wearisome or apparently fruitless. But prophets know that they are never alone. As he did with Jeremiah, so God encourages us: "Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you" (*Jer 1:8*).

3. Men and women religious, like all other consecrated persons, have been called, as I mentioned, "experts in communion". So I am hoping that the "spirituality of communion", so emphasized by Saint John Paul II, will become a reality and that you will be in the forefront of responding to "the great challenge facing us" in this new millennium: "to make the Church the home and the school of communion." I am sure that in this Year you will make every effort to make the ideal of fraternity pursued by your founders and foundresses expand everywhere, like concentric circles.

Communion is lived first and foremost within the respective communities of each Institute. To this end, I would ask you to think about my frequent comments about criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy, hostility as ways of acting which have no place in our houses. This being the case, the path of charity open before us is almost infinite, since it entails mutual acceptance and concern, practicing a communion of goods both material and spiritual, fraternal correction and respect for those who are weak ... it is the "mystique of living together" which makes our life "a sacred pilgrimage". We need to ask ourselves about the way we relate to persons from different cultures, as our communities become increasingly international. How can we enable each member to say freely what he or she thinks, to be accepted with his or her particular gifts, and to become fully co-responsible?

I also hope for a growth in communion between the members of different Institutes. Might this Year be an occasion for us to step out more courageously from the confines of our respective Institutes and to work together, at the local and global levels, on projects involving formation, evangelization, and social action? This would make for a more effective prophetic witness. Communion and the encounter between different charisms and vocations can open up a path of hope. No one contributes to the future in isolation, by his or her efforts alone, but by seeing himself or herself as part of a true communion which is constantly open to encounter, dialogue, attentive listening and mutual assistance. Such a communion inoculates us from the disease of self-absorption.

Consecrated men and women are also called to true synergy with all other vocations in the Church, beginning with priests and the lay faithful, in order to "spread the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries".

4. 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. "Go into all the world"; these were the last words which Jesus spoke to his followers and which he continues to address to us (cf. *Mk 16:15*). A whole world awaits us: men and women who have lost all hope, families in

difficulty, abandoned children, young people without a future, the elderly, sick and abandoned, those who are rich in the world's goods but impoverished within, men and women looking for a purpose in life, thirsting for the divine...

Don't be closed in on yourselves, don't be stifled by petty squabbles, don't remain a hostage to your own problems. These will be resolved if you go forth and help others to resolve their own problems, and proclaim the Good News. You will find life by giving life, hope by giving hope, love by giving love.

I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor, and finding creative ways to catechize, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach others how to pray. Consequently, I would hope that structures can be streamlined, large religious houses repurposed for works which better respond to the present demands of evangelization and charity, and apostolates adjusted to new needs.

5. I expect that each form of consecrated life will question what it is that God and people today are asking of them.

Monasteries and groups which are primarily contemplative could meet or otherwise engage in an exchange of experiences on the life of prayer, on ways of deepening communion with the entire Church, on supporting persecuted Christians, and welcoming and assisting those seeking a deeper spiritual life or requiring moral or material support.

The same can be done by Institutes dedicated to works of charity, teaching and cultural advancement, to preaching the Gospel or to carrying out specific pastoral ministries. It could also be done by Secular Institutes, whose members are found at almost every level of society. The creativity of the Spirit has generated ways of life and activities so diverse that they cannot be easily categorized or fit into ready-made templates. So I cannot address each and every charismatic configuration. Yet during this Year no one can feel excused from seriously examining his or her presence in the Church's life and from responding to the new demands constantly being made on us, to the cry of the poor.

Only by such concern for the needs of the world, and by docility to the promptings of the Spirit, will this Year of Consecrated Life become an authentic *kairos*, a time rich in God's grace, a time of transformation.

**I. Some challenges of today's world**

52. In our time humanity is experiencing a turning-point in its history, as we can see from the advances being made in so many fields. We can only praise the steps being taken to improve people's welfare in areas such as health care, education and communications. At the same time we have to remember that the majority of our contemporaries are barely living from day to day, with dire consequences. A number of diseases are spreading. The hearts of many people are gripped by fear and desperation, even in the so-called rich countries. The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. It is a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity. This epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology, and by their instant application in different areas of nature and of life. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power.

...

67. The individualism of our postmodern and globalized era favors a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. Pastoral activity needs to bring out more clearly the fact that our relationship with the Father demands and encourages a communion which heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds. In our world, especially in some countries, different forms of war and conflict are re-emerging, yet we Christians remain steadfast in our intention to respect others, to heal wounds, to build bridges, to strengthen relationships and to "bear one another's burdens" (*Gal 6:2*). Today too, various associations for the defense of rights and the pursuit of noble goals are being founded. This is a sign of the desire of many people to contribute to social and cultural progress.

...

74. What is called for is an evangelization capable of shedding light on these new ways of relating to God, to others and to the world around us, and inspiring essential values. It must reach the places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed, bringing the word of Jesus to the inmost soul of our cities. Cities are multicultural; in the larger cities, a connective network is found in which groups of people share a common imagination and dreams about life, and new human interactions arise, new cultures, invisible cities. Various subcultures exist side by side, and often practice segregation and violence. The Church is called to be at the service of a difficult dialogue. On the one hand, there are people who have the means needed to develop their personal and family lives, but there are also many "non-citizens", "half citizens" and "urban remnants". Cities create a sort of permanent ambivalence because, while they offer their residents countless possibilities, they also present many

people with any number of obstacles to the full development of their lives. This contrast causes painful suffering. In many parts of the world, cities are the scene of mass protests where thousands of people call for freedom, a voice in public life, justice and a variety of other demands which, if not properly understood, will not be silenced by force.

EXCERPT FROM *THE PROPHETIC IMAGINATION* BY WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

- **Page 35, paragraph 3 through the end of page 37**, from “This model of royal consciousness does not require” to “only the prophetic word is mobilized against this compelling reality.”



## MODULE 3: LIVING BEYOND STEREOTYPES

### Readings:

- Maxims 16 and 44
- *Evangelii Gaudium/The Joy of the Gospel*, paragraphs 100-102
- *Prophetic Imagination*, pages 39-41

### MAXIMS

**16:** In everything and everywhere, have only God, God's will and glory before your eyes, and make no account of anything else.

**44:** Never do anything which contradicts the pursuit of holiness.

### EXCERPT FROM *THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL* BY POPE FRANCIS

100. Those wounded by historical divisions find it difficult to accept our invitation to forgiveness and reconciliation, since they think that we are ignoring their pain or are asking them to give up their memory and ideals. But if they see the witness of authentically fraternal and reconciled communities, they will find that witness luminous and attractive. It always pains me greatly to discover how some Christian communities, and even consecrated persons, can tolerate different forms of enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy and the desire to impose certain ideas at all costs, even to persecutions which appear as veritable witch hunts. Whom are we going to evangelize if this is the way we act?

101. Let us ask the Lord to help us understand the law of love. How good it is to have this law! How much good it does us to love one another, in spite of everything. Yes, in spite of everything! Saint Paul's exhortation is directed to each of us: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (*Rom 12:21*). And again: "Let us not grow weary in doing what is right" (*Gal 6:9*). We all have our likes and dislikes, and perhaps at this very moment we are angry with someone. At least let us say to the Lord: "Lord, I am angry with this person, with that person. I pray to you for him and for her". To pray for a person with whom I am irritated

is a beautiful step forward in love, and an act of evangelization. Let us do it today! Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love!

### **Other ecclesial challenges**

102. Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making. Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge.

EXCERPT FROM *THE PROPHETIC IMAGINATION* BY WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

- **Page 39, paragraph 1 through page 41, end of paragraph**, from “We have considered as a paradigm” to “where do we begin?”

## MODULE 4: UNCONDITIONAL LISTENING

### Readings:

- Maxims 6 and 41
- *Evangelii Gaudium/The Joy of the Gospel*, paragraphs 141, 169-171

### MAXIMS

**6:** Put aside your old self... so that you can put on the new” (Eph. 4:22-24), and accordingly lead a life dead to the world and to self-love, full of gentleness, humility of heart, true sincerity, modesty, interior and exterior peace, and of charity toward the neighbor; in a word, (a life) completely modeled on the holiness and the pleasing virtues of Jesus which you should develop in yourself. Thus you can by grace draw many people who will profit by your example and your conversations.

**41:** Tend solely and lovingly to resemble the dear Savior perfectly and in all things. Let him live in you and you in him.

### EXCERPT FROM *THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL* BY POPE FRANCIS

141. One cannot but admire the resources that the Lord used to dialogue with his people, to reveal his mystery to all and to attract ordinary people by his lofty teachings and demands. I believe that the secret lies in the way Jesus looked at people, seeing beyond their weaknesses and failings: “Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (*Lk* 12:32); Jesus preaches with that spirit. Full of joy in the Spirit, he blesses the Father who draws the little ones to him: “I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes” (*Lk* 10:21). The Lord truly enjoys talking with his people; the preacher should strive to communicate that same enjoyment to his listeners.

...

## **Personal accompaniment in processes of growth**

169. In a culture paradoxically suffering from anonymity and at the same time obsessed with the details of other people's lives, shamelessly given over to morbid curiosity, the Church must look more closely and sympathetically at others whenever necessary. In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. *Ex* 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.

171. We need to practice the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives. But this always demands the patience of one who knows full well what Saint Thomas Aquinas tells us: that anyone can have grace and charity, and yet falter in the exercise of the virtues because of persistent “contrary inclinations”. In other words, the organic unity of the virtues always and necessarily exists *in habitu*, even though forms of conditioning can hinder the operations of those virtuous habits. Hence the need for “a pedagogy which will introduce people step by step to the full appropriation of the mystery”. Reaching a level of maturity where individuals can make truly free and responsible decisions calls for much time and patience. As Blessed Peter Faber used to say: “Time is God's messenger”.

## MODULE 5: HEALTHY CONFLICT HEALTHY COMMUNITY

### Readings:

- Maxims 51 and 52
- *Evangelii Gaudium/The Joy of the Gospel*, paragraphs 131, 226-228, 230
- *Prophetic Imagination*, pages 85, 91

### MAXIMS

**51:** Give all the happiness you can to those who give you a great deal of unhappiness, and give it willingly.

**52:** Interpret all things from the best possible point of view.

### EXCERPT FROM *THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL* BY POPE FRANCIS

131. Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things and turn it into an attractive means of evangelization. Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity. When we, for our part, aspire to diversity, we become self-enclosed, exclusive and divisive; similarly, whenever we attempt to create unity on the basis of our human calculations, we end up imposing a monolithic uniformity. This is not helpful for the Church's mission.

...

### **Unity prevails over conflict**

226. Conflict cannot be ignored or concealed. It has to be faced. But if we remain trapped in conflict, we lose our perspective, our horizons shrink and reality itself begins to fall apart. In the midst of conflict, we lose our sense of the profound unity of reality.

227. When conflict arises, some people simply look at it and go their way as if nothing happened; they wash their hands of it and get on with their lives. Others embrace it in such a way that they become its prisoners; they lose their bearings, project onto institutions their own confusion and dissatisfaction and thus make unity impossible. But there is also a third way, and it is the best way to deal with conflict. It is the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process. "Blessed are the peacemakers!" (*Mt 5:9*).

228. In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity. This requires acknowledging a principle indispensable to the building of friendship in society: namely, that unity is greater than conflict. Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense, thus becomes a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity. This is not to opt for a kind of syncretism, or for the absorption of one into the other, but rather for a resolution which takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides.

...

230. The message of peace is not about a negotiated settlement but rather the conviction that the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonize every diversity. It overcomes every conflict by creating a new and promising synthesis. Diversity is a beautiful thing when it can constantly enter into a process of reconciliation and seal a sort of cultural covenant resulting in a "reconciled diversity". As the bishops of the Congo have put it: "Our ethnic diversity is our wealth... It is only in unity, through conversion of hearts and reconciliation that we will be able to help our country to develop on all levels".

#### EXCERPT FROM *THE PROPHETIC IMAGINATION* BY WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

- **Page 85, paragraph 1**, from "Jesus' readiness to forgive sin" to "social control was even greater."
- **Page 91, paragraph 1**, from "Jesus is remembered and presented" to "ntering into the pain and giving it voice."

## MODULE 6: WHOLE MISSION AUTHENTIC CHARISM

### Readings:

- Maxims 61 and 67
- *Evangelii Gaudium/The Joy of the Gospel*, paragraphs 130, 224, 235
- *Prophetic Imagination*, page 117

### MAXIMS

**61:** Strive also wholeheartedly after the peaceful and intimate union with God, very cordial charity and forbearance towards the neighbor, really innocent purity of heart, very perfect fidelity to grace joined to a peaceful death to all natural inclinations, a very true humility, simplicity and sincere candor, the obedience of a child who looks for no reason, poverty completely stripped, continual joy of spirit appropriate to your institute, in a word, attain the pure and perfect love of God which explains all things.

**67:** Accordingly, pursue to the very end and with gentleness and vigor what you have once and for all resolved and what you prudently believe corresponds to the greater glory of God.

### EXCERPT FROM *THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL* BY POPE FRANCIS

#### **Charisms at the service of a communion which evangelizes**

130. The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms. These gifts are meant to renew and build up the Church. They are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the centre which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse. A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God's holy and faithful people for the good of all. Something truly new brought about by the Spirit need not overshadow other gifts and spiritualities in making itself felt. To the extent that a charism is better directed to the heart of the Gospel, its exercise will be more ecclesial. It is in communion, even when this proves painful, that a charism is seen to be authentic and mysteriously fruitful. On the basis of her response to this challenge, the Church can be a model of peace in our world.

...

224. Sometimes I wonder if there are people in today's world who are really concerned about generating processes of people-building, as opposed to obtaining immediate results which yield easy, quick short-term political gains, but do not enhance human fullness. History will perhaps judge the latter with the criterion set forth by Romano Guardini: "The only measure for properly evaluating an age is to ask to what extent it fosters the development and attainment of a full and authentically meaningful human existence, in accordance with the peculiar character and the capacities of that age".

...

235. The whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts. There is no need, then, to be overly obsessed with limited and particular questions. We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all. But this has to be done without evasion or uprooting. We need to sink our roots deeper into the fertile soil and history of our native place, which is a gift of God. We can work on a small scale, in our own neighbourhood, but with a larger perspective. Nor do people who wholeheartedly enter into the life of a community need to lose their individualism or hide their identity; instead, they receive new impulses to personal growth. The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren.

EXCERPT FROM *THE PROPHETIC IMAGINATION* BY WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

- **Page 117, all**, from "The issues of God's freedom" to "more intentional even in our age."