



The Holy See

CELEBRATION OF VESPERS

ON THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

AND THE 16TH DAY OF CONSECRATED LIFE *HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI*

Peter's Basilica

Thursday, 2 February 2012 [\[Video\]](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, 40 days after the birth of Jesus, shows us Mary and Joseph who, in obedience to the Law of Moses, go to the Temple in Jerusalem to offer the child, their first born son, to the Lord and to redeem him through a sacrifice (cf. Lk 2:22-24). It is one of the cases in which liturgical time reflects historical time, because today actually marks 40 days after the Solemnity of the Birth of the Lord. The theme of Christ the Light, that is a feature of the cycle of the Christmas festivities and culminates in the Solemnity of the Epiphany, is taken up again and extended in today's feast.

The ritual act of Jesus' parents, which takes place in the humble, hidden manner characteristic of the Incarnation of the Son of God, finds a unique welcome in the elderly Simeon and the Prophetess Anna. By divine inspiration they recognize the baby as the Messiah foretold by the prophets. In the meeting of the elderly Simeon and Mary, a young mother, the Old and New Testaments converge in a wonderful way in the thanksgiving for the gift of the Light which shone in the darkness and prevented it from prevailing: Christ the Lord, the light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel (cf. Lk 2:32).

The Day of Consecrated Life is celebrated on the day on which the Church commemorates the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. In fact this Gospel episode to which we are referring is a significant icon of the gift of one's life by those who are called to present anew in the Church and in the world, through the evangelical counsels, the characteristics of Jesus, virgin, poor and obedient, the Consecrated of the Father. In today's feast we therefore celebrate the mystery of

consecration: the consecration of Christ, the consecration of Mary, the consecration of those who place themselves in the *sequela* of Jesus for love of the Kingdom of God.

According to the insight of [Bl. John Paul II](#), who celebrated for the [first time in 1997 the Day dedicated to consecrated life](#), it establishes specific goals. First, it seeks to respond to the need to give praise and thanks to the Lord for the gift of this state of life which belongs to the sanctity of the Church. Today, the prayer of the entire Community is dedicated to every consecrated person, giving thanks to God the Father, giver of every good, for the gift of this vocation, and once again invoking him with faith. Moreover, this occasion offers the opportunity to appreciate increasingly the testimony of those who have chosen to follow Christ through the practice of the evangelical counsels by promoting understanding and appreciation of the consecrated life within the People of God. Finally, the World Day for Consecrated Life is meant, above all for you, dear brothers and sisters who have embraced this state in the Church, to be a precious occasion to renew your commitment and rekindle the feelings that inspired and continue to inspire the gift of yourselves to the Lord. Let us do this today, this is the commitment you are called to realize every day of your life.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the opening of the [Second Vatican Ecumenical Council](#), [I announced — as you know — the Year of Faith](#), which will begin this October. All the faithful, and in a special way the members of Institutes of Consecrated Life, have welcomed this initiative as a gift, and I hope that they will live the Year of Faith as a favourable time for interior renewal, of which there is always need, with a deepening of the essential values and needs of their own consecration. In the Year of Faith you, who have welcomed the call to follow Christ more closely through the profession of the evangelical counsels, are invited to increasingly deepen your relationship with God. The evangelical counsels, accepted as an authentic rule of life, strengthen faith, hope and charity, which unite one to God. This profound closeness to the Lord, which must be the priority and characteristic point of your existence, will lead you toward a renewed adherence to Him and will have a positive influence on your special presence and on the form of your apostolate among the People of God, through the contribution of your charisms, in fidelity to the Magisterium, to be witnesses of faith and grace, credible witnesses for the Church and the world today.

The [Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life](#), with the means it deems appropriate, will suggest guidelines and will do its utmost to encourage this Year of Faith to be, for all of you, a year of renewal and of fidelity so that all consecrated men and women may enthusiastically engage in the New Evangelization. As I extend my cordial greetings to the Prefect of the Dicastery, Archbishop João Braz de Aviz — whom I wish to include among those I will create Cardinals in the next Consistory — I gladly take this joyful occasion to thank him and his co-workers for the precious service they render to the Holy See and to the entire Church.

Dear brothers and sisters, I also thank each one of you for having wished to participate in this

Liturgy, which, also thanks to your presence, is distinguished by a special atmosphere of devotion and recollection. I wish you every good on the journey of your religious Families, as well as for your formation and your apostolate. May the Virgin Mary, disciple, servant and Mother of the Lord, obtain from the Lord Jesus that “all who have received the gift of following him in the consecrated life may be enabled to bear witness to that gift by their transfigured lives, as they joyfully make their way with all their brothers and sisters towards our heavenly homeland and the light which will never grow dim” (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, n. 112). Amen.

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