

CONSECRATED FOR MISSION

LECTIO

(what does the Word in itself say)

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

³Blessed be God, the Father of Christ Jesus, our Lord, the all-merciful Father and the God of all comfort! ⁴He encourages us in all our trials, so that we may also encourage those in any trial, with the same comfort that we receive from God. ⁵Just as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so, through Christ, a great comfort also overflows. ⁶If we are afflicted for your sake, it is for your comfort and salvation; and we also receive comfort for you, that you may endure the same sufferings we endure and experience the same comfort that is ours. ⁷Our hope for you is most firm; just as you share in our sufferings, so shall you also share in our consolation.

MISSION

* “The Institute is a family of consecrated members for *ad gentes* mission” (Const. 4). The consecration, in Blessed Joseph Allamano’s intuition and ideal, adequately responds to the need for holiness in order to be authentic missionaries.

“Consecrated life is “the epiphany of God’s love in the world”” (VC 72); it’s the most disinterested testimony of the choice of “God alone”, of the following of Christ as a norm of life, of the opening up to the action of the Holy Spirit, who sends to every part of the world to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to serve all brothers and sisters with a total charity, only out of love. The radicalism required by consecrated life becomes for Allamano the foundation of missionary action, because it disposes to a total abandonment to God’s will and to his design of salvation. “The evangelical foundation of consecrated life is found in the special relationship that Jesus, in his earthly existence, established with some of his disciples, inviting them not only to welcome the Kingdom of God in their own lives, but in order to place their own existence at the service of this cause” (VC 14; X GC 28).

* Today, consecrated life is even an answer to secularization: “The deconsecration of the world is one of the great temptations of modern man, who tends to conceive the world as nature, in which science is exercised, but extraneous to religious destiny. The world in which we live in is a world full of Trinity. All of nature is like a temple in which God lives in. Everything is a sign of the divine presence and reflection of its reality. It’s really true that we live, we move and are in Him” (J. Danielou).

In the eyes of the world the consecrated are “walking dead men” because they’re “citizens of heaven” (cfr. Colossians 3:1-3). They preach the balance of life to everybody like an earthly and celestial reality at the same time.

* Consecration associates us to Jesus' mission and to his ministry of consolation: we're "consecrated for mission".

POVERTY

* Poverty is Jesus' style. His being poor, however, didn't happen to him by chance, but it had been a prophetic choice in view of the Kingdom. The consecrated person's poverty is a sign of the absolute primacy of the Kingdom and certainty that every possibility comes from Him.

* Poverty is living out poor Jesus; it's living like Mary who places God in the first place in her life. "God suffices". The man who has found him will live for Him and with a continuous "debt" of love towards his neighbour. He will use necessary things, but "as if he weren't using them". Poverty only has meaning if it's "in the heart". Creatures will all become brothers-sisters, an occasion for a song of gratitude and of praise.

* The Father Founder warned: "When the vow of poverty is neglected, the community is close to its end" (VS 283).

* Poverty preserves mission (cfr. VS 280). Poverty is the test bench upon which the authenticity of mission is measured. "Poverty in fact is necessary in order to love. Because if you have things, you give things: only when you have nothing, you give yourself, that is you love. Poverty is a sign of gratitude, the beginning of every life and grace, goodness and beauty. Poverty is victory over the idol, the god Mammon which everybody seeks, turning their own needs into their own god, instead of recognizing in God their own need. Poverty is faith in God, instead of in the god of this world (cfr. Luke 16:13). Poverty is necessary in order to serve God. Poverty is freedom from oneself and from things, in order to be a disciple (cfr. Luke 9:23; 14:33). Poverty forces one to serve others: the poor "must" serve (cfr. Luke 17:10). Poverty brings humiliation and humility and associates us to the banner of Christ, his cross" (S. Fausti).

CHASTITY

* "Like a young man marries a girl, so your Creator will marry you. Like the man rejoices over his spouse, so your God will exult for you" (Isaiah 62:5).

* Chastity realizes human beings according to God's heart, making them fall in love with God. Jesus isn't followed only as a master, He isn't obeyed only as Lord: He's first of all loved with a personal love.

"If you'll be chaste, always chaste, I'm sure of your good outcome. If instead you will not be consolidated well in this virtue not only will you do great harm to yourselves, but even to your confreres and to the whole mission, let alone to the very cause of the apostolate, because all at once you will make the toils of many years vain and that greatly profaned place will have to be left. Be chaste (1 Timothy 5:22)" (VS 307).

Chastity is a gift and as such is lived out: it's by God's grace that this form of life is possible for us. Chastity is therefore lived out like growth in love. In love, the exclusive belonging,

which no longer concedes space to oneself, gives God the first place and loves the brethren unconditionally for Him. Perfect chastity is a logical consequence of it: “temples of God”! Chastity dilates the heart. “We need to dilate the heart upon the measure of Jesus’ heart. Having done this, everything is done. It’s a question of loving everybody who comes next to us like God loves him. [...] Our most important work is to keep God’s chastity and that is, to keep love in one’s heart like Jesus loves. Therefore in order to be pure one doesn’t need to deprive the heart and to repress the love in it. One has to dilate it upon Jesus’ heart and love everybody” (C. Lubich).

OBEDIENCE

* “Jesus said to them: My food is to do the will of God who sent me, and to carry out his work right ‘til the end” (John 4:34).

* Out of obedience we become imitators of Christ in his plan of salvation: doing with joy the will of the Father who wants all men to be saved, that is sons! Mission is thus born! Even the organization of daily life is influenced by it. When the “food” is moved in the right direction, the place to live in, the work to be done and in some way even the way to do things are secondary aspects.

“Believe me: this indifference towards all offices, humble or great, is important. Holiness doesn’t consist in the occupation; the occupations aren’t but means. If something is enjoyable, don’t jump for joy; if it’s displeasing, don’t make faces” (VS 357).

“The inconveniences which are verified in mission are more or less caused by a lack of obedience. I will therefore never repeat it enough to you: absolute obedience, if you want to turn out to be good missionaries; obedience not only to the commands, but even to the Superiors’ desires. This has to be a virtue, I would say, inherent in us; we have to form the habit to it before leaving for the missions. If this obedience isn’t there, nothing is done; it’s better not to be missionaries. It’s bad not to obey here, in mission it’s bad for oneself and for the others. This is the main virtue, the fundamental virtue of our Institute” (VS 344).

IN ORDER TO BRING CONSOLATION

* “Jesus saw two fishermen. [...] He said to them: “Come with me, I will turn you into fishers of men”. And they, immediately, abandoned their nets and followed him” (Matthew 4:18-19). “To console everybody” (v. 4), bringing the same consolation. Whoever wants “to come with Jesus”, by following Him, will bring the Word of salvation to the world. It’s a participated vocation by every uninhabited by God, but it can become the only objective of life for whoever feels particularly called.

MEDITATIO

(what the Word says to me)

* Mission can be seen as the “unexpressed vow” but which the Founder considered intended in the profession of missionary life in the Institute: ““We should have as a vow serving the missions even at the cost of our lives!” or, in any case, to become everything for everybody like Paul (cfr. 1 Corinthians 9:18-23)” (XGC 75).

* The religious vocation and the missionary one have characteristics of total commitment, generosity and enthusiasm.

* In religious consecration we assume the style of the virgin Jesus, the poor Jesus, the obedient Jesus, the missionary Jesus.

* The poor Jesus wants to be lived out: “Sent to bring the happy news to the poor, we proclaim with our lives the beatitude of poverty, imitating Jesus Christ, who being rich made himself poor and advised: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, then come and follow me”” (Const. 43).

* The chaste Jesus wants to be lived out: “Consecrated chastity in celibacy is a gift of God. We freely welcome it and with gratitude, as a value particularly tied to the evangelical testimony, to the credibility and the fecundity of the missionary apostolate. We live a love without reserves in order to be on every occasion available to everybody, with the aim of serving them and of bringing them Christ” (Const. 41). Does chastity constitute my “art of loving”?

* The obedient Christ wants to be lived out: is concrete love represented by my obedience? Do I live the beatitude of “being anxious in doing God’s will”? Am I ready for any place, environment, office?

ORATIO

(what does the Word make me say)

Reparation:

“Blessed are those who are poor in front of God: God will give them his Kingdom” (Matthew 5:3). Lord, have mercy!

Thanksgiving:

“Not everybody understands this teaching; only those to whom God gives the capacity to do it welcome it... others don’t get married in order to serve the kingdom of God better.

Whoever can understand, let him understand” (Matthew 19:12). It’s my vocation!

Thank you!

Spirit’s request:

“I have come in order to do not mine, but the will of He who has sent me” (cfr. John 6:38).

It’s mission: obedience to the Father done in docility to the Spirit! Come, Holy Spirit!

CONTEMPLATIO

(“The Lord speaks and everything is done, commands and everything exists” [Psalm 32:9])

* True consecration is the baptismal one: in baptism I’ve been consecrated to live with the Trinity. The Spirit of the Lord, the origin of every vocation and consecration, places us apart for mission. ik “The great means in order to reach perfection which the Master asks is still and always the “pres-ence” of God, according to his commandment to Abraham: “Walk in my presence” (Genesis 17:1)” (J. Allamano).

COMMUNICATIO

(first and only addressee of the Word is the people of God)

* There’s no mission without poverty, which is even solidarity, sharing and closeness to the people. Poverty is opening up towards the needs of others, as a sharing of life and of goods.

* “You, by becoming chaste priests and missionaries, will be holy priests and missionaries, because a perfectly chaste priest can’t not be even truly a saint. You will do immense good and you will have the indestructible crown of the virgins in Heaven!” (VS 336).

* “For me the most beautiful consolation is of always having done the will of God” (VS 358).