



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE CHAPTERS OF:
CLERICS OF SAINT VIATOR,
CLERICS REGULAR MINOR,
MINIMS,
AUGUSTINIAN SISTERS OF DIVINE LOVE,
REPARATRIX SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART
AND IN THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER OF THE PROVINCE OF CHRIST THE KING
OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF SAINT ANTHONY MARY CLARET**

*Clementine Hall
Monday, 15 July 2024*

[Multimedia]

Thank you for this meeting. Here are present: Minims, Clerics Regular Minor, Augustinian Sisters of Divine Love, Clerics of Saint Viator, Reparatrix Sisters of the Sacred Heart and Missionary Sisters of Saint Anthony Mary Claret.

I will ask a question before we begin: How many novices do you have? How many?... You need to pray. And how are things going? Where do your novices come from? [In response: "From Asia, Africa and Latin America".] Indeed, the future is there, yes? [In response: "We have eight".] That's good. And you? [In response: "We have seventeen".] And over here, how are you doing? [In response: "We have twelve".] But we have to double these numbers. Thank you for your visit. I like to ask this question, because it is a question about the future of your congregation.

You represent different institutes and religious orders of various foundation, whose origins range from the sixteenth to the twentieth century: *Minims, Clerics Regular Minor, Augustinian Sisters of*

Divine Love, Clerics of Saint Viator, Reparatrix Sisters of the Sacred Heart and Missionary Sisters of Saint Anthony Mary Claret. In this diversity, you are a living image of the mystery of the Church, in which “to each is given the manifestation of the Holy Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7), so that the beauty of Christ may shine in all its splendour throughout the world. It was not by chance that the Fathers of the Church defined the spiritual life of consecrated men and women as “*philokalía*, or love of the divine beauty, which is the reflection of the divine goodness” (SAINT JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, 19). Yet, how often our steps along the journey of the spiritual life are far removed from our internal struggles, far removed from the love that should motivate us. I would like to take a moment and reflect with you on two aspects of your life that have much to do with precisely this: *beauty* and *simplicity*.

First: *beauty*. Truly, your histories, in the variety of their circumstances, times and places, are stories of beauty, for in them the grace and beauty of God’s face shines forth. In the Gospels, we see these made visible in Jesus: in his hands raised in prayer at times of intimacy with the Father (cf. Mt 14:23); in his heart full of compassion for his brothers and sisters (cf. Mk 6:34-44); in his eyes burning with zeal as he denounced injustices and abuse (cf. Mt 23:13-33); and in his feet, wearied by his long journeys to reach even the most poor and marginalized outposts of his land (cf. Mt 9:35).

Your Founders and Foundresses, prompted and guided by the Holy Spirit, were able to perceive this beauty and to transmit it in different ways according to the needs of their times. In doing so, they wrote marvellous pages of practical charity, courage, creativity and prophetic witness, spending themselves in caring for the weak, the sick, the elderly and children; in educating the young, in missionary preaching and in social commitment. These pages are now entrusted to you, so that you may carry on the work that they began.

The work of your Chapters is thus a summons for all of you to take up their witness – it is your task to take it and move forwards – and to continue, as they did, to seek out and spread the beauty of Christ in the concrete circumstances of today’s world. First, by listening attentively to the love that inspired them, and then letting yourselves be challenged by how they responded to that love: by the decisions and sacrifices that they made, at times with suffering, in order to be mirrors of the face of God for their contemporaries.

This brings us to the second aspect, which is *simplicity*. Each of your Founders and Foundresses, in different situations, chose what is truly essential and renounced what is superfluous. In this way, they allowed themselves to be shaped daily by the simplicity of God’s love shining forth in the Gospel. Because God’s love is simple, its beauty is simple, not a sophisticated beauty, no, but a simple, accessible beauty. As you prepare for your meetings, then, pray that the Lord will grant you the gift of simplicity, both as individuals and as part of the synodal processes in which you will play a role. Strip yourselves of everything that is unnecessary or might hold you back from listening attentively and preserving harmony in your discernment. Strip yourselves of:

calculations, ambition – for ambition is a plague in the consecrated life, please be beware that it is a plague – envy, which is ugly in community life – I like to describe envy as the “yellow disease”, something ugly – making undue demands, rigidity and any other baneful temptation to self-interest. In this way, you will be able to interpret together, and wisely, the present moment, to discern within it the “signs of the times” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4) and to make the best decisions for the future.

As men and women religious, you embraced poverty precisely in order to strip yourselves of all that is not love of Christ, to allow yourselves to be filled with his beauty, and make that beauty overflow into the world (cf. *Laudato Si'*, *A Prayer for Our Earth*). And to do so wherever the Lord sends you and for the benefit of all those whom he places on your path, especially through the exercise of obedience. This is a great mission! And the Father entrusts it to you, frail members of the Body of his Son, precisely so that your humble availability will point to the power of his tender love, which surpasses your own abilities and permeates the history of each of your communities. And do not leave aside prayer, prayer from the heart; do not leave aside moments before the tabernacle, talking *with* the Lord, talking *to* the Lord and letting the Lord speak to you. Always prayer from the heart, not parrot-fashion prayer, but that which comes from the heart and moves us forward along the Lord's path.

Dear sisters, dear brothers, I thank you for the great good you do in the Church and in so many parts of the world, and I encourage you to persevere in your efforts with faith and generosity! Pray for vocations. You must have successors who will carry on the charism. Pray, pray. And be very careful in formation, so that it is a good formation. I bless you, I pray for you and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.