

Reflections on consecrated life

Use these insightful quotes and reflections on consecrated life for every week of the Year of Consecrated Life and beyond.

1. Religious life ought to promote growth in the church by way of attraction. The church must be attractive. Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! ... It is this witness that I expect of you. Religious should be men and women who are able to wake the world up.

—*Pope Francis, meeting with the Union of Superiors General, November 29, 2013*

2. In every age consecrated men and women must continue to be images of Christ the Lord, fostering through prayer a profound communion of mind with him.”

—*Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata, no. 9*

3. A good vocation is simply a firm and constant will in which the person who is called must serve God in the way and in the places to which almighty God has called him.

—*Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622)*

4. Jesus’ core message—that we are one—is surely one of the great mysteries of existence. This truth is so hard to accept because our senses tell a different story: We are separate, different, and alone. We need an image to help us realize what our senses cannot.

Picture the giant redwood trees of California: They only grow in groves. Moreover, each tree’s roots extend and grasp the roots of the surrounding trees, forming a strong, interconnecting network that serves to nourish and sustain all of them equally.

Remember the redwood trees and their invisible, interlocking roots as you discern your vocation. You are not alone and never will be on your chosen path to Christ.

—*Vision Vocation Guide 2014*

5. Legend surrounds the brief life of Saint Wenceslaus I, Duke of Bohemia (907-935), originally venerated because of his martyrdom but most remembered today because of a Christmas carol from the 16th century that celebrated him as a model of generosity. Separating fact from fiction may be difficult after 1,000 years, but your own track record with regard to generosity should be easier to tally. Will anyone sing praises of your generosity a millennium from now? A hundred years? Ten minutes after you are gone? If not, what can you do today to start building your own lasting legacy as a disciple of Christ?

—*Take Five for Faith*

6. Because of our vows of chastity poverty, and obedience, consecrated religious have the freedom to work with others in caring for those on the margins of society, speaking on their behalf, yet at the same time, empowering them to recognize and utilize their God-given gifts and talents.

—*Sr. Sister Rosemary Finnegan, O.P., 2014 Diocese of Orlando interview*

7. All the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity. ... In order that the faithful may reach this perfection, they must use their strength accordingly as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. ... They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good. . . .

—*Pope John XXIII at the opening of the Second Vatican Council on Oct. 11, 1962*

8. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux lived in a Carmelite convent with her older sister Pauline. Pauline was with Thérèse throughout her brief life, illness, and death at the tender age of 24. It is no accident that Jesus sent out his disciples in pairs. Having a spiritual companion, as Thérèse did, can be of great help and comfort on the sometimes difficult spiritual journey. Cultivate spiritual friendships in your own life.

—*Take Five for Faith*

9. Every vocation to consecrated life is born in contemplation, from moments of intense communion and from a deep relationship of friendship with Christ, from the beauty and light which was seen shining on his face.

—*Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium, no. 9*

10. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.

— *Evangelii Gaudium, “The Joy of the Gospel” (127)*

11. The life of prayer and contemplation founded on the Eucharistic mystery is also at the heart of the vocation of consecrated people who have chosen the path of the *sequela Christi*, to give themselves to the Lord with an undivided heart in an ever more intimate relationship with him. By their unconditional attachment to Christ and to his Church, they have the special mission to remind everyone of the universal vocation to holiness... Consecrated men and women proclaim that God alone can give fullness to human existence.

—*Pope Benedict XVI, 2006 Address to Canadian Bishops*

12. At last I have found my vocation: My vocation is love.

—*Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*

13. Invited to leave everything to follow Christ, you, consecrated men and women, no longer define your life by family, by profession, or by earthly interests, and you choose the Lord as your only identifying mark. Thus you acquire a new family identity.

—*Homily of Pope John Paul II, Jubilee of Consecrated Life, February 2, 2000*

14. If you are what you should be, then you will set the world on fire.

—*Saint Catherine of Siena*

15. Did you know that the word vocation is related to the term “vocal cords” and means “a calling”? More precisely it means spending your life doing what your innermost heart feels called to do. To follow a vocation means living your own unique life. That’s of course what all of us would like to accomplish, but how shall we do it?

If we ask people who are doing what they really love to do, “How did you get to where you are?” we find that many of them started by asking themselves some basic questions: 1. What would I really like to do? 2. What am I good at doing or learning? 3. What opportunity is life offering me, right now, for doing what makes me come joyfully alive? Thus they started with themselves, with their own gifts and preferences.

—*Vision Vocation Guide 2015*

16. We are not called upon to do all the good that is possible, but only that which we can do.

—*Mother Theodore Guerin*

17. A painter and musician happened upon a spray-painted image of a cross on a walk along a Mexican road. He took a picture of what he saw: a haunting, rough, wild, desolate, but ultimately hopeful image of this universal Christian symbol. The man with the camera was simply out on a hike, but he has the discerning eye of an artist, so he sees things others might not. It is a talent cultivated over years of practice and a reminder to all of us to pay attention—for even the stones cry out the glory of God (cf. Luke 19:40). Insights and sparks of enlightenment will come to us particularly through spiritual practice and prayer, and in those moments we will know above all else who we are and where we are being called.

—*Vision Vocation Guide 2012*

18. Our religious charisms, our communities, our way of life and our very vocations are precious gifts that come with tremendous responsibilities. How will we share this responsibility and provide leadership and loving service with and for God’s people into the future?

—*Sister Susan Francois, C.S.J.P., Giving Voice Update, December 2012*

19. We assume the apostles must have been solid, holy people because Jesus handpicked them to be part of his inner circle of friends and disciples. But the gospels present quite a different picture. These were ordinary people who weren’t always clear about Jesus’ message, who occasionally turned their back on Jesus even when he was most in need, and who struggled with their own faith. The apostles’ relationship with Jesus as well as their faith was a work in progress that ultimately brought them closer to God. Like the apostles, we, too, encounter struggles in our relationship with Jesus and our faith. Allow your struggles and missteps to become another positive step in getting to know God more deeply.

—*Take Five for Faith*

20. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.

—*Parker J. Palmer, Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*

21. There's a story told about a woman who prayed to the Virgin that one of her sons would become a priest. She had seven sons, but all of them married and raised families. Then she prayed that one of her grandsons would become a priest. She had many grandsons, but none chose that life. The woman continued her prayer. She was almost 100 years old and near death when one of her grandsons, at the age of 33, decided to become a priest. She died a happy woman knowing her lifelong prayer was finally answered. The story is true, told by the priest himself. Prayer works; you just have to keep at it.

—*Take Five for Faith*

22. There are many priests, seminarians and consecrated persons here today; be close to them and support them! And if, in the depths of your hearts, you feel the same call to the priesthood or consecrated life, do not be afraid to follow Christ on the royal road of the Cross!

—*Pope John Paul II, 2002 World Youth Day*

23. God calls you to make definitive choices, and He has a plan for each of you: To discover that plan and to respond to your vocation is to move toward personal fulfillment.

—*Pope Francis, 2013 World Youth Day*

24. Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice "out there" calling me to be something I am not. It comes from a voice "in here" calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God.

—*Thomas Merton*

25. Sometimes we need a little help seeing clearly. Various devices aid our focus, from eyeglasses and contact lenses to microscopes and telescopes. Sometimes seeing clearly means shifting our perspective, too. Take the example of Saint Gertrude (the only female saint to earn the title "the Great"): correcting her vision came about by changing the direction she was facing. A brilliant young Benedictine sister, she excelled in the study of philosophy and literature. Then she received a vision of Jesus, urging her to trade in her pursuit of the humanities for divinity studies. Gertrude's heart was ignited with a new flame, and she became a profound mystic.

—*Take Five for Faith*

26. Dear brothers and sisters, in the finest traditions of the Church in this country, may you also be the first friend of the poor, the homeless, the stranger, the sick and all who suffer. Act as beacons of hope, casting the light of Christ upon the world, and encouraging young people to discover the beauty of a life given completely to the Lord and his Church.

—*Pope Benedict XVI, Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, 2008*

27. Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

—*Saint Francis of Assisi*

28. Some of the best love poems have been written by monks and nuns.

—*John Geddes, A Familiar Rain*

29. In a recent survey of a broad spectrum of Catholics, more than 70 percent of the survey participants have invited someone to consider religious life. Ideally the promotion of vocations is the responsibility of the entire church, not only of the clergy or religious themselves.

Pope Francis promulgated the Year of Consecrated Life to raise the church's awareness about the importance of this unique vocation within the communion of vocation we all share as baptized Christians. What a gift and blessing for the entire church!

—*Vision Vocation Guide 2015*

30. For each one of us, there is only one thing necessary: to fulfill our own destiny, according to God's will, to be what God wants us to be.

—*Thomas Merton*

31. At the heart of the church is vocation. The earliest idea of what is today called "church" starts with the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is only found twice in the gospels, both times in Matthew, and means those who have been "called out." Jesus "calls out" all who follow him to share in his ministry in different ways.

Before Jesus even preached, healed someone, or performed a miracle, he called people to follow him. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, after his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, the first thing he did was to call two sets of brothers. He asks Simon and Andrew and then James and John to follow him (Mark 1:16-20). And that is the church in its simplest terms: the followers of Jesus Christ.

—*Vision Vocation Guide 2015*

32. It can take time to find one's calling and be confirmed in it. Saint Paul of the Cross wanted to redirect his life to bring others the message of God's love expressed in Christ's Passion, but he had to wait more than two decades before the church officially gave him permission to found the religious order now known as the Passionists.

—*Take Five for Faith*

33. All of us without exception, both individually and in society, have a life-long obligation to strive after heavenly values. ... The traditional as well as the contemporary Christian approach to life is to strive with all zeal for evangelical perfection, and at the same time to contribute toward the material good of humanity.

—*Pope John XXIII at the opening of the Second Vatican Council on Oct. 11, 1962*

34. Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.

—*Saint Francis of Assisi*

35. The Christian faithful have an obligation to foster vocations to the priesthood and the religious life by living faithfully the call to holiness, by holding vocations to the priesthood and the religious life in esteem, and by encouraging young men and women to consider the possibility of a call from God to the ordained or consecrated states.

—*Diocese of Sacramento, Statute 9*

36. What is known in vocation circles as the “process of discernment” is simply the time we pilgrims here on earth take to identify our strengths and gifts and determine how they may best be put to use in joyful service of the church and the world as we “journey onwards towards our heavenly homeland.”

—*2013 Vision Vocation Guide*

37. Say a word of gratitude to the saintly folks around you today—the moms and dads balancing family and work, the parish priests comforting those who mourn, the deacons ministering to the sick in hospitals, the religious sisters and brothers teaching and advocating for the poor, the spiritual writers offering enrichment to hungry souls—and everyone else in between.

—*Take Five for Faith*

38. There has never been a time in Christian history when someone, somewhere, has not died rather than compromise with the powers of oppression, tyranny, and unbelief.

—*Rev. Dr. Anthony Harvey, sub-dean of Westminster Abbey in London at the 1998 dedication of statues of 20th-century Christian martyrs*

39. By your prayer and intercession, you are the advocates of all who seek God, who are journeying towards God. You bear witness to a hope which, against every form of hopelessness, silent or spoken, points to the fidelity and the loving concern of God. Hence you are on the side of those who are crushed by misfortune and cannot break free of their burdens. You bear witness to that Love which gives itself for humanity and thus conquered death.

—*Pope Benedict XVI, with priests, religious and seminarians in Austria, 2007*

40. Religious orders are not formed for the purpose of gathering together perfect people but those who have the courage to aim at perfection.

—*Saint Francis de Sales*

41. When you go to church it may be hard to see beyond what the priests, deacons, lectors, cantors, and others are doing at the moment (unless of course you’re one of those people!). Behind that hour of Mass, however, are many hours of meetings, practice, and personal preparation that go into leading worship. But the work everyone else in a faith community does—including yours—is just as important. Supporting yourself, and maybe a family, as well as all the other tasks of life, if you do them in a spirit of faith and generosity, go just as far in building the kingdom of God. And perhaps the most important thing you do is worship itself. The very origin of the word liturgy is the “public work and service” of the church.

—*Take Five for Faith*

42. May the world of our time ... be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected and discouraged ... but from ministers of the gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ.

—*Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi, no. 1*

43. Clothing has a dual purpose: to protect the fragile body from harsh weather and to adorn and identify ourselves and what we are about: the business suit of an executive, the torn jeans of a teenager, the uniform of a soldier. So it makes sense that Saint Paul says we should “put on” virtue; we should wear compassion, kindness, patience, gentleness—colorful and obvious as our outfits. Paul wants us to wear our allegiance to Christ—“on our sleeves” if you will—not as a boast like a Gucci or Prada logo, but as a simple, humble sign that this woman, this man, this youngster belongs to Christ, and you’ll know it because you can see that the person is dressed in love.

—*Take Five for Faith*

44. Since its origins consecrated life has been marked by its thirst for God: *quaerere Deum*. May your first and supreme desire, therefore, be to witness to the fact that God should be listened to and loved with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your might, before any other person or thing.

—*Pope Benedict XVI, in a 2005 message to religious in the Diocese of Rome*

45. One thing I would like people to do in their discernment is to find a spiritual director who is compassionate to them and is willing to help them to find the community which is good for them. Don’t forget to pray to God for his guidance.

“In the midst of a turbulent, often chaotic life we are called to reach out, with courageous honesty to our innermost self, with relentless care to our fellow human beings and with increasing prayer to our God.”

—*Henri J. Nouwen*

46. We have to come alive ourselves and make current and vigorous in our lives today the heroic qualities we remember in long-dead saints.

—*Take Five for Faith*

47. One thing I would like people to do in their discernment is to find a spiritual director who is compassionate to them and is willing to help them to find the community which is good for them. Don’t forget to pray to God for his guidance.

—*Br. Tello Vu, T.O.R., 2014 Diocese of Orlando interview*

48. There is no identity—and consequently joy of life—without an active and unwavering sense of belonging to God’s faithful people ... Go out and give your people what was entrusted to you, for your people will make you feel and taste who you are, what your name is, what your identity is, and they will make you rejoice in that hundredfold which the Lord has promised to those who serve him.

—*Pope Francis, Holy Chrism Mass, Holy Thursday homily, 2014*

49. The gospel is the basis of community life. By living in community, we proclaim the love of Jesus Christ. Living in community implies relationships. It means relating to one another as truly sisters and putting into practice what Jesus taught us: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

—*Sister Mary Edward Urban, O.S.F. of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, Whitehall Franciscan Newsletter*

50. So it is that in accordance with the Divine Plan a wonderful variety of religious communities has grown up which has made it easier for the church ... to be equipped for every good work and ready for the work of the ministry—the building up of the Body of Christ.

—*Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life Perfectae Caritatis, no. 1*

51. The consecrated life inspires and accompanies the spread of evangelization in the different parts of the world, where Institutes from abroad are gratefully welcomed and new ones are being founded, in a great variety of forms and expressions. Consequently, although in some parts of the world Institutes of Consecrated Life seem to be experiencing a period of difficulty, in other places they are prospering with remarkable vitality. This shows that the choice of total self-giving to God in Christ is in no way incompatible with any human culture or historical situation.

—*Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata, no. 2*

52. “Already dedicated to him through Baptism, the person who surrenders themselves to the God they love above all else thereby consecrates themselves more intimately to God’s service and to the good of the church.”

—*Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 931*

53. Sin isn’t the absence of love; love is already there. Rather it’s the failure to choose to take advantage of opportunities to love. Review your day and see where you did not bother to love. Then take the trouble to do it tomorrow.

—*Take Five for Faith*

54. “It is not what you are, nor what you have been, that God looks at with his merciful eyes, but what you would wish to be.”

—*The Cloud of Unknowing*

55. When one renounces everything to follow Christ, when one gives to him all that one holds most dear, braving every sacrifice as did the divine Teacher, the consecrated person who follows in Christ’s footsteps necessarily also becomes “a sign of contradiction” because his/her way of thinking and living is often in opposition to the logic of the world.

—*Pope Benedict XVI, 2007 World Day of Consecrated Life*

56. “Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.”

—*Saint Augustine*

58. From the very beginning of the church men and women have set about following Christ with greater freedom and imitating him more closely through the practice of the evangelical counsels, each in their own way leading a life dedicated to God.

—*Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life Perfectae Caritatis, no. 1*

58. How far are you willing to go in your own life in to bring Good News to others? Consider the example of Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne (1769-1852), born in France, traveled all the way to St. Charles, Missouri to bring the Society of the Sacred Heart religious congregation to the U.S. Today the Society has 21 schools in the U.S. and is found in 44 countries around the world. Sacred Heart sisters focus on educating young women and emphasize in their curriculum the need for global awareness and building a more just world. You can carry on these efforts in your own neighborhood, parish, office, home, and see how far the Spirit moves you.

—*Take Five for Faith*

59. Consecrated men and women of today have the duty to be witnesses of the transfiguring presence of God in a world that is evermore disoriented and confused, a world where toning down has substituted sharp and distinctive colours ... Belonging to the Lord: this is the mission of the men and women who have chosen to follow Christ—chaste, poor and obedient—so that the world may believe and be saved. To belong completely to Christ so as to become a permanent confession of faith, an unequivocal proclamation of truth that frees us from the seduction of the false idols that deceive the world.

—*Pope Benedict XVI, 2006 Address to superiors general of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life*

60. You owe it to all of us to get on with what you're good at.

—*W.H. Auden*

61. Since the call of the first disciples, some followers of Jesus have sought a different way to live their faith. In the early church, groups of widows gathered to dedicate themselves to prayer and good works. Others craved solitary prayer, so they fled to the desert to commune with God and guide others in the pursuit of holiness. Monasteries, cloisters, and religious houses eventually came into being, and religious life as we know it began to take shape.

Consecrated life—in its diverse expressions around the globe—is a gift to the church and world. Its prayer lifts the entire church. Likewise, good works and the pursuit of justice shape society to more closely resemble the reign of God. A life of chastity, poverty, and obedience gives powerful witness to faith in Jesus without a word being uttered.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, religious communities of men and women rise up, serve a purpose, thrive, and live on or come to an end. This ebb and flow has occurred for 2,000 years and will continue for millennia to come as new members around the world take vows and join their lives to communities to live out the gospel in radical ways.

—*Vision Vocation Guide 2015*

Source: [Vision Vocation Network](#)