

November 21st 2014

Introduction to Taize Prayer from Brother Denis

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome each and everyone of you to the launching of this Year of Consecrated Life.

Pope Francis shocked all of us by announcing this year putting a spot-light on all of those who have dedicated themselves to the spreading of the Lord's kingdom through the evangelical councils of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Among we religious there are hundreds of individual stories in the Archdiocese of Toronto, many of them sitting right here in this church.

Equally there are multiple charisms determining what each congregation does in its apostolic endeavours. But all of us are bonded in a common oneness when it comes to consecrated life, our vows.

Sometimes when describing what these vows are we use vocabulary that can be interpreted in a negative manner. This is far from the reality of the life each of us has chosen and the vows we have embraced.

The vows are 3 in number:

POVERTY:

By the vow of poverty we name ourselves as creatures, entirely dependent on the love and mercy of God. This is not just about our goods and possessions, but about making our whole being, time, talents and energy available to the divine mission. Of course, we are called to a simple lifestyle and a reverent approach to the goods of the earth. However, this is only so that a transformation of love can take place within our hearts. Putting God at the center of our lives and having a total dependence on God is what our poverty is all about. Living a lifestyle that is about sharing, and simplicity putting our resources and temporary goods as well as our talents at the service of others is how our vow of Poverty is expressed.

CHASTITY: (Consecrated Celibacy)

Living a life of unconditional love. Being loved and loving. Being in love. The vow of chastity calls us to love. Like all human beings, like all Christians, we Religious are called to give and to receive love. We are called to love and we channel our sexual energy in a particular way, in a way that is different to that of the married person or the single Christian. The person who vows chastity today must understand this. He or she must believe that this vow can lead to a life which is loving, creative and generative. There is nothing in this vow which is anti-sexual or anti-relational. After all Christianity is the religion of the incarnation, “par excellence”!

OBEDIENCE:

The vow of obedience should not have any military connotations for us. Its root comes from the Latin verb ‘audire’ meaning to hear or to listen. Ultimately, obedience commits us to listening for God in the signs of the times and in the community of our Brothers, our Sisters. We live our lives out of that listening. We recognize that there is someone greater than ourselves. We come together with others who share in that call. This is the world of “community”. We have been prodded over the centuries by mystics and activists alike admonishing us with questions like: “I wonder, can you ever really live the vow of obedience, if you are not spending long periods in silence”? Thomas Merton told us that real dialogue is prepared for by hours spent in silence. In listening for God, we need to sit in silence for hours before we hear a voice other than our own. And all of us, vowed or not, are called to be saints.

I conclude with quotes from Pope Francis who talks to all of us about modern-day saints:

WORLD YOUTH DAY QUOTES - POPE FRANCIS

We need saints that go to the movies, that listen to music, that hang out with their friends.

We need saints that look for time to pray every day and who know how to be in love with purity, chastity and all good things.

We need saints that have a commitment to helping the poor and to make the needed social change.

We need saints that drink Coca-Cola, that eat hot dogs, that surf the Internet and that listen to their iPods.

We need saints that love the Eucharist, that are not afraid or embarrassed to eat a pizza or drink a beer with their friends

We need saints that are open, sociable, normal happy companions.

We need saints who are in this world and who know how to enjoy the best in this world without being callous or mundane. We need saints.