

VATICAN CITY, 3 FEB 2009 (VIS)

TO CONSECRATED PEOPLE:



IMITATE THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL

Yesterday afternoon in the Vatican Basilica Benedict XVI met with members of religious congregations, institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, at the end of a Mass marking the thirteenth Day of Consecrated Life, an annual celebration established by John Paul II.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration for the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, presided by Cardinal Franc Rode C.M., prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, the Holy Father greeted those present . . .

In this year dedicated to St. Paul the Pope focused his remarks on the Apostle "who", he said, "has always been recognised as father and master of those who, called by the Lord, have chosen to dedicate themselves unconditionally to Him and His Gospel. ... Imitating him by following Jesus is the best way to respond fully to your vocation of special consecration in the Church", he said.

St. Paul's lifestyle "expresses the substance of a consecrated life inspired by the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.

Poverty

In the life of poverty he saw a guarantee that the Gospel would be announced gratuitously. At the same time, such a life is an expression of real solidarity towards brothers and sisters in need".

Chastity

"Accepting God's call to chastity", noted the Holy Father, the Apostle of the Gentiles "gave his heart entirely to the Lord in order to be able to serve his brethren with greater freedom and dedication. Moreover, in a world in which the values of Christian chastity enjoyed little popularity, he offered secure guidelines of behaviour".

Obedience

On the subject of obedience, Benedict XVI recalled how St. Paul was "under daily pressure because of his anxiety for all the churches", and how this "inspired, shaped and consumed his life, making it a sacrifice agreeable to God".

Mission

"Another fundamental aspect of Paul's consecrated life was that of mission. He was entirely for Jesus in order to be, like Jesus, for everyone. ... In him, so closely bound to the person of Christ, we recognise a profound capacity to unite spiritual life and missionary activity. In him, these two dimensions support one another".

and . . . Charity

The Pope told the consecrated people of his hope that the Pauline Year may "give you further encouragement to welcome the witness of St. Paul, meditating daily upon the Word of God through the faithful practice of 'lectio divina', and singing 'psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts'. May the Apostle help you to accomplish your apostolic service in and with the Church, with an unreserved spirit of communion, making a gift of your charisms to others and bearing witness to the greatest charism of all, which is charity".