

## **THE CONSECRATED LIFE:**



## **A SHARE IN THE TOTAL GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**[An Oblation to the Father, of the Kenosis of the Son,  
in the Total Gift of the Holy Spirit - in the Recent Magisterial Teaching]**

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### **Introduction:**

In the universal call to holiness addressed to the entire Church, the central Model of it all is the Most Blessed Trinity, made known to us through the exclusive Self-giving of Jesus Christ:

"... The Church, whose mystery is set forth by this Sacred Council, is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. This is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as 'alone holy'. loved the Church as His Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her [cf. Ep 5:25-26]..." [LG 39].

The "nuptial theme", epitomized by Mary and Joseph, is recalled repeatedly in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Redemptoris Custos* [August 15, 1989]:

"... Thus, before Joseph lived with Mary, he was already her 'husband'. Mary, however, preserved her deep desire to give herself exclusively to God. One may well ask how this desire of Mary's could be reconciled with a 'wedding.' The answer can come only from the saving events as they unfold, from the special action of God Himself. From the moment of the Annunciation, Mary knew that she was to fulfill her virginal desire to give herself exclusively and fully to God, precisely by becoming the Mother of God's Son. Becoming a Mother by the power of the Holy Spirit was the form taken by her gift of self: a form which God Himself expected of the Virgin Mary who was 'betrothed' to Joseph. Mary uttered her Fiat... [RC 18].

"... One may say that what Joseph did united him in an altogether special way to the Faith of Mary. He accepted as truth coming from God the very thing she had already accepted at the Annunciation. The Council teaches: 'The obedience of faith must be given to God as he reveals himself. By this obedience of faith, man freely commits himself entirely to God, making the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals and willingly assenting to the revelation given by him.' [cf. DV 5]. This statement, which touches the very existence of faith, is perfectly applicable to Joseph of Nazareth..." [RC # 4]...

"The **total sacrifice**, whereby Joseph **surrendered his whole existence** to the demands of the Messiah's coming into his home becomes understandable only in the light of his profound interior life..." [RC 26]... "Through his **complete self-sacrifice**, Joseph expressed his generous love for the Mother of God and gave her **a husband's gift of self**...Joseph obeyed the explicit command of the angel and took Mary into his home, while respecting the fact that **she belonged exclusively to God**..." [RC 28]

When Pope Paul VI pondered the mystery of Christian Marriage thirty years ago this summer [*Humanae Vitae*, July 25, 1968], he emphasized its **total and exclusive self-giving** in order for it to succeed. Repeatedly, he spoke of the **"totality" of the mystery**, in the line of his "name-sake", St. Paul: "... this mystery has many implications; but I am saying that it applies to **Christ and the Church**." [Ep 5:32]:

"... It is the **whole man** and **the whole complex** of his responsibilities that must be considered, not only what is natural and limited to this earth, but also what is supernatural and eternal [HV # 7].

... "As a consequence, husband and wife, through that **mutual gift of themselves**, which is **specific and exclusive** to them alone, seek to develop that kind of personal union in which they complement one another in order to cooperate with God in the generous education of new lives..." [HV # 8]. "... Then, it is a love which is **total**...that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously **share everything**, allowing no unreasonable exceptions or thinking just of their own interests. Whoever really loves his partner and loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for her own sake, content to be able to **enrich the other with the gift of himself**...' [HV # 9].

"... Consequently, if the mission of generating life is not to be exposed to the arbitrary will of men, one must necessarily recognize insurmountable limits to the possibility of man's domination over his own body and its functions; limits which no man, whether a private individual, or one invested with authority, may licitly surpass. And such limits cannot be determined otherwise than by the respect due to the integrity of the human organism and its functions, according to the principles recalled earlier, and also according to the correct understanding of the **Principle of Totality**, illustrated by our predecessor Pope Pius XII..." HV 17].

Pope Pius XII employed this “**Principle of Totality**” in a discussion on moral theology he held on October 8, 1953 - regarding two questions: one was on the amputation of an organ for the general well being of one’s health - and the other pertained to marriage. Regarding the first matter, any and every amputation also has to be decided in the light of the “Principle of Totality”, a right regarding one’s body bestowed by the Creator (1). A second time Pius XII returned to this theme was on May 14, 1956, regarding cornea transplants. The Holy Father quotes his own Encyclical, *Mystici Corporis* [of June 29, 1943] in which he made clear that it is necessary to keep in mind **the totality** of the physical organism even in speaking of the moral organism (2). The “**Principle of Totality**” is very important in any consideration of the living of the baptismal commitment, marriage, as in the living of the consecrated life.

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Reflecting on this “spousal nature” of total self-giving, it is small wonder that the Code of Canon Law defines Religious Life as “a wonderful marriage”:

“Religious Life, as a consecration of the whole person, manifests in the Church a wonderful marriage brought about by God, a sign of the future age. Thus, religious bring to perfection their full gift as a sacrifice offered to God, by which their **whole** existence becomes a continuous worship offered to God in love” [Code of Canon Law 1983, Can. 607, ¶ 1].

Among the special effects of a definition of such a nature, the following may be noted:

“... The title on religious is introduced by this short theological description of religious life. The canon focuses on some of the important characteristics of religious life, namely, consecration, public vows, life in common and bearing witness to Christ. Paragraph one which is based on *Lumen Gentium* 44 understands consecration in terms of living the fullness of the gospel life, by means of the evangelical counsels. There is a greater accent on the worship element of the consecration so that religious life has a value in itself aside from the various means of apostolic service. The thrust of this paragraph can have importance when religious institutes develop a ritual of consecration. Thus, each institute may express in its own way its particular concept of consecration, in view of the intimate union between God and the consecrated person, and the manner in which the institute manifests that it is a sign of the risen life. (3)

In a recent reflection on “The Holy Spirit and the Consecrated Life” (4), the author points out that the Holy Spirit is particularly present in the matter of relationships, especially where existence opens itself up to “Gift.” This is uniquely the case in the matter of religious life. The Second Vatican Council - as well as the consistent teaching of the Church, presents the consecrated life as a way of **making a gift of one’s entire life, to be a gift to God, in union with Christ, by the Holy Spirit** [cf. PC 1]. Canon Law itself emphasizes the giving of self to God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

“... Life consecrated through profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living, in which the faithful follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, and are **totally dedicated to God** who is supremely loved.” [cf. Can. 573].

“Some of the Church’s faithful are specially called by God to this state, so that they may benefit from **a special gift in the life of the Church**, and contribute to its saving mission, according to the purpose and spirit of each institute” [cf. Can. 474 § 2]. The evangelical counsels, based on the teaching and example of Christ the Master, are **a divine gift** which the Church received from the Lord, and which by his grace it preserves always” [cf. Can. 575].

The most recent Papal Document on the Consecrated Life, *Vita Consecrata* (5), high-lights the role of the Holy Spirit in it:

“...Like the whole of the Christian life, the call to the consecrated life is closely linked to the working of the Holy Spirit...It is the Spirit who awakens the desire to respond fully; it is he who guides the growth of this desire, helping it to mature...Those who by the power of the Holy Spirit are led progressively into full configuration to Christ reflect in themselves a ray of unapproachable light... The consecrated life thus becomes a particularly profound expression of the Church as Bride who, prompted by the Spirit to imitate her spouse, stands before him ‘in splendor, without spot of wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish’ [Ep 5:27]...” [# 19].

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There are several points that bear emphasis in this context:

- Every Total Gift of Oneself- inspired by the Holy Spirit;
- Total Self-Oblation of the Consecrated Life in the Recent Magisterium - “the absolute Infinite” [ET 34];

- The Principle of Totality, the 'Thirst for the Divine Absolute' of the Consecrated Life [cf. EN 69; VC 39].

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#### A. Every Total Gift of Oneself: Inspired by the Holy Spirit

St. Augustine (6) uses a kind of “appropriation” of the word Gift for the Holy Spirit, in that God Himself is “Gift”:

“...And just as for the Holy Spirit his being **the gift of God** means his proceeding from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to proceed from him. Nor, by the way, can we say that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son as well; it is not without point that the same Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of the Father and the Son.” (7)

In Fr. Hill’s explanatory note, he points out:

“... finding proper names for the Holy Spirit that will distinguish him from the other persons is a classic difficulty of Trinitarian theology. Augustine opts for this title of '**Gift**' and will revert to the subject several times in the course of his work. What is required is a kind of 'relational' term, like 'Father' and 'Son.' (8).

In Sacred Scripture, the Wisdom tradition reminds us that the Lord’s gift remains constant to the devout [cf. Si 11:17]. In the Lord’s own prayer, the Church is taught to ask for the gift of daily needs [cf. Mt 6:11]. As human parents strive to give good things to their children, how much more will the heavenly Father give what is good to His creation [cf. Mt 7:11]. To this, Luke offers a significant addition: “... how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! [cf. Lk 11:13]. The Spirit has been given to the Son without reserve [cf. Jn 3:34]. To the woman of Samaria, Jesus seems to be making the veiled offering of the gift of the Holy Spirit: “.. If you only knew what God is offering ...” [cf. Jn 4:10]. [cf. also Rm 5:5, f.; I Jn 3:24; 4:13].

In the Acts of the Apostles, the presence of the Holy Spirit truly “gifts” the early Church. In the first conversions, Peter promises that after baptism, the faithful will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit [cf. Ac 2:38]. The Holy Spirit is given through the imposition of hands [cf. Ac 8:20; 19:1, f.]. Believers were astonished to see the gift of the Holy Spirit being poured out on non-believers as well [cf. Ac 10:45; 11:17].

St. Paul offers his unique development of this theme: there is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit, who is given to each person for a good purpose [cf. 1 Co 12:4, ff.]. God gives the Spirit so freely [cf. Ga 3:3, ff.]. The gift of God is not one of timidity but the Spirit of power, and love, and self-control [cf. 2 Tm 1:6].

The Liturgy offers this teaching as in the celebration for Pentecost, as the Spirit is called “**the Gift of the Most High God**” - the Sequence proclaims: “Father of the Poor, Giver of Gifts, Light of Hearts - sweet guest of the soul.” The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer offers this petition in the Epiclesis before the Consecration: “... So that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for Him who has died and is risen for us, You have sent, Father, the Holy Spirit, **First Gift to those who believe.**”

As has been noted, one of the early and greatest theologians of the “Holy Spirit as Gift” is St. Augustine of Hippo:

“... the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. This relationship, to be sure, is not apparent in this particular name, but it is present when he is called *the gift of God*. [Ac 8:20; Jn 4:10]. He is the gift of the Father and of the Son, because on the one hand he proceeds from the Father [Jn 15: 26], as the Lord says; and on the other, the apostle’s words, *Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ is not one of his* [Rm 8:9], are spoken of the Holy Spirit. So when we say ‘the gift of the giver’ and ‘the giver of the gift’, we say each with reference to the other. So the Holy Spirit is a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son and perhaps he is given this name just because the same name can be applied to the Father and the Son.” (9).

“... is the answer that the Holy Spirit always proceeds and proceeds from eternity, not from a point of time; but because he so proceeds as to be givable, he was already gift even before there was anyone to give him to? There is a difference between calling something a gift, and calling it a donation; it can be gift even before it is given, but it cannot be called in any way a donation unless it has been given...” (10) - [perhaps a little less ‘artificial’ in Latin: *donum/donatum* (11) .

In Book 15, St. Augustine discusses at length the propriety of the names we give to the Holy Spirit (12):

“... only the Son is called the Word of God, and only the Holy Spirit is called the Gift of God and only the Father is called the One from whom the Word is born and from Whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds... So it is the Holy Spirit of

which He has given us that makes us abide in God and him in us. But this is precisely what love does. He then is the gift of God who is love... the Holy Spirit has been given to us [Rm 5:5]. Nothing is more excellent than this gift of God... So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him the charity of God is poured out in our hearts and through it the whole triad dwells in us. This is the reason why it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the Gift of God. And this Gift, surely, is distinctively to be understood as being the charity which brings us through to God without which no other gift of God at all can bring us through to God..."

This doctrine was then offered by St. Thomas Aquinas (13). In **1 Sentences**, St. Thomas comments on Augustine's treatment of the question when he asks whether the Holy Spirit might be called "gift" and "given", or "donated." The Angelic Doctor offers a rather developed "Division of his Text". In Question 1, he divides the discussion into 5 articles - in the first of these, he asks whether the name 'Gift' is an essential name, or a personal one. He goes on to ask whether Gift is a name proper to the Spirit; whether through this name, all gifts are bestowed whether the Spirit is also God and whether he may be called "our" Gift.

In his **Summa**, the matter is succinctly summarized in two articles: "gift" imports an **aptitude for being given**, thus indicating its relation both to the giver and to that to which it is bestowed. The giver can only give what is his/her own - we are said to possess what we can use and enjoy. This can only be realized by a rational creature united to God.

"Gift" then is the proper name of the Holy Spirit - He is bestowed without the intention of being returned. Love of is nature is that of first gift, through which all free gifts are given. Since the Holy Spirit proceeds as love, He proceeds as the first gift.

The recent teaching of the Church has pondered this special name given to the Holy Spirit. In his Encyclical Letter, **Dominum et Vivificantem** (14) [of May 30, 1986], Pope John Paul II has written:

"... It can be said that in the Holy Spirit the intimate life of the Triune God becomes totally gift, an exchange of mutual love between the divine Persons, and that through the Holy Spirit, God exists in the mode of gift. It is the Holy Spirit who is the personal expression of this self-giving, of this being love [St. Thomas Aquinas]. He is Person-Love. He is Person-Gift. Here we have an



inexhaustible treasure of the reality and an inexpressible deepening of the concept of *person* in God, which only divine revelation makes known to us.

“At the same time, the Holy Spirit being consubstantial with the Father and the Son in divinity, is love and uncreated gift from which derives as from its source [**fons vivus**] *all giving of gifts* vis-a'-vis creatures [created gift]: the gift of existence to all things through creation; the gift of grace to human beings through the whole economy of salvation. As the Apostle Paul writes: ‘God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.’ [# 10].

In these few lines, we have the teaching of “**total gift**” as a Trinitarian concept, denoting the intimate life of God - God’s very being might be thought of as Gift. As all are made to the image and likeness of this God, this “total gift” is one of the dimensions all are called to live in the strength of baptismal consecration. In the creation of the universe, there is “gift” bestowed through God’s initiative. “Gift” is the heart of Christian Anthropology, as salvation is opened to humanity by means of this sharing of the very being and nature of God as “Gift.” Through this gift, rational creatures share in His nature.

“... Christ’s farewell discourse at the Last Supper stands in particular reference to this ‘giving’ and ‘**self-giving**’ of the Holy Spirit. In John’s Gospel we have as it were the revelation of the most profound ‘logic’ of the saving mystery contained in God’s eternal plan, as an extension of the ineffable communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...” [# 11]

This “**self-giving**” is behind the mystery of Divine Revelation, where in God revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and His Divine Plan of Redemption. In the last analysis, these almost come together - in that the Revelation of the Trinity is meant to be the first step in sharing His inner life with creatures:

“... This is the divine ‘logic’ which from the mystery of the Trinity leads to the mystery of Redemption of the world in Jesus Christ. The *redemption accomplished by the Son* in the dimensions of the earthly history of humanity - accomplished in his ‘departure’ through the Cross and Resurrection - is at the same time, in its entire salvific power, *transmitted to the Holy Spirit*: the one who ‘will take what is mine’ [Jn 16:14]...” [# 11].

“... Describing his ‘departure’ as a condition for the ‘coming’ of the Counselor, Christ links the new beginning of God’s salvific self-communication in the Holy Spirit with the mystery of the Redemption...” [# 13].

In the sending of the Holy Spirit, “the words of the text of John indicate that, according to the divine plan, Christ’s ‘departure’ is an indispensable condition for the ‘sending’ and the coming of the Holy Spirit...” What begins in this is the new salvific self-giving of God in the Holy Spirit. Jesus almost assumes the role of Precursor of the Holy Spirit, preparing the heart of humanity for the coming of the Paraclete.

This mystery of the divine self-giving is the heart of the mystery of Redemption - and it is this that establishes the Church through Jesus Christ. As God is the “Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” [cf. Rv. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13], Protology looks to Eschatology, first beginnings lead to the Last End of humanity:

“... It is a new beginning in relation to the first, original beginning of God’s salvific self-giving, which is identified with the mystery of creation itself. Here is what we read in the very first words of Genesis: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...., and the Spirit of God [*Ruah Elohim*] was moving over the face of the waters.’ [Gn 1:1, f.]. This biblical concept of creation includes not only the call to existence of the very being of the cosmos, that is to say *the giving of existence*, but also the presence of the Spirit of God in creation, , that is to say the beginning of **God’s salvific self-communication...**’Let us make’: can one hold that the plural which the Creator uses here in speaking of himself already in some way suggests the Trinitarian mystery, the presence of the Trinity in the work of the creation of man? The Christian reader already knows the revelation of this mystery, can discern a reflection of it in these words. At any rate, the context of the Book of Genesis enables us to see in the creation of man the first beginning of God’s salvific self-giving commensurate with the ‘image and likeness of himself which he has granted to man...” [# 12]

Creation, then, is the beginning of the accompanying presence of God - centuries before the fulfillment of the Incarnation of the “Emmanuel” in Jesus Christ, God is “with” His people, leading them to the fulfillment of the Plan of Creation. Creation, then is subordinated to redemption - the separating of the waters above from those below in Genesis [cf. Gn 1:6, ff.] is a foreshadowing of the Great Miracle of the Sea in Exodus [14: 21, ff.], dividing the waters to the left from those of the right, so that the people of God would walk through to freedom, and by separating the waters underfoot of the River Jordan [cf. Jos 3: 14 -17; 4:10-18]. This Spirit of God “fills the universe” in every age:

“... [Jesus Christ] offered his perfect sacrifice through the eternal Spirit, which means that the Holy Spirit acted in a special way in this **absolute self-giving**, in order to transform this suffering into redemptive love... [# 40]... In the Third Eucharistic Prayer, referring to the same salvific plan, the priest asks God that the Holy Spirit may ‘make us an **everlasting gift to you...**’ [# 41] - “.. The Holy Spirit is the **Gift** that comes into man’s heart together with prayer...” [# 65].

“... Praying thus [the Sequence of the Solemnity of Pentecost] the Church unceasingly professes her faith that there exists in our created world a Spirit who is uncreated gift. He is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son: like the Father and the Son, He is uncreated, without limit, omnipotent, God, Lord... Man turns to him, as to the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth and of love, man who lives by truth and by love, and who without the source of truth and of love, cannot live. To him turns the Church, which is the heart of humanity, to implore for all and dispense to all those gifts of the love which through him ‘has been poured into our hearts’ [Rm 5:5]..” [# 67 - Conclusion].

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [the publication of which was promulgated by the Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*, October 11, 1992] presents the Holy Spirit as “God’s Gift” [cf. CCC ## 733-736]. Grace is shown to be the Spirit’s Gift - and this, in turn, includes the Gifts of the Holy Spirit which enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church [# 2003].

The Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year 2000 ( 15) states:

“... The expression ‘in the Holy Spirit’, therefore, means first of all that God in his immensity welcomes each one and makes himself ‘gift’ through grace, by joining with him...” [pp. 16, f.]... “At the same time, the Spirit prepares the heart of man to listen, and makes him capable and willing to accept the Word... This turns faith into a reasonable option, without which the reality would remain shut up into the absurd and man would be unable to understand his most high calling’ [GS 22] [p. 19]...” “The Spirit is **ever a gift**, a grace granted to man by God the Father and it is the way through which man participates in the nature of God by the power of the new creation brought about by Christ [cf. c. 3, n. 1, p. 33]... “The Spirit is particularly present at the time of the death of Jesus. According to the Letter to the Hebrews [9:14-15] it was the Holy Spirit that kindled the sacrificial offering of Christ at his redemptive death and makes **his self-immolation the very soul of the true sacrifice**. Now Christ offered himself to God through the generous accomplishment of his will [cf. Heb 10:4-10] and

this happened through the stimulus and power of the Holy Spirit that inspired and supported the sacrifice of Christ, since he was the source of his charity towards God and towards his brethren..." [c. 4, n. 1, p. 42]... In theology, the expression 'gifts of the Spirit' has acquired a two-fold significance: the one equivalent to "charism" or manifestation of the Spirit in a person for building the Church [this is the case in 1 Co 12] - and the one corresponding to spiritual 'gift' which is even greater than the infused virtues..." [cf. c. 7. n. 2, p.85].

The Holy Spirit communicates **the capacity of total self-giving**: both in the form of sanctifying grace, as well as in various charisms that build up the holiness of the Church. The Consecrated Life is just one such "charism", a unique gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

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#### **B. The Total Self - Giving of the Consecrated Life in the Modern Magisterium: "The Absolute Infinite" [ET 34]**

From the opening document of his Pontificate, Pope John Paul II considered the last forty years of this 20th century, as a kind of "New Advent" for the Third Millennium of the Church, the setting for the "New Evangelization":

"... We are in a certain way in a season of a New Advent, a season of expectation ... through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that He intended man to have from his first beginning: he has granted that dimension definitively - in the way that is peculiar to him alone, in keeping with his eternal love and mercy, with the full freedom of God... [O happy fault... which gained us so great a Redeemer..! (16).

"... In fact, preparing for the year 2000 has become, as it were, a hermeneutical key of my Pontificate. It is certainly not a matter of indulging in a New Millenarianism, as occurred in some quarters at the end of the first millennium. Rather: it is aimed at an increased sensitivity to all that the Spirit is saying to the Church and to the churches [cf. Rv 2: 7, ff.]; as well as to individuals, through **charisms meant to serve the whole community**. The purpose is to emphasize what the Spirit is suggesting to different communities - from the smallest ones, such as the family - to the largest ones, such as nations and international organizations, taking into account cultures, societies and sound traditions..." (17).

With so much else, this period has been very rich in official documents that have developed the theology of the Consecrated Life throughout this “New Advent”:

**LUMEN GENTIUM**, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, November 21, 1965, ## 39 - 42:

“... Likewise, the Church’s holiness is fostered in a special way by the manifold counsels which the Lord proposes to his disciples in the Gospel for them to observe. Towering among the counsels is that precious gift of divine grace given to some by the Father [cf. Mt 19:11; 1 Co 7:7] to **devote themselves to God alone** more easily with an undivided heart [cf. 1 Co 7:32-34] in virginity, or celibacy...The Church bears in mind also the apostle’s admonition when calling the faithful to charity and exhorting them to have the same mind which Christ Jesus showed who ‘emptied himself, taking the form of a servant... and became obedient unto death’ [Ph 2:7, f.] and for our sakes ‘became poor though he was rich’ [2 Co 8:9]. Since the disciples must always imitate this love and humility of Christ and bear witness of it, Mother Church rejoices that she has within herself many men and women who pursue more closely the Savior’s self-emptying and show it forth more clearly, by undertaking poverty with the freedom of God’s sons, and renouncing their own will: they subject themselves to man for the love of God, thus going beyond what is of precept in the matter of perfection, so as to conform themselves more fully to the obedient Christ...” [cf. LG 42 c, d].

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**PERFECTAE CARITATIS**, Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life, October 28, 1965:

“... From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels. They led lives dedicated to God, each in his own way. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits, or founded religious families. These the Church, by virtue of her authority, gladly accepted and approved. Thus, in keeping with the divine purpose, a wonderful variety of religious communities came into existence. This has considerably contributed towards enabling the Church not merely to be equipped for every good work [cf. 2 Tm 3:17] and to be prepared for the good work of the ministry unto the building-up of the Body of Christ [cf. Ep 4:12], but also to appear adorned with the manifold gifts of her children, **like a bride** adorned to her husband [cf. Apoc 21:2] and to manifest in herself the multiform wisdom of God...” [# 1].

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**EVANGELICA TESTIFICATIO**, Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life, June 29, 1971 (18):

“...And yet, it is well known that the Council recognized ‘**this special gift**’ as having a place in the life of the Church, because it enables those who have received it to be more closely conformed to ‘that manner of virginal and humble life which Christ the Lord elected for himself and which the Virgin Mother also chose...[# 2] ...From the first centuries, the Holy Spirit has stirred up, side by side with the heroic confession of the martyrs, the wonderful strength of disciples and virgins, of hermits and anchorites...[# 3 b]...Dear sons and daughters, by a free response to **the call of the Holy Spirit**, you have decided to follow Christ, **consecrating yourselves totally to him**... [# 7 a]...In reality, the charism of religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood, or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is **the fruit of the Holy Spirit**, who is always at work in the Church... [# 11]... through obedience, you offer to God **a total dedication** of your own wills as a sacrifice of yourselves [# 27]...This grace will be given to you by Christ Jesus in proportion to **the fundamental gift** which you have made of yourselves and which you do not retract [# 31]...”

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**MUTUAE RELATIONES**, Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church. The Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, April 23, 1978 - (Some Doctrinal Elements) (19) :

“... From the day of Pentecost onwards (LG 4) there exists in the world a ‘new’ people which, vivified by the Holy Spirit, is united with Christ and has access to the Father (Ep 2:18). The members of this People are gathered from all nations and are bound together in such an intimate unity (LG 9) that it cannot be explained solely by axioms of the sociological order: there exists between them a kind of ‘newness’ which transcends the human condition. It is only in this **transcendent perspective** that mutual relations between the various members of the Church can be correctly understood. The reality upon which this unique nature is based is the very presence of the Holy Spirit... The spiritual and pastoral re-awakening of recent years ... is due to the presence of the Holy Spirit and is clear evidence of a specially privileged moment (EN 75) for the renewal of the youth of the Church as she looks forward to the Day of her Lord (Rv 22:17)..”  
[# 1]

“... Vocation to the Apostolate: the whole Church is driven by the Holy Spirit to do her part for the full realization of the plan of God (LG 17; AA 2l AG 1-5)... This vocation demands of every man, as a sign of his ecclesial communion, that he recognize the primacy of the life in the Spirit upon which depends docility to the word, interior prayer, awareness of life as a member of the whole body, desire for unity, dutiful accomplishment of one’s official mission, **the gift of self in service** and the humility of repentance... From this common baptismal vocation to *life in the Spirit* there come to light clearer demands and effective means in what concerns relations between Bishops and Religious...” [# 4].

“... Religious institutes are numerous in the Church and they differ one from the other according to their own proper character (PC 7-10). Each in fact, contributes its own vocation as a **gift raised by the Holy Spirit**, through the work of ‘outstanding men and women’ (LG 45; PC 12) and authentically approved by the sacred hierarchy. The ‘charism of the Founders’ (ET 11) appears as ‘**an experience of the Spirit**’ transmitted to their followers to be lived by them, to be preserved deepened and constantly developed in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in a process of growth. It is for this reason that the distinctive character of the various religious institutes is preserved and fostered by the Church (LG 44; CD 33, 35, § 1 and 2, etc.). [# 11].

“... The historical fact between charism and cross, apart from other factors which may give rise to understanding, is an extremely helpful sign in discerning **a call from the Spirit**. Individual religious also possess personal gifts coming from the Spirit to enrich, develop and rejuvenate the life of the Institute, to further unite the community and to show forth its renewal. But the discernment of these gifts and their correct use can be recognized to the extent to which they harmonize with the community commitment in the Institute and with the needs of the Church, as determined by legitimate authority...”[# 12]

“... Religious and their communities are called upon in the Church to give a visible testimony of their **total consecration to God**. This is **the fundamental option** of their Christian existence and the first objective to be attained in their distinctive way of life, whatever the specific character of their Institute, religious are, in fact, consecrated in order to proclaim publicly in the Church-sacrament that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes (LG 31)...” [# 14].

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**THE CONTEMPLATIVE DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE**, by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, March 1980 (20):

“...The contemplative dimension is basically a reality of grace, experienced by the believer as **God’s gift**. It enables persons to know the Father (cf. Jn 14:8) in the mystery of Trinitarian communion (cf. 1 Jn 1:3], so that they can enter *into the depths of God* (I Co 2:10). It is not the intention here to discuss the many and delicate aspects of different methods of contemplation, nor to analyze contemplation in so far as it is **an infused gift of the Holy Spirit**. We describe the contemplative dimension fundamentally as the theological response of faith, hope and charity, by which the believer opens up to the revelation and communication of the living God through Christ in the Holy Spirit, ‘The concentration of the regard of one’s heart on God, which we define as contemplation, becomes the highest and fullest activity of the spirit, the activity of which today, also, can and must order the immense pyramid of all human activities’ [Paul VI, Dec. 7, 1965].

“As the unifying act of all human movement towards God, the contemplative dimension is expressed by listening to and meditating on the Word of God; by participating in the divine life transmitted to us in the sacraments, particularly, the Eucharist; by liturgical and personal prayer; by the constant desire for God and the search for His Will in events and people; by the conscious participation in His salvific mission; by **self-giving to others** for the coming of the Kingdom. There results, in the religious, an attitude of continuous and humble adoration of God’s mysterious presence in people, events and things: an attitude which manifests the virtue of piety, an interior fount of peace and a person who brings peace to every sphere of life ad apostolate.

“All this is achieved in continual purification of heart, under the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that we can find God in all things and people and become ‘the praise of his glory’ [Ep 1:6].. The very nature of the consecrated life stands out in this way as the profound source which nourishes and unifies every aspect of the lives of religious...” [# 1].

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**THE CODE OF CANON LAW**, promulgated by Pope John Paul II, by the Apostolic Constitution, *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges*, January 25, 1983, [## 573-730] - this is its own study, with references to the Consecrated Life as a **Gift of the Spirit**, inspiring **the total self-gift** of those who enter it.

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**LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II TO UNITED STATES BISHOPS, ON PROBLEMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE**, April 3, 1983 (21):

“... Consecration is the basis of religious life. By insisting on this, the Church places the first emphasis on the initiative of God and on the transforming relation to him which religious life involves. Consecration is a divine action. God calls a person whom he sets apart for a **particular dedication to himself**. At the same time, he offers the grace to respond to that consecration is expressed on the human side by a **profound and free self surrender**. The resulting relationship is a pure gift. It is a covenant of mutual love and fidelity, of communion and mission, established for God’s glory, the joy of the person consecrated and the salvation of the world...” [# 5].

“... Jesus lived his own consecration precisely as Son of God: dependent on the Father, loving him above all and completely given to his will. These aspects of his life as Son are shared by all Christians. To some, however, for the sake of all, God gives the gift of a closer following of Christ in his poverty, chastity and obedience, through a public profession of these counsels mediated by the Church. This profession in imitation of Christ, manifests a particular consecration which is ‘rooted in that of baptism and is a fuller expression of it ‘ ( PC 5). The fuller expression recalls the hold of the divine person of the Word over the human nature which he assumed and it invites a response like that of Jesus: a dedication of oneself to God in a way which he alone makes possible and which witnesses to his holiness and absoluteness. Such a **consecration is a gift of God**, a grace freely given...” [# 7].

“... The identity (in religious consecration) derives from that **action of the Holy Spirit** which is the institute’s **founding gift** and which creates a particular type of spirituality, of life, of apostolate and of tradition [cf. MR 11]. Looking at the numerous families one is struck by **the wide variety of founding gifts**. The Council laid stress on the need to foster these as **so many gifts of God** (cf. PC 2 b). They determine the nature, spirit and purpose and character which form each institute’s spiritual patrimony, and they are basic to that sense of identity which is a key element in the fidelity of every religious (cf. ET 51)... [# 11].

“...It is proper, though not exclusive to religious life to profess the evangelical counsels by vows which the Church receives. These are a response to **the prior gift of God** which, being **a gift of love**, cannot be rationalized. It is something God himself works in the person chosen...” [# 13].

“... The vows themselves are specific: three ways of pledging oneself to live as Christ lived in areas which cover the whole of life: possessions, affections, autonomy. Each emphasizes a **relation to Jesus, consecrated and sent**. He was rich but he became poor for our sakes, emptying himself, and having nowhere to lay his head. He loved with an undivided heart, universally and to the end. He came to do the will of the Father who sent him, and he did it steadily, learning obedience through suffering and becoming a cause of salvation for all who obey...” [# 15].

“... When God consecrates a person, he gives a **special gift** to achieve his own kind purposes: the reconciliation and salvation of the human race. He not only chooses, sets apart and dedicates the person to himself, but engages him or her in his own divine work. Consecration inevitably implies mission. These are two facets of one reality. The choice of a person by God is for the sake of others: the consecrated person is one who is sent to do the work of God in the power of God. Jesus Himself was clearly aware of this. Consecrated and sent to bring the salvation of God, he was **wholly dedicated** to the Father in adoration, love and surrender, and **totally given** to the work of the Father which is the salvation of the world...” [# 23].

“... (The consecration of religious) calls for **the self-giving** without which it is not possible to live either a good community life, or a fruitful mission. Jesus’ statement that the grain of wheat needs to fall to the ground and die if it is to bear fruit, has a particular application to religious because of the public nature of the profession. It is true that much of today’s penance is to be found in the circumstances of life, and should be accepted there...” [# 31].

“... For each religious, formation is the process of becoming more and more a disciple of Christ, growing in union with, and in configuration to him. It is a matter of taking on increasingly the mind of Christ, of **sharing more deeply his gift of himself to the Father**, and his brotherly service of the human family, and of doing this according to the **founding gift** which mediates the Gospel to the members of a given religious institute. Such a process requires a genuine conversion. The ‘putting on Jesus Christ’ (cf. Rm 13:14; Ga 3:27; Ep 4:24) implies the stripping off of selfishness and egoism (cf. Ep 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10). The very fact of ‘waiting henceforth according to the Spirit’ means giving up ‘the desires of the flesh’ (Ga 5:15). The religious professes to make this putting on of Christ, in his poverty, his love and his obedience, the **essential pursuit of his life**. It is a pursuit that never ends. There is a constant maturing in it, and this reaches not only to spiritual values but also to the fullness of the human personality. The

religious grows toward the fullness of Christ according to his or her state of life..." [# 45].

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**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THE CHURCH'S TEACHING AS APPLIED TO INSTITUTES DEDICATED TO WORKS OF THE APOSTOLATE** May 31, 1983.(22).

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**REDEMPTIONIS DONUM**, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, to Men and Women Religious on their Consecration in the Light of the Mystery of Redemption. March 25, 1984 (23):

'... When Christ looked upon you and loved you', calling each one of you... that redeeming love of his was directed towards a particular person, and, at the same time, it took on **a spousal character**: it became **a love of choice**. This love embraces **the whole person**, soul and body, in that person's unique unrepeatable personal 'I.' The One who, **given eternally to the Father**, 'gives' himself in the mystery of Redemption, has now called man in order that he in his turn should **give himself entirely** to the work of Redemption through membership in a Community, of brothers and sisters, recognized and approved by the Church. Surely, it is precisely this call that St. Paul's words can be applied: 'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit..? You are not your own: you were bought with a price [I Co 6:19, f.]... Christ says: 'If you wish ...'. And the response to this call is, therefore, a free choice. You have chosen Jesus of Nazareth, the Redeemer of the world by choosing the way that he has shown you..." [# 3].

"... In this perspective the fundamental treasure of one's own humanity is connected to the fact of 'being', **by giving oneself**. The direct point of reference in such a vocation is the living person of Jesus Christ. The call to the way of perfection takes shape from him, and through him, in the Holy Spirit, who continually recalls to new people, men and women, at different times of their lives, but especially in their youth, all that Christ has said...The vocation in which a person discovers in depth **the evangelical law of giving**, a law inscribed in human nature, is itself a gift! It is a **gift overwhelming with the deepest content of the Gospel, a gift which reflects the divine and human image of the mystery of the Redemption** of the world..." [# 6].

"... Religious profession creates **a new bond**... In this way, religious profession is deeply rooted in baptismal consecration and is a fuller expression of it [PC 5]. In this way, religious profession in its constitutive content, becomes **a new**

**consecration**; the consecration and **giving of the human person to God**, loved above all else. The commitment undertaken by means of the vows to practice the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, according to the determinations proper to each religious family as laid down in the Constitutions is the expression of a **total consecration to God**, and, at the same time, the means that leads to its achievement. This is also the source of bearing witness and of exercising the apostolate..." [# 7].

"... In this form is contained **your answer to the call of redeeming love**, and it is also an **answer of love; a love of self-giving** which is the **heart of consecration**, of the consecration of the person. The words of Isaiah: 'I have redeemed you ... you are mine...' seem to seal precisely this love which is the **love of a total and exclusive consecration to God**. This is how the **special covenant of spousal love** is made, in which we seem to hear an unceasing oath of the words concerning Israel, whom the Lord 'has chosen as his own possession.' For in every consecrated person the Israel of the new and eternal Covenant is chosen. The whole messianic people, the entire Church, is chosen in every person whom the Lord selects from the midst of this people, in every person who is **consecrated for everyone to God as his exclusive possession...**" [# 8].

"... In this particular context of the Jubilee Year of the Redemption, let us then go back again to the mystery of the body and soul of Christ as the **complete subject of spousal and redemptive love**: spousal *because* redemptive. For love he offered himself, for love he gave his body for the sin of the world. By immersing yourselves in the Paschal Mystery of the Redeemer through the consecration of the religious vows, you desire, **through the love of total self-giving**, to fill your souls and your bodies with the spirit of sacrifice, even as St. Paul invites you to do in the words of the Letter to the Romans just quoted: 'to offer your bodies as a sacrifice' [Rm 12:1]. In this way, the likeness of that love which in the Heart of Christ is **both spousal and redemptive**, is imprinted on the religious profession.... this love is the beginning of **new life in Christ and the Church; it is the beginning of a new creation...**" [# 8].

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**LETTER TO UNITED STATES BISHOPS,** John Paul II, February 22, 1989 (24):

"... They are **at the heart of the mystery of the Church**; they **belong inseparably to her life and holiness**. They are called to a **radical living of the baptismal commitment** common to all [#2186].

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**DIRECTIVES ON FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES**, February 2, 1990 (25).

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**PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR THE 1994 SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Lineamenta** .

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**FRATERNAL LIFE IN COMMUNITY - Congregavit nos in Unum** February 2, 1994 (26).

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**C. The Principle of Totality:**  
**“The Thirst for the Divine Absolute’ of the Consecrated Life**

[cf. EN 69; VC 39] - John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, March 25, 1996: in this document, the challenge to live the “Principle of Totality” is multiplied:

“... In every age there have been men and women who, obedient to the Father’s call, and to the **prompting of the Spirit**, have chosen this special way of following Christ in order to **devote themselves to him with undivided heart** [cf. I Co 7:34]. Like the Apostles, they, too, have left everything in order to be with Christ and to put themselves as he did, at the service of God and their brothers and sisters...” [# 1].

“... the choice of **total self-giving to God in Christ** is in no way incompatible with any human culture or historical situation...” [# 2].

The consecrated life may experience further changes in its historical forms, but there will be no change in the substance of a choice which finds expression in a **radical gift of self** for the love of the Lord Jesus and, in him, of every member of the human family...” [# 3].

“... These new forms of consecrated life now taking their place along-side the older ones bear witness to the constant attraction which **the total gift of self to the Lord**, the ideal of the apostolic community and the founding charisms continue to exert, even on the present generation. They also show how the gifts of the Holy Spirit complement one another...” [# 12].

“... Many of the baptized throughout history have been invited to live such a life ‘in the image of Christ.’ But, this is possible only on the basis of a special vocation and in virtue of **a particular gift of the Spirit**. For, in such a life baptismal consecration develops into a **radical response** in the following of Christ through acceptance of the evangelical counsels, the first and essential of which is the sacred bond of chastity for the sake of the kingdom. This special way of following Christ, at the origin of which is always the initiative of the **Father**, has an essential **Christological** and **Pneumatological** meaning: it expresses in a vivid way the Trinitarian nature of the Christian life, and it anticipates in a certain way, that eschatological fulfillment toward which the whole church is tending..” [# 14].

“... ‘Lord, it is well that we are here!’ [Mt 17:14] ... These words bespeak the Christocentric orientation of the whole Christian life. But, they also eloquently express **the radical nature of the vocation to the consecrated life**: How good it is for us to be with You, to devote ourselves to You, to make **You the one focus of our lives!** Truly those who have been given the grace of this special communion of love with Christ feel as it were, caught up in His splendor: He is the fairest of the sons of men’[Ps 45:2], the one beyond compare...” [# 15].

“... ‘This is My Beloved Son!...The words from on high give new depth to the invitation by which Jesus himself at the beginning of his public life called them to follow him, to leave their ordinary lives behind and enter into a close relationship to him. It is precisely this special grace of intimacy which in the consecrated life makes possible and even demands the **total gift of self** in the profession of the evangelical counsels... In the consecrated life, then it is not only a matter of following Christ with **one’s whole heart**, of loving him more than father or mother, more than son or daughter’ [cf. Mt 10:37] - for this is the required of every disciple - but of living and expressing this **by conforming one’s whole existence to Christ in an all-encompassing commitment which foreshadows the eschatological perfection** to the extent that this is possible in time and in accordance with the different charisms...” [# 16].

“... Contemplation of the glory of the Lord Jesus in the icon of the Transfiguration reveals to consecrated persons first of all the Father, the Creator and Giver of every good thing who draws his creatures to himself [cf. Jn 6:44] with a special love and for a special mission. ‘This is my beloved Son: listen to him!’ [cf. Mt 17:5]. In response to this call and interior attraction which accompanies it, those who are called entrust themselves to the love of God who wishes them to be **exclusively at his service** and **they consecrate themselves totally to him and to his plan of salvation** [cf. I Co 7:32-34].

“This is the meaning of the call to the consecrated life: it is an initiative coming wholly from the Father [cf. Jn 15:16], who asks those whom he has chosen to **respond with complete and exclusive devotion**. The experience of this gracious love of God is so deep and so powerful that the person called senses the need to respond by unconditionally dedicating his or her life to God, **consecrating to him all things present and future, and placing them in his hands**. This is why, with Saint Thomas, we come to understand the identity of the consecrated person, beginning with his or her **complete self-offering, as being comparable to a genuine holocaust** [2-22, q. 186, a. 1]. [# 17;].

“...the practice of the evangelical counsels is also a particularly profound and fruitful way of sharing in Christ’s mission, in imitation of the example of Mary of Nazareth, the first disciple, who willingly put herself at the service of God’s plan **by the total gift of self**. ..” [cf. # 18; cf. all of ## 28 & 34 for the example of Mary’s totality].

“... The eyes of the Apostles are therefore fixed upon Jesus, who is thinking of the Cross [cf. Lk 9:43-45]. There his virginal love for the Father and for all mankind will attain its highest expression. His poverty will reach **complete self-emptying**, his obedience, **the giving of his life**... It is the contemplation of the Crucified Christ that all vocations find their inspiration. From that contemplation, together with **the primordial gift of the Spirit, all gifts, in particular, the gift of the consecrated life, take their origin**. After Mary, the Mother of Jesus, it is John who receives this gift. John is the disciple whom Jesus loved, the witness who together with Mary, stood at the foot of the Cross [cf. Jn 19:26,f.]. His decision to **consecrate himself totally** is the fruit of the divine love which envelops him and fills his heart...” [# 23].

“...the sense of mission is at the very heart of every form of consecrated life... To the extent that consecrated persons live **a life completely dedicated to the Father** [cf. Lk 2:49; Jn 4:34], held fast by Christ [cf. Jn 15:16; Ga 1:15-16] and animated by the Spirit [cf. Lk 24:49; Ac 1:8; 2:4], they cooperate effectively in the Mission of the Lord Jesus [cf. Jn 20:21]... Consecrated persons will be missionaries of having been called and chosen by God, to whom they must therefore direct and **offer everything that they are and have**, freeing themselves from the obstacles that could hinder the totality of their response...” [# 25].

“... Fundamental to every charism is a three-fold orientation: ... charisms lead to the Father in **the filial desire to seek his will**, through a process of unceasing conversion...the attitude [mind] of consecrated persons... is progressively conformed to Christ... Finally, every charism leads to the Holy Spirit, insofar as it

prepares individuals to let them be guided and sustained by him, both in their personal spiritual journeys, and in the lives of communion and apostolic work, in order to embody that **attitude of service** which should inspire the true Christian's every choice..." [# 36].

"... All consecrated persons by practicing **the evangelical discipleship**, commit themselves to fulfilling the Lord's 'new commandment' to love one another as he has loved us [cf. Jn 13:34] Love **led Christ to the Gift of Self**, even to the supreme sacrifice of the Cross, So, too, among his disciples, there can be no true unity without that unconditional mutual love which demands a readiness to serve others generously, a willingness to welcome them as they are without judging them [cf. Mt 17:1-2] and an ability to forgive seventy times seven..." [Mt 18:22] [# 42].

"...Consecrated men and women are sent forth to proclaim by the witness of their lives the value of Christian fraternity and the transforming power of the Good News, which makes it possible to see all people as sons and daughters of God and **inspires a self-giving love** toward everyone, especially the least of our brothers and sisters. Such communities are places of hope and of discovering of the beatitudes.." [# 51].

## CONCLUSION

With a rich and varied vocabulary, the Universal Magisterium of this "New Advent" has emphasized repeatedly that the Consecrated Life is truly a Gift of the Spirit. The witness that the Church needs most of all is that of the challenge to answer as totally as Jesus Christ did to His Father's Mission in the Holy Spirit:

1. The Consecrated Life is based on God's own salvific Self-communication, His divine self-giving. The Life is a gift through grace, from One eternally given to His Father in the Holy Spirit.
2. The Consecrated life is presented as "this special gift" - a call of the Holy Spirit, that places Church members side by side with her **martyrs**. This gift has been raised up in the Church - this experience of the Holy Spirit is meant to be the fundamental option for all who embrace it. It is a unique gift of God's love, offering a special relationship with the Jesus Christ, consecrated and sent.
3. The following are some of the many expressions to challenge the full living of the gospel life - through a '**Principle of Totality**' - asked of all the baptized. The Consecrated Life is presented as a way imitating **Christ's own life with His Apostles, a truly radical discipleship**, living all through life the evangelical law of **self-giving**; a **truly radical living of Baptism**; a **living of evangelical discipleship**:



- a progressively fuller configuration to Jesus Christ;
- an expression of devotion to God alone, through the mind of Jesus Christ;
- a total dedication to God and the Church;
- the living of the transcendental perspective;
- a gift of one's entire self to God;
- complete self sacrifice, of one's whole existence;
- giving oneself up for God and His plan;
- the sacrifice of one's whole existence to God and His people;
- the surrender of one's total existence;
- an entire commitment to God;
- a spousal gift of self in service;
- exclusive belonging to God;
- the giving of oneself exclusively to God;
- wholly dedicated, totally given;
- the essential pursuit of one's whole life;
- total and exclusive self-giving
- a whole, specific and exclusive gift of self;
- self- immolation lived as the soul of sacrifice;
- the giving of oneself entirely to the One Who gives of Himself eternally;
- a love of choice by the whole person;
- a gift overwhelming with the deepest content of the Gospel;
- a gift reflecting the divine and human image of the mystery of Redemption;
- a new bond, a total consecration, giving the human person to God as His possession;
- the answer to the call of redeeming love;
- the heart of consecration: an answer to the love of Christ's self-giving;
- the love of a total and exclusive consecration to God;
- a special covenant of spousal love;
- consecrated for everyone to God as his exclusive possession;
- complete subject of spousal and redemptive love of total self-giving;
- new life in Christ, in the Church, the beginning of a new Creation;
- unconditional dedication, consecrating all, present and future;
- complete self-offering, a genuine holocaust;
- the oblation of all that one is and has.

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4. On March 22, 1995, Pope John Paul II dedicated his Catechetical Instruction through his Wednesday audience to “The Influence of the Holy Spirit in the Consecrated Life” (27). In the course of this instruction, the Holy Father presented many insights that offer a good conclusion to these reflections.

a. Pope John Paul II stated that the spirituality of the commitment of the religious life is to be understood in the strongest sense of that word, meaning that it is meant to be an orientation bestowed by the Holy Spirit Himself. The Holy Spirit is the author of every interior progress, and the Giver of every grace in the Church [cf. LG 44; PC 1]. The living of the consecrated life flows from the sovereign and decisive action of the Holy Spirit, that the consecrated persons might experience in ineffable manner a certain created connaturality of divine charity - quoting St. Thomas Aquinas [2-2, q.45, a.2].

b. It is the Holy Spirit Who develops in the secret of each soul the grace of vocation - He is the principal Educator of vocations - it is He Who guides the consecrated souls to perfection - He is the author of magnanimity, of patience, of the fidelity of each one. If allowed, the Holy Spirit exercises His influence in the formation of candidates to the consecrated life.

c. It is the Holy Spirit Who arouses within human beings the inspiration of **a radical donation to Jesus Christ** - it is He Who is at the origin of a more immediate relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit as the effect of the evangelical counsel of chastity [cf. PI 13]. It is the Spirit who exercises His permanent influence in order to bring about perseverance of those consecrated in prayer and in the life of intimate union with Jesus Christ. It is the breath of the Holy Spirit Who animates the Apostolic Mission of the Consecrated Life of community. Those living the consecrated life are called up to live a Holy Abandonment to His initiative.

d. This is the challenge of the Holy Spirit for the consecrated life, for those living it, and who are engaged in its apostolic mission as the dawn of the Third Millennium rapidly approaches. The consecrated life is a very special path to realize the ideal of the Second Vatican Council: “... The ‘obedience of faith’ [Rm. 16:26; cf. Rm 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6] must be given to God as he reveals himself. By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making ‘the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals’, and willing assenting to the Revelation given by him..” [DV 5].

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**END NOTES**

- [1] Pope Pius XII, Allocution, in: AAS XLV [1953], pp. 674, f. - cited in *Humanae Vitae* note 21.
- [2] Pope Pius XII, Allocution, in: AAS XLVIII [1956], pp. 461, ff. - cited in HV, note 21.
- [3] cf. Jordan F. Hite, TOR, in: *The Code of Canon Law and Commentary. Commissioned by the Canon Law Society of America. Study Edition. "Title Two: Religious Institutes. Canons & Commentary. Edited by James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, Donald E. Heintschel. NY/Mahwah. Paulist 1985, p. 470.*
- [4] Amadeo Cenci, *Spirito Santo e vita consecrata*, in: *Osservatore Romano*. sabato 21 gennaio 1998, p. 1.
- [5] Pope John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation - March 25, 1996.
- [6] St. Augustine, *The Trinity. The Works of St. Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century. Introduction, Translation and Notes.* Edmund Hill, OP. ed. John E. Rotelle, OSA, Brooklyn NY 1991.
- [7] Book IV, c. 5, n. 29, p. 174.
- [8] cf. Note 94, p. 184.
- [9] *The Trinity.* o.c., Book V, c. 3, n. 12, p. 197.
- [10] ib., n. 16, pp. 199, ff.
- [11] ib. Fr. Hill's Note 52, p. 204.
- [12] ib., Book V, c. 3, nn. 17, ff., pp. 416, passim.
- [13] *I Sentences*, d. 18; *Summa* I, q. 38, aa. 1-2.
- [14] cf. *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 10, ## 448-631. cf. Fabio Giardini, OP, *Il Dio che ci dà la vita.* Milano: Ed. Ancora 1989.

[15] *Your Spirit, Lord, fills the Earth*. Prepared by the Theological-Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, chapter I: “The Mediation of the Spirit in the Trinity and in Salvation”, n. 3.

[16] Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, ***Redemptor Hominis***, 1st Sunday of Lent, March 4, 1979, n. 1.

[17] Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, ***Tertio Millennio Adveniente***. November 10, 1994, n. 23.

[18] *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*. Volume 2. General Editor Austin Flannery, OP, Document 53, pp. 680-706.

[19] cf. ***Mutuae Relationes***, in: ***Vatican Council II. More Post-Conciliar Documents***. General Editor Austin Flannery, OP, Vol. II, Document 92 pp. 209-243.

[20] *More Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. 2, Document 93, pp. 244-289.

[21] cf. ***Enchiridion Vaticanum***, Vol. 9, ## 184-296.

[22] cf. *EV* 9, ## 193-293.

[23] cf. *EV* 9, pp. 694-759 [## 721-758].

[24] cf. *EV* 11, ## 2160-2190.

[25] cf. *EV* 12, pp. 2-139 - especially ## 6-18, “Religious Consecration.”

[26] cf. *EV* 14, ## 345 - 357.

[27] cf. *La vita consecrata. La Catechesi di Giovanni Paolo II, dal 28 settembre 1994 al 22 [29] marzo 1995. Introduzione di S. Em. il Cardinale Eduardo Martinez Somalo*, in: *Quaderni de l'Osservatore Romano*, n. 27. Città del Vaticano: Libreria Vaticana 1995, pp. 98-101, passim.

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