

**A GOD TO PRAY TO AND A GOD TO HOPE IN**

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## **Presentation**

I appreciate the invitation to participate in this National Week for Consecrated Life. During this Year of Faith it is a privilege for me to be able to share with you my experience of God as a believer and religious in an apostolic institute. The title of my contribution is “A God to pray to and a God to hope in”, thought-provoking and challenging because it unites faith and hope.

I begin with the personal encounter with Jesus Christ. In Him we find the profound significance of our life. He gives meaning to all that we are, all that we do, and all that we suffer.

In the first part, “A God to pray to”, I speak of this encounter made possible in prayer and prolonged in life.

In the second part, “A God to hope in”, I present an itinerary with the intention of illustrating the hope that exists in extreme human situations in believers who have freely given of their lives in order to be associated with Jesus. I conclude this section with a look at today’s religious life so that we might uncover the reason for our hope, our capacity to generate hope in others.

Lastly as a conclusion I endeavor to present the reason behind this compound theme: A God to pray to and to hope in.

### **1. My encounter with Jesus the Christ, God incarnate**

Before I begin to share with you, I would like to make some brief personal remarks. I am Japanese, so I come from a non-Christian culture within a country whose Catholic population is a very small minority. I came to know Jesus Christ in our school, and I was baptized as an adult. It can be assumed that my faith did not come by birth but rather was a gift offered to me in freedom.

From the moment I encountered Christianity, there was something which attracted my attention: the Christian God is a personal and intimate God who not only sent prophets to speak of Him, who not only wants us to act ethically. Our God is also a God who has disclosed Himself to us, not only by words, but also by making himself part of human history. The Word was made flesh (Jn. 1:14). This is the great uniqueness which Christianity contributes but which, because it is so evident, Western European culture with its Christian roots sometimes misses.

Our God is not an abstract God. He is the Father of Jesus the Christ. I remember very well that when I was a novice, the Directress of Novices told us one day:

“For those of us who are from a non-Christian country, but with great sensitivity to things religious and sacred, there is a danger that we might relate only to a good God, to a transcendental existence. We might not place ourselves in relationship to the God who manifested Himself in Jesus Christ.” I was immediately taken with this idea, and it has frequently helped me to move toward that encounter, to live through Him, with Him, and in Him.

Our God has a human face. He calls us friends. He died for us and wants us to celebrate the Eucharist in His memory, and in that same memory to live in communion with Him. He seeks us and calls us to collaborate freely in his project of salvation. He has made us essential for the building of the Kingdom. Our God is a God who gives us grace to abide in Him. (Jn. 15)

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in his encyclical, *God Is Love*, wrote: “...being Christian is not the result of an ethical decision or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a Person which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.... Since God has first loved us (cf. I Jn. 4:10), love is no longer a mere ‘command’; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.”<sup>1</sup>

It is only as a result of this personal encounter with Jesus the Christ -- and I emphasize the experience of the encounter

sought after and continued in our life -- that we may speak of a God to pray to and to hope in.

## **2. A God to pray to**

### **2.1. To pray is an act of faith**

To pray is to confess that God is here with us. We pray because we hope in God who acts. It is an expression of our capacity to transcend ourselves. We are led to a place “we do not know”. In prayer we renounce efficiency. We do not take the lead. He alone is Lord; we are allowing ourselves to be transformed. Listening to the Word is what forms and transforms us. We pray to God as God’s creature, small in His presence, conscious that without Him we can do nothing. Prayer is a confession of faith.

To pray implies a choice: To what and to whom do I dedicate my time, my scarcest commodity right now? In everyday language, we say: “We make time for what we like”. We dedicate time to one whom we love; hence the commitment to prayer describes Whom we love and Who possesses our heart. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be.

Prayer is also the primordial and essential place for our apprenticeship in hope.<sup>2</sup> Hope is born of faith and nourished in prayer, created out of listening to God’s Word and adoration of God’s Presence in the Eucharist, in history, in our sisters and brothers. Only with His Heart as our source, might we feel, love and see as He does, from His viewpoint, Then in our relationships with others we are able to restore personal dignity

We pray because we hope in Him, because we have the certainty that He comes to us, He fulfils his promise to be with us. I would like to express this experience through the lovely poetry of Tagore:

*Don't you hear his silent footsteps? He comes, he comes,  
he always comes*

*In every instant and in every age, every day and every night.*

*He comes, he comes, he always comes.*

*I have sung many songs and in a thousand ways*

*but the notes were always saying:*

*He comes, he comes, he always comes.*

*In the fragrant days of sunny April*

*through the green forest. He comes, he comes, he always comes.*

*In the dark and rainy anguish of July nights*

*above the thunderous carriage of the clouds. he comes, he comes, he always comes.*

*From one pain of mine to the next, his footsteps are the ones which press upon my heart and the golden glow of his feet is what makes my joys shine...<sup>3</sup> [trans. Kathleenjoy Cooper, acj]*

## **2.2. The new gaze which is born of contemplation**

As I was thinking of the expression “a God to pray to”, I remembered the speech of Rowan Williams in the Synod on *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, in which I was privileged to participate. Williams was at that time Primate of the Anglican Church. He said that Jesus was contemplative, and he invited us to fix our gaze on the light of God in the Christ, to contemplate God’s face. For this Archbishop of Canterbury, “contemplation is the key to the essence of a renewed humanity capable of seeing the world with freedom... [contemplation] is an intrinsic element in the process of transformation.” It is true that when we contemplate Jesus, when we pray, we allow ourselves to be transformed by Him. Jesus renews us and frees us from our egoisms and prejudices in order to be able to see the world with God’s eyes.

Rowan Williams proposes questions which are a genuine challenge for each one of us who desires to make of our life a deep encounter with God. He asks:

“Do we look anxiously at the problems of our day, the varieties of unfaithfulness or the threat to faith and morals, the weakness of the institution? [Do we gaze anxiously?] Or are we seeking Jesus, the revealed face of the image of God, in the light of which we see that image further reflected in ourselves and in our neighbors?”<sup>4</sup>

Williams proposes two ways of facing reality. One way, which begins with ourselves, is a gaze which takes in reality with anxiety, weighed down by its harshness. A second way of gazing is born of contemplating Jesus as image of the Father. With his light we are brought to recognize his image in our very selves and also in the persons with whom we live and work. It is only when we center our heart on Jesus that we will rejoice in our own being and in that of others.

This is the very experience which Ignatian spirituality calls “contemplation in action”, which brings us to recognize God in all things. In prayer we find that light which helps us to discover God in other human beings and in events, as well as the strength to respond to the calls which are made to us through our sisters and brothers. In continual union with the Christ, prayer becomes apostolic and our apostolic service an encounter with God.<sup>5</sup>

The British archbishop’s speech deeply impressed the participants in the Synod, because his “Message for the People of God” speaks of contemplation together with closeness to the poor as an expression of the life of faith of the New Evangelization. It emphasizes that “a testimony that the world would consider credible can arise only from an adoring gaze at the mystery of God, only from the deep silence that receives the unique, saving Word like a womb.”<sup>6</sup> I myself am struck by the fact that when he reflected upon the New Evangelization, he placed so much emphasis on contemplation.

### 3. A God to hope in

#### 3.1. Hope in extreme situations

In extreme experiences, where there appears to be no solution, in which our most radical human fragility remains so much in evidence, there arises mysteriously the strength of a hope which allows our possibilities of life to open.

This strength is grounded in love, with very diverse expressions, but it is what can give us reason to hope. I would like to cite two events which substantiate these words.

As you recall, two years ago Japan was affected by the terrible earthquake and tsunami, followed by a nuclear accident. People lost everything, their land, their town, their home, their neighbors, loved ones. From night to morning their lives changed completely. Nevertheless, in that extreme situation, those women and men experienced great hope because of the arrival of many volunteers. The volunteers immediately began to clear out debris, to prepare hot meals, to invent provisional ways to bathe and shower, and above all, they remained at the side of those persons, listening to them, sharing in their sufferings. Hope was born from this gesture of solidarity.

Quite some time ago I read the book, *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl, the famous Jewish psychologist who lived for some years in the Auschwitz concentration camp. What most impressed me in his writings is his story of a prisoner who put up with that terrible situation and survived the concentration camp but who committed suicide when he was liberated and returned to his homeland and learned that his wife and children had been killed. That prisoner had been able to overcome so many misfortunes by thinking about his joyful reunion with his loved ones. Yet in the face of that loss he could find no strength to live and despaired completely.<sup>7</sup>

These stories tell us that hope comes through the presence of someone who remembers you, who is interested in

you and who lets you know that “You and your happiness are important to me”, in particular in difficult times. It is a hope which gives us peace, a serenity which reaches the very depths of our heart and gives us a reason for living.

### **3.2. Witnesses of Hope**

We do find persons and communities among us Catholics who are capable of being focused on God to the very end, to that point where our human expectations end and faith alone remains. For us, these witnesses are people of hope who by their very lives point us toward the Giver of all hope.

Let us recall the community of the seven Trappist priests murdered in Algeria on May 21, 1996. They chose to remain in Algeria in spite of the threats of violence. They had placed themselves in the midst of the Algerian people as brothers to all. As a result of their freedom and their faith, their assassination transformed them as they surrendered their lives for the sake of the Algerian people. They lived and died in communion with Jesus the Christ. Consequently they have become witnesses of hope. I cite here the words, the final testament of Christian, the prior of the community:

“If it should happen to me one day — and it could be today – that I become a victim of the terrorism which now seems ready to engulf all the foreigners living in Algeria, I would like my community, my Church, and my family to remember that my life was GIVEN to God and to this country. I ask them to accept the fact that the one Master of all life was not a stranger to this brutal departure. I would ask them to pray for me: for how could I be found worthy of such an offering?”<sup>8</sup>

The life of Cardinal F.X. Nguyen Van Thuan is impressive, too. He was named coadjutor archbishop of Saigon in 1975, and

detained and imprisoned for thirteen years under the Communist regime in his country, Vietnam.

He exercised his Episcopal ministry as a prisoner by sharing the Word of God with his companions in suffering and in this way was a channel of strength and hope for them. He used to say: “Lord, it is true that my cathedral is here, for the people you have given me to care for are right here. I must assure the presence of God in the midst of these miserable and desperate brothers. It is Your will, hence it is my choice.”<sup>9</sup>

He was freed in 1989 and some years later John Paul II named him President of the Justice and Peace Commission. He worked untiringly in favor of immigrants and refugees throughout the world.

In the self-gift of these believers we can recognize the same gesture as that of our Master: loving to the extreme. That is why they are an unequivocal sign of hope for Religious Life in our times.

### **3.3. Hope in this time of “Minus” in Religious Life**

Turning now to this situation of scarcity, I want to first go to the Gospel—to what is called the “crisis of Galilee”.

In the first part of the public life of Jesus, a multitude is following him. That young Teacher speaks with authority; his word convinces. There are signs which accompany Him. His person awakens enthusiasm. However, a there comes a time when Jesus begins to ask for total adherence to Him, without any loopholes. The demands of this following contradict the expectations of the followers and of what is “politically correct”. People begin to desert Jesus. He faces this situation and questions them.

Let us recall the text: “From then on, many of his disciples left him and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the Twelve: ‘Will you also go away?’ Simon Peter answered him:

‘Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We know and we have believed that you are the Holy One of God’.” (Jn. 6:66-69)

I don't know whether this situation speaks to you too. In our environment we feel disillusioned, we lack spiritual vigor; we are discouraged in the face of pastoral results. All of us feel: “Lord we have been toiling all night long and we have caught nothing.” (Lk. 5:5). And Jesus asks us this question too: “Will you also go away?”

We are tempted to “abandon” Him. Although we may remain where we are physically, we make ourselves comfortable in our world. These words are too difficult, and we lead watered-down lives.

In one of my visits to the provinces of Spain, I met an older Sister with a great deal of missionary experience currently living in one of our infirmaries. This Sister continues to reveal an ardent apostolic spirit. She asked me: “Inmaculada, aren't you concerned about the future of the congregation, seeing that we are becoming weaker, older, and are receiving fewer vocations? “

At first, I wanted to evade her question, but her insistence obliged me to express my stance in regard to the future of our mission. It is the very same question which a large majority of the participants in religious life are asking ourselves. This is my reply: “I am not as worried about our numbers, as I am about our living in mediocrity.” I truly believe this. I would be happy to have more young people and a greater number of Sisters with strength and energy. However, the quality of our lives matters much more to me than the number of Sisters. Although a group might be small, if all its members live and work with fervor, passion, and joy, that Institute is valuable and has a worthwhile existence in the Church. When my congregation began, it had very few Sisters; however, they were on fire with love for Jesus Christ. They were united and happy; at that point they began to grow. I feel that the only future we can depend upon is a future which we are constructing now.

At this time in which we are living we can read our own reality through statistics, results, a glance at what is apparent: aging, lack of vocations, less esteem for the call to consecrated life. At times we find ourselves dispersed over many tasks; we become self-centered in small things. In religious life, these things produce disillusion and lack of spiritual vigor....

No one can change reality for us. None of us can free ourselves from the influence of this perception of contemporary religious life. However, another response is fitting, another reading, a look which takes us beyond the immediate, one which the Gospel narrative itself gives us; it comes from Peter, a man like us. He himself was caught between the love of Jesus and his own desires of greatness and worldly leadership. He needed to undergo the process of allowing himself to be transformed by a greater love capable of welcoming his weakness and limits: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have known and have believed that you are the Holy One of God."

Peter's reply speaks to us not only of why we do not leave, but above all, of why we remain. It is a realistic confession of faith, arising from one whose life had been touched to the depths. Peter knows, and knows by experience that nobody except Jesus has the Word of eternal life. Only He can give meaning to poverty and to irrelevance, to failure and to diminishment. No one else can sustain our hope, only God, our Hope.

I would like to quote Father Arrupe. His person and his fidelity is an eloquent testimony of hope. In this simple prayer he expresses very beautifully the meaning of religious life, the reason behind all that we are and do.

"Nothing is more practical than encountering God;  
than loving Him absolutely and till the end.

The One with Whom you have fallen in love  
and who takes over your imagination  
will affect everything.

He will determine what you do  
when you get up in the morning,  
what you do with your afternoons,  
how you spend your weekends,  
what you read and whom you know.  
what breaks your heart  
and what fills you  
with surprise, with joy, with gratitude.  
Fall in love; stay in love  
and this will decide everything.<sup>10</sup>

This prayer is beautiful. It is the witness of a religious in love with Jesus the Christ and totally given over to Him and to His cause.

### **3.4. Hope as synonym for Meaning**

For us, too, the goal is to seek and find the meaning of our religious life here and now, to read its history in these years, to discern what it is time for and how the Lord wants us to live.

I began to think about this in particular as I listened to an African bishop in the Synod. Each day began with prayer, and after the reading of a bible passage, some bishops shared their meditation upon the passage with us. One day it was a Latin American bishop, another day an Asian.... When it was the African bishop's turn, he spoke of the current situation of the Church. He said that the Catholic Church is going through a difficult time. It is discouraged by the scandals which it has undergone. The faithful are leaving the Church. We have lost credibility in society. In this situation we are now called to live very aware of what we need to be in the midst of this world. He added that it will help us to think how we would like future Catholics to speak of us contemporary Catholics.

We can apply this suggestion to our religious life. How would we like future religious or lay persons to speak of us? How would we like people to remember us, the religious who are living

in 2013? What footprints would we have to leave in the history of religious life?

Looking at religious life in its totality and recent history, I think that the majority of us share a process in common. For example, many Sisters of my institute belong to a generation which has lived through several major changes in the Church and in our Institute. They entered the congregation before Vatican Council II. After this ecclesial event, the way of living religious life changed a great deal. Every institute made an enormous effort to respond with fidelity to the call of the Church to renew religious life. At that point there was enthusiasm to begin a new era. There was hope. Then we lived through some years of confusion and pain as many of our Sisters left the Institute. Vocations began to decrease, and now we are in a difficult place: few vocations, aging, the closing of various works and communities. After fifty years of living Vatican Council II, we no longer experience the enthusiasm and excitement with which we undertook the renewal of religious life.

However, living through this, our moment in history, has meaning. The challenge is to live it in depth. Difficulties are also opportunities. God awaits us in them.

What meaningful word, then, can religious life offer today?

- In a secularized and relativizing world we wish to be women and men with full and happy human lives fulfilled through self-gift as a response to God, the Absolute in our lives. We wish to have a loving and committed gaze upon reality, because our world and our history are inhabited by God.
- In a world which lives for appearance and success, which values what is immediate and efficient, we wish to be women and men who give Gospel witness to what is gratuitous and small, who offer altruistic service, who show concern for what is socially irrelevant, who are faithful each day and always.

- In a superficial world, saturated with information and permanently connected, but incapable of authentic communication, we wish to restore human words and human gestures capable of creating dialog and authentic encounter.
- In a world which is moved by the temporary and productive, we wish to be women and men who offer the life experience of their action “not as wearing oneself out” but as being sent on the task of Mission -- a place where one encounters the source of one’s being: the Lord of the Mission.
- In a world divided we wish to offer witness to universality where diversity is welcome.
- In a globalized world which excludes and tends to eliminate differences, we wish to be women and men who live as the sign of communion and hope and who constitute a pluricultural and pluriracial religious community.
- In a world obsessed by the search for prestige and power, we wish to offer a religious life with a solid identity which does not renounce its prophetic and charismatic character for the sake of gaining social relevance.

Will future generations remember us in these ways?

### **3.5. Hope born of Gratitude**

Will you permit me as a general superior to offer you my personal witness of hope in the mission that the Church and the Institute have given me? The source which nourishes my hope is gratitude.

My gratitude is awakened as I recognize the gift which religious life is, its enormous reserve of humanity and spirituality that identifies each of our religious congregations.

Gratitude for the gift of the charism placed at the service of the Church and of the world, which has enabled and continues to enable many persons and peoples to achieve their rights and their human dignity as persons and children of God.

Gratitude for our older Sisters and those who are ill, who live with physical pain and inactivity. In *Spe Salve*, Benedict XVI wrote: “The greatness of humanity is determined especially by its relationship with suffering and with the one who suffers.”<sup>11</sup> These Sisters are witnesses of how to live with suffering which is united with Jesus’ suffering. They pray for the Church and for the Institute; it is the way in which they genuinely participate in our mission. They are witnesses of faith, of fidelity and of the greatness of humanity.

Gratitude for the bravery and generosity of the Sisters who are on the frontiers with “those who suffer”, and at times are risking their very lives, and gratitude for those who respond to the world’s pain with sensitivity and affection towards the poorest and most vulnerable.

Gratitude for the Sisters who work in schools. They do so enthusiastically in spite of the hard work entailed in education, in spite of how demanding their work is. They keep going, without hesitating in their efforts to seek and find new and creative structures to continue our education with the laity.

I look at my congregation and I can ponder this service with hope and with the certainty that there is a future for us because there is passion and self-gift in the Sisters. I was able to confirm this sense as I wrote my “Report on the State of the Institute” for our last General Congregation. I was also very aware of this truth during the visit which I made recently to two provinces in Spain.

I think that we need a more profound gaze upon life, a gaze which recognizes and appreciates what we are and does not allow us to become paralyzed in the face of what we cannot do. This grateful gaze is bound to repair our self esteem. If we do not feel that our life is worthwhile, it will not be easy for us to

be happy. Still less will we be able to awaken in others the call to our life.

Gratitude that we are alive at this time in the history of religious life. From my own limited perception, I can see that something new has already been born among us, and it is growing.

We are fewer in number now, but we are more capable of seeking out and working with others. We have no need to see ourselves as socially relevant. We have become more human because we are constantly in touch with our personal and institutional weakness. Being in touch with such reality, far from depressing us, lifts us up to recognize the primacy of God in our lives. We continue to learn to walk humbly with our God. This hope which is being born is called humility.

Vocations are on the increase in some areas of the world, especially in Asia and Africa. The face of the Institute is changing. It is a challenge and at the same time a hope. Our Institutes are now more international and intercultural than ever. It is a joy to see how founders' charisms are increasingly taking root in different contexts in the world.

I am convinced, as the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* says, that "Not only do we have a glorious history to remember and recount but also a great history to construct!"<sup>12</sup>

The Holy Spirit who brought about our institutes guides our history and is acting in each institute with transforming energy. We do not know when or how; we cannot control this action. The important thing is to believe in it. I remember very well a point about the Holy Spirit made by the Anglican archbishop to whom I referred. "When we pray to the Holy Spirit, are we aware that we are asking that the Third Person of the Holy Trinity come to us?"<sup>13</sup> Let us continue to implore Him with this awareness and in faith. We have to collaborate with the Spirit.

### 3.6. Religious Life as a Profession of Hope

Religious life professes hope because it has been born as a response to the One who persevered until the end. With Him and through Him we too will persevere. Our fidelity is sustained by His fidelity. We are faithful because God is faithful. “Let us keep firm in the confession of hope, since He who made the promise is faithful.” (Heb. 10:23).

We are called through faith to recognize this time in which God dwells. The Gospel of Luke proclaims that in Jesus the Kingdom has arrived, the promise of salvation has been fulfilled today. The term “today” is an expression frequently used by Saint Luke, as it is very dear to him:

- In the words of the angel:  
*“Today in the city of David, there is born to you a Savior who is Messiah and Lord.”* (Lk. 2:11).
- In Jesus’ words in the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading Isaiah’s prophecy:  
*“Today this passage is fulfilled in your presence”.* (Lk. 4:21).
- Prior to the conversion of Zaccheus:  
*“Today salvation has come to this house, for he is also a son of Abraham.”* (Lk. 19:9).
- Lastly, the words of Jesus on the cross, to the “good thief”:  
*“I assure you that this day you will be with me in paradise.”* (Lk. 23:24).

We believe that every time is a time of salvation. From the moment in which Jesus entered our history, it is a history of salvation. Today this Good News is being fulfilled. The present time in which we live is our opportunity, our “kairos”. Will we be capable of recognizing and welcoming the grace which is given to us in this time? Will our faith be capable of engendering hope?

It is impossible for us to make a confession of faith without having examined our hope. The future of Religious Life is intimately linked with our hope and with our ability to engender hope in others.

This self-examination begins by recognizing the source from which our hope is nurtured. This source is none other than the gift received in the call to Religious Life. Today it is necessary as the apostle Paul tells us: "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God which you received." (2 Tim. 1:6)

As we hear this invitation which Paul extends to his friend, Timothy, we are reminded that we too need to encourage one another mutually, that our communities need to become spaces which strengthen our experience of this gift. We need to rekindle the gift which each of us has received. The gift is to be found in our first call and has been enriched throughout our entire history of being in Love with Him who has always loved us first.

We are invited to experience our aliveness, deeply permeated by the abundance of his Love. This very Love impels us to show God's gift to today's world. It is by this Love that we are chosen and sent to announce the God of Life and do it as a profession of our hope.

#### **4. A God to pray to and to hope in**

The Easter liturgy which we are celebrating during these days places before us the stories of the Apparitions of the Risen Lord. In them we contemplate the God who is seeking us and we experience once again our condition of being "seekers who are being sought". The stories are a paradigm of how God continually goes in search of the human being, and at the same time an expression of the desire which resides in every human soul. We do seek God even though sporadically. This search reaches its definitive meaning in Jesus the Christ. In Him, God and the human being have found each other.

In these stories the common denominator is the Lord's initiative in the search. Let us examine the stories of the apparition to the apostles. Jesus goes in search of them because they are lost in the most literal and deepest sense. He has to search for them. They have dispersed; they have abandoned the community and gone into hiding. He begins the search and

discloses once again what kind of Heart beats within Him. "I have come to search for that which is lost" (Lk. 19:10).

The Presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of the disciples allows them to experience His role as Consoler.<sup>14</sup>

He searches for them in their fears, in what is blocked and in despair within them. It turns out to be the very Presence of the Lord which fills them with peace and joy and restores their hope.

Now let us contemplate the beautiful narratives of the apparition to the women. Mary Magdalene's story in particular is very poignant. The women had remained at the foot of the cross. They had witnessed the burial of Jesus and, without giving it a second thought or considering the consequences, they go to anoint the Lord's body on the first day of the week. They are looking among the dead, but He is not there. He reaches out to them in their pain and darkness, and as a result of His Presence, their [despair] becomes hope. They themselves are the first witnesses to the Resurrection. We have seen the Lord!

All of us, too -- we have seen the Lord! We live with the certainty of this Presence which urges us to seek God, the God to whom we pray and the God in whom we hope. This encounter, sought and awaited, gives meaning to our lives and sustains our hope. From this encounter Mission is born.

Religious Life welcomes the mandate of the Risen One, and with the strength of His Spirit is sent to elicit hope from others: by healing wounds, by repairing breaches, by sowing family spirit among people. By its very life, Religious Life announces this encounter with Jesus the Christ, the Living God.

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- <sup>1</sup> BENEDICT XVI. Encyclical: *Deus Caritas Est*. Rome, 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2005, n. 1.
- <sup>2</sup> BENEDICT XVI. Encyclical: *Spe Salvi*. Rome, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2007, n. 32.
- <sup>3</sup> TAGORE, Rabindranath. *Ofrenda lírica*. Madrid: Ed. Aguilar, 1975.
- <sup>4</sup> WILLIAMS, Rowan. "Intervention in the Synod of Bishops". Rome, 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2012.
- <sup>5</sup> Cfr. Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. *Constitutions*, 9.
- <sup>6</sup> "Final Message of the Synod of Bishops." Rome, October, 2012, n. 12.
- <sup>7</sup> FRANKL, Viktor E. *El hombre en busca de sentido*. Barcelona: Ed. Herder, 1986.
- <sup>8</sup> OLIVERA, Dom. Bernardo, OCSO. *Martirio y Consagración*. Madrid: Ed. Publicaciones Claretianas, 2011.
- <sup>9</sup> NGUYEN, F.X. Van Thuan. *Cinco panes y dos peces*. Madrid: Ed. Ciudad Nueva, 2000.
- <sup>10</sup> GARCÍA, José Antonio. *Orar con el Padre Arrupe*. Bilbao: Ed. Mensajero, 2007, p. 117.
- <sup>11</sup> BENEDICT XVI. Encyclical: *Spe Salvi*. Rome, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2007, n. 38.
- <sup>12</sup> JOHN PAUL II. Apostolic Exhortation: *Vita Consecrata*. Rome, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1996, n. 110.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. WILLIAMS, Rowan.
- <sup>14</sup> Cfr. S. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, n. 224.