



## Archdiocese of Lagos

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### **LIVING EPISTLES: CONSECRATED LIVES, TESTIMONIES OF GOD'S GRACE**

#### **To all Consecrated Persons working in the Archdiocese of Lagos**

With joy and gratitude to God for your lives and services to the People of God in our Archdiocese, I greet you all dear brothers and sisters. May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you as you gather this year to celebrate the Day of Consecrated Life on the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord. On this auspicious day, we in Lagos join the universal Church to express our sincere appreciation of the grace of deep witnessing given by those from among us who have chosen to follow Christ in the religious life.

The biblical account of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, an event rooted in Jewish Tradition, reminds us of the profound commitment embedded in the total gift of one's life to God. Just as it was with the Infant Jesus presented in the temple, so it is with you, consecrated persons, offered entirely to God. The Psalmist remind us in Psalm 116:12, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?" Your response as Religious lies in your embrace of the evangelical counsels—obedience, poverty, and chastity. These are pathways by which you enter into a deeper communion with Christ, echoing the sentiments of the Psalmist, "I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord."

Chastity, modeled after the purity of the Holy Family, reflects undivided love and commitment to God. Poverty, mirrored in the simple presentation of the infant without worldly adornment, signifies detachment from material possessions in favour of reliance on God's providence. Obedience, as exemplified by Mary and Joseph's fulfillment of religious customs, mirrors the divine obedience of Christ. Those called to consecrated life, like the aged Simeon and Anna, bear witness to the presence of God in the world.

In the context of these sacred vows, Pope Benedict XVI, in his Apostolic Exhortation "Vita Consecrata," calls you to recognize that consecrated life is a response to a divine call, transcending personal desires and will. It is not merely our work but the work of God that stands the test of time. You must ensure that you do not lose sight of the one who called you. The profound message of St. Augustine should serve to keep us on our toes: our vocation do not guarantee automatic salvation, but they signify a special call and the grace to respond. In the spirit of self-awareness and humility, as you profess the evangelical vows and preach the word of life, you must also be embodiments of what you profess and preach. You must not be like

billboards pointing others without making a move. Let our lives mirror the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi, who urges us to: "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words." In this way, our actions become an authentic proclamation of the Gospel, inviting others to walk the path of holiness.

As you walk the path of consecrated life, the words of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1 must echo with profound relevance. Let love be the guiding virtue in all we do: correcting others with fraternal charity, welcoming with expected hospitality, kindness in discussion about others, being considerate towards one another. As St. Therese of Lisieux would say , "Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love."

In the midst of the vocation boom in Africa, you are all entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing and guiding the younger ones drawn to this sacred vocation. In the words of St. Teresa of Calcutta, "Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier." Your love and good example become the seeds that will blossom into a vibrant future for consecrated life on our continent.

I take advantage of this joyful celebration, to express my profound gratitude for your dedicated services to God and His people in our Archdiocese. On this Day of Consecrated Life, I entrust each one of you to the maternal intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the epitome of a perfect response to God's call. May her guidance and intercession strengthen you in your commitment to the evangelical counsels and inspire you in the service of society.



**Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins**

**Archbishop of Lagos.**

***2nd February, 2024; Feast of the Presentation of the Lord***

