



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
ON THE MANAGEMENT OF ECCLESIASTICAL GOODS**

Pontifical Antonianum University , 8-9 March 2014

*To the Venerable Brother
Cardinal João Braz de Aviz
Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life
and Societies of Apostolic Life*

I cordially greet you and all the participants attending the International Symposium on the theme: “The management of the ecclesiastical goods of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, at the service of the *humanum* and of mission in the Church”.

Our age is characterized by significant changes and developments in various fields, with important consequences for the life of mankind. Despite having reduced poverty, the goals attained have oftentimes contributed to building an *economy of exclusion and inequality*: “Today everything is regulated by the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless” (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 53). In the face of the uncertainty in which most of the men and women of our time live, as well as the spiritual and moral frailty of so many people, especially young people, we feel challenged as a Christian community.

The Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life can and must be active protagonists in living and testifying that the *principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift* find their place in economic activity. The founding charism of each Institute is fully inscribed in this “logic”: of *being gift*, as consecrated people, you can make a true contribution to economic, social and political development. *Fidelity to the founding charism* and to the subsequent spiritual heritage, together with the finality proper to each Institute, remain the first criterion for evaluating the administration, management and all of the work carried out in the Institutes at every level: “The

nature of the charism ... directs their energies, sustains their fidelity and directs the apostolic work of all towards the one mission” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, n. 45).

Attentive vigilance is needed in order to ensure that the goods of the Institutes are administered with prudence and transparency, that they are protected and preserved, combining the primary charismatic-spiritual dimension with the economic dimension and with efficiency, which has its own *humus* in the administrative tradition of the Institutes which does not tolerate waste and which is attentive to using resources properly. The day after the closing of Second Vatican Council, the Servant of God Paul VI called for “a new and authentic Christian mentality” and for a “new style of ecclesial life”: “We note with watchful attention that, in this period of ours, which is all absorbed in gaining, possessing, enjoying economic goods, a desire is apparent in public opinion both inside and outside the Church, to see evangelical poverty practised. It is almost a need. People want to see it most where the Gospel is preached and represented” (*General Audience*, 24 June 1970, *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 2 July 1970, p. 3).

I wished to recall this need also in this year’s Lenten Message. The Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life have always been a prophetic voice and living witness to the newness which is Christ, of conformation to the One who made himself poor so that we might become rich by his poverty. This loving poverty is solidarity, sharing and charity and is expressed in moderation, in the quest for justice and in taking joy in the essential, so as to guard against the material idols which blur the authentic meaning of life. Theoretical poverty is not needed, but rather the poverty that we learn by touching the flesh of the poor Christ, in the humble, in the poor, in the sick, in children. Still, today may you be for the Church and for the world, the outposts of care for all of the poor and for all material, moral and spiritual poverty, and examples in overcoming every form of egoism through the logic of the Gospel which teaches us to trust in the Providence of God.

As I express my gratitude to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life who have promoted and prepared this Symposium, I also wish to express my hope that it will produce the desired results. For this I invoke the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and I bless you all.

From the Vatican, 8 March 2014

FRANCIS