**PRAYER TO CELEBRATE THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE**

**– CONGREGATIONS OF BROTHERS –**

**MOTIVATION**

**Dear Brothers,** once again we gather in front of the Lord, who presides over our community as a guide and centre.

**His presence** reminds us that one day we were called to follow him in religious life. That we have received a vocation that demands us to be united to Him and to be united among us.

**His voice** calls us to update, in a creatively way, the response we have to give in the present time.

**His Word** guides us and is the seed that we must sow, destined to grow in every man to produce fruits of salvation.

**His Church** accompanies us with her teachings, sacraments and prayer, and impels us to live in communion to give the testimony the world needs so that everyone may believe.

**His beloved sons**, the children, the youth and the poor, are waiting for us, so that we may accompany them in their way of growth as persons and Christians.

**His elected ones**, chosen to religious life of Brothers, we accompany one another and we want to walk more united, so to make of this vocation a richness for men and Christians of today.

**We are invited to celebrate** our consecrated life of Brothers as a response to a call, a call of love, which can only be answered from love. The objectives proposed for this Year are an invitation to:

* Give thanks to God for the gift of consecrated life.
* Hold the future with hope, trusted in the Lord, to whom we have offered our life.
* And live the present with passion, evangelizing our own vocation and witnessing to the world the beauty of following Christ.
* ***Hymn:*** *(To be chosen among the repertoire of the Community)*

**FIRST TIME OF LISTENING: THE BEATS OF THE WORLD**

The Letter of the Sacred Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated Life, dated 2 February 2014, invites us to look at the world with a contemplative sight: *“To be with Jesus trains us into a contemplative sight of the history, which knows how to see and listen in everything the presence of the Spirit and, in a privileged way, to discern his presence to live the time as a time of God.”*

* ***Excerpt of the speech of Martin Luther King.* *Washington D.C., 28 August 1963***

“Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. I say to you today, my Friends. And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream.

I have a dream that one day, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, ‘and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.’

This is our hope. And this is the faith that I go back to the South. With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

And this will be the day –this will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with new meaning […]. And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when *all* of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: *‘Free at last! Free at last! / Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!’*”

***Two questions proposed by Pope Francis to the Religious:***

*1.- How large are our views and impulses?; Have we a high dream?*

*2.- Are we consumed with zeal? Or, instead, are we mediocre, contented ourselves with merely theoretical apostolic programmes?*

* ***Some characteristic features of the modern world***

“Mankind has now a new period in its history, characterized by profound and rapid changes, which are spreading to the entire universe. It is so, that we can speak of a true social and cultural metamorphosis, which is also in the religious life.

As in any crisis of growth, this transformation brings no small difficulty. So, while dramatically expanding its power, it is not always able to submit to its service. It wants to know with increasing depth its spiritual intimacy, and often it feels more uncertain than ever of itself. Gradually, it discovers the laws of social life, and doubts about the direction that it should be given.

Mankind ever had before so much riches, so many possibilities, so much economic power. And yet, much of humanity is suffering from hunger and poverty, and there is a crowd who cannot read or write.

Never had man so acute sense of freedom, and meanwhile new forms of social and psychological slavery are emerging. As the world feels vividly its own interdependent unity in inescapable solidarity, however, it is seen grievously divided by the presence of opposing forces. Indeed, they still persist sharp tensions: political, social, economic, racial, ideological and religious, and there is even the danger of a war that threatens to destroy everything.

Communication of ideas is increased; however, even the defining words of the most fundamental concepts are of very diverse senses in different ideologies. Finally, it is insistently sought a more perfect temporal order, without parallel progress of the improvement of the spirits.

Affected by the complex situation, many of our contemporaries hardly get to know the permanent values and to combine them exactly at the same time with new discoveries. Concern torments them, and they wonder, among anxieties and hopes, on current developments in the world. The course of present history is a challenge to man, who forces him to respond” (*The article is signed in Internet by “A contemporary philosopher”).*

***Two questions proposed by Pope Francis to the Religious:***

*1.- Look deep in your heart, look into your own depths, and ask yourself: Do you have a heart that desires great or a heart that is indifferent?*

*2.- Has your heart remained in a ceaseless search or have you let it be stiffed by* things*, do that is deadened?*

* ***Hymn:*** *(To be chosen among the repertoire of the Community)*

**SECOND TIME OF LISTENING: THE WORD OF GOD**

* ***1st Reading: Rm 8:28–34***

“And we know that, for those who love God, all things work together unto good, for those who, in accordance with his purpose, are called to be saints. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined, in conformity with the image of his Son, so that he might be the Firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. So, what should we say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spared even his own Son, but handed him over for the sake of us all, how could he not also, with him, have given us all things? Who will make an accusation against the elect of God? God is the One who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus who has died, and who has indeed also risen again, is at the right hand of God, and even now he intercedes for us.”

* ***Psalm of the Community***

***Response:*** *Behold, how good and how pleasing it is for the brothers to dwell in unity!* (Ps 133)

1. We give you thanks, Lord, because in You, only source of happiness,

we can find the authentic treasure.

Your love fathoms us calling to share your life,

to experience your friendship and to join to You,

living consecrated life from the “union of hearts.”

1. We give you thanks, because you make yourself present

in every one of our brothers, offering security,

support and apostolic fruitfulness.

Thank you, Lord, because your life, made Eucharist, is food

that strengthens our community life and our being apostles.

1. Lord, your infinite love sounds out and fathoms the most private of our being.

You, who know us and know everything, grant us a generous heart,

make us able to share our life from happiness, joy and charity.

Strengthen our faith, fortify us with a joyful hope,

which commits itself in the authentic love to transmit Christ.

* ***Gospel: Mt 23:1–12***

“Then Jesus spoke to the crowds, and to his disciples, saying: ‘The Scribes and the Pharisees have sat down in the chair of Moses. Therefore, all things whatsoever that they shall say to you, observe and do. Yet truly, do not choose to act according to their works. For they say, but they do not do. For they bind up heavy and unbearable burdens, and they impose them on men’s shoulders. But they are not willing to move them even a finger of their own. Truly, they do all their works so that they may be seen by men. For they enlarge their phylacteries and glorify their hems. And they love the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues, and greetings in the marketplace, and to be called Master by men.

But you must not be called Master. For One is your Master, and you are all brothers. And do not choose to call anyone on earth your father. For One is your Father, who is in heaven. Neither should you be called teachers. For One is your Teacher, the Christ. Whoever is greater among you shall be your minister. But whoever has exalted himself, shall be humbled. And whoever has humbled himself, shall be exalted.”

* ***Reflection (personal or shared)***

**PRESENTATION OF SYMBOLS**

(To be placed at the front, before the reading of each text)

***Banner: ‘We are all Brothers’***

“Consecrated life can help the Church and the whole society, giving a testimony of fraternity, that is possible to live together as brothers in the diversity: This is important! Because in community, we do not choose ourselves first, but we are found with people of different character, age, formation, sensitivity… and we try to live as brothers” *(Pope Francis to the participants in the National Assembly of Major Superiors of Italy, 07/11/2014)*

***(Towel)***

“The princes of the nations rule over them and the powerful exercise their power over them; it should not be so among the brothers, the one who wants to be greater among the brothers must be the servant and slave; and the one who wants to be the greatest, must become the lowest. And no one should be called Prior, but all be called simply little brothers. And they should wash feet one another” *(Franciscan Sources, 18-19, 23).*

***(Banner with the face of Christ)***

“As you are ambassadors and ministers of Jesus Christ in the task you exercise, you should carry it out as representing the same Jesus Christ” *(Meditation 195, 2nd point. St John Baptist de La Salle. Founder of Brothers of the Christian Schools).*

***(Personal Identity Card)***

“You bear the sweet name of Brothers, do not allow ever to be called otherwise. The names of the dignitaries inspire and demand respect; brother, on the contrary, only suggests simplicity, kindness and charity” *(Br. Gabriel Taborin. Founder of Brothers of the Holy Family).*

***(Ribbon of peace)***

“Live in peace with all your brothers: May divine charity unite all of you with its sweet bonds” *(Fr. John-Mary de la Mennais, Founder of Brothers of Christian Instruction).*

***(Notebook and pencil)***

“In order to educate the children you have to love them. And to love them all equally. Loving the children is to devote totally to their education, to adopt the necessary means that a clever zeal may suggest to train them in virtue and piety.

To love the children is to bear in mind that a child is a weak person, that needs to be treated with kindness, charity and understanding, and to be instructed and trained with infinite patience” (*St Marcellin Champagnat*, *Founder of Marist Brothers).*

***(Plan of the city)***

"Had we known the merit and value of going from one street to another in order to serve the neighbour by the love of God, we should appreciate it more than gold or silver” *(Blessed Edmund Rice, Founder of Christian Brothers).*

“Instil to your Brothers the love to one’s own vocation; stress any good they do, so that everyone may appreciate and love this good. For your concept of honour, loyalty and acknowledgement, they will feel attach to you and to me. The love of God and Providence unites you, above all, to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary” *(Fr. André Coindre, Founder of Brothers of Sacred Heart).*

…… Other texts of our Founders that speak of the identity of Brother.

* **Welcome of the Messages and personal Adoration***(Time to internalize what we have heard, to contemplate it and to pray for it before the Most Blessed Sacrament).*
* ***Hymn:*** *(To be chosen among the repertoire of the Community)*

**INTERCESSIONS**

*(Inspired in no. 60, The Religious Brothers – Vita Consecrata)*

*(We respond with the second part of each intercession, which is in bold)*

1. **From our condition of consecrated religious, the Church reminds us:** *“The term ‘brother’ suggests a rich spirituality. These Religious are called to be brothers of Christ, deeply united with him, ‘the firstborn among many brothers’;”* **–Lord, we ask you to help us to seek you in prayer so that we may live trusted and devoted to you and focused on your love.**
2. **From our community life, we want to reach to live as** *“Brothers to one another, in mutual love and working together in the Church in the same service of what is good;”* **–Lord, we ask you help to care for our fraternity in our Communities and to be able to offer it as the best fruit in the construction of the Kingdom.**
3. **From our commitment with the mission of our Congregation, we seek to reach the ideal of being:** *“Brothers to everyone, in their witness to Christ’s love for all, especially the lowliest, the neediest; brothers for a greater brotherhood in the Church;”* **–Lord, we ask you to purify and convert our heart to be able to love everyone from humility and service.**
4. **From our specific tasks,** *“Religious Brothers provide valuable services of various kinds, inside or outside the community, participating in this way in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel and bearing witness to it with charity in everyday life;”* **–Lord, we ask you to make our apostolate germinate and grow for the benefit of the people and the values of the Kingdom.**
5. **From our wish to be in communion with the whole Church, offering what is characteristic of us,** *“Religious Brothers are an effective reminder to Religious Priests themselves of the fundamental dimension of brotherhood in Christ, to be lived among themselves and with every man and woman, and they proclaim to all the Lord's words: ‘And you are all brothers’ (Mt 23:8);”* **–Lord, we ask you that our testimony may contribute to build up a more fraternal and nearer Church.**
6. **With the desire to continue arousing vocation to this kind of consecrated life,** *“We cannot think in religious life in the Church without the presence of this particular lay vocation, open still today to many Christians who may consecrate, for this, to the following of Christ and the service of humanity”* (St John Paul II); **–Lord, we ask you to call new young people to become Brothers in our Congregations.**

(Spontaneous intercessions)

* **Our Father…**

**CONCLUDING PRAYER**

***Leader:*** Lord, make us instruments of your peace:

That where there is hatred, we may bring love,

That where there is wrong, we may bring the spirit of forgiveness,

That where there is discord, we may bring harmony,

That where there is error, we may bring truth,

That where there is doubt, we may bring faith,

That where there is despair, we may bring hope,

That where there are shadows, we may bring light,

That where there is sadness, we may bring joy.

Lord, grant that we may seek

Rather to comfort than to be comforted;

To understand, than to be understood;

To love, than to be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.

It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.

It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life.

***All:***

**Mary, Virgin and Mother,**

Star of the new evangelization,

help us to bear radiant witness to communion,

service, ardent and generous faith,

justice and love of the poor,

that the joy of the Gospel

may reach to the ends of the earth,

illuminating even the fringes of our world.

Mother of the living Gospel,

wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones,

pray for us.

Amen. Alleluia!

(Letter EG)