Introduction: The turmoil in religious life—especially women's—after Vatican II

Plainly, all has not gone well with religious life since the Council. I do not think there is any single factor that accounts for it. Rather, what has been happening flows from many factors that happen to concur, somewhat like a motoring accident in which the driver of a rented car hits a parked vehicle because of: (1) a patch of ice on the road, (2) the driver's distraction, which prevents noticing the ice in time, (3) the tires' lack of tread, which prevents stopping in time, (4) the other vehicle being parked where it should not have been. A traffic officer tickets both the parked vehicle and the driver for driving too fast under hazardous conditions; the driver sues the rental car company for supplying a vehicle with badly worn tires; the owner of the parked vehicle expects the driver or the rental car company to repair it; and everyone would blame the patch of ice if it could be forced to pay. But none of the partial views does justice to the complexity of the situation, in which there is more than enough blame to go around.

Prior to Vatican II, there were many real problems with religious life, especially in many institutes or local communities of women. It was by no means a golden age.

For many centuries, Rome resisted the development of women's religious institutes of active life, wrongly supposing that religious life, especially for women, had to be contemplative: religious women had to be nuns, living in cloisters. When institutes of active apostolate were recognized, in many ways their members were hindered by restrictive practices that amounted to a sort of residue of the old conception of the nun.

Many entered directly after high school and some even before high school. In many cases, they had insufficient information to discern whether their gifts and limitations pointed to a different vocation. In very few cases were they compelled to confront the challenges to faith and temptations of lay people who went to college. So, not having had to renew their commitment of faith against serious alternative options, their faith was not as strong as it would have been had it been tempered by fire.

Exploitation by bishops and pastors to provide cheap staff for schools and other institutions—and even to provide cheap servants for seminaries, rectories, and so on—had distorted religious life and violated various human goods of many sisters. Very often, sisters were terribly overworked, while clerics enjoyed plenty of free time to visit their families, play golf, and enjoy popular entertainment or more sophisticated cultural opportunities. In many cases, bishops and priests exercised authority over sisters with respect to matters they should have decided for themselves. Such abuses generated justified anger, which was suppressed rather than consciously dealt with, so that it generated a deep and powerful pool of resentment, like hot lava building up pressure under an apparently quiet volcano.

While progress had been made in many institutes in educating their members and preparing them for apostolates, many were ill-educated and inadequately prepared—compelled by bishops and/or superiors to get to work quickly like raw recruits forced immediately into battle with little regard for the consequences to themselves and others.

In many cases, the grace of office was exaggerated, and superiors made uninformed decisions without adequate consultation and listening to considerations pro and con. In some cases, obedience was distorted to promote humiliation and a childish lack of appropriate autonomy and self-confidence.

Various practices, instilled during formation, played on the immaturity and fearfulness of those entering women's religious communities. For example, requiring not only unthinking and unquestioning obedience but prior approval by a superior to do anything not specifically prescribed fostered childish dependence; in moral formation, obeying rules to avoid hell prevailed over understanding the good reasons for willingly doing appropriate actions.

Spirituality depended too much on conformity in external observances and pious practices. Many were fixated on superficial marks of distinction and resistant to updating sought by Pius XII and the Congregation for Religious. In some cases, group pride made for uncharitable rivalry and competition rather than effective cooperation.

John M. Lozano, C.M.F., *Foundresses, Founders, and Their Religious Families,* trans. Joseph Daries, C.M.F. (Chicago: Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality, 1983), 66–68, lists many founders of institutes who were deposed by the Holy See or by bishops, most of them women. Bishops often installed a priest as superior of an institute for women; while some of these no doubt exercised restrained and benign oversight, others oppressively interfered with the inner life of the community.

What Vatican II called for was very difficult, and the work of renewal was not well moderated by the Vatican.

The renewal called for required creativity of the sort characteristic of founders, as well as their charisma to keep the group together. PC was calling on sisters to put themselves in the place of their foundress and refound the institute as she would have done had she been doing it today—thus getting rid of anything intervening that would not be useful for the purpose and taking full account of the present situation. That was a challenge requiring unusual capacities and creativity. The problem of renewal could be solved in diverse ways; it admitted of no simple and single right answer. But some possible answers suited some members better; others, other members.

Institutes were more or less ill-organized to undertake the task of reinventing themselves. In general, authority structures were not designed for such radical reworking, which called for a broadly representative and collaborative approach. Probably special structures should have been devised and required to be used for this purpose. Probably, too, minority reports should have been allowed and mediators provided. A worldwide gathering of representatives of all those in any approved form of consecrated life perhaps could have worked out detailed procedures and norms by dialogue with the synod of bishops. Perhaps in the short run certain changes widely considered desirable could have been legislated for all institutes that ratified them by a certain proportion of votes.

In some respects, experimentation was not well understood and was improperly used: one needs to know what one is looking for and to have clear criteria in advance for determining

whether one is attaining it. Also, there can be no experiment with the most central things, whose value is intrinsic—one must do the best one can in every instance, and do something else only when one thinks that is the best one can do. Changing one's life in significant ways makes a permanent change in oneself; one can no more experiment with significant changes in one's spiritual and apostolic life than a young couple can experiment by living together so as to decide whether to get married. Analogy with bringing up kids.

Members who had never been superiors and who were most effectively formed by the existing system were disinclined to take initiative in the renewal process. Those who both had been superiors and who were dissatisfied with the existing system were most inclined to take the initiative and most able to dominate the renewal process. The Holy See failed to set ground rules that might have ensured a broadly representative and collaborative approach.
Did not entertain minority reports.
Did not facilitate regrouping of individuals by division and merging of institutes.
Assumed all religious should retain all characteristics of religious life as it had been—a rigidity about the essence of religious life—rather than allowing a spectrum of forms of evangelical life with various combinations and permutations of features to emerge.

Nadine Foley, "The Ambiguity of Religious Life; Does It Evolve?" *Review for Religious,* 56/1 (Jan./Feb. 1997): 8–9, a former president of the LCRW, tells how, while participating in the process of seeking approval for new constitutions through conversations with people at CICLSAL, she encountered the view that religious life does not evolve. After "entire congregations participated in developing new constitutions," she says, "it became quite clear that we were expected to fit into a Procrustean bed of fixed categories. The suggestion, once heard, that we could save ourselves a lot of trouble if we just settled upon calling ourselves 'secular institutes' epitomized the problem. We did not fit many canonical expectations of 'consecrated life,' but at the same time we found no comfort in being labeled secular institutes."

She is no doubt right about the rigidity of the categories. But the proposed solution would not have been bad to seize upon. For secular institutes can add nonessentials, such as community life and even public vows, without violating their paradigm.

What really is essential for an institute to be recognized?

It must promote genuinely evangelical life, in which all the essentials received from Christ are cherished and members strive to do nothing but respond to God's plan for their lives.

It must involve specifications with respect to gifts and opportunities for service that are common enough to warrant institutionalization. In other words, it must not be so specified that too few intent on living an evangelical life would be called to enter it. (In practice, this condition is shown to be met by the growth of the would-be institute in numbers stably adhering to it over a period of time before it wins approval.)

Nothing about it may be likely to bring about side effects that would make the Church's recognition inappropriate. (Some good forms of life involve too close material cooperation with evil for those involved in them to form a recognized institute.)

Members must be submissive enough to hierarchical authority to warrant recognition, and must see point in being recognized sufficient to warrant seeking recognition.

Thus, a nuanced attitude must be taken toward the essential elements of religious life.

On the one hand, there are advantages in all of these and good reasons for them; none can be set aside by those whose gifts and service—whose divinely given vocations—admit of them.

On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that all these elements need to go together: public vows, community life, corporate apostolate, exclusion of individual ownership of material goods, wearing a habit. Nor is there any reason to suppose that appropriate transpositions of charisms of founders of institutes always would today involve all the elements; in many cases something between religious life and a secular institute would do just fine.

On the document on "Essential Elements" see John R. Sheets, "The Call to the Renewal of Religious Life," *Review for Religious*, 43 (1984): 175–90.

The Transformation of American Catholic Sisters by Lora Ann Quiñonez and Mary Daniel Turner, which is in MSM library, will need to be studied. I noted a few things in chapter 1:

p. 23: On the reorganization into the LCRW: "In the organization configured by the statutes, power was concentrated in the hands of a very small group, the National Executive Committee. The membership exercised little voice except by electing the three officers of their region."

p. 24: In the late sixties, dissatisfaction from the rank and file led to granting universal suffrage in the election of Conference officers.

p. 25: "Especially since the early seventies, the LCWR has involved the members in carrying out the programs and activities of the organization." In other words, the leadership used members who saw things their way to carry out their programs and activities.

Ann Carey, *Sisters in Crisis*, is double reviewed in *Review for Religious*, 56:3 (May/June 1997): 325–30, by DiIannia and Wittberg, both sensible reviewers.

Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Women in the Vanishing Cloister* (1992) in MSM library is a case study representative of dying out of some groups.

Patricia Ranft, *Women and the Religious Life in Premodern Europe* (1996) in MSM library, pp. 113 ff., treats some of the struggle for active women's religious life to emerge; the Visitations, founded to visit the sick and the poor, were enclosed. This is analogous to the resistance to the transformation of women's religious institutes and the attempt to impose the "essential features" and maintain uniformity with respect to things that, after all, are admittedly not essential to consecrated life, given the approval of secular institutes.

St. Vincent de Paul insisted very strongly that the Daughters of Charity were not religious; they did not take public vows, for then they would have been cloistered and unable to serve the poor. Yet they devoted themselves to charitable works in order to honor Jesus in the poor, lived in community (though they denied it was a convent), and practiced the counsels.

Ecclesiae sanctae, on norms for implementing PC, Part I, I,
1, Institutes are to carry out adaptation and renewal "especially through general chapters or, among the Orientals through synaxes."
2 The cooperation of all superiors and members is needed.
3 A special general chapter, ordinary or extraordinary, is to be convened within two or at most three years.
4 The general commission in preparing this chapter should provide for full and free consultation of the members and arrange the results in time.
6: "This general chapter has the right to alter certain norms of the constitutions, or among the Orientals the norms of the Typika, as an experiment, as long as the purpose, nature and character of the institute are preserved."

These directives were in general inadequate guidance for the very difficult assignment, for they failed to take into account inevitable radical divisions, and left the procedure to those in constitutional control—which was adequate for governance within the constitutional framework. The proposal to alter norms as an experiment was an invitation to abuse and confusion, for reasonable experiment presupposes expendability and also criteria of success or failure.

Note that there is a weaker sense of experiment. One is doing the best one can in trying to promote or protect some important good, but is not sure what means to use, since all may have bad side effects. So, one tries what looks best, but does not jump all at once. Rather, one prudently proceeds with caution, and only increases gradually as no unbearable side effect appear. One can call that "experimenting," and could do that where experimenting in the stronger sense is excluded. For example, psychiatrists "try" a treatment for depression, while being open to stopping it if bad side effects that affect some patients manifest themselves.

On norms for implementing PC, Part I, III, The Criteria of Renewal and Adaptation, *Ecclesiae sanctae,* 15–19, struggles to provide guidance, but obviously is a synthesis of desiderata in severe tension. 16 (1) and (2) call unrealistically for study and mediation on the Gospels and the whole of Scripture, and investigation and explanation of the aspects of the doctrine of religious life—as a basis for making principles pervade the renewal, while *Ecclesiae sanctae* at the same time is demanding it go forward quickly. (19) makes renewal something to be ongoing, not once for all, "with the help of the zeal of the members and the solicitude of the chapters and superiors."

Ecclesiae sanctae, on implementing PC, II, VII (39–41) deals with the merging and suppression of institutes, but does not envisage splitting ones in which there is a serious division among members.

PC 2: "b) It is for the Church's good that institutes hold to their peculiar character and *munus*. So, they are to recognize and faithfully hold to the spirit and purposes of their founders, and their sound traditions, which constitute the patrimonies of every and each institute."

In interpreting this, one must keep in mind the differences among the founders' gifts—some of permanent value for the Church as a whole, others more tied to particular historical

situations and needs. Some involved forms of devotion that now have less appeal. What the Council and the Holy See ignored was that what is required here called for considerable creativity, and so admitted a variety of legitimate solutions—none of them likely to fit well all members of an institute. No institute had provisions in its constitutions to carry out such a process with fairness and due consideration for all concerned. So, the mandate to renew was a directive to plunge into disruptive conflicts.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "The Need for Self-Criticism: Affirmative Comments," *Review for Religious,* 58:3 (May/June 1999): 251–60, cites a solid body of scholarship in support of her view that institutes that are greatly declining in numbers have not carried out renewal well in at least some important respects, and must either shape up or die out. My treatment of religious life in this chapter will lay out many aspects of the ideal of religious life to which greater conformity is necessary for survival.

Patricia Wittberg, S.C., *The Rise and Decline of Catholic Religious Orders* (Albany, New York: The State University of New York Press, 1994), 209–56, summarizes the history of developments in U.S. Catholic religious orders from 1950–90, asserts that Vatican II's affirmation of the universal call to holiness destroyed the ideological frame that legitimated the institutes' existence, and argues that the new justification in terms of prophetic witness was undercut by lifestyle changes. She sums up (256, footnotes omitted): "Religious orders were to be prophets to the Church and the larger society—but their interpretation of ministry, community, and obedience prevented them from fulfilling this role. Individual religious were defined as those who live their baptismal call in the vowed life—but these vows were either inadequately defined or else defined in such a way as to apply indiscriminately to all Christians. . . . As a result of the collapse of their ideological frame, members of religious congregations have suffered an 'alarming' loss of identity. Instead of alarm, however, the members of many religious orders have developed defense mechanisms which prevent them from addressing the problem."

She also explains how other factors contributed to the dramatic decline of religious orders. Various external sociological factors diminished the incentive to enter religious life. For various internal reasons, members no longer effectively recruited new members. In many cases, institutes no longer could provide their previous service. Hostility on the part of ecclesiastical authorities—both the Holy See and many bishops—also was a factor.

She misses certain things. To a great extent, catechesis failed to call the attention of children and young people to the need to find their personal vocations. For most, the sexual revolution, weakly opposed by the clergy, preempted the issue of virginity/celibacy for the kingdom's sake. And the fading of belief in hell and fear of it made heaven seem a sure thing, and so eliminated hope, with the bad result that nothing beyond the present life seemed important.

The brief Quinn commission report to the US bishops is in *Origins* 4 (December 1986). It indicates some sources of the difficulty with religious life.

While the so-called "essential elements of religious life" are good things, none of them is essential to consecrated life, which is the one necessary thing. When it came to working out a

renewal in line with the original charism, it had to be expected that at least in many institutes of active life one legitimate solution would be something nearer to a secular institute. In general, the Holy See and bishops should not insist on more than is necessary for consecrated life as such; the other elements should be left to proper law, and a continuum of diverse institutes should be accepted.

The failure after Vatican II was an extension of the long-term abuse of power in trying to force those with vocations to consecrated life into a prescribed mold, rather than fostering and respecting the discernment of those concerned and evaluating what they proposed solely by its harmony with the revealed essentials that every Christian must accept. The coupling of that general abuse with specific oppression and exploitation, especially of women religious—due to their vulnerability to clerical domination—provoked backlash.

Sandra M. Schneiders, I.H.M., *Religious Life in a New Millennium,* vol. 1, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context* (New York: Paulist, 2000), 183–88, tells how many religious, in the wake of Vatican II, replaced the theology and philosophy taught them in formation (which she mistakenly regards as "the Thomistic theological-philosophical synthesis") with modern and postmodern views, and frankly describes (188) the result: "Many religious, and indeed whole congregations, experienced the confusion and disorientation that the breakdown of the compelling self-evidence of the Thomistic theological-philosophical synthesis occasioned. It was often not clear that the members of a community shared the same, or indeed any, convictions about God, Christ, Eucharist, Church, or the ramifications of Christian faith for spirituality or ministry. Increasingly, communities looked to their common commitments to peace and justice, feminism, ecology, psychological development, or even ecumenical and interreligious dialogue rather than to Christian faith, practice, or theology as a source of shared meaning." Again (196): "No one has freely chosen to lose her faith. The faith struggles in which Religious are involved have arisen from their honest participation in the contemporary cultural ethos of a modernity that is being rapidly saturated by postmodernity. But the God-question is so central to Religious Life that the darkness surrounding it at present is creating a crisis of major proportions. . . . It is not simply that one's ideas about God are changing or even being subverted. There seems to be no God about whom to have ideas at all. God-talk seems empty, even boring. God has simply disappeared from the horizon without a trace." She goes on (197–209) by working with the analogy of St. John of the Cross's passive night of the spirit, to suggest, optimistically, that perhaps religious life is undergoing a profound transformation from which it will emerge purified and strengthened.

My concern in this book is not to describe the history of the many forms of consecrated life in the Church. In my view, they have been a very rich variety of efforts, all sincere but not all entirely sound, to respond to Jesus' invitation to discipleship with a radicality rooted in Jesus' own peculiar style of life and New Testament indications of its point and availability to some, but not all, disciples. Rather, I wish to indicate how religious life and other currently approved forms of consecrated life can be lived well today.

Schneiders, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, 210–13, explains the development of the crisis in religious life and the exodus of many from it partly by the impact of Vatican II's teachings about the laity and religious. The Church has been clergy-centered, and religious had been quasi-clergy. The teaching of Vatican II on the Church as people of God and on the laity enhanced their status. The teaching on religious made it clear they must not be considered quasi-clergy. Renewal of religious life changed many things that had distinguished religious. So (213): "This left many wondering whether there was any real point in being a Religious. Was there anything distinctive about the life, aside from certain burdensome obligations like celibacy . . .?"

She also has (287–88) an interesting set of objections to the idea of going back to the charism of the founder; in some cases, none is identifiable. She suggests as a solution the charism of the institute as something developed in tradition. Since the charism did not cease with the founder but formed the institute, one reasonable strategy would have been to consider what all agreed was essential before the Council, what outstanding members all along had thought important, and what an identifiable founder if any had been up to—with this last, so far as discernible, the main touchstone within the institute's own tradition.

In any case, it is important to recognize that charisms, as graces, always are given to definite persons, and always are for the benefit of others, and ultimately for the Church as a whole. So, virginity as such is not a charism, but someone's receiving the gift for it is; active religious life is not a charism, but various people's receiving some specific gift for it is. Still, charisms are not always given to persons as individuals. Generally, they are given to persons as leaders (individual or co) of groups and as cooperators with those leaders who become members of the group, and who perhaps themselves become leaders, so that the group continues even after the original leader dies.

Up until recent times, the reform of religious institutes always involved an effort to get back to primitive observance or the original rule, in a more or less integral way. But with the awareness and acceptance of homogeneous development of doctrine in the nineteenth century, that notion began to be applied in thinking about the reform of religious institutes. Vatican II's idea of going back to the original charism and trying to strip away accretions and make appropriate adaptations assumes that model will work and be adequate.

However, is that model really adequate? If doctrine develops and if charisms were conditioned by the limits of earlier stages of doctrinal development, they are themselves open to revision. Child oblation cannot have a place in religious life today, but it did for a long time. Perhaps that tells us that Benedict's "charism" itself was conditioned in significant ways and needs to be reformed.

One question that might be asked: Why did the Church so often and for so long try to compel women who wished to be religious engaged in active apostolates to adopt features of nuns? In other words, why was the contemplative life insisted upon as paradigmatic for women? I think the answer is that religious life as such was understood on that paradigm, due to the mistake Dubay still tries to defend of regarding infused contemplation as essential to the holiness to which everyone is called.

But why only women? Because the men's clerical service was so obviously needed and useful, and because their offering that service provided them with leverage that popes and bishops accommodated to. When the same authorities realized they needed women religious in active apostolates just as badly or even more so, they accommodated them too, for a long time by stretching the law, but finally by revising it.

Schneide1rs, *Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecclesial and Cultural Context*, 307, talks of "ministerial religious" and argues that ministry rather than the prayer of the monastic counterpart is the "filter" that shapes their lifestyle.

While the pastors of the Church erred by insisting on a monastic style for all institutes of religious women, they were right in assuming that something should be retained besides what is required for consecrated life in a secular institute if those institutes of active life were to remain religious. If religous life means subordinating everything to powerful witness to the kingdom not of this world, all the so-called essential elements do make sense. If institutes or individuals want to shape their lifestyle by the requirements of "ministry" (works of charity bearing upon nonreligious goods) as such, they are essentially a secular institute. Community that arises from the free choice of its members depends on cooperation; it is not like family, in which a bond of flesh and blood remains among members no matter how they otherwise differ.

Thus, if an institute does not have a (or a few) well-defined and ongoing corporate apostolates that individuals enter to participate in, but rather leaves it to members or groups of them to determine and abandon their apostolates, it really is a secular institute, because other matters, such as community living or not, participation in liturgy, managing finances, and so on will in reality have to be left to individuals or ad hoc groups.

Something will have to be said about feminism. I treat it in LCL, pp. 387–89 (but note the context provided by earlier parts of the same question), 615–19, 628–29.

Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens,* 13, under the heading, "The role of women," offers a good short statement:

> Similarly, in many countries a charter for women which would put an end to an actual discrimination and would establish relationships of equality in rights and of respect for their dignity is the object of study and at times of lively demands. We do not have in mind that false equality which would deny the distinction with woman's proper role, which is of such capital importance, at the heart of the family as well as within society. Developments in legislation should on the contrary be directed to protecting her proper vocation and at the same time recognizing her independence as a person, and her equal rights to participate in cultural, economic, social and political life.

When reviewing proposed revisions of constitutions and other norms of institutes and societies, pastors may refuse to accept the abandonment of norms to which there has been a commitment and new ones proposed. But they cannot legitimately impose new norms or requirements that are not entailed by the law of the Church for all. Why not? Because the

undertaking of consecrated/apostolic life is by free self-commitment to God's vocation, which nobody else can discern for one, and nobody can be rightly drafted into such service beyond his/her consent. Why, then, can pastors reject proposed changes? Because they are responsible for the good of the Church, and recognizing the group as Catholic puts it into organic relationship with other parts and members of the Church, not least dioceses and individuals who might join the group or cooperate with it as supporters or clients.

Lozano, *Discipleship*, makes it clear, not in any one place, but by his book as a whole, that religious life started out (with the desert Fathers) with a series of good and bad elements. Individuals were really serious about their faith and readiness to go all out; they took to heart the NT's demands for the primacy of the kingdom and detachment from everything else; some certainly became very holy. But they also were influenced by Hellenistic ideas: opposition between the material and the spiritual, between this world and the ultimate (due to the finitizing of the ultimate); the notion that individuals could achieve perfection by their efforts (a rather Pelagian notion); concern for self-perfection rather than service to neighbors. The errors and defects were gradually overcome in various ways: switch to community life, service to others in community and gradually in the wider Church and world. But the residual notion that other forms of Christian life were inferior as forms of Christian life remained, until in practice shot down by Vatican II. Thus, the Council's focus on the ecclesial value of concentration on things of the Lord as essential to religious life—and what really distinguishes it—may not seem exactly right. But it is, even if that requires recognition that lots of past saints had it somewhat wrong, at least in theory. Of course, in practice they often did better than their theory!

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996,

> **The dignity and role of consecrated women**
>
> 57. The Church fully reveals her varied-spiritual richness when she overcomes all discrimination and welcomes as a true blessing the gifts lavished by God upon both men and women, considering them in their equal dignity. By virtue of their dedication lived in fullness and in joy, consecrated women are called in a very special way to be signs of God's tender love toward the human race and to be special witnesses to the mystery of the Church, Virgin, Bride and Mother. [note omitted] This mission of theirs was noted by the Synod, in which many consecrated women participated and made their voices heard. Those voices were listened to and appreciated. Thanks also to their contribution, useful directions for the Church's life and her evangelizing mission have emerged. Certainly the validity of many assertions relating to the position of women in different sectors of society and of the Church cannot be denied. It is equally important to point out that women's new self-awareness also helps men to reconsider their way of looking at things, the way they understand themselves, where they place themselves in history and how they interpret it, and the way they organize social, political, economic, religious and ecclesial life.

Having received from Christ a message of liberation, the Church has the mission to proclaim this message prophetically, promoting ways of thinking and acting which correspond to the mind of the Lord. In this context the consecrated woman, on the basis of her experience of the Church and as a woman in the Church, can help eliminate certain one-sided perspectives which do not fully recognize her dignity and her specific contribution to the Church's life and pastoral and missionary activity. Consecrated women therefore rightly aspire to have their identity, ability, mission and responsibility more clearly recognized, both in the awareness of the Church and in everyday life.

Likewise, the future of the new evangelization, as of all other forms of missionary activity, is unthinkable without a renewed contribution from women, especially consecrated women.

New possibilities of presence and action

58. It is therefore urgently necessary to take certain concrete steps, beginning by providing room for women to participate in different fields and at all levels, including decision-making processes, above all in matters which concern women themselves.

Moreover, the formation of consecrated women, no less than that of men, should be adapted to modern needs and should provide sufficient time and suitable institutional opportunities for a systematic education extending to all areas from the theological-pastoral to the professional. Pastoral and catechetical formation, always important, is particularly relevant in view of the new evangelization, which calls for new forms of participation also on the part of women.

Clearly a more solid formation, while helping consecrated women to understand better their own gifts, cannot but encourage within the Church the reciprocity which is needed. In the field of theological, cultural and spiritual studies, much can be expected from the genius of women, not only in relation to specific aspects of feminine consecrated life, but also in understanding the faith in all its expressions. In this regard the history of spirituality owes much to saints like Teresa of Jesus and Catherine of Siena, the first two women to be given the title "Doctor of the Church," and to so many other mystics for the exploration of the mystery of God and their analysis of his action in believers! The Church depends a great deal on consecrated women for new efforts in fostering Christian doctrine and morals, family and social life, and especially in everything that affects the dignity of women and respect for human life. [note omitted] In fact, "women occupy a place in thought and action which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a 'new feminism' which rejects the temptation of imitating models of 'male domination' in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation."[The footnote for the internal quotation is: "132. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Evangelium Vitae (25 March 1995), 99: AAS 87 (1995), 514."]

> There is reason to hope that a fuller acknowledgment of the mission of women will provide feminine consecrated life with a heightened awareness of its specific role and increased dedication to the cause of the Kingdom of God. This will be expressed in many different works such as involvement in evangelization, educational activities, participation in the formation of future priests and consecrated persons, animating Christian communities, giving spiritual support and promoting the fundamental values of life and peace. To consecrated women and their extraordinary capacity for dedication, I once again express the gratitude and admiration of the whole Church, which supports them so that they will live their vocation fully and joyfully, and feel called to the great task of helping to educate the woman of today.

This passage is very hard to summarize, because it is not very straightforward and is quite rhetorical. One can pick out some significant quotes, as follows.

> 57. The Church fully reveals her varied-spiritual richness when she overcomes all discrimination and welcomes as a true blessing the gifts lavished by God upon both men and women, considering them in their equal dignity. [This implies that there has been discrimination and failure to welcome some of the gifts given by God to women. It fails to note that the discrimination has been mostly clericalist and the failure has been to welcome gifts of both laymen and laywomen.]
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> Certainly the validity of many assertions relating to the position of women in different sectors of society and of the Church cannot be denied. [There is no indication of which claims are being accepted and which not.]
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> Having received from Christ a message of liberation, the Church has the mission to proclaim this message prophetically, promoting ways of thinking and acting which correspond to the mind of the Lord. [Liberationist rhetoric is accepted but not the substance that is incompatible with revelation; however, there is no indication of what exactly that is.]
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> 58. It is therefore urgently necessary to take certain concrete steps, beginning by providing room for women to participate in different fields and at all levels, including decision-making processes, above all in matters which concern women themselves. [That certainly is true, but it applies to lay people in general; how the participation is to be worked out really is up to the pope more than anyone else.]
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> In the field of theological, cultural and spiritual studies, much can be expected from the genius of women, not only in relation to specific aspects of feminine consecrated life, but also in understanding the faith in all its expressions. [This is a claim for a special genius of women; what that amounts to is unclear. Some women do good theology, but there is nothing peculiarly feminine about it.]
>
> “women occupy a place in thought and action which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a ‘new feminism’ which rejects the temptation of imitating models of ‘male domination’ in order to acknowledge and affirm the true

> genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation." [The footnote for this passage, which is an internal quotation, is: "132. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* (25 March 1995), 99: *AAS* 87 (1995), 514."] [The call for a Christian feminism is appropriate, but it is not clear what that is.]

In general, then, JP II here seems to continue the approach he undertook in *Mulieris dignitatem*, which made the mistake of accepting the feminist formulation of issues, rather than recasting them within the framework of equal dignity and complementarity between males and females, together with a recognition of clericalism and a program of reform to deal with it.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 63, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XII, offers some thoughts on the tendency of some groups to die out or experience problems with apostolate:

> The various difficulties stemming from the decline in personnel and apostolates must in no way lead to a loss of confidence in the evangelical vitality of the consecrated life, which will always be present and active in the Church. While individual Institutes have no claim to permanence, the consecrated life itself will continue to sustain among the faithful the response of love toward God and neighbor. Thus it is necessary to distinguish the historical destiny of a specific Institute or form of consecrated life from the ecclesial mission of the consecrated life as such. The former is affected by changing circumstances; the latter is destined to perdure.
>
> This is true of both the contemplative and apostolic forms of consecrated life. On the whole, under the ever creative guidance of the Spirit the consecrated life is destined to remain a shining witness to the inseparable unity of love of God and love of neighbor. It appears as the living memory of the fruitfulness of God's love. New situations of difficulty are therefore to be faced with the serenity of those who know that what is required of each individual is not success, but commitment to faithfulness. What must be avoided at all costs is the actual breakdown of the consecrated life, a collapse which is not measured by a decrease in numbers but by a failure to cling steadfastly to the Lord and to personal vocation and mission. Rather, by persevering faithfully in the consecrated life, consecrated persons confess with great effectiveness before the world their unwavering trust in the Lord of history, in whose hands are the history and destiny of individuals, institutions and peoples, and therefore also the realization in time of his gifts. Sad situations of crisis invite consecrated persons courageously to proclaim their faith in Christ's Death and Resurrection, that they may become a visible sign of the passage from death to life.

Survival at the cost of authenticity and faithfulness would be worthless. It is for those institutes that cannot recruit or have lost their apostolic reason for being to die out with faithfulness and dignity to the end.

Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio* (On the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council), 2, already (29 June 1971) was very much concerned that things were going wrong with respect to the renewal of religious life:

> We wish to respond to the anxiety, uncertainty and instability shown by some; at the same time We wish to encourage those who are seeking the true renewal of the religious life. The boldness of certain arbitrary transformations, an exaggerated distrust of the past—even when it witnesses to the wisdom and vigor of ecclesial traditions—and a mentality excessively preoccupied with hastily conforming to the profound changes which disturb Our times have succeeded in leading some to consider as outmoded the specific forms of religious life. Has not appeal even unjustly been made to the Council to cast doubt on the very principle of religious life?

He's obviously concerned by a perception that some are throwing out the baby of religious life with the bath water of its renewal.

PC 2 begins "Accommodata renovatio"—a phrase also included in the document's very title. What was called for involved two simultaneous undertakings, which should make up a unified whole.

One was renewal, a continuous going back to the sources of Christian life in general and the original genius of each institute and so becoming clear about the essential gift and its implications for shaping life and service. The continuousness of going back perhaps meant through the process prescribed to begin at once, but perhaps also suggested ongoing renewal, so that the institutes would not again get into the same mess. The sources of Christian life in general: Scripture and tradition interpreted in accord with the magisterium, and all this considered without reading back into the sources what we already take for granted and suppose we know well. The original genius of each institute (the charism of the founder, as Paul VI calls it in 29 June 1971, *Evangelica testificatio,* 11): the originating inspiration of the founder/foundress and its development in the initial forming of the institute, considered in the particular historical context, so as to see how it might be carried out today.

The other was accommodation or adaptation, which is adjusting to present opportunities for service and needs of those served, present conditions for witnessing effectively, and currently appropriate means for carrying out the commitments involved.

The renewal was to be carried out under the impulse of the Spirit and the leadership of the Church: what was needed was a re-foundation of each institute, which depended on gifts from above (that had to be prayed for and accepted) and could not be carried out except in line with norms the magisterium laid out and subject to its veto, just as the original foundations were. The norms set out in PC 2 are five:

"a) Since the ultimate norm of religious life is the following of Christ proposed in the Gospel, this is to be maintained as the supreme rule by all institutes." This is ambiguous. The following of Christ proposed in the Gospel, sometimes for every disciple (Mk 8.24; Lk 9.23, 14.27) and sometimes only to the twelve or certain disciples (Mt 10.38, 16.24)—take up your cross and follow me—is not specific enough for religious life. But this norm is in a context;

LG 44 and PC 1 make it clear that religious life involves following more closely, and norm (e) below also specifies that religious life is ordered before everything else to following Jesus and being united with God by profession of the evangelical counsels.

"b) It is for the Church's good that institutes hold to their peculiar character and *munus*. So, they are to recognize and faithfully hold to the spirit and purposes of their founders, and their sound traditions, which constitute the patrimonies of every and each institute." In interpreting this, one must keep in mind the differences among the founders' gifts—some of permanent value for the Church as a whole, others more tied to particular historical situations and needs. Some involved forms of devotion that now have less appeal. What the Council and the Holy See ignored was that what is required here called for considerable creativity, and so admitted a variety of legitimate solutions—none of them likely to fit well all members of an institute. No institute had provisions in its constitutions to carry out such a process with fairness and due consideration for all concerned. So, the mandate to renew was a directive to plunge into disruptive conflicts.

"c) All institutes are to participate in the life of the Church and each, in accord with its proper character, is to make its own and foster as best it can the Church's initiatives and purposes—as in respect to Scripture, liturgy, doctrine, pastoral practice, ecumenism, missionary activities, and social matters." The mandate here is to get with the Council's program itself; that provides an important norm for the accommodation that is being called for. Notice, however, that the Council is not asking any institute to substitute Vatican II for its proper charism. The idea of Vatican II is to recall everyone to more perfect fulfillment of his or her proper vocation, and so those who already have made commitments to consecrated life according to the specifications of some institute are to buy into the Council's concerns in fulfilling their previous commitment, not in place of it.

"d) Institutes are to promote among their members' sensitive awareness of the conditions of people and of their present situations, and of the needs of the Church, so that, judging the conditions of the contemporary world in the light of faith and burning with apostolic zeal, they may be able to serve people more effectively." This norm is directed toward institutes with an active apostolate—the contemplative ones have much the same contribution to make regardless of time-linked conditions. Here is a very important norm for updating—the real needs of the Church and opportunities for service should be met, rather than insisting on continuing as we always have. But witness cannot be compromised, and there must not be a false commensuration of trendy services with those having less appeal. This norm is misunderstood if it is taken to mean getting more involved in secular affairs, being less remote from contemporary life styles. One can do that without serving more effectively—for example, a congregation of nursing sisters can make themselves and their hospital more mainstream and high tech. But for nursing sisters to get out of hospitals, which have become a big business, and to concentrate their efforts on care for those who don't get it in the present system is in line with what the Council means.

"e) Since religious life is above all ordered to this, that the members follow Christ and be united to God by profession of the evangelical counsels, everyone must keep in mind that the

best accommodations to the needs of our time will not have their intended effect unless they are animated by spiritual renewal—to which first place must be reserved even in promoting outward works." This norm certainly calls for greater individual faithfulness to observance of the vows and for greater community faithfulness to the rule—giving up customs that have developed to make things easier and less demanding. But it also calls for a joint effort to develop a spiritual revival, something akin to Pentecostal renewal, but not necessarily with the peculiarities of that movement. Getting back to the founders and retelling the stories of the beginnings should have fostered this.

Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio* (On the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council), 5, clearly affirms the need for renewal, though he sees excesses:

> 5. Certainly many exterior elements, recommended by founders of orders or religious congregations are seen today to be outmoded. Various encumbrances or rigid forms accumulated over the centuries need to be curtailed. Adaptations must be made. New forms can even be sought and instituted with the approval of the Church. For some years now the greater part of religious institutes have been generously dedicating themselves to the attainment of this goal, experimenting—sometimes too hardily—with new types of constitutions and rules.

Notice that he is saying that even some things the founders recommended are outmoded and that encumbrances and rigid forms have been accumulated, and all that must go.
The one limit he is clearly setting here is: no changes unless approved by "the Church"—i.e., by the Holy See.

In the next section (6), Paul VI goes on:

> 6. How can We assist you to make the necessary discernment in this dynamic process itself, in which there is the constant risk that the spirit of the world will be intermingled with the action of the Holy Spirit? How can what is essential be safeguarded or attained? How can benefit be obtained from past experience and from present reflection, in order to strengthen this form of evangelical life?

Here he is getting out the point that there are essentials that cannot be compromised.
He goes on to assert his role—as authorized to confirm his brethren and as having the Spirit who works in the Church.

PC 3: specifically calls for adapting everything to the physical and psychological conditions of contemporary members, to contemporary and local social and cultural conditions, and to the needs of the apostolate; specifically this adaptation was to include reviewing the whole regulating documents and books of prayers and ceremonies; all was to be brought into harmony with Vatican II and all outdated regulations deleted. The tone of this article calls for a veritable revolution; underlying that tone, no doubt, was the expectation that many would drag their feet and resist doing anything much.

PC 4: goes on to talk about the structuring of authority in respect to the projected renewal. They want everyone to participate but still want the action to be taken by proper authority,

especially that of general chapters. In decisions about the future of the institute as a whole, superiors are to consult with members and listen to them (that is nicely ambiguous, since it can mean take into account or not reject). And the balancing act ends with the statement that what is needed is more diligent observance of constitution and rules than multiplication of regulations.

Rules (in the broad sense: whatever has the force of law for an institute) are in general creations of a founder/foundress having religious genius. They do not provide guidance and procedures for anything more than gradual amending. Thus, institutes sorely needed fairly detailed specific law governing the renewal the council told them to undertake. This was not adequately provided. This failure to face up to the need for new and special structures to be created and imposed for bringing about renewal virtually guaranteed trouble, especially when combined with the inevitable legitimate diversity of possible solutions to the renewal problem.

Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio* (On the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council), 51:

> For a living being, adaptation to its surroundings does not consist in abandoning its true identity, but rather in asserting itself in the vitality that is its own. Deep understanding of present tendencies and of the needs of the modern world should cause your own sources of energy to spring up with renewed vigor and freshness. It is a sublime task in the measure that it is a difficult one.

The analogy of the organism's adaptation to its environment is useful for making it clear that the up-to-date renewal of religious life must keep the essentials while jettisoning anything that impedes them in the present, and adopting instead what will facilitate them.

One should not look at the world about as rich in values but as in need, as mired in spiritual poverty and moral corruption—as John XXIII plainly saw it. So the up-to-date renewal of religious life ought to be aimed chiefly at making it more effective apostolically, a more effective effort to spread the gospel and save souls. So, Paul VI at once (52) goes on (under the heading "Need for evangelical witness in today's world"):

> 52. A burning question of the present day preoccupies Us: how can the message of the Gospel penetrate the world? What can be done at those levels in which a new culture is unfolding, where a new type of man is emerging, a man who no longer believes he needs redemption? Since all men are called to the contemplation of the mystery of salvation, you can understand how these questions create such a serious obligation in your lives and such a challenge to your apostolic zeal! Dear religious, according to the different ways in which the call of God makes demands upon your spiritual families, you must give your full attention to the needs of men, their problems and their searching; you must give witness in their midst, through prayer and action, to the Good News of love, justice and peace.

The problem is to figure out, within the framework of the commitment to religious life specified by each particular charism, how to meet the needs of a spiritually impoverished contemporary world.

Treatment of why institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life need to be regulated by hierarchy, and of the limits of hierarchical authority (see CIC, c. 576, 2–D–5, p. 1).

a) One consideration common to all of them: they put themselves forward as "Catholic" entities. If they are not both authentically so and unambiguously so, they convey a false message, a counterwitness. So, hierarchy ought to exercise oversight—as with all so-called Catholic entities.

b) They enroll new members and seek cooperation of faithful—e.g., financial support. If they do not really deserve it, people get scammed and otherwise wronged.

c) The institutes and societies have members to whom they must keep their undertakings, and it's up to the hierarchy to provide redress when those in charge fail to treat members properly.

d) Members of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life carrying out the apostolates to which they are committed act in the person of the Church. Their actions need to be coordinated by bishops with other ecclesial action, and overseen to ensure that they are genuinely apostolic (see CIC, cc. 207 and 574, in 2–D–5, p. 17).

e) It should not be assumed that, once approved, an institute or society must go on forever. All should be accredited only for a time and need to report and get re-accreditation from time to time. At the same time, institutes and societies may be called to change rather significantly, and there should be recognized ways to do that, both fair to all members and to the faithful who have supported them.

f) Only those founding and carrying on institutes and societies can discern their own communal calling, judge how they might carry it out, and figure out how to organize themselves. Hierarchy can and must judge the acceptability of offers, discern which proposed activities to approve as helpful contributions, and negotiate cooperation with clerics. On general nonsubordination of consecrated life to clergy, see 2–D–5, p. 20. In some documents, such as *Essential Elements* (see 2–D–6, pp. 27–29) it seems that the hierarchy's role with respect to religious life is one-sidedly overstated, and that not enough attention is paid to the immediacy of the relationship between Jesus and the Spirit on the one hand and, on the others, individuals and groups discerning their vocations and carrying them out. The hierarchy's role is to encourage that process, discern what is genuine and coordinate that with other genuine divine gifts. While no new divine gift can be incompatible with those already given, no other principle is rightly used to sort out charisms.

Notes for 4–A Responsibilities with respect to vocation and the institute's charism

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 36, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VII, deals with "Faithfulness to the charism":

> 36. In Christian discipleship and love for the person of Christ there are a number of points concerning the growth of holiness in the consecrated life which merit particular emphasis today.
>
> In the first place, there is the need for fidelity to the founding charism and subsequent spiritual heritage of each Institute. It is precisely in this fidelity to the inspiration of the founders and foundresses, an inspiration which is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit, that the essential elements of the consecrated life can be more readily discerned and more fervently put into practice.
>
> Fundamental to every charism is a threefold orientation. First, charisms lead to the Father, in the filial desire to seek his will through a process of unceasing conversion, wherein obedience is the source of true freedom, chastity expresses the yearning of a heart unsatisfied by any finite love and poverty nourishes that hunger and thirst for justice which God has promised to satisfy (cf. Mt. 5:6). Consequently the charism of each Institute will lead the consecrated person to belong wholly to God, to speak with God or about God, as is said of St. Dominic, [note omitted] so that he or she can taste the goodness of the Lord (cf. Ps 34:8) in every situation.
>
> Second, the charisms of the consecrated life also lead to the Son, fostering an intimate and joyful communion of life with him in the school of his generous service of God and neighbor. Thus the attitude of consecrated persons is progressively conformed to Christ; "they learn detachment from externals, from the tumult of the senses, from all that keeps man from that freedom which allows him to be grasped by the Spirit." [note omitted] As a result, consecrated persons are enabled to take up the mission of Christ, working and suffering with him in the spreading of his Kingdom.
>
> Finally, every charism leads to the Holy Spirit, insofar as it prepares individuals to let themselves be guided and sustained by him, both in their personal spiritual journeys and in their lives of communion and apostolic work, in order to embody that attitude of service which should inspire the true Christian's every choice.
>
> In fact it is this threefold relationship which emerges in every founding charism, though with the specific nuances of the various patterns of living. This is so because in every charism there predominates "a profound desire to be conformed to Christ to give witness to some aspect of his mystery." [note omitted] This specific aspect is meant to take shape and develop according to the most authentic tradition of the Institute as present in its Rule, Constitutions and Statutes. [note omitted]

This is a summary of what all charisms for consecrated life have in common, and so indicates nothing distinctive about any of them. JP II's strategy here seems to be to call attention to the common features in an effort to provide a framework for interpreting particular law in a nonlegalistic way, a way that will be faithful and yet also creative. Thus he goes on in the next section (same p. VII):

> 37. Institutes of Consecrated Life are thus invited courageously to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today's world. [note omitted] This invitation is first of all a call to perseverance on the path of holiness in the midst of the material and spiritual difficulties of daily life. But it is also a call to pursue competence in personal work and to develop a dynamic fidelity to their mission, adapting forms if need be to new situations and different needs in complete openness to God's inspiration and to the Church's discernment. But all must be fully convinced that the quest for ever greater conformity to the Lord is the guarantee of any renewal which seeks to remain faithful to an Institute's original inspiration.(PC 2)
>
> In this spirit there is a pressing need today for every Institute to return to the Rule, since the Rule and Constitutions provide a map for the whole journey of discipleship in accordance with a specific charism confirmed by the Church. A greater regard for the Rule will not fail to offer consecrated persons a reliable criterion in their search for the appropriate forms of a witness which is capable of responding to the needs of the times without departing from an Institute's initial inspiration.

This plainly suggests that JP II saw widespread disregard of particular law as the root of many problems in consecrated life.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 38, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VII, speaks about prayer and asceticism:

[He says that there is need for] great fidelity to liturgical and personal prayer, to periods devoted to mental prayer and contemplation, to Eucharist adoration, to monthly retreats and to spiritual exercises.

> There is also a need to rediscover the ascetic practices typical of the spiritual tradition of the Church and of the individual's own Institute. These have been and continue to be a powerful aid to authentic progress in holiness. Asceticism, by helping to master and correct the inclinations of human nature wounded by sin, is truly indispensable if consecrated persons are to remain faithful to their own vocation and follow Jesus on the way of the Cross.

Obviously, when prayer and asceticism drop out, consecrated life simply crashes up.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 39, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VII, points out one important benefit of deeper holiness by consecrated persons: "To the degree that they deepen their friendship with God, consecrated persons become better prepared to help their brothers and sisters through valuable spiritual activities such as schools of prayer, spiritual exercises and retreats, days of recollection, spiritual dialogue and direction. In this way people

are helped to grow in prayer and will then be better able to discern God's will in their lives and to commit themselves to the courageous and sometimes heroic demands which faith makes of them."

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 64, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XII, deals with "Fresh efforts in the promotion of vocations":

> The invitation of Jesus, "Come and see" (Jn. 1:39), is the golden rule of pastoral work for promoting vocations, even today. Following the example of founders and foundresses, this work aims at presenting the attraction of the person of the Lord Jesus and the beauty of the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel. A primary responsibility of all consecrated men and women is therefore to propose with courage, by word and example, the ideal of the following of Christ, and then to support the response to the Spirit's action in the heart of those who are called.
>
> After the enthusiasm of the first meeting with Christ, there comes the constant struggle of everyday life, a struggle which turns a vocation into a tale of friendship with the Lord. In view of this, the pastoral work of promoting vocations should make use of suitable help, such as spiritual direction, in order to nourish that personal response of love of the Lord which is the necessary condition for becoming disciples and apostles of his Kingdom. Moreover, if the flourishing of vocations evident in some parts of the world justifies optimism and hope, the lack of them in other areas must not lead either to discouragement or to the temptation to practice lax and unwise recruitment.

This is sound insofar as it encourages promoting and nurturing vocations by presenting appropriate emotional motives and reasons, and nurturing the focus of affection on Jesus. It also is sound insofar as JP II excludes unsound methods and compromises on quality—"lax and unwise recruitment." But he fails to articulate, much less, stress the central condition for promoting vocations to clerical and consecrated life, namely, catechesis of the young about the universal call to holiness, evangelical life, and personal vocation.

Some so emphasize following Christ that they relativize every other aspect of religious life. But that eliminates it, since every personal vocation is to follow Christ. To capture what is special about consecrated life, one must focus on how one follows Christ by professing the vows etc.

It won't do to dismiss the details and say that the special vocation is a communal making present of the obedience of Jesus to his Father's will (any good Christian family should do that), a life project that channels sexual energy toward fuller service to the kingdom than marriage does (that not only denigrates marriage but confuses fuller service with a specifically different kind of service), and a bridge to the poor (which is pretty vague).

DV 25: The Council urges clerics to read and study Scripture lest they become empty preachers. It then adds: "Similarly, this sacred Synod vehemently and especially exhorts the Christian faithful as a whole, especially members of religious institutes, to acquire, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures, 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ' (Phil

3.8). ‘For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ’ [St. Jerome, Prologue to Commentary on Isaiah, PL 24:17; references to papal encyclical omitted].”

The Council is not only exhorting the reading of Scripture but that it be read so as to cultivate acquaintance with Jesus. That acquaintance is the key principle for the emotional love necessary for a strong intimate relationship with Jesus, and that relationship is necessary for the constant, faithful cooperation with him by which one fulfills one’s vocation.

PC 7 deals with institutes completely ordered to contemplation. They are to be renewed, but not to give up their specifically contemplative character, withdrawal from the world, and characteristic exercises of their contemplative life. The Council makes it clear that contemplatives serve the Church without active apostolate: they offer God a fine sacrifice of praise, they lend luster to God’s people with abundant fruits of holiness, motivate them by example, and expand the Church with mysterious apostolic fruitfulness.

The Council does not make the point here but it is worth making that the witness value of contemplative life calls for appropriate efforts to manifest it—by means of suitable publicity, allowing outsiders to participate in some ways, accepting prayer intentions from clerics and others in active apostolates, and so on. Wulf (in Vorgrimler, ed. commentary, 2:349–51) makes it clear that the Council is replacing the older conception of contemplative life as an individualistic quest for perfect holiness by an exclusive relationship to God without service to those outside the monastery.

Pius XII in radio addresses to contemplative nuns (*The Pope Speaks*, 5:61–81 at 80–81) makes it clear that even pure contemplatives participate in and contribute to the Church’s apostolate, including love of neighbor, by example, prayer, and penance.

In this radio address, Pius also makes as clear as anywhere what contemplative life is.

PC 8 goes on to deal with institutes with an active apostolate. The Council says: “In these institutes, apostolic action and beneficence belong to the very nature of religious life, because sacred ministry and the work of charity are their special commission from the Church to be carried out in her name.” (Here we have the point that, unlike the secular activities of the laity, the activities of religious are carried out on behalf of the Church, and so have an official status. That limits the sort of thing that can be appropriate as apostolate for religious, and justifies sorts of oversight by bishops that would be meddling if exercised in the lives of lay people.)

The Council sets up the principle: since members respond to a call to follow Christ and serve him in his members, the basis for their activity is intimate union with Christ—this is the source of their love for God and neighbor. (Here we have the open acknowledgement that a special intimacy with Jesus that isn’t charity is the point of departure.) Out of this comes worship of God (the properly religious) and apostolic activity (charitable work for others intended to bear witness to and spread the faith). So, spirituality must be apostolic and the apostolate religious. There is great diversity in such forms of life. The needs of the apostolate—bearing in mind it is apostolate and real work of charity—should dictate the means for sustaining members’ lives in service to Christ. (Here we have the apostolic activity

as the real end, to which other things are means—and underlying this is the idea that we are sanctified by serving others according to God's will and calling.)

PC 9 goes on to deal with monastic life and the life of religious institutes that unite an active apostolic life with the choral office and monastic observances. The liturgical focus is commended—they present to the divine majesty a service at once humble and noble. Monks are asked to adapt their old and beneficent traditions to the contemporary needs of souls so that their monasteries will be seminaries of edification for the Christian people. In other words, the common monastic apostolate to preserve is fostering growth beyond minimalism for all. The others—including Dominicans and Franciscans—are to adapt their way of life to the needs of their apostolate while preserving their special form. (In neither case is the guidance very helpful for shaping the prescribed renewal. In this number, there seems to be less urgency to do anything drastic, perhaps because it is assumed these outfits are in pretty good shape as they are.)

PC 10 deals redundantly with lay society of men (brothers) or women, and makes it clear that they really qualify as religious institutes. In the men's outfits, some can be ordained to serve the community.

PC 19: Takes a cautious view about founding new institutes—must be both really needed and likely to prosper. At the same time, there is a special reason for new institutes in newer Churches, to take into account the natural endowments and manners of the people, and local customs and circumstances. (I doubt these factors really warrant the founding of entirely new institutes; one obvious factor about religious life is that some of the existing forms showed themselves very adaptable and exportable.)

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "New Communities," *Review for Religious*, 52/1 (Jan./Feb.) 1992: 140–46, deals with the process for setting up a new institute or society of apostolic life. It really ought to be new, not merely an attempt to refound an existing outfit by people who are dropping out for one reason or another. It takes time and approval depends on showing that it can last and grow.

A transfer is probably a better option for many people who judge it impossible in conscience to continue where they are. Sisters also can become consecrated virgins and go on their own, perhaps in association with one or a few others. Priests who are able to function can seek permission to leave the institute and incardination in a priest-poor diocese.

PC 24: Institutes have the right to promote vocations, but with prudence and in accord with norms laid down by the Holy See and local bishops. Prudence means that they cannot act as if a vocation were something to be marketed. They need to promote vocations mainly by sound catechesis about vocations in general. And, as the Council says: Members should bear in mind that the example of their own lives is the best commendation of their institute and effective invitation to grasping the religious life.

Ecclesiae sanctae, on implementing PC, II, II (20) encourages religious to adopt the Divine Office or part of it in place of the Little Office and (21) calls for more mental prayer instead of a multitude of prayers so that "religious may participate more intimately and fruitfully in

the most holy mystery of the Eucharist and the public prayer of the Church, and that their whole spiritual life may be nourished more abundantly," while at the same time adding: "retaining nevertheless the pious exercises commonly accepted in the Church." That seems to be trying to have it both ways—a liturgical center, with more mental prayer, yet traditional devotions besides—presumably the rosary and so forth.

An institute may be called upon to cease to be. PC 21: When an institute or monastery has no real prospect of surviving, the ordinary or ordinaries concerned (and the Holy See) may agree to end it—no more novices. If possible, such an entity should be merged into another whose end and spirit are similar. *Ecclesiae sanctae,* on implementing PC, II, VIII (39–41) deals with union and suppression of institutes.

As all the faithful have the right to follow any spirituality consonant with the Church's teaching (see CIC, c. 214), members of institutes have the right to personal forms of prayer and devotion consonant with both Church teaching and their common responsibilities as members of the institute. So, superiors and other members act wrongly if they press members to adopt particular forms of prayer, devotion, and so on beyond those duly prescribed, or to give up such things merely because of personal preference or for the sake of uniformity. Thus, the common prayer and devotional practices to be specified in institutes are limited by both the common obligation to participate in the Church's liturgy (which must not be arbitrarily modified) and the individual right to personal spirituality.

CIC, c. 578: "All must observe faithfully the mind and designs of the founders regarding the nature, purpose, spirit, and character of an institute, which have been sanctioned by competent ecclesiastical authority, and its sound traditions, all of which constitute the patrimony of the same institute." CIC, c. 583: "Changes in institutes of consecrated life affecting those things which have been approved by the Apostolic See cannot be made without its permission."

The word *charism* does not appear here as it does not appear in Vatican II; patrimony is the preferred expression in both. Note that it does not include everything in the founder's methods and so forth; what is essential is the very specific common good and the basic structure of the cooperation set up to achieve it, understood just as they were approved by the Church in the first place. Insofar as members freely commit themselves to this particular institute, they are restricting themselves by excluding many other legitimate options, very much as people getting married are committing themselves to just this spouse.

CIC, c. 587, §1, require that, among other things, the things stated in c. 578 must be included in the fundamental code or constitutions of the institute: "to protect more faithfully the proper vocation and identity of each institute." So, the patrimony must be maintained if the institute is to keep its identity. Does that mean no development at all? No. It means any development must be homogeneous: an unfolding of the virtualities of what was given at the beginning in a way always totally consistent with that.

CIC, c. 597, §1: "Any Catholic endowed with the right intention . . . can be admitted into an institute of consecrated life." So, those admitting must ascertain the individual's intention and may not admit anyone who lacks the right one. That obviously does not require the ability to

articulate the purpose of religious life. Someone might just say: “I’ve known so-and-so (a member of the institute) and become convinced that I want to become like that.” But there can be clear indications of wrong intention, and there might be a temptation to admit such people in hope that their wrong intention will eventually change. For instance, they might only be fleeing someone or something, seeking refuge, as it were; or they may be interested in education or formation for some extrinsic purpose. Such people are not to be admitted to the institute.

CIC, c. 643, §1, lists other conditions which invalidate (though some can be dispensed) admission into the novitiate of a religious institute; §2 says proper law can add others. The generally invalidating impediments: age under seventeen, being married, who is currently in some institute or society of apostolic life, “who enters the institute as a result of force, grave fear, or fraud, or whom the superior received induced in the same way” (the relationship must really be free on both sides), who has concealed earlier incorporation in some institute or society.

CIC, c. 597, §2 says that nobody is to be admitted without suitable preparation. That means there must be a preparatory program, which ought to be set up so that it can be prolonged as needed to meet individual’s needs, that brings interested individuals to the point of being ready for admission to the novitiate. People can be admitted to that preparatory program while their qualifications are being reviewed. It should clarify for them what the institute is up to and what would be expected of them. It should introduce them to the liturgical and other prayer of the community. It should check and, if needed, improve their general level of catechesis. It should explore with them the possibility that they really don’t want the institute and are perhaps there by mistake. It should not be harsh and should be friendly, but should not offer more support, comforts, and good times than novices and professed members experience.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 54, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, X, discusses “Cooperation with the laity” and says:

> Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that, in the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the Secular or Third Orders, a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.

That encourages associating lay people not only as the third orders did in the past but also in carrying on the apostolate of an institute in accord with its proper charism. The problem is how to do that while remaining faithful to the founding charism and keeping an institute of consecrated life faithful to its commitment to the vows.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 56, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, X, he goes on about this, under the heading “Associates and lay volunteers”:

> 56. A significant expression of lay people’s sharing in the richness of the consecrated life is their participation in various Institutes under the new form of so-

> called associate members or, in response to conditions present in certain cultures, as people who share fully for a certain period of time the Institute's community life and its particular dedication to contemplation or the apostolate. This should always be done in such a way that the identity of the Institute in its internal life is not harmed. [note omitted]
>
> This voluntary service, which draws from the richness of the consecrated life, should be held in great esteem; it is however necessary to provide proper formation so that, besides being competent, volunteers always have supernaturally motivated intentions and, in their projects, a strong sense of community and of the Church. [note omitted] Moreover, it should be borne in mind that initiatives involving lay persons at the decision-making level, in order to be considered the work of a specific Institute, must promote the ends of that Institute and be carried out under its responsibility. Therefore, if lay persons take on a directive role, they will be accountable for their actions to the competent Superiors. It is necessary for all this to be examined and regulated by special directives in each Institute, to be approved by higher authority; these directives should indicate the respective responsibilities of the Institute itself, of its communities, associate members and volunteers.

Here JP II is calling for particular law to regulate such participation by lay people, and saying that needs approval by the bishop or the Holy See.

Accepting individuals as full members of an institute without the commitment its documents require changes the character of the institute as a whole: it becomes a looser, voluntary association of individuals who live and work together within the limits of mutual consent. See the article advocating this: "Alternative Membership in Religious Congregations," *Review for Religious,* 50:4 (July/Aug. 1991): 559–63.

An alternative is to associate with such individuals without making them full members of the community: they would not reside there but elsewhere, and would not participate in community decision making but relate as volunteer helpers or assistants or friends and guests (even if for long stretches) of the community.

(Of course, a community might allow someone to live in without becoming involved in its work: a roomer/boarder who needs a decent place to stay.)

In an institute of active apostolate, such associates can contribute valuable service. They need to be formed appropriately and should be treated as colleagues in respect to the common work. Within their own sphere of apostolic activity, they may share in or even shape decision making about particular matters, especially technical ones about which they are competent, just as a lay person may become a manager in an institution where religious are employed. But associates cannot be merged into the community without destroying its character and identity. They might gather at a house and stay there on occasion over night, but must not reside there. They cannot participate in chapters, function as superiors, be members of councils, vote in community votes.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “Fraternal Life in Community,” 70:

> In order to achieve such an objective [that of good collaboration and exchange of gifts], however, it is necessary to have: religious communities with a clear charismatic identity, assimilated and lived, capable of transmitting them to others and disposed to share them; religious communities with an intense spirituality and missionary enthusiasm for communicating the same spirit and the same evangelizing thrust; religious communities who know how to animate and encourage lay people to share the charism of their institute, according to their secular character and according to their different style of life, inviting them to discover new ways of making the same charism and mission operative. In this way, a religious community becomes a center radiating outwardly, a spiritual force, a center of animation, of fraternity creating fraternity, and of communion and ecclesial collaboration, where the different contributions of each help build up the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

Naturally, very close collaboration should be worked out with respect for the reciprocal vocations and different styles of life proper to religious and to lay persons.

A religious community has its own needs of animation, horarium, discipline and privacy (see CIC, cc. 667 and 607, §3), such as to render unacceptable those forms of collaboration which imply cohabitation and the living together of religious and laity, even when such arrangements specify conditions which are to be respected.

Otherwise, a religious community would lose its own character, which it is responsible for maintaining by observing its common life.

The point is that collaboration shaped by the charism of the religious institute is okay, but that in which the charism and the living of religious life are compromised is not.

CIC, c. 663, §1: “The first and foremost duty of all religious is to be the contemplation of divine things and assiduous union with God in prayer.” §2 calls for daily participation in the Eucharist and Eucharistic adoration; §3 calls for Scripture reading, meditation, liturgy of hours according to institute’s rules, and other pious exercises; §4 for Marian devotion and rosary; §5 annual retreat. The canon sets out a series of duties. Religious life is to be primarily prayerful and devout. The duties also imply rights. Individual religious are entitled to have a schedule and facilities that allow them to fulfill these duties; they are entitled to the support and cooperation of their fellow religious and the clergy in doing so. The laity and ecclesiastical employers, including operations of the institute’s own, owe individual religious the time and facilities to live a devout life without compression, minimalization—so that their religious acts can be done well and fruitfully for themselves and others.

It is wrong to admit people for service for which they have the gifts but who are overqualified. Prior to admission, interested persons’ abilities should be looked into. Only if it seems likely that their gifts match the ministry in which they would eventually serve should they be admitted. For example, a high school graduate from a poor family who has considerable intellectual abilities should not be admitted as an auxiliary sister or as a working brother to an

institute which would not provide educational opportunity to develop those gifts and opportunities of service to use them. That does not mean there is something wrong in admitting individuals of average intelligence and no desire for further education to develop and use their gifts for homemaking, secretarial, or maintenance work in service to the community.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 13:

> 13. As a response to the admonition of the Lord, "watch at all times, and pray" (cf. Lk. 21:36), a religious community needs to be watchful and take the time necessary for attending to the quality of its life. Sometimes men and women religious "don't have time" and their day runs the risk of being too busy and anxious, and the religious can end up being tired and exhausted. In fact, religious community is regulated by a rhythmic horarium to give determined times to prayer, and especially so that one can learn to give time to God (vacare Deo).
>
> Prayer needs to be seen also as time for being with the Lord so that He might act in us and, notwithstanding distractions and weariness, might enter our lives, console them and guide them. So that, in the end, our entire existence can belong to him.

Everyone must make provision for prayer. Those who live together in community must provide together both for communal prayer (not least but not exclusively liturgical prayer) and for opportunities for personal prayer.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 14:

> As happened in the first community in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:42), the word, the Eucharist, common prayer, dedication and fidelity to the teaching of the Apostles and their successors, put one in touch with God's great works; in this context, these works become resplendent and generate praise, thanksgiving, joy, union of hearts, comfort in the shared difficulties of daily life together, and mutual encouragement in faith.

This brief statement indicates the working of community prayer centered in the Eucharist.

Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio* (On the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council), 37, after (30–36) talking about various aspects of the ascetical and prayer life of religious amidst the distractions of the contemporary world, speaks of the "Doctrine of Life":

> 37. The Council considers "a proven doctrine of acquiring perfection" (50) [see LG 43] as one of the inherited riches of religious institutes and one of the greatest benefits that they must guarantee. And since this perfection consists in advancing ever further in the love of God and of our brethren, it is necessary to understand this doctrine in a very concrete way, that is as a doctrine of life that must be effectively lived. This means that the pursuit to which the institutes devote themselves cannot consist only in certain adaptations to be carried out in relation to the changing circumstances of the world; they must instead assist the fruitful

> rediscovery of the means essential for leading a life completely permeated with love of God and of men.

Here is an important point: members of each institute must continue to shape their life by their charism precisely insofar as it was meant to promote love of God and neighbor, to lead members to holiness. That thought provides a principle for ongoing renewal and also for faithfulness to the charism.

Congregation for Bishops and Congregation for Relgious and Secular Institutes, *Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church,* 12:

> 12. Every authentic charism implies a certain element of genuine originality and of special initiative for the spiritual life of the Church. In its surroundings it may appear troublesome and may even cause difficulties, since it is not always and immediately easy to recognize it as coming from the Spirit.
>
> The specific charismatic note of any institute demands, both of the Founder and of his disciples, a continual examination regarding: fidelity to the Lord; docility to His Spirit; intelligent attention to circumstances and an outlook cautiously directed to the signs of the times; the will to be part of the Church; the awareness of subordination to the sacred hierarchy; boldness of initiatives; constancy in the giving of self; humility in bearing with adversities. The true relation between genuine charism, with its perspectives of newness, and interior suffering, carries with it an unvarying history of the connection between charism and cross, which, above every motive that may justify misunderstandings, is supremely helpful in discerning the authenticity of a vocation.

So, according to this, the charism carries with it a set of responsibilities of "continual examination." Underlying the objects of the examination are the real responsibility—fidelity to the Lord requires accepting the charism, committing oneself to exercise it in service, and then regularly doing so; docility to the Spirit is required in discerning the charism and how to exercise it, rather than setting up one's own agenda for doing so; attention to circumstances and signs of the times is required by obligation to use the charism in service, and so to be keen to find the opportunities and needs to be met by its exercise; the will to be part of the Church and subordination to the hierarchy require submission to legitimate authority and a real effort to coordinate one's action with others' service for the good of the Church as a whole; boldness of initiates is required for creative faithfulness, which love of those to be served demands; constancy in giving will manifest and increase love; humility in bearing with adversities is required by complete dependence on God and the primacy of his plan and will, rather than one's own.

Genuine Christian service succeeds less by one's effectiveness than by one's fidelity when ineffective, because that suffering requires and manifests greater love, which more effectively witnesses to God's salvific action which it also occasions, as it did in Jesus' own life.

Congregation for Bishops and Congregation for Relgious and Secular Institutes, *Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church,* 16:

> 16. Mission, which begins with the Father, requires that those who are sent exercise their awareness of love in the dialogue of prayer. Therefore, in these times of apostolic renewal, as always in every form of missionary engagement, a privileged place is given to the contemplation of God, to meditation on His plan of salvation, and to reflection on the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel, so that prayer may be nourished and grow in quality and frequency.
>
> It is urgently necessary that everyone appreciate prayer and have recourse to it. Bishops and their priest-collaborators (cf. LG 25, 27, 28, 41), "dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4:1), "should aim to make of one mind in prayer all who are entrusted to their care, and to ensure their advancement in grace through the reception of the sacraments, and that they become faithful witnesses to the Lord" (CD 15). Religious, in turn, inasmuch as they are called to be, as it were, specialists in prayer (Paul VI, Oct. 28, 1966), "should seek and love above all else God . . ." and "in all circumstances they should take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col 3:3) which is the source and stimulus of love of neighbor" (PC, 6).

This is another way of saying that the soul of the apostolate is interior life, that without a vibrant interior life the outward performance will either become mechanical and empty or be directed to some nonapostolic, secular end.

Congregation for Bishops and Congregation for Relgious and Secular Institutes, *Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church,* 25:

> 25. On their part, religious communities, especially of contemplative life, maintaining, of course, fidelity to their distinctive spirit (cf. PC 7; AG 40), should offer people appropriate aids for prayer and for their personal spiritual life, so that they can respond to the pressing need, today more deeply felt than ever, for meditation and the deepening of faith. They should also offer them the opportunity and facility to participate suitably in their liturgical functions, always respecting the requirements of the enclosure and the rules laid down in this regard.

Here is the articulation of a norm that directs doing what most religious communities have done: foster prayer and spiritual life, along the lines of their distinctive charism, in "people"—the faithful at large—and also facilitate their participation in the community's liturgies, without compromising the requirements of religious life.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life,* 1:

> 1. 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 (1 Cor 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 which today, also, can and must order the immense pyramid of all human activities” (Paul VI, 7 December 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 font of peace and a person who brings peace to every sphere of life and apostolate.

The Congregation’s description of what it calls “contemplation” here makes it clear that the word is not being used to refer to that contemplation which is an infused gift of the Holy Spirit, and the document prescinds from that.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life, 9,* under the heading “Centrality of the Eucharist”:

> Devout participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, “the source and apex of all Christian life” (LG 11), is the irreplaceable center and animating force of the contemplative dimension of every religious community (cf. PC 6; ET 47–48).
>
> —Priest religious, therefore, will give a preeminent place to the daily celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice.
>
> —Each and all religious should take an active part in it every day (SC 48) according to the concrete circumstances in which their community lives and works. “That more perfect participation is highly recommended, by which the faithful, after the priest’s communion, receive the Body of the Lord from the same sacrifice” (SC 55; cf. ET 47; Synod of Bishops 1971).

Thus, not only is the daily celebration of the Eucharist mandated, but the Eucharist is said to be “the irreplaceable center and animating force of the contemplative dimension of every religious community,” which puts personal prayer of every sort in a decidedly subordinate position. To claim that contemplative prayer is more central is therefore mistaken. Those who deprived themselves of regular participation in the Eucharist by going out into the desert were wrongheaded.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church’s Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate,* 28:

> 28. Religious life cannot be sustained without a deep life of prayer, individual, communal, and liturgical. The religious who embraces concretely a life of total consecration is called to know the risen Lord by a warm, personal knowledge, and to know him as one with whom he or she is personally in communion: “This is eternal life: to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent” (Jn 17:3). Knowledge of him in faith brings love: “You did not see him, yet you love him; and still without seeing him you are already filled with a joy so glorious that it cannot be described” (I Pet 1:8). This joy of love and knowledge is brought about in many ways, but fundamentally, and as an essential and necessary means, through individual and community encounter with God in prayer. This is where the religious finds “the concentration of the heart on God” (C Dm 1), which unifies the whole of life and mission.

This points to the importance of the sort of prayer that brings about knowledge of Jesus by acquaintance. The document shifts from that to knowing God, but that is not the same thing. The quotation from 1 Pt 1.8 is apt, however. The document goes on:

> 29. As with Jesus for whom prayer as a distinct act held a large and essential place in life, the religious needs to pray as a deepening of union with God (cf. Lk 5:16). Prayer is also a necessary condition for proclaiming the Gospel (cf. Mk 1:35–38). It is the context of all important decisions and events (cf. Lk 6:12–13). As with Jesus, too, the habit of prayer is necessary if the religious is to have that contemplative vision of things by which God is revealed in faith in the ordinary events of life (cf. C Dm 1). This is the contemplative dimension which the Church and the world have the right to expect of religious by the fact of their consecration. It must be strengthened by prolonged moments of time apart for exclusive adoration of the Father, love of him and listening in silence before him. For this reason, Paul VI insisted: “Faithfulness to daily prayer always remains for each religious a basic necessity. Prayer must have a primary place in your constitutions and in your lives” (ET 45).

The argument moves fallaciously from needs for prayer in view of an ongoing cooperative relationship with God—and there several good points are made—to contemplation in some stronger sense. They use Paul VI to bring in constitutions.

> 30. By saying “in your constitutions,” Paul VI gave a reminder that for the religious prayer is not only a personal turning in love to God but also a community response of adoration, intercession, praise, and thanksgiving that needs to be provided for in a stable way (cf. ET 43). This does not happen by chance. Concrete provisions at the level of each institute and of each province and local community are necessary if prayer is to deepen and thrive in religious life individually and communally. Yet only through prayer is the religious ultimately able to respond to his or her consecration. Community prayer has an important role in giving this necessary spiritual support. Each religious has a right to be assisted by the presence and example of other members of the community at prayer. Each has the privilege

> and duty of praying with the others and of participating with them in the liturgy which is the unifying center of their life. Such mutual help encourages the effort to live the life of union with the Lord to which religious are called. “People have to feel that through you someone else is at work. To the extent that you live your total consecration to the Lord, you communicate something of him and, ultimately, it is he for whom the human heart is longing” (Pope John Paul II, Altötting).

The argument is muddled, but the central point—there must be communal prayer and the community must provide for that and provide opportunities and support for personal prayer—is obviously sound and important.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church’s Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate,* 19: “The capacity to live community life with its joys and restraints is a quality which distinguishes a religious vocation to a given institute and it is a key criterion of suitability in a candidate.” This remark is developed in a later article:

> 22. In view of the crucial importance of community life, it should be noted that its quality is affected, positively or negatively, by two kinds of diversity in the institute: that of its members and that of its works. These are the diversities of Saint Paul’s image of the Body of Christ or the Council’s image of the pilgrim People of God. In both, the diversity is a variety of gifts which is meant to enrich the one reality. The criterion for accepting both members and works in a religious institute, therefore, is the building of unity (cf. MR 12). The practical question is: Do God’s gifts in this person or project or group make for unity and deepen communion? If they do, they can be welcomed. if they do not, then no matter how good the gifts may seem to be in themselves or how desirable they may appear to some members, they are not for this particular institute. It is a mistake to try to make the founding gift of the institute cover everything. A gift which would virtually separate a member from the communion of the community cannot be rightly encouraged. Nor is it wise to tolerate widely divergent lines of development which do not have a strong foundation of unity in the institute itself. Diversity without division and unity without regimentation are a richness and a challenge that help the growth of communities of prayer, joy, and service in witness to the reality of Christ. It is a particular responsibility of superiors and of those in charge of formation to ensure that the differences which make for disintegration are not mistaken for the genuine value of diversity.

Here is an important and valid criterion for excluding some aspirants. If aspirants and their gifts will not contribute to the community’s development along the lines of its own charism, they should not be accepted—no matter how attractive they might be.

Many men have the gifts for religious life and for the contemplative life or an active apostolate that does not involve clerical ministry. They find religious life appealing but have no interest in being priests. Such men ought not to be ordained; they should be lay monks or brothers. Why? Because one ought to accept and commit oneself to one’s vocation. If ordained, such men very

likely would at times be drafted into clerical ministries for which they are not suited, or not so well suited as for the apostolate from which they would be distracted. In times past, due to clericalism, many such men were ordained. With a better understanding of personal vocation, that has changed some and should change completely.

Maurizio Costa, S.J., "'Priest-Religious' and/or 'Religious Priest'?" *Consecrated Life*, 26 (2006): 53–86, takes up the issue of the relationship between ordination and profession as a religious—and deals with it rather mysteriously.

4–B Responsibilities with respect to formation

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 65, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XII, deals with "Commitment to initial formation":

> 65. The Synod Assembly paid special attention to the formation of those who wish to consecrate themselves to the Lord, [note omitted] and recognized its decisive importance. The primary objective of the formation process is to prepare people for the total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ, at the service of the Church's mission. To say "yes" to the Lord's call by taking personal responsibility for maturing in one's vocation is the inescapable duty of all who have been called. One's whole life must be open to the action of the Holy Spirit, traveling the road of formation with generosity, and accepting in faith the means of grace offered by the Lord and the Church. [note omitted]
>
> Formation should therefore have a profound effect on individuals, so that their every attitude and action at important moments as well as in the ordinary events of life will show that they belong completely and joyfully to God. [note omitted] Since the very purpose of consecrated life is conformity to the Lord Jesus in his total self-giving, [note omitted] this must also be the principal objective of formation. Formation is a path of gradual identification with the attitude of Christ toward the Father.
>
> If this is the purpose of the consecrated life, the manner of preparing for it should include and express the character of wholeness. Formation should involve the whole person, [note omitted to CIC, c. 607, §1] in every aspect of the personality, in behavior and intentions. Precisely because it aims at the transformation of the whole person, it is clear that the commitment of formation never ends. Indeed, at every stage of life, consecrated persons must be offered opportunities to grow in their commitment to the charism and mission of their Institute.
>
> For formation to be complete, it must include every aspect of Christian life. It must therefore provide a human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation which pays special attention to the harmonious integration of all its various aspects. Sufficient time should be reserved for initial formation, understood as a process of development which passes through every stage of personal maturity—from the psychological and spiritual to the theological and pastoral. In the case of those studying for the priesthood, this initial formation coincides with and fits well into a specific course of studies, as part of a broader formation program.

The first paragraph makes it clear that the primary purpose of formation is to prepare individuals to make the commitment. Preparing well to make it is itself the beginning of making it properly. A legalistic, minimalistic attitude toward the requirements of formation is hardly a way to prepare for self-giving! And since the whole person is given to God, the whole person must be dealt with in formation. That also reflects the essence of holiness: total self-integration with the gift of charity one has received. The final sentence reflects the practice of novitiate before training for orders, and makes the former part of "a broader"

program. I think that is fundamentally wrong-headed; the whole should be formation for clerical-consecrated life, and both the novitiate and theological studies should be parts of that, with permanent profession and ordination coinciding.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 69, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XIII, deals with "Continuing formation":

> 69. Continuing formation, whether in Institutes of apostolic or contemplative life, is an intrinsic requirement of religious consecration. As mentioned above, the formation process is not limited to the initial phase. Due to human limitations, the consecrated person can never claim to have completely brought to life the "new creature" who, in every circumstance of life, reflects the very mind of Christ. Initial formation, then, should be closely connected with continuing formation, thereby creating a readiness on everyone's part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives. [note omitted]

This opening is not entirely sound. Human limitations—the extent to which one falls short when one completes initial formation of all that one could and should be at that time—are only one factor. More important is that one's potentialities unfold in the face of new opportunities and challenges. Ongoing cooperation with the Holy Spirit in preparing to carry out new and changing responsibilities is essential, and others often can help. But what is offered to support ongoing formation must not be simply more of the same sort of thing, repeated over and over, or it becomes boring and unhelpful.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 70, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XIII, continues talking about ongoing formation under the heading "In a constant search for faithfulness." Much of this long section makes generalized remarks about the problems in the early years, the middle years, the stage of maturity, and advanced age. The questionable assumption is that formation is a matter of others helping. The last stage is death, and then JP II has a section on critical situations throughout life:

> When the moment finally comes for uniting oneself to the supreme hour of the Lord's passion, the consecrated person knows that the Father is now bringing to completion the mysterious process of formation which began many years before. Death will then be awaited and prepared for as the supreme act of love and self-offering.
>
> It should be added that, independently of the different stages of life, any period can present critical situations due to external factors—such as a change of place or assignment, difficulties in work or lack of success in the apostolate, misunderstandings and feelings of alienation—or resulting from more directly personal factors such as physical or mental illness, spiritual aridity, deaths, difficulties in interpersonal relations, strong temptations, crises of faith or identity, or feelings of uselessness. When fidelity becomes more difficult, the individual must be offered the support of greater trust and deeper love at both the personal and community levels. At such times the sensitive closeness of the Superior is most

> essential. Great comfort can also come from the valuable help of a brother or sister, whose concerned and caring presence can lead to a rediscovery of the meaning of the covenant which God originally established, and which he has no intention of breaking. The person undergoing such a trial will then accept purification and hardship as essential to the following of Christ Crucified. The trial itself will appear as a providential means of being formed by the Father's hands, and as a struggle which is not only psychological, carried out by the "I" in relation to itself and its weaknesses, but also religious, touched each day by the presence of God and the power of the Cross!

The paragraph on death speaks in the indicative about what consecrated persons should do and ideally will do. The long final paragraph is more realistic in identifying occasions of problems that must be dealt with. Superiors do need to be supportive; it is one of their most important responsibilities. And others can help. But no guidelines are given them. Obviously what troubled individuals need is genuinely friendly, personal conversation. They need to be listened to, seriously and patiently. They may need reminders to put what is bothering them into the perspective of faith and their vocational commitment. Their emotions may be leading them to overlook or ignore or undervalue some things; if so, they need gentle encouragement to reflect and take a more rational view. They may need some concrete, practical information or help.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 71, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XIII, deals with "Dimensions of continuing formation." The first paragraph deals with the spiritual center of formation, that is, charity, listening to the Word of God, attending to the Institute's charism in which one participates, and personal religious activities:

> 71. If the subject of formation is the individual at every stage of life, the object of formation is the whole person, called to seek and love God "with all one's heart, and with all one's soul, and with all one's might" (cf. Dt. 6:5), and one's neighbor as oneself (cf. Lv. 19:18; Mt. 22:37–39). Love of God and of the brethren is a powerful force which can ceaselessly inspire the process of growth and fidelity. Life in the Spirit is clearly of primary importance. Living in the Spirit, consecrated persons discover their own identity and find profound peace; they grow more attentive to the daily challenges of the word of God, and they allow themselves to be guided by the original inspiration of their Institute. Under the action of the Spirit, they resolutely keep times for prayer, silence and solitude, and they never cease to ask the Almighty for the gift of wisdom in the struggles of everyday life (cf. Wis. 9:10).

Here, liturgy apparently is taken for granted. The increased integration of the whole self with charity by faithfully fulfilling one's commitment—the truly formative effect of doing that—is overlooked, and formation is looked at as extrinsic to that process. The section runs on for four more paragraphs, dealing with the human and fraternal dimensions, the apostolic dimension, the cultural and professional dimensions (not adequately distinguished from the apostolic dimension), and the dimension of the charism proper to each Institute. Most of what is said here is obvious; several desirable things are mentioned—awareness of personal

limitations, intellectual adaptability—without any indication of how those things are to be promoted or by whom all this is to be done.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 98, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XIX, under the heading, "Evangelizing culture," urges a more serious commitment to study:

> . . . within the consecrated life itself there is a need for a renewed and loving commitment to the intellectual life, for dedication to study as a means of integral formation and as a path of asceticism which is extraordinarily timely, in the face of present-day cultural diversity. A lessened commitment to study can have grave consequences for the apostolate, by giving rise to a sense of marginalization and inferiority, or encouraging superficiality and rash initiatives.
>
> With all respect for the diversity of charisms and the actual resources of individual Institutes, the commitment to study cannot be limited to initial formation or to the gaining of academic degrees and professional qualifications. Rather, study is an expression of the unquenchable desire for an ever deeper knowledge of God, the source of light and all human truth. Consequently, a commitment to study does not isolate consecrated persons in an abstract intellectualism or confine them within a suffocating narcissism; rather, it is an incentive to dialogue and cooperation, a training in the capacity for judgment, a stimulus to contemplation and prayer in the constant quest for the presence and activity of God in the complex reality of today's world.

Study is needed for "integral formation"; it also is a path of asceticism. He obviously thinks that many in consecrated life are not doing the studying they need to be doing, with various bad consequences.

PC 18 The adaptive renewal of institutes depends mostly on the formation of members. So, male and female lay religious are not to be sent out on mission right after the novitiate. They should stay in suitable residences while they receive religious and apostolic formation, doctrinal and technical, and appropriate credentials. Those going into active apostolates must learn about society and the way people feel and think.

Similar formation must be ongoing—spiritual, doctrinal, and technical. Superiors should see to it that the opportunity, support, and time are allowed for this.

Superiors also are to see to it that suitable people are chosen to be in charge of formation, spiritual directors, and teachers, and that those people are properly trained.

The Council clearly wants to prevent the gross exploitation to which many, especially religious women, were subjected by being put out teaching or in other work with little time for formation, and then having to get formed on the side, weekends and summers.

Formation should not isolate people from the reality of the institute they are entering. Obviously, all the trouble should not be presented at once to newcomers. But there must be openness and contact sufficient that one who makes permanent profession does not only then discover the truth, and undergo severe disillusionment.

Ecclesiae sanctae, on implementing PC, II, VII (33–38), set some requirements for formation, which is to be adapted to the institute, and to go on throughout the period of temporary vows. For those in institutes of active life, it is to involve a sort of internship in apostolate. Institutes are encouraged to cooperate in providing adequate doctrinal and technical formation. Experimentation is called for—again, with no criteria.

Formation must include a careful study of the patrimony of the institute. Those introduced to the formation program are not already committed; they need to understand what they are committing themselves to. If they do not discern that their gifts are likely to be most aptly employed by committing themselves to the institute, then doing so is not their vocation, and they should get out. On the other hand, if they make the commitment, they should do so wholeheartedly, accepting willingly that they are excluding a slew of other morally acceptable options that are just as good (and perhaps better) for faithful people with appropriate gifts.

The condition of community of people in formation often is not homogeneous with that of professed people in the outfit properly acting out their commitment according to its specific charism. That may require subordination of community to apostolic service, but those in formation are living somewhat like members of a monastic community—tied to the place and preoccupied with their own spiritual life. So, those assisting in formation must be ruthlessly objective in presenting the proper charism of the institute and making clear the sort of community life it involves.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "Charisms and Religious Life," *Review for Religious,* 52/5 (Sept./Oct. 1993): 655–56: "Regarding the charisms of religious life, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of initial and ongoing formation." Formation introduces to the institute's specific charism. "Formation in consecrated life requires a certain comprehensive submission to the heritage of a particular community precisely so that one can grow in it." She goes on (657–59) to emphasize that a genuine charism of religious life demands ongoing transformation, so that one has never arrived, one is never finished being shaped up by it. That is because it affects one's entire self, one's whole life.

CIC, c. 593, §2: "The moderators of every institute are to promote knowledge of documents of the Holy See which regard the members entrusted to them and are to take care about their observance." This is an element of ongoing formation. Since obedience to the pope is an essential element of vowed obedience, proper superiors are to subordinate themselves and lead their members in obeying the pope, rather than treat him as an outsider.

Formation is essentially the Holy Spirit's and one's own activity. Others can help, and must offer needed guidance and keep one honest. One has a standard: the gospel and the reality of the institute as that is conveyed in its documents and living tradition. One is being formed not for Christian life or religious life in general, but for them in this institute as it will be—not in some ideal future but—when one commits oneself to it.

With respect to religious institutes: CIC, c. 646: "The novitiate, through which life in an institute is begun, is arranged so that [is ordered to] the novices better understand [become clear about] their divine vocation, and indeed one which is proper to the institute, experience

the manner of living of the institute, and form their mind and heart in [by] its spirit, and so that their intention [propositum] and suitability are tested [verified]."

This canon on the purpose of the notitiate really focuses on two things: one is the novices getting clear about their vocation (that is, what a vocation is and whether God really wants them in this institute) and the other is representatives of the institute getting clear about its vocation with respect to these aspirants (that is, given what the institute is, whether God wants it to accept and incorporate these people). To help the novices do their part of this two-sided discernment, they must experience what life in the institute is like—so the institute must provide them with a genuine experience of itself, not a phony courtship version. To help the institute do its part, the aspirants must be open and aboveboard in making a sincere effort to form their minds and hearts by the institute's spirit—that is, to think and will as members do, and not just to imitate them superficially. In doing that, they will show those involved in formation whether and to what extent they have the readiness to make the necessary commitment and whether they have the other characteristics required to be a good member of the institute.

CIC, c. 647, §1, requires a novitiate "house" (which may be part of a larger building, but set up as a separate community), though §2 permits by way of exception superiors to allow individuals to make their novitiate with an ad hoc director in a regular house and §3 to allow groups of novices to reside temporarily outside the novitiate house (the last might be at a vacation facility, or in some other house of the institute for a time so as to experience what goes on there, but must not be stretched to eliminate the novitiate house for all practical purposes).

Part of the value of having novices reside in a special house is that those in charge of it can try to maintain the highest and purest standards, so that formation is in what the institute really ought to be. For that reason, members working with the novices ought to be exemplary and solid, but also vibrant with the charism and effective in communicating the institute's spirit. That prevents the constant handing on of compromises and backsliding and abuses.
At the same time, it perhaps sets novices up for some disillusionment when they complete the novitiate. However, they can be warned of that, at least toward the end of their novitiate period.

Since novitiate is to introduce incomers to the institute's proper spirit and test their vocation to it, a generic novitiate experience hardly will do. That may not preclude the legitimacy of having novices from diverse institutes share some common experiences—such as classes—but it certainly precludes a totally shared novitiate for those proposing to become members of institutes with different charisms, but not perhaps for juridically distinct institutes whose charisms really are indistinguishable.

CIC, cc. 648–49 and 653, §2, together carefully regulate the time to be spent in novitiate; not only the letter, but the spirit, of these canons should be followed. So, novices should not be engaged simultaneously in other activities (see CIC, c. 652, §5), such as study or apostolic works that do not really contribute to the purposes of formation. They and those working with

them really need their full time and concentrated attention for close to a year to do the essential work of development and mutual discernment.

Since someone entering novitiate is not making a commitment to remain and the institute is not making a commitment to retain the novice, it is entirely reasonable that novices not burn their bridges: sell all they have, resign their work (if a leave is possible), and so forth. They show appropriate docility to God's will by keeping their options open.

CIC, c. 650, §2, says that under the authority of the major superiors, the governance of novices is reserved to one director—the Latin word is *magistro,* which suggests a master in the sense of teacher. That means that someone really must be in charge and that person's role is to teach. CIC, c. 651, §2, envisages the possible need for assistants, but they should assist—not be members of a "formation team" that operates by consensus, but a team with a real head together with team players to handle the specific responsibilities assigned them.

Of course, as usual, the whole team should participate fully in the deliberation needed to plan the common work together and settle all matters of policy, within the framework of canon law and their institute's proper law. This deliberation often is circumvented by the head and agreeable members staying on, while new team members come in to a going program that never reviews its working arrangements and policies. Such matters need to be reconsidered at least whenever the new members join the team. The review makes sure everyone is on the same page, but also provides an opportunity for new input, and the head may then amend the distribution of responsibilities and previously settled policies.

C. 651, §3, says that members who have been carefully prepared and are not impeded by other duties are to be in charge of the training of novices—that obviously applies to the master/mistress, who should be full time and always available to the novices.

The 1990 "Directives on Religious Formation," 31, say that those responsible for formation should display "inner serenity, availability, patience, understanding, and true affection for those" they are dealing with. The Directives 30 also say those involved in formation should have sound Catholic faith and morals, human insight and responsiveness, a certain experiential knowledge of God and of prayer, wisdom resulting from listening to the word of God, love of the liturgy and understanding of its role in formation, and necessary cultural competence—in other words, polish. The general idea is that the novice master/mistress needs to be an exemplary and mature religious who also is both genuinely friendly, personable, and socially adept. Since that is hard to come by, the effort should be to develop exemplary members for this work.

CIC, c. 652, §1, tells the director and assistants to assess the vocation of the novices and form them gradually in the specific way of perfection proper to the institute. §3 tells the novices to collaborate actively so that the faithfully respond to the grace of a divine vocation. That needs to be understood not as begging the question that they are called to life in the institute. They must be up front with the novice master/mistress, for their current vocation is to be novices whose vocation to the institute remains to be proved. But they do have some vocation. Also, the canon's way of putting the whole thing sounds pelagian, and it must be understood

that the Holy Spirit is the chief formator, with whom the novice must cooperate, and the others must help that relationship as best they can. §5 says other members of the institute must help cooperate by their example and by prayer.

CIC, c. 652, §2, sets out an eight-point agenda for the novitiate: "Novices [1] are to be led to cultivate human and Christian virtues; [2] through prayer and self-denial they are to be led to a fuller way of perfection; [3] they are to be taught to contemplate the mystery of salvation [4] and to read and meditate on the sacred Scriptures; [5] they are to be prepared to cultivate the worship of God in the sacred liturgy; [6] they are to learn a manner of leading a life consecrated to God and humanity in Christ through the evangelical counsels; [7] they are to be instructed regarding the character and spirit, the purpose and discipline, the history and life of the institute; and [8] they are to be imbued with love for the Church and its sacred pastors." That is quite a bit for a one-year or even a two-year program.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes," 47, amounts to an extended commentary on canon 652, §2 [in the English text, the note to 46 wrongly refers to §1 of canon 652]:

> 47. As a consequence of this general law, the total initiation which characterizes the novitiate goes far beyond that of simple instruction. It is:
>
> —an initiation into a profound and living knowledge of Christ and of his Father. This presupposes a meditative study of Scripture, the celebration of the liturgy according to the spirit and character of the institute, an initiation into personal prayer, so that its practice becomes habitual, and a relish for the great authors of the Church's spiritual tradition, without being limited to spiritual reading of a modern cast;
>
> —an initiation into the Paschal mystery of Christ through detachment from self, especially in the practice of the evangelical counsels according to the spirit of the institute, an evangelical asceticism joyfully undertaken, and a courageous acceptance of the mystery of the cross.
>
> —an initiation into a fraternal, evangelical life. It is, in effect, within a community that faith is deepened and becomes communion, and that charity finds its numerous manifestations in the concrete routine of daily life.
>
> —an initiation into the history, particular mission, and spirituality of the institute.

Here, for institutes dedicated to the apostolate, there enters the fact that: "to complete the formation of the novices, in addition to the time mentioned in n. 1 (that is, the twelve months to be passed within the novitiate community itself) the constitutions can determine one or several periods of apostolic exercises to be spent outside the novitiate community."(120)

These periods have the purpose of teaching the novices to "realize in their lives, in progressive stages, that cohesive unity whereby contemplation and apostolic activity are closely linked together, a unity which is one of the most fundamental and primary values of these same societies."(121)

The arrangement of these periods should take into account the twelve months to be passed within the novitiate community itself, during which the novices will not be occupied with studies and duties which do not directly serve this formation."(122)

The novitiate program of formation should be defined by the institute's proper law.(123)

> It is not advisable that the novitiate be conducted within a milieu foreign to the culture and native language of the novices. Small novitiates are actually better, provided that they are rooted in this culture. The essential reason for this is to avoid a multiplication of problems during a period of formation in which the fundamental equilibrium of a person should be established and when the relationship between the novices and the director of novices should be comfortable, enabling them to speak to each other with all the nuances required at the outset of an intensive spiritual journey. Further, a transfer into another culture at this particular moment involves the risk of accepting false vocations and of not perceiving what may be false motivations.

(120) CIC 648.2.

(121) RC [Instruction Renovationis causam] 5; cf. Introduction, note 7, above.

(122) CIC 652.5.

(123) CIC 650.1.

The point is that the novitiate must really initiate interested persons into the life of the institute both qua religious institute and qua specified by its charism. No part of the required year-long novitiate is to be spent in activities that do not really contribute to its proper purpose. Time spent outside the novitiate community does not count; time spent in it is not to be used for studies and other things that do not really contribute. The call for cultural unity between formators and novices, and the favoring of small novitiates, goes against practices that depersonalize novitiate; properly conducted, it must be conducive to intimate communication and real cooperation between formators and each individual novice.

Obviously, the novitiate program presupposes a novice who already is generally well-formed to live a devout Catholic life. So, someone whose catechetical formation is sketchy, who currently has serious moral problems, or who has not habitually done more than the minimum of liturgical and personal prayer needs some pre-novitiate work, and should not be admitted directly to a novitiate. Whether the preliminary training is done outside the institute but with its guidance or in a formal postulancy program matters not. The important thing is that it be done.

Before entering novitiate, would-be novices need to be told, so that they will be clearly aware, that those they deal with will contribute to the judgment of their suitability, assuming they persevere in the novitiate and wish to be admitted to the institute when the time comes. At the same time, novices need to be encouraged to be forthright about their problems and concerns, and not to hold anything back that they think might lead to an adverse judgment. That would not make sense unless they rightly understand what they are doing: finding out what God

wants of them, rather than pursuing something they happen to want. They should take the attitude that, if the institute prefers not to accept them as they really are, they are better off not entering it.

In general, novitiate is like a young couple's going together. It makes sense for someone who is thinking seriously of entering religious life and that this institute could be the one. Novitiate is not like an engagement. Engagement involves an agreement to marry, a clear and definite expectation of permanent commitment. Novitiate is an opportunity to learn more about each other and see whether both sides want to make that preliminary, but very real, commitment. The period of temporary vows is like engagement. Both sides believe the relationship is right and plan together to make it permanent and consummate it.

CIC, c. 653, §1, says a novice can freely leave (*deserere*) an institute and the competent authority can dismiss a novice. The language is somewhat inappropriate to express what should happen. Either side can come to realize that the novitiate will not be fruitful, and should without delay communicate that realization, and the two should part on good terms. Or, ideally, a consensus will develop. Both parties must be kind, truthful, and faithful to the other's right to confidentiality. In any case, a novice's decision to leave, just as such, should not be held against him/her by other institutes or by seminaries.

CIC, c. 653, §2, says that at the end of novitiate, a novice judged suitable is to be admitted to temporary profession and one judged unsuitable is to be dismissed. If in doubt, a major superior can extend the novitiate for up to six months but not more.

Though only temporary profession is immediately at stake, the judgment of suitability should be for permanent membership in the institute. In other words, temporary profession should not be treated as a prolongation of novitiate, but as a real beginning of life together, with limits, though, inasmuch as the commitment is not unconditional and permanent. Like engagement: it makes no sense unless the couple really do expect to marry, and so neither should enter in unless convinced that marriage is right for them. Moreover, like engagement, the judgment of suitability should not be clouded by positive doubts. While one realizes that something may arise to change one's mind, right now there is nothing that would impede permanent commitment. If there is, one should not get engaged or make temporary vows!

If either side has doubts, the major superior can extend the novitiate up to six months. That shows that certitude is needed. The question should be: "Should this novice be admitted to profession?" or "Should I take temporary vows?" and the novice should not be allowed and should not take temporary vows unless both confidently agree that the answer is yes.

The provision allowing an extension also indicates that the testing period should not go on indefinitely. Why extend it at all? Unresolved moral problems could be one reason. No one should be allowed to make temporary vows who has not been entirely chaste for an extended period—certainly, at least six continuous months. Health problems could be another. Still another could be failure at the intellectual tasks essential to novitiate by a candidate who otherwise is promising. Or the candidate may have unresolved questions that still need to be pursued, perhaps ones that only became clear toward the end of the usual novitiate.

In institutes of men, at least some of whom are ordained for the institute, very often vows/promises are made well before those to be ordained are ordained. If the commitment of the vows is unconditional and the possibility of ordination really treated as an open option to be resolved by the mutual discernment and commitment of individuals and the institute, the time sequence is not a problem. But if the presumption is that certain individuals taking vows will be ordained, both they and their superiors may take a wrong attitude toward either the vows or ordination or both.

They take a wrong attitude toward the perpetual vows if they think of them as means to an ulterior end—for the individual, as insurance that he will be ordained; for the institute, a way of locking the individual in so that he will not leave but stay and be ordained. Vows should not be chosen as means to anything. The purpose ought to be to do God's will, and that ought to be discerned: God's plan is that this individual be a member of this institute, and both sides are morally certain of that.

They also take a wrong attitude toward the vows if they think of them as conditional: if I don't get ordained, I will get dispensed; if a man turns out not to be an acceptable candidate for orders, we can always get him dispensed from his vows. These latter attitudes, since they subject the vows to a condition, actually nullify them (I think). It is like a couple getting married: we want to marry and have a family; if it turns out that we are a sterile couple, we can always get an annulment. With that attitude, they can indeed get an annulment, because they've conditioned their consent with a condition incompatible with it.

Alternatively, either the individual or those representing the institute or both may regard ordination as a decidedly subordinate element of being a member of the religious institute, so that the vows are taken seriously but the preparation for, qualification for, and commitment to orders is slighted. That can take different forms. I will go through this and get by, since I need to get ordained to be a member of this outfit and do what I want to do in it (which does not *per se* require orders). Or: since we are a clerical institute, we need to get these men ordained, but they don't really need to be able to be good pastors—mostly they won't be doing that anyway.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Starting Afresh from Christ," 18, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 26 June 2002, V:

> The most pressing challenges which formation must face grow out of the values of today's globalized culture. The Christian announcement of life as vocation, that is, one which flows from God's loving plan and requires a personal and salvific encounter with Christ in the Church must confront the dominant ideals and plans of cultures and social histories which are extremely diversified. There is the risk that subjective choices, individual projects and local customs will prevail over the rule, the style of community life and the apostolic projects of the community. This calls for a formative dialogue capable of bringing together the human, social and spiritual characteristics borne by each person, discerning in them the human limitations which must be overcome and the promptings of the Spirit which can renew the lives of individuals and Institutes.

This rightly stresses the vocational principle and the importance of resisting any alternative agenda.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, "*Verbi sponsa:* Instruction on the Contemplative Life and on the Enclosure of Nuns" (13 May 1999), 24, says:

> Every monastery should in fact be able to find within itself the resources to ensure its own vitality and future; for this reason it needs to become self-sufficient, especially in the area of formation, which cannot be directed at only some of its members but should involve the entire community, in order that it may be a place of fervent progress and spiritual growth.

The point is specified to contemplative nuns. But it points to something true for every community: members need to shape up and to help one another to do so; formation cannot be merely passive or a preparatory period for "real" life.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 24: "A fraternal and shared common life has a natural attraction for young people but, later, perseverance in the real conditions of life can become a heavy burden. Initial formation needs, then, to bring one to awareness of the sacrifices required for living in community, to accepting them in view of a joyful and truly fraternal relationship and of all the other attitudes characteristic of one who is interiorly free."

A set up for formation that makes things too easy, that calls for little in the way of self-sacrifice to build up communio, is not realistic formation for life as it will need to be lived. Those in formation must be told candidly what they are to expect, and they ought to think in advance how to deal with the problems they will encounter living in community as it really is.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 45–46:

> To live in community is to live the will of God together, in accordance with the orientation of the charismatic gift received by the founder from God and transmitted to his or her disciples and followers.
>
> The renewal of recent years, re–emphasizing the importance of the originating charism by rich theological reflection, [note omitted] has promoted the unity of the community, which is seen as bearer of this same gift from the Spirit, a gift to be shared with the brothers or sisters, and by which it is possible to enrich the Church "for the life of the world." For this reason, formation programs which include regular courses of study and prayerful reflection on the founder, the charism and the constitutions of the institute are particularly beneficial.
>
> A deepened understanding of the charism leads to a clearer vision of one's own identity, around which it is easier to build unity and communion. Clarity concerning one's own charismatic identity allows creative adjustment to new situations and this leads to positive prospects for the future of the institute.

> A lack of clarity in this area can easily cause insecurity concerning goals and vulnerability with respect to conditions surrounding religious life, cultural currents and various apostolic needs, in addition to the obstacles it raises regarding adaptation and renewal.
>
> 46. It is therefore necessary to promote an institute's charismatic identity, especially to avoid a kind of genericism, which is a true threat to the vitality of a religious community.
>
> Several factors have been identified as having caused suffering for religious communities in recent years and, in some cases, continue to cause it:
>
> > a "generic" approach—in other words, one that lacks the specific mediation of one's own charism—in considering certain guidelines of the particular Church or certain suggestions deriving from different spiritualities;
> >
> > a certain kind of involvement in ecclesial movements which exposes individual religious to the ambiguous phenomenon of "dual membership";
> >
> > in the essential and often fruitful relationships with laity, especially with lay collaborators, a certain adjustment to a lay mentality. Instead of offering their own religious witness as a fraternal gift which would encourage Christian authenticity, they simply imitate the laity, taking on their way of seeing and acting, thus weakening the contribution of their own consecration;
> >
> > an excessive accommodation to the demands of family, to the ideals of nation, race or tribe, or of some social group, which risks distorting the charism to suit particular positions or interests.
>
> The genericism which reduces religious life to a colourless lowest common denominator leads to wiping out the beauty and fruitfulness of the many and various charisms inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Keeping true to the charism is a formation issue, since it affects the whole of one's style of life. To the extent that the forms of genericism that the document talks about are not outright sins, they are essentially, deformations of the lives of some or many or even all members of an institute in view of interests in goods shaped by considerations other than the charism of the institute.

Congregation for Bishops and Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church*, 30:

> 30. Right from the initial stages of both ecclesiastical and religious formation, the systematic study of the mystery of Christ, of the sacramental nature of the Church, of the ministry of bishops and of religious life in the Church should be programmed. Therefore:

a) religious, from the novitiate on, should be brought to a fuller awareness and concern for the local Church, while at the same time growing in fidelity to their own vocation;

The idea is that formation of religious should include teaching them their proper place within the Church, so that they do not think of themselves as free lancers, operating independently of bishops.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, "Religious and Human Promotion," 33, deals with implications of the previous parts of the document for initial and ongoing formation:

33. In this regard, some aspects of formation seem to merit special attention.

a) There is need to assure an awareness of the profound nature and characteristics of religious life, both in itself and in its dynamic involvement in the mission of the ecclesial community in today's society. Fidelity to the charism of the institute and a creative involvement in a renewal of activities and work are also among the more important elements of initial and ongoing formation.

b) The profession of the evangelical counsels, in the context of religious life-Church-modern world, may require new attitudes which are attentive to the value of prophetic sign as a power for the conversion and transformation of the world, of its mode of thinking and of its relationships (95).

c) Life in common, seen especially as an experience and witness of communion, develops the capacity for adaptation (96) permitting a response to different forms of activity. These do not weaken fraternal bonds and sharing of the institute's specific service to the Church. In fact, with this attitude, these bonds could be strengthened.

d) New forms of involvement, which have been described in examining the above problems, could possibly create unforeseen situations. This calls for a spiritual and human preparation in the formation programs of religious life which can help to achieve a mature presence on the part of consecrated persons, capable of renewed relationships, both within and outside their own communities.

Involvement in the life of the Church and in its mission, in an attitude of co-responsibility and complementarity, implies an up-to-date knowledge of its projects and the goals it hopes to attain (97).

From the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and from the insistence with which the Synods of Bishops have referred to the matter, it is clear that there can be no dichotomy between formation for permanent Gospel commitment and human promotion according to God's plan. Therefore, a program of formation and renewal in religious institutes would not be adequate and complete unless it took into account the Church's thinking in this matter (98).

This is even more necessary if religious are to be capable of their apostolic duty of reawakening consciences (99), of forming other Christians, particularly the laity, in such a way that they will assume their proper role in this common mission of evangelization and human promotion with competence and security (100).

Since the missionary dimension of the Church depends especially on the generous availability of religious (101), the formation of those called to this excellent form of evangelization and human promotion will need to be genuinely adaptable to the cultures, sensibilities and specific problems of the localities (102).

(95) ET l3–29; cf. Puebla document, n. 476: “Our social behavior is an integral part of our following of Christ.”

(96) PC 3, 15.

(97) PC 2c.

(98) “With reference to this teaching, the Church has a mission to carry out: it must preach, educate persons and groups, form public opinion, give guidance to public authorities. Draw, then, from these genuine sources. Speak with the voice of experience, of the sufferings and hopes of contemporary humanity” (John Paul II, Puebla, inaugural discourse, III, 4).

(99) ET 18.

(100) The document on *Justice in the World* (Synod 1971: *AAS* 1971, pp. 935–937), together with a synthesis of the Church’s principal doctrinal statements, also gives directives for a commitment to an “education for justice.” And again, John Paul II (Puebla, inaugural discourse III, 7): “Allow me then to recall the urgency of sensitizing the faithful to this social teaching of the Church. Special attention should be given to the formation of a social conscience at all levels and in all sectors. When injustices are on the increase and the gap between poor and rich is widening painfully, social teaching, creative and open to the wide fields of the Church’s presence, should be an invaluable instrument of formation and action.”

(101) EN 69.

(102) AG 18, 25–27.

(a) is making the point that formation must make clear what the charism of the institute is and why one who enters it must be faithful to it, as well as making clear what consecrated life is in itself and the role it plays in the Church. While the document does not say it here, fidelity to the consecration will be difficult in some ways, and that ought to be made clear, and also why it is so important.

(b) is urging formators to try to get those formed to understand that their witness of state, of life in general, and of fidelity in the detail of appropriate apostolates will be their way of helping overcome the evils that constitute social injustices and threaten peace.

(c) is suggesting a motive for good fraternal life: it provides witness of communion, which the world needs. Obviously, when religious behave toward each other like members of any secular group, they provide little witness.

(d) implies that people should not be trained in patterns of behavior, which may well be impractically rigid, but firmed up in commitment so that the execution can be flexible as necessary—that members, remaining faithful, can form and reform their human relationships as necessary to fulfill their responsibilities.

Religious need to know the projects and goals of the Church—to get with the program of the Holy See and the diocese in which they are operating.

Invoking the authority of Vatican II and the Synods of Bishops, the document wants the outlook about the commitment of religious and human formation that it has been presenting to be inculcated.

It wants religious to think of themselves as animating the laity—awakening their consciences and forming them for lay apostolate—rather than undertaking to do the work of the laity.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, “Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life,” 11:

> 11. Spiritual direction.
>
> Spiritual direction, in the strict sense, also deserves to be restored to its rightful place in the process of the spiritual and contemplative development of religious. It cannot in any way be replaced by psychological methods. Therefore that direction of conscience, for which PC 14 asks due liberty, should be fostered by the availability of competent and qualified persons.
>
> Such availability should come especially from priests who, by reason of their specific pastoral mission, will promote appreciation for spiritual direction and its fruitful acceptance. Superiors and directors of formation, who are dedicated to the care of the religious entrusted to them, will also contribute, although in a different way, by guiding them in discernment and in fidelity to their vocation and mission.

The context in PC 14 of the remark about “due liberty” is superiors’ responsibilities with respect to obedience: they are to leave those under them “due liberty with respect to the sacrament of penance and direction of conscience.” Obviously, spiritual direction is considerably broader than that. No doubt, some outfits have offered or even imposed psychological counseling; that plainly is no substitute for spiritual direction, and is repugnant unless an individual is suffering from a psychopathology—in which case suitable care ought to be offered and perhaps even required under obedience just as suitable care would be for a physical illness. The document does not envision non-priest spiritual directors. But it does not adequately indicate the qualifications required for a spiritual director. Some will get people to appreciate spiritual direction but not be sound in doctrine or prudent or both.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, “Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life,” 12, under the heading, “The Liturgy of the Hours”:

> The willingness with which religious communities have already responded to the Church's exhortation to celebrate the divine praises with the faithful shows how much they appreciate the importance of this more intimate participation in the Church's life (ES II, 20).
>
> The contemplative dimension of the lives of religious will find constant inspiration and nourishment in the measure that they dedicate themselves to the Office with attention and fidelity. A greater appreciation of the spiritual riches in the Office of Readings could also help achieve this.

Thus, the document not only commends the Liturgy of the Hours, but the practice of inviting the faithful to join in the celebration, and of not limiting it to Morning and Evening Prayer, as many religious have done.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, "Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life," 17:

> 17. Religious formation.
>
> The principal purpose of formation at its various stages, initial and ongoing, is to immerse religious in the experience of God and to help them perfect it gradually in their lives. With this in mind, there is need to "duly emphasize the apostolate itself" (MR 27). The primary objective of active institutes should be to integrate the interior life and the active life so that each religious will increasingly cultivate the primacy of life in the Spirit (MR 4), from which flows the grace of unity proper to charity.
>
> The strongly ecclesial dimension of religious life (LG 44; ET 50; MR 10) demands that formation in every aspect be imparted in profound communion with the universal Church. This should be done in such a way that religious may be able to live their vocation in a concrete and effective way in the local Church and for the local Church to which they are sent, according to the mission of their institute.

The first paragraph of this section is likely to be misunderstood, due to its loose talk about "immerse religious in the experience of God and to help them perfect it in their lives." In the first place, those in initial formation, who have not yet made vows, are not yet religious. More important, talk about immersing people in an experience of God, as if it were a baptismal pool, is vague and ambiguous—taken in some ways it is dangerously misleading or even meaningless. But the point is that the basic thing is to help those being formed to be good Christians and, if they are to be religious, well and firmly committed religious. Preparation or training for the specific apostolate of the institute is secondary, though it must be understood and accepted as part of the charism, and candidates must become confident that they have the gifts it requires and be ready to commit themselves to it as well as to other elements of the charism.

The second paragraph is clearer and sounder. The idea is that formation should help candidates and religious to think with the Church, and should help them prepare to serve well in whichever particular Church they are called to serve.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, “Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life,” 20, deals with qualifications for formation personnel:

> 20. The need for suitable qualified formation personnel.
>
> Those who are responsible for formation need to have:
>
> —the human qualities of insight and responsiveness;
>
> —a certain experiential knowledge of God and of prayer;
>
> —wisdom resulting from attentive and prolonged listening to the Word of God;
>
> —love of the liturgy and understanding of its role in spiritual and ecclesial formation;
>
> —necessary cultural competence;
>
> —sufficient time and good will to attend to the candidates individually, and not just as a group.

“Experiential knowledge” means acquaintance as against book learning. This seems to omit: moral uprightness, especially fidelity to their vows; psychological capacities such as cheerfulness, freedom from anxiety, patience, and toughness; great clarity of thought and articulateness about religious life and the charism of their institute.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes,” 13, deals with formation in chastity. The introduction to the norms does not explain well why these norms are proposed, though the opening sentence suggests that it has done that!

> The pedagogy of consecrated chastity will consequently aim at:
>
> —preserving joy and thanksgiving for the personal love in which each one is held, and is chosen, by Christ;
>
> —encouraging frequent reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, recourse to regular spiritual direction, and the sharing of a truly sisterly or brotherly love within the community, which is brought about by frank and cordial relationships;
>
> —explaining the value of the body and its meaning, acquiring an elementary physical hygiene (sleep, exercise, relaxation, nourishment, etc.);
>
> —giving basic notions on masculine and feminine sexuality, with their physical, psychological, and spiritual connotations;
>
> —helping in matters of self-control, on the sexual and affective level, but also with respect to other instinctive or acquired needs (sweets, tobacco, alcohol);
>
> —helping each one to profit by past personal experiences, whether positive, in order to give thanks for them, or negative, in order to be aware of one’s weaknesses, in order to humble oneself peacefully before God and to remain vigilant for the future;

> —manifesting the fruitfulness of chastity, its spiritual fecundity (Gal 4:19), which begets life for the Church;
>
> —creating a climate of confidence between religious and their instructors, who should be ready to listen to whatever they have to say, and to hear them with affection in order to enlighten and encourage them;
>
> —helping them to act with prudence in the use of the communications media and in personal relationships which may present an obstacle to a consistent practice of the counsel of chastity (cf. can. 277.2 and 666). It remains the responsibility not only of the religious to exercise this prudence, but also of their superiors.

This set of norms is pretty helpful. They could not be quotes, but might be referred to in a treatment that makes essentially the same points in a clearer and more orderly exposition.

Since the charisms of diverse institutes are different, and since the charism affects how the vows are lived out, those in formation really need to understand the charism if they are to understand exactly what they will be committing to if they are professed. At the same time, the charism specifies something generic—consecrated life—so that the charism itself cannot possibly be understood if what is generically common to consecrated life is not accurately grasped.

In coming to understand both consecrated life as such and the specific charism, those being formed of course need to realize that the generic and the specific are in no way real alternatives nor distinct aspects of the life to be lived. Concretely, only this or that specific form of religious life can be instantiated. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes,” 21, makes this point:

> . . . the personal life of a religious must not become dichotomized between the generic end of religious life and the specific end of the institute; between consecration to God and mission in the world; nor between religious life itself on the one hand, and apostolic activities on the other. There is no religious life existing concretely “by itself” upon which is grafted the specific and the particular charism of each institute as subordinate additions. In institutes dedicated to the apostolate there is no pursuit of sanctity, profession of the evangelical counsels, or life dedicated to God and to his service which is not intrinsically connected with the service of the Church and of the world.(57) Further “apostolic and charitable activity is of the very nature of religious life” to such an extent that “the entire religious life... should be imbued with an apostolic spirit and all apostolic activity with a religious spirit.”(58) The service of one’s neighbor neither divides nor separates a religious from God. If it is moved by a truly theological charity, this service obtains its value as service of God.(59)
>
> (57) Cf. PC 5.
>
> (58) PC 8.
>
> (59) St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae,* 2–2, q. 188, aa. 1 and 2.

The passage is seeking to exclude false dichotomies that have led to confusion and the weakening of some institutes.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes,” 28, deals with a specific problem about formation:

> 28. Here it is necessary to bring up the problem caused by inserting a religious formation community in a poor milieu. Small religious communities inserted in a working class district, on the periphery of certain large cities, or in the inner city, or in the more remote or poorer areas of the country, can be a significant expression of “the preferential option for the poor,” since it is not enough to work for the poor but there is also the question of living with them and, as far as possible, like them. However, this demand should be modified at times according to the situation in which religious find themselves. First of all, it is necessary to insist, as a general rule, that the requirements of formation should prevail over certain apostolic advantages that come from an insertion into a poor milieu. It must be possible to realize and maintain solitude and silence, for example, which are indispensable during the whole time of initial formation. On the other hand, the time of formation contains periods of apostolic activities where this dimension of religious life can find expression, on condition that these small, inserted communities conform to certain criteria which assure their religious authenticity; that is, that they offer the possibility of living a truly religious life in accord with the ends of the institute; that, in these communities, the life of communal and personal prayer and, consequently, times and places of silence, can be maintained; that the motives for the presence of the religious be first of all, evangelical; that these communities always be ready to respond to the needs of the superiors of the institute; that their apostolic activity not be primarily a response to a personal choice, but to a choice of the institute, in harmony with the pastoral work of the diocese, for which the bishop is primarily responsible.

Formation communities for institutes of active life need not be monastic. But they do need to safeguard the conditions for formation, which is their primary business. Moving people who are not yet formed into active apostolate can be unfair both to those who are “served” and to those undergoing formation.

The document comes back again to this business in #50 and says more clearly: “. . . making the novitiate in an inserted community is completely discouraged.” Novices are to withdraw from the world in which they have been living and be formed for their new life; the good inserted community is engaging in an apostolic return to the world so as to affect it. The two movements cannot be carried out simultaneously, though each is appropriate at its due time.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes,” 30–32, deals with the duties of “Instructors or Formators (Superiors and Others Responsible for Formation)”:

> 30. The spirit of the risen Jesus is made present and active by means of a complex of ecclesial mediations. The whole of the religious tradition of the Church

> attests to the decisive character of the role of teachers for the success of the work of formation. Their role is to discern the authenticity of the call to the religious life in the initial phase of formation, and to assist the religious toward a successful personal dialogue with God while they are discovering the ways in which God seems to wish them to advance. They should also accompany religious along the paths of the Lord [(93) Cf. Tob 5:10, 17, 22.] by means of direct and regular dialogue, always respecting the proper role of the confessor and spiritual director in the strict sense of the words.
>
> Further, one of the main tasks of those responsible for formation is to ascertain whether the novices and the young professed are being effectively followed by a spiritual director.
>
> Formators should also offer religious solid nourishment, both doctrinal and practical, in keeping with each one's stage of formation. Finally, they should progressively examine and evaluate the progress that is being made by those in their charge, in light of the fruits of the Spirit. They must decide whether the individual called has the capacities which are required at this time by the Church and the institute.

This passage seems to make formators' responsibility for discerning whether the individual is to be allowed to proceed their primary responsibility, and seems to leave them alone responsible for that. It does not distinguish clearly enough between primary and ongoing formation. Still, it does begin by regarding the formators as "teachers" and says they should offer "religious" (though those in initial formation are still lay people) solid doctrinal and practical nourishment.

> 31. In addition to a sound knowledge of Catholic faith and morals, "those who are responsible for formation need to have:
>
> the human qualities of insight and responsiveness;
>
> a certain experiential knowledge of God and of prayer; wisdom resulting from attentive and prolonged listening to the Word of God;
>
> love of the liturgy and understanding of its role in spiritual and ecclesial formation;
>
> necessary cultural competence;
>
> sufficient time and good will to attend to the candidates individually, and not just as a group."[(94) Contemplative Dimension, 20; cf. Introduction, note 9, above.]
>
> Consequently, this office requires inner serenity, availability, patience, understanding, and a true affection for those who have been confided to the pastoral responsibility of the instructor.

The listed qualifications are important and appropriate, so far as they go. But since the teaching is largely by example and what is in question here is the formation of potential

religious according to a specific charism, formators must be exemplary religious not only but not least with respect to their institute's charism. They must be articulate about it and match their words with deeds.

> 32. If there is a group of formators under the personal responsibility of the one who is in charge of formation, the individual members should act in harmony, keenly aware of their common responsibility. Under the direction of the superior, "they should cultivate the closest harmony of spirit and action," and should form with one another and with those in their charge, one united family. [(95) OT 5b.] No less necessary is the cohesion and continued collaboration among those responsible for the different stages of formation.
>
> The work of formation as a whole is the fruit of the collaboration between those responsible for formation and their disciples. If it remains true that the disciple assumes a large part of the responsibility for his or her own formation, still this responsibility can only be exercised within a specific tradition, that of the institute, for which those responsible for formation are the witnesses and immediate exponents.

The need for harmony is stressed here. Doubtless that is necessary. But it is hardly possible in institutes beset by divisions that permeate the whole Church and as yet have not been dealt with effectively by the collegium. Formation is one area in which the unsatisfactoriness of unfaced division is clearest. Of course, harmony need not mean uniformity. But where real conflicts are present, those in formation are compelled to go along with (or pretend to go along with) inconsistent demands.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes," 43, deals with the pre-novitiate or postulancy—the period, whatever it is called, during which interested persons are prepared for the novitiate and those judged unsuitable are encouraged to discern their vocation, which is not in this institute. The following standards for admitting to novitiate are stated [notes omitted]:

> Admission is based upon conditions determined by the general law of the Church, though the institute's proper law can add others.(113) The requirements of the law are as follows:
>
> a sufficient degree of human and Christian maturity(114) for undertaking novitiate without its being reduced to the level of a course of general formation based on a simple catechumenate. It can actually happen that some present themselves as candidates who have not completed their Christian initiation (sacramental, doctrinal, and moral), and lack some of the elements of an ordinary Christian life.
>
> a general cultural foundation which should correspond to what is generally expected of young persons who have achieved the normal education of their country. It is particularly necessary that future novices attain a facility in the language used in the novitiate.

. . .

> a balanced affectivity, especially sexual balance, which presupposes the acceptance of the other, man or woman, respecting his or her own difference. Recourse to a psychological examination can be useful, taking into account the right of each individual to preserve his or her own privacy.(115)
>
> the ability to live in community under the authority of superiors in a particular institute. This capacity certainly will be verified further during the course of the novitiate, but the question should be posed in advance. Candidates should be well aware of the fact that other ways exist by which to give all of one's life to the Lord, apart from entering a religious institute.

With promising individuals, as much time as necessary can be allowed to meet these requirements. Not mentioned here is that the individual should prove healthy enough to cooperate in the proper activity of the institute.

4–C Responsibilities with respect to vows in general, and dispensations

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 38, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VII, after speaking about prayer and asceticism, has one long paragraph in which he mentions several temptations to deviate from the consecration involved in the vows in general:

> It is also necessary to recognize and overcome certain temptations which sometimes by diabolical deceit present themselves under the appearance of good. Thus, for example, the legitimate need to be familiar with today's society in order to respond to its challenges can lead to a surrender to passing fashions [Latin: temporis moribus = contemporary ways of acting], with a consequent lessening of spiritual fervor or a succumbing to discouragement [Latin: *vel admissa quasi fracti animi affectione* = the lost drive of a spirit as it were broken]. The possibility of a deeper spiritual formation might lead consecrated persons to feel somehow superior to other members of the faithful, while the urgent need for appropriate and necessary training can turn into a frantic quest for efficiency, as if apostolic service depended primarily on human means rather than on God. The praiseworthy desire to become close to the men and women of our day, believers and nonbelievers, rich and poor, can lead to the adoption of a secularized lifestyle or the promotion of human values in a merely horizontal direction. Sharing in the legitimate aspirations of one's own nation or culture could lead to embracing forms of nationalism or accepting customs which instead need to be purified and elevated in the light of the Gospel.

He mentions five temptations, to which, obviously, he thinks significant numbers of religious have succumbed:
(1) setting out to understand current culture but then adopting contemporary ways of acting, and so losing spiritual fervor or the will to persevere faithfully;
(2) pride—having a condescending attitude toward other faithful, due to opportunities for more profound spiritual formation;
(3) pursuing appropriate and necessary training for apostolate but getting caught up in an excessive pursuit of effectiveness, and losing sight of dependence on God for fruitful apostolate;
(4) trying to overcome isolation and get close to people and ending up adopting their secular lifestyle and this-worldly goals;
(5) solidarity with others of one's nationality and culture, with violations of Christian universalism and culture reformed and renewed in the light of faith.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 47, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VIII–IX, deals with "Fraternity in the universal Church":

> 47. Consecrated persons are called to be a leaven of communion at the service of the mission of the universal Church by the very fact that the manifold charisms of their respective Institutes are granted by the Holy Spirit for the good of the entire Mystical Body, whose upbuilding they must serve (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4–11). Significantly, "the more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:31), the "greatest of all" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13), as the Apostle says, is charity, which brings all diversity into one and

> strengthens everyone to support one another in apostolic zeal. This, precisely, is the scope of [Latin: Ad hoc quidem intendit = Toward this—i.e., the strengthening of mutual support in apostolic zeal—indeed tends] the particular bond of communion which the different Institutes of Consecrated Life and the [p. IX] Societies of Apostolic Life have with the Successor of Peter in his ministry of unity and missionary universality. The history of spirituality amply illustrates this bond and shows its providential function both in safeguarding the specific identity of the consecrated life and in advancing the missionary expansion of the Gospel.

Here JP II is making some important claims.
(1) Charisms are given for the good of the entire Church, and he apparently means the Church universal. Paul says in 1 Cor 12.7 that the charisms are given for what translators take to mean "the common good" or "the common advantage" though the Gk is ambiguous; the translation is warranted though, and the pope's reading seems to be, by 1 Cor 12.12–30, where Paul develops his Body-of-Christ teaching on the analogy of a natural body. Though he is writing to a particular Church, that of Corinth, he surely does not mean to suggest that there are as many bodies of Christ as there are particular churches!
(2) He applies Paul's lesson: more important than the distinctive charisms of various institutes is their and their members' communion of charity in and with the Church universal.
(3) He says that the special bond of communion between institutes and the Holy See tends to the institutes' and Holy See's mutual support in apostolic zeal, mutual help in apostolate.
(4) Here the Pope defines his own role as a ministry of unity and and missionary universality, and so draws into his discussion of the institutes' responsibilities in respect to fraternity their role as exemplars of communio with the Holy See and in respect to missionary activity.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 84–85, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XVI, deals in a very generalized way with the prophetic responsibility of those in consecrated life:

> 84. The prophetic character of the consecrated life was strongly emphasized by the Synod Fathers. It takes the shape of a special form of sharing in Christ's prophetic office, which the Holy Spirit communicates to the whole People of God. There is a prophetic dimension which belongs to the consecrated life as such, resulting from the radical nature of the following of Christ and of the subsequent dedication to the mission characteristic of the consecrated life. The sign value which the Second Vatican Council acknowledges in the consecrated life [note to LG 44] is expressed in prophetic witness to the primacy which God and the truths of the Gospel have in the Christian life. Because of this preeminence, nothing can come before personal love of Christ and of the poor in whom he lives. [note omitted]
>
> The Patristic tradition has seen a model of monastic religious life in Elijah, courageous prophet and friend of God. [note omitted] . . . True prophecy is born of God, from friendship with him, from attentive listening to his word in the different circumstances of history. Prophets feel in their hearts a burning desire for the holiness of God and, having heard his word in the dialogue of prayer, they proclaim that word with their lives, with their lips and with their actions, becoming people

> who speak for God against evil and sin. Prophetic witness requires the constant and passionate search for God's will, for self-giving, for unfailing communion in the Church, for the practice of spiritual discernment and love of the truth. It is also expressed through the denunciation of all that is contrary to the divine will and through the exploration of new ways to apply the Gospel in history, in expectation of the coming of God's Kingdom. [note omitted]
>
> 85. In our world, where it often seems that the signs of God's presence have been lost from sight, a convincing prophetic witness on the part of consecrated persons is increasingly necessary. In the first place this should entail the affirmation of the primacy of God and of eternal life, as evidenced in the following and imitation of the chaste, poor and obedient Christ, who was completely consecrated to the glory of God and to the love of his brethren. The fraternal life is itself prophetic in a society which, sometimes without realizing it, has a profound yearning for a brotherhood which knows no borders. Consecrated persons are being asked to bear witness everywhere with the boldness of a prophet who is unafraid of risking even his life.
>
> Prophecy derives a particularly persuasive power from consistency between proclamation and life. Consecrated persons will be faithful to their mission in the Church and the world, if they can renew themselves constantly in the light of the word of God. [note omitted] Thus will they be able to enrich the other faithful with the charismatic gifts they have received and, in turn, let themselves be challenged by the prophetic stimulus which comes from other sectors of the Church. In this exchange of gifts, guaranteed by full harmony with the Church's Magisterium and discipline, there will shine forth the action of the Holy Spirit, who "gives [the Church] a unity of fellowship and service; he furnishes and directs her with various gifts, both hierarchical and charismatic." [note: LG 6, cf. PO 2]

The primary way of being prophetic is built in to consecrated life as it is built in to every specific personal vocation: live it out faithfully. Consecrated life will be especially effective if really lived out. Inconsistency with what one has committed oneself to undermines the sign-value and makes the whole thing ineffective. In 84, 2, he gives a good clarification of what prophecy is; that stands against the notion that people are being prophetic when they fall in with whatever is politically correct and get on the bandwagon with secular movement. In 85, he adds that a really prophetic stance emphasizes the primacy of God and eternal life; it must focus on the kingdom not of this world, as Jesus did. A Catholic's prophetic stance must be in "full harmony with the Church's Magisterium and discipline"; there is nothing prophetic in dissent and attacks on Church order.

How to justify those, like Mother Teresa, who rightly change their commitment to a certain form of consecrated life, and distinguish them from people who renege on their commitments? Mother Teresa did not give up the consecrated life, but intensified her consecration: in radicality, witness, and self-offering. And she had the approval of her appropriate superior, so there was no problem about obedience. But unless the change clearly intensifies

consecration and is authorized by an appropriate superior, people who make vows renege if they try to shift their consecration to some other form of it. If there are some instances in which it seems the church has approved changes that did not meet the stated standard, we can explain them: Mistakes are made by the Church, and people also do wrong things, repent, and then live outstandingly holy lives.

At present, there is no annulment procedure for vows. It seems there should be, because there must be cases of nullity, and the truth of the situation and the relationships should be acknowledged and dealt with, which hardly is likely to happen if all cases are treated uniformly as instances of inability or unwillingness to fulfill responsibilities that really were assumed. To require someone who really did not make vows to go on living as if they had would be unjust, not only to those individuals but to other people who would act with or toward them on an unsound assumption about their status.

Once one has made vows, one should not entertain wishes that one had not made them, or had made them in a different institute. Such wishes are almost sure to arise sometimes, especially in the early years when one encounters frustrations or finds one's expectations disappointed. But they should be recognized as temptations to be unfaithful, and so never should be willingly entertained, but ought always to be set aside as bad thoughts.

Being satisfied to live religious life in a mediocre way—only doing enough to avoid mortal sin—is risky. The form of life is badly designed for that. Everything depends on grace. One needs to keep in mind how many and how great are the gifts received, and be grateful for them. One also needs to continue to pray for abundant grace and to tap into the channels by which it is normally given. Therefore, one always must be faithful in liturgical participation, personal prayer, and the practice of obedience and poverty. If one ceases to strive for excellence in these matters, the framework of consecrated life becomes burdensome, and serious infidelity to the vows becomes more and more likely.

What is involved in committing oneself to fraternal life in which members are united without being absorbed? It is a matter of undertaking cooperation for common purposes, while mutually realizing that not everything about any individual is available for those purposes—short of cooperating with Jesus for the kingdom. But the cooperation of a particular institute always is short of that. So, an individual religious has gifts and opportunities that are personal. Nobody would deny that everyone must have a chance for personal prayer, and that not all prayer can be liturgical or communal. Also, every individual needs some opportunity for personal friendships and for time to communicate with personal friends. And so forth.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "Living the Evangelical Counsels," *Review for Religious,* 58:1 (Jan./Feb 1999): 98–102, comments on CIC, c. 598, which requires each institute to define in its constitutions how the evangelical counsels will be observed in its way of living and requires every member to observe the counsels faithfully and fully, and to put their lives together in accord with the proper law of their institute and thereby strive for the perfection of their state. She points out that this canon uses the institute's charism as the standard for specifying how to live the consecrated life and points to their commitment in taking the vows

as putting them in a "state of perfection"—a state in which they are committed explicitly to seeking perfection in their charism's proper way.

The interior dimension of living the vows is the most important: one's heart must be chaste, obedient, and detached or the outward avoidance of sexual activity, conformity to rules and orders, and lack of personal property are meaningless.

However, the vows in general do require specific behavior different from that of upright, single laypeople. Vowed chastity requires permanently avoiding relationships that could lead not only to nonmarital sexual activity but toward marriage, and carefully building friendships and communal associations around other shared goods, centrally that of religion (the things of the Lord). Vowed obedience and poverty require submission and detachment not only according to norms that any upright lay person also must meet but appropriate for fulfilling the other commitments shaping vowed life rather than for fulfilling other commitments that might constitute others' Christian lives.

CIC, c. 654: "By religious profession, members assume the observance of the three evangelical counsels by public vow, are consecrated to God through the ministry of the Church, and are incorporated into the institute with the rights and duties defined by law."
CIC, c. 655: "Temporary profession is to be made for a period defined in proper law; it is not to be less than three years nor longer than six."

The fact that there can be temporary profession and that a person is consecrated to God by religious profession entails that the specific consecration involved in religious profession need not be permanent. For those temporarily professed really do make their vows, are consecrated, and are members of the institute—though with limited rights.

Whether a particular institute's profession explicitly mentions the three vows does not matter; they are implicit in whatever formula approved proper law specifies. One ought to think of the consecration involved as a cooperative act: the Holy Spirit (the principal agent), the person receiving public vows acts in the name of the Church, and the individual making the profession. Is the reception of the vows *in persona Christi*?

CIC, c. 657, §1: "When the period for which profession was made has elapsed, a religious who freely petitions and is judged suitable is to be admitted to renewal of profession or to perpetual profession; otherwise the religious is to depart."

That makes it clear that temporary profession is like engagement; both sides must agree for permanent profession to take place. So, the temporarily professed religious is really a religious, yet has no right to remain a member of the institute.

CIC, cc. 684–85 provide procedures for transfer from one institute to another. CIC, cc. 686–87 provide for exclaustration, voluntary and imposed—which is like a separation rather than a divorce, in that person is still to keep the vows, the separation can go on only for three years, and the institute has some obligation to care for the person. CIC, c. 688 provides for the separation—i.e., divorce from the institute—of those in temporary vows. They cannot be exclaustrated, because that presupposes a more permanent relationship, whereas those in temporary vows are, as it were, only engaged.

CIC, c. 689 provides for exclusion from further profession of someone in temporary vows. §1 requires "just causes"—which means that the superior may not refuse to let someone go on simply because he/she does not like them or feels uneasy about them. There must be a reason that is significant enough to make it reasonable not to let the individual stay. Yet the individual has no right to stay. So, the reason might just be that the individual has not shown enough of the required dispositions; it need not be that he/she has done anything terrible. §2 makes a just cause of physical or psychic illness that experts think is incompatible with life in the institute—"unless the illness has been contracted through the negligence of the institute or through work performed in the institute." §3 excludes an institute from dismissing someone in temporary vows who goes insane. The latter two sections in effect set conditions under which an institute becomes responsible for caring for someone—just as families are responsible for their members.

CIC, c. 690 provides for the reentry of individuals who have legitimately left an institute after completing the novitiate or after profession. This does not apply to those who were dismissed. So, it is concerned with people who voluntarily opted out before final profession.

CIC, c. 691 provides in §1 that a perpetually professed religious may apply for an indult of departure only for the gravest of causes considered before the Lord. The religious applies to the supreme moderator of the institute, who sends it along with an opinion and that of the council to (§2) the holy see or bishop (as the case may be). C. 692 provides that the indult is effective when the individual requesting it is notified of it unless he or she rejects it "in the act of notification"—that is, then and there. When notified, the individual is dispensed from vows by the law itself and all rights and obligations in the institute end. C. 693 says that clerical religious will not get an indult unless they find a bishop who will incardinate them or at least receive them experimentally; if the bishop rejects him before five years, he must return to his institute; if the bishop does not incardinate him by five years, the law automatically incardinates him then.

CIC, c. 694 dismisses automatically those members of religious institutes who defect notoriously from Catholic faith or attempt marriage. CIC, c. 695 provides for mandatory dismissal of members who commit certain crimes against persons (including completed abortion); it also makes mandatory unless the superior decides another way is possible to correct the member, restore justice, and repair scandal dismissal of members living in concubinage or persisting in a scandalous situation involving an external sin against the sixth commandment, or sins in another way against the sixth commandment committed by force or threats or publicly or with someone below the age of sixteen.

CIC, c. 696 provides for dismissal for cause—a variety of stated causes and other grave causes; superiors can dismiss someone in temporary vows for less serious reasons. However c. 697 requires the superior to hear the council, to warn the member twice, and then to send the case to the supreme moderator who, according to c. 698, must listen to the member's self-defense. Only on this basis, according to c. 699, can the supreme moderator and council (of at least four) acting collegially (as a sort of jury) decide by secret ballot to dismiss the individual, in which case the supreme moderator issues the decree of dismissal, which must

give reasons for it (or in certain monasteries, the bishop decides). Even then, according to c. 700, the decree has no effect unless it is confirmed by the Holy See or the bishop of the diocese in which the house to which the religious has been attached is situated—and the individual has ten days to appeal the decision once it is confirmed, and the individual can appeal all the way to the *Signatura*.

CIC, c. 701 provides that with dismissal, vows and rights and obligations as a religious end, but a cleric cannot exercise sacred orders unless he finds a bishop who receives him into the diocese (c. 693) or at least allows him to exercise sacred orders. CIC, c. 702 provides that those who depart legitimately or are dismissed legitimately §1 can request nothing from the institute for work done in it but §2 the institute is to observe equity and Christian charity toward a member who is separated from it—is to be fair and even merciful in helping the person out, all things considered.

CIC, c. 703 provides for an emergency procedure: in case of grave external scandal or grave imminent harm to an institute, a major superior (or even the superior of the house with the consent of the council, if there is danger in delay) may expel someone from the house; if necessary, the major superior is then to begin a dismissal process.

The practice of obedience with respect to both poverty and apostolate has loosened up considerably from what it once was. Now, many religious have control of substantial funds, and need a superior's permission to draw and use only on occasion—e.g., when submitting an annual budget or asking for some supplement for substantial extraordinary expenses. Similarly, many religious have assignments such that they manage most of their own time with little oversight, and may be in a position to commit substantial time and resources without superiors' awareness.

None of this is all bad. Such practices need to be considered carefully by chapters to make certain that they conform to particular law and really are not so lax that they violate the charism of the institute, open members needlessly to occasions of sin, or detract seriously from witness.

Also, there is a real need to abide by some specific norms. Good religious will make sure that any significant income they receive (stipends, gifts) is turned in or reported to appropriate superiors. Good religious also will inform superiors of substantial available time and resources not needed for their current assignment, so that superiors can judge how best to employ them. Certainly, it would be wrong to make any significant commitment not usually part of one's present assignment without getting superior's assent.

One violation by religious of poverty is in their differential treatment of the rich and the poor, when to the detriment of the latter. That may be rational in terms of getting support for the institute. But in terms of witness, it falsely indicates that wealth matters in what is most important. Religious who practice poverty well give as much time and attention to a poor person as a rich one, treat him or her with the same respect, indeed give more to the poor so long as doing so is fair in order to help overcome the detrimental effects of poverty. The nuns who saved the best used books for the children of wealthy families did not have the right idea.

Those who give up a flourishing hospital in suburbia to set up a free clinic in a ghetto have the right idea.

Someone who has made vows in one outfit may be genuinely called to found another (Mother Teresa) or to switch to a different outfit, a religious to become a diocesan priest or a consecrated virgin, and so on. There is a presumption against any such change, but it can be overcome. Individuals must engage in genuine discernment, then go through channels. Must be entirely honest and open to considering what is said against idea. Superiors also ought to be open, not resentful, but insistent upon being shown good grounds for overcoming the presumption against change. If individual encounters what he/she considers unreasonable refusal, after conscientious reconsideration, the issue is: are you bound in conscience to make the change if possible? If so, must try any available avenue of appeal—e.g., to higher superior, to congregation in Rome. If appeal fails, even if one knows there was skullduggery, so that one cannot make the change, one ought to take that as a sign that, despite everything, one is called to stay as one is.

Lozano, *Discipleship*, 282–83, has a brief treatment of dispensation from vows. I do not think it is very convincing, though usually his treatments are sensible. At the same time, his argument (285) is more convincing that the notion of the solemn vows Thomas had (*S.t.*, 2–2, q. 88, a. 11) which made them indispensable even by the Roman Pontiff. That has been falsified by the practice of the Church which (reluctantly) dispenses from those vows (see CIC, c. 692). Thomas's conception of vow was drawn from Roman sources, and involved the idea that the vow irrevocably consecrated the individual—changed his or her status from secular to divine—so that the vow's force (of self-destruction) could be evaded only by fulfilling it.

Gianfranco Ghirlanda, S.J., Dean of Canon Law at the Gregorian University, talked with me about the question of exclaustration—separation of a consecrated person from religious life—which helps clarify the nature of the bond formed by vows.

Solemn vows were not dispensed until the 15th century; the idea was that by the vow of chastity people as it were marry God, hand over their body to him; but then the vows began to be dispensed on the basis that the pope, as vicar, can exercise divine power in the matter (very like the old account of Pauline privilege dissolutions of marriages). Since the Church has been doing it, he concludes, she can do it.

But now there is a problem of too-easy exclaustration from consecrated life. There is a consecration by God but also a mediation by the Church; the juridical fact is rooted in vocation by God, but not identical with it. The divine gift is mediated by the Church; the person's state in the Church changes. This is not a sacrament but it is a sacramental; in the East, the ritual also includes the blessing of oil and anointing of the person. So, the Church also consecrates. Therefore, if the person quits without permission, the superior must seek out the person, try to counsel her or him, and seek her or his return.

But when the person is dispensed, where is she or he morally? If a person is bound by vows yet not abiding by them, that is scandalous, and the dispensation is given to mitigate this

scandal. But there are four elements in consecration: consecration by God, objective consecration by the Church, invocation of the Spirit, and also a ministerial consecration (to use charism in service to the Church). When the person asks to be and is dispensed, all is gone except the consecration by God. How does she or he stand morally with regard to this?

Through the mercy of God mediated by the mercy of the Church, the person who cannot any longer fulfill vows is given the possibility of pursuing a new way of life, a lay vocation. But the person must keep the awareness that she/he was consecrated. What, then, is the good conscience of the person in relation to God?

Ghirlanda's answer: God forever elects Israel. But the people did not respond. Still, his gift and call are irrevocable (see Romans). So the people remain his chosen people. Israel is the type (model) of every person in front of God. But eventually Israel will respond. Likewise, individuals will respond and rediscover their original consecration. Perhaps at the moment of death.

I think this is a poor solution, but did not say so. It has all the defects of any final option theory. I think that if people get to a point where they really *cannot* live according to the vows, their taking them must have been invalid in the first place. If they could abide by them but refuse to do so, those vows either involve an irrevocable divine consecration and they are not really dispensed, or they are dispensed from sacred promises of their own that did not correspond to any irrevocable divine consecration. (Given the Church's practice, I think the latter clearly is the case.)

He thinks that the moral aspect of marriage-divorce is the same, but in that case the consummated sacramental union is beyond the moral order and cannot be dissolved except by death. (I also think that is false.)

He also thinks that, if simple vows are taken without intervention by the Church, the vows can be dispensed by any parish priest, but morally the situation is the same.

In the East, the continuity between the second consecration (of religious) and the first (baptismal) is stressed; in the West, the distinction between the two is stressed. In the East, consecration principally is connected to monasticism.

He thinks it now is too easy to get into religious life and too easy to get out. Underlying this, there is an inadequate grasp on the importance of the moral act of the person making the commitment and of the Church's act of consecrating. (I think he may well be right here.)

I think that his use of Romans 11.29 ("For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable") is fallacious. Paul is concerned with the basic gift and call to divine communio, and saying that is irrevocable: all Israel (that is, Israel as such, not necessarily every individual) will be saved. But the gift and call of religious life is only an element of an individual's vocation, and there is no reason why God cannot plan that to be only temporary, though allowing the individual to think it permanent and undertake it as such. Given the effectiveness of the dispensation, a person who vowed celibacy and was dispensed can rightly marry, and so that could be God's gift and vocation for them at that point in their lives. (None of this requires us to suppose that

anyone who makes vows validly fails to keep them until death without mortal sin. God's plan for the person's life permits the sin and provides a different vocation for the repentant sinner.)

Novitiate is like courting. Both parties are interested in the prospective communio with each other, but it is not yet the case that both are morally certain that they ever will make that commitment. Temporary vows are like engagement. Both sides need to be morally certain that they will commit when the times comes, and they promise to do that. Yet the promise is conditional; the time is not yet here, so, like the engaged couple, they need to remain open to being convinced by more information and experience that they should break it off and not make the commitment.

Temporary vows, while analogous to engagement, also differ from that. People make temporary vows in other contexts simply to bind themselves for a time to a religiously significant act they regard as inherently worthwhile. Temporary vows are thought of that way too. While rather easily dispensed, the expectation is that even people who come to see they should not and will not make permanent vows nevertheless should be faithful to their temporary vows until they end.

In institutes that have both temporary and permanent vows, nobody ought to make temporary vows unless he/she conditionally intends to make permanent ones. And the same on the other side: nobody should be admitted to first profession unless they intend to profess the person permanently. Implicit in making temporary vows is a promise (but not a vow) to make perpetual ones; so to make the promise without intending to keep it would be dishonest (on either side). That being so, the period of temporary vows ought to be devoted primarily, not to discerning whether to make permanent ones, but to preparing to make permanent ones (and living the life of the institute for its own sake, of course). At the same time, as in engagement, there is place for ongoing discernment, but that should be decidedly subordinate, not the focus of people in temporary vows. It should be the focus of novitiate. During first profession, discernment should be limited to items that raise doubts about one's provisional commitment already made.

If an outfit has repeated temporary vows or promises and no perpetual ones, it can be reasonable to make temporary vows even while uncertain about the future—in principle, even when certain that one will not make them the next time around. For example: By next time, my aged parents will need me, and I'll drop out.

The Jesuits (perhaps other institutes?) do not make temporary vows, but go straight from novitiate to permanent vows (exception to Canon 655 of the 1983 code). In their case, there is no formal point at which they promise to make permanent vows—no set period corresponding to engagement. Novitiate will not do as analogue, since it is still more like courtship, discerning on both sides whether to form a permanent relationship. However, even here there must be a point during novitiate, towards the end, when both sides are preparing for profession, and it will be inconvenient if either backs out. At that point, there is an implicit undertaking that is analogous to engagement. It is not analogous to temporary vows, though, since there is no commitment to God, and so no need to continue until the end if some good reason arises to break it off.

In general, ordination and profession, like marriage, are public acts because they affect and involve a surrounding community. And engagement, temporary vows, and candidacy for diocesan priests are public acts too, for similar reasons. So, perhaps Jesuits ought to formalize some sort of public act of mutual undertaking—even if only a ceremony like candidacy of diocesan seminarians—late in novitiate or at the end of it but a while before making the simple but perpetual vows.

SC Rel 2 Feb. 1961, *Canon Law Digest*, 5:476:

> Consequently, superiors have a grave obligation to implant the following rule of the life of perfection in the souls of their young subjects: religious may use these comforts and pleasures of life only in so far as they contribute to the pursuit of evangelical perfection and the proper exercise of the apostolate according to one's own constitutions. This norm differs not a little from the one used as a standard for the common state of the Christian life.

The Congregation has an important idea here, but does not get it out as clearly as it might. The comforts and pleasures of life it has in mind are the enjoyments of human goods that are morally acceptable in themselves, but not always appropriate for religious. There is a special norm that limits—thus, "only insofar as." The vows as interpreted by the institutes' constitutions and the requirements of apostolate set the special limit. That limit is different than the relevant limit for laypeople. Of course, lay people may have a vocation that sets requirements even more severe in some respects.

Self-abnegation has two layers, as it were. First, one needs to make choices and in doing so forgo alternative possibilities. In the light of revelation, one discerns one's vocation; the commitment to it precludes many possible activities that otherwise would have been morally acceptable. Second, whatever one sees to be good and to be done or not done—whether the norm arises from one's vocational commitments or not—one also has emotional motives that are not integrated and so must be denied. Some of those get integrated rather easily; it is simply a question of their needing to be formed. But others resist: the consequences of fallen nature and also of others' sins and of one's own past.

In the time since Vatican II, many religious have reacted against the bad old days during which self-denial was promoted almost as something good in itself, so that there sometimes were excesses that denigrated genuine human goods and even violated them. So far, so good.

But the appreciation of human goods also has led many to overlook the need for the self-denial required to fulfill their vocational commitment. It's pretty obvious that one must deny oneself with respect to sex, but those who do that pretty well or even very well often don't see the need for other elements of self-denial that are still very appropriate. For example, the shaping of one's own career and pursuit of new opportunities as they arise is in itself something humanly good and worthwhile, provided one is really concerned about the goods at stake and serving others. But when one has committed oneself to serve the religious good in a specific way and a group of people according the charism of some institute, one needs to deny oneself potential goods of shaping one's own career and pursuing opportunities. The same

thing is true of owning things and enjoying various cultural opportunities: in many cases, what is good in itself and quite worthwhile must be excluded if one is to fulfill the vocation to which one has committed oneself—especially insofar as one's lifestyle is to provide witness to the heavenly kingdom.

Given the commitment one has made and the importance of witness, many activities that are humanly good in themselves become seriously sinful. Some things that, one's vocational commitment apart, would be sinful, become obligatory. If a married man with children is called up for military service (assuming the call up is just), he has an obligation to make sacrifices that otherwise would seem inhuman, forgo goods it otherwise would be wrong to forgo, and risk his life in ways that otherwise would be gravely wrong. So, no wonder that religious called up for service must accept conditions that otherwise would be wrong.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 44: "Religious profession expresses the gift of self to God and to the Church—a gift, however, which is lived in the community of a religious family. Religious are not only 'called' to an individual personal vocation. Their call is also a 'con-vocation'—they are called with others, with whom they share their daily life."

This passage makes an important point, but does not make it clearly enough. Making one's profession in a given institute is committing oneself to God and the Church precisely by undertaking to live and serve as a member of that institute, and thus in accord with its constitutions, proper law, and superiors' legitimate decisions. One implicitly commits oneself to the institute and its other members, with whom one will associate and cooperate. Correspondingly, in accepting an individual for profession, an institute commits itself to that individual.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes," 55, quotes a passage in which JP II quotes himself from *Redemptor hominis,* 21:

> Mature humanity means full use of the gift of freedom received from the Creator when he called to existence the man made "in his image, after his likeness". This gift finds its full realization in the unreserved giving of the whole of one's human person, in a spirit of the love of a spouse, to Christ and, with Christ, to all those to whom he sends men and women totally consecrated to him in accordance with the evangelical counsels.

and then the curial document adds: "One does not give one's life to Christ on a 'trial' basis." However, CIC, c. 655, provides: "Temporary profession is to be made for a period defined in proper law; it is not to be less than three years nor longer than six." So the document continues:

> 56. Perpetual profession presumes a prolonged preparation and a persevering apprenticeship. This justifies the Church's requirement that it be preceded by a period of temporary profession. "While still retaining its probationary character by the fact that it is temporary, the profession of first vows makes the young religious

> share in the consecration proper to the religious state." [(135) RC 7 {Instruction Renovationis causam}; cf. Introduction note 7, above.] Consequently, this time of temporary profession has as its end the strengthening of the fidelity of the young professed, whatever may be the human satisfaction which they receive from their daily life "in the following of Christ."

Thus, such temporary profession is a genuine consecration, yet it is not a permanent commitment. There is no real analogue to it in the case of couples marrying. How is it anything but giving one's life to Christ on a "trial" basis?

One can only say that temporary profession is a genuine commitment to give an irretrievable *stretch* of one's life, not merely as a period of trial, but for the intrinsic value of doing so. One should make it because convinced that whether or not God wants one to make permanent profession, he does want this, and one is determined to give him what he wants—this now and whatever later. Approached in this way, temporary profession can be the consequence of a permanent and total self-giving to God.

Still, insofar as temporary profession is transitional, nobody should make it intending to split at the period's end, and nobody should be allowed to make it by a superior intending the individual to leave at its end. In that respect it is like engagement to marry: the parties must conditionally intend permanent commitment at the end of the term of temporary profession.

Lozano, *Discipleship*, 287, points out that Vatican II declined a proposed *modus* that would have entitled chapter 6 of LG "De Consecratis," which would have made the idea of consecration central. Also, in PC 5: "They have given over their whole life to his [God's] service. Doing that really constitutes a certain special consecration that is closely rooted in and that more fully expresses the baptismal consecration."

Religious consecration cannot be absolute as the baptismal consecration itself is. That is exactly why temporary vows with the same content as the permanent ones can be made and are really binding for their term. In what sense, then, are the permanent ones permanent?
(1) The baptismal consecration that underlies and is more fully expressed by religious vows is permanent and absolutely irrevocable.
(2) The individual is to make religious vows with the intention of faithfulness until death and is gravely bound not to do anything that would undercut that faithfulness.

However, in two sorts of cases, the absoluteness of the baptismal consecration calls for dispensation from religious vows.
(1) If the individual does wrongly undercut faithfulness to religious vows, the time can come when he/she is called to repent and accept a different vocation.
(2) In some cases, a professed religious who has remained entirely faithful might encounter conditions that call for discernment along with his/her superiors whether he she is being called to do something else, and should see that to be the case and be granted a dispensation.

What would such circumstances be? Suppose someone had been married but believed his her spouse and infant child had died in an accident, entered a novitiate and been professed, then it came to light that he/she had a surviving six-year-old child with severe health problems living

in a wretched public institution, and it had been impossible to find anyone willing to adopt the child; then that person might be called to leave, care for the child, and, perhaps, marry again. Not doing that might constitute a rather clear and sharp negative sign: that the faith does involve inhuman renunciation, is an enemy of authentic human values, etc.

Sharon Holland, I.H.M., "Policies When a Member Leaves an Institute," *Consecrated Life*, 26 (2006): 305–18, deals with c. 702 problems of helping people who leave for various reasons.

4–D Responsibilities with respect to particular vows; current abuses

If an institute has a provision that its norms do not hold under pain of sin, that might lead to a lackadaisical attitude. But that's the legalism the provision was meant to overcome. Norms have their value in promoting cooperation, in guiding toward the common good. The lack of additional motive of enforcement should not detract from the effectiveness of the norm, and won't if one is really rightly committed.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 46, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VII, points out an obligation of those in consecrated life that often has been violated in recent years:

> A distinctive aspect of ecclesial communion is allegiance of mind and heart to the Magisterium of the Bishops, an allegiance which must be lived honestly and clearly testified to before the People of God by all consecrated persons, especially those involved in theological research, teaching, publishing, catechesis and the use of the means of social communication. [note omitted] Because consecrated persons have a special place in the Church, their attitude in this regard is of immense importance for the whole People of God. Their witness of filial love will give power and forcefulness to their apostolic activity which, in the context of the prophetic mission of all the baptized, is generally distinguished by special forms of cooperation with the Hierarchy. [note omitted]

Thinking with the Church is vital not only for the good of the Church as a whole but also for the real fruitfulness of apostolate, which requires cooperation with the hierarchy. The point is that dissent undermines witness.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 52, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, IX, under "Communion among different institutes," deals with the general responsibility of those committed to consecrated life to practice "fraternity":

> 52. Fraternal spiritual relations and mutual cooperation among different Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life are sustained and nourished by the sense of ecclesial communion. Those who are united by a common commitment to the following of Christ and are inspired by the same Spirit cannot fail to manifest visibly, as branches of the one Vine, the fullness of the Gospel of love. Mindful of the spiritual friendship which often united founders and foundresses during their lives, consecrated persons, while remaining faithful to the character of their own Institute, are called to practice a fraternity which is exemplary and which will serve to encourage the other members of the Church in the daily task of bearing witness to the Gospel.

Unfortunately, sometimes members of various institutes have manifested antagonism and bitter rivalry toward one another. Doing so is radical disobedience: to Jesus himself. There sometimes has been bitter competition for "vocations" and financial support. That provides counter-witness.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 82, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XV–XVI, deals with "Preference for the poor and the promotion of justice":

> 82. At the beginning of his ministry, in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus announces that the Spirit has consecrated him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to captives, to give sight back to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to declare a year of favor from the Lord (cf. Lk. 4:16–19). Taking up the Lord's mission as her own, the Church proclaims the Gospel to every man and [p. XVI] woman, committing herself to their integral salvation. But with special attention, in a true "preferential option," she turns to those who are in situations of greater weakness, and therefore in greater need. "The poor," in varied states of affliction, are the oppressed, those on the margin of society, the elderly, the sick, the young, any and all who are considered and treated as "the least."
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> The option for the poor is inherent in the very structure of love lived in Christ. All of Christ's disciples are therefore held to this option; but those who wish to follow the Lord more closely, imitating his attitudes, cannot but feel involved in a very special way. The sincerity of their response to Christ's love will lead them to live a life of poverty and to embrace the cause of the poor. For each Institute, according to its charism, this involves adopting a simple and austere way of life, both as individuals and as a community. Strengthened by this living witness and in ways consistent with their choice of life, and maintaining their independence vis-á-vis political ideologies, consecrated persons will be able to denounce the injustices committed against so many sons and daughters of God, and commit themselves to the promotion of justice in the society where they work. [note omitted] In this way, even in present circumstances, through the witness of countless consecrated persons there will be a renewal of that dedication which was characteristic of the founders and foundresses who spent their lives serving the Lord in the poor. Christ "is poor on earth in the person of his poor. . . . As God he is rich, as man he is poor. With his humanity he has gone up to heaven and, prosperous, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and yet, here on earth, still poor, he suffers hunger, thirst and nakedness." [note: 208. St. Augustine, Sermon 123, 3–4: PL 38, 685–86.]
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> The Gospel is made effective through charity, which is the Church's glory and the sign of her faithfulness to the Lord. This is demonstrated by the whole history of the consecrated life, which can be considered a living exegesis of Jesus' words: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40). . . .

He defines the object of the preferential option for the poor inclusively: all those in situations of greater weakness and so of greater need. In respect to spiritual goods, that often means those who have everything and feel no need of God. JP II says that the preference is a requirement of Christian charity—and so it is, if it reduces to using one's gifts to serve greater and more urgent needs. He says those in consecrated life must be involved in a special way, and begins to specify that by focusing on the authentic practice of poverty. That practice provides a condition for effectively denouncing injustices and promoting justice in ways that don't involve buying in to some political ideology. The idea is important; it would distinguish people in consecrated life from secular liberals, who do not practice an austere way of life and who are very much involved in political ideologies that are inconsistent with the Gospel, for

example, in exaggerating individual rights on some matters and embracing an unreasonable optimism about the power of governmental programs on other matters. He then stresses the tradition of works of charity that in fact delivered benefits to particular suffering people.

John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 50, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 10 Jan. 2001, X, broadens out the category of the "poor":

> The scenario of poverty can extend indefinitely, if in addition to its traditional forms we think of its newer patterns. These latter often affect financially affluent sectors and groups which are nevertheless threatened by despair at the lack of meaning in their lives, by drug addiction, by fear of abandonment in old age or sickness, by marginalization or social discrimination. In this context Christians must learn to make their act of faith in Christ by discerning his voice in the cry for help that rises from this world of poverty. This means carrying on the tradition of charity which has expressed itself in so many different ways in the past two millennia, but which today calls for even greater resourcefulness. Now is the time for a new "creativity" in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by "getting close" to those who suffer, so that the hand that helps is seen not as a humiliating handout but as a sharing between brothers and sisters.

Poverty must not be narrowly conceived, and there needs to be creativity—e.g., in providing aid without requiring recipients to pay an unfair price in terms of other genuine human goods.

Some religious superiors abdicate their duties. John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 43, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VIII, speaks to this failure:

> 43. In the consecrated life the role of Superiors, including local Superiors, has always been of great importance for the spiritual life and for mission. In these years of change and experimentation, the need to revise this office has sometimes been felt. But it should be recognized that those who exercise authority cannot renounce their obligation as those first responsible for the community, as guides of their brothers and sisters in the spiritual and apostolic life.
>
> In an atmosphere strongly affected by individualism, it is not an easy thing to foster recognition and acceptance of the role which authority plays for the benefit of all. Nevertheless, its importance must be reaffirmed as essential for strengthening fraternal communion and in order not to render vain the obedience professed. While authority must be above all fraternal and spiritual, and while those entrusted with it must know how to involve their brothers and sisters in the decision-making process, it should still be remembered that the final word belongs to authority and consequently that authority has the right to see that decisions taken are respected. [note omitted]

This excludes a policy that reduces the superior to chairperson. Authority extends to spiritual life as well as to mission. JP II is assuming fully adequate involvement in the decision-making process, along the lines I advocate.

PC 13 asks religious to practice the poverty to which they are committed and, if necessary, to try new forms. (That suggestion seems to indicate that the practice of poverty was no longer thought to be working very well.) It is not sufficient for members of communities to be subject to superiors in use of goods; they also must be poor in spirit and in fact, having treasure in heaven.

This suggests that the community as a whole should live modestly, rather than at the level of comfort common to people in their culture with the same level of education and types of work. The fact that the property is not owned by individuals and that they only use it subject to a superior's regulation does not make them poor in fact. The truth is that communal living generally provides a level of security and quality of life, such as good health care, unavailable to many laypeople. So, poverty in fact requires real simplicity of life.

PC 13: "In discharging his duty, each religious should regard himself as subject to the common law of labor." That seems to mean that religious should earn their living like everyone else—not expect to be supported by begging! They should make necessary provisions but should brush aside undue concerns. (This means not trying to cover every possible contingency. The point of this is obvious when dealing with an individual or small family, but in a large community, apart from cases in which provisions would be wasteful—e.g., buying flight Insurance—there is not much room here, because the superiors must count on major costs for some members.)

The institutes as such should try to render a collective witness of poverty, taking into account local conditions. (The generalate should work out and propose a policy; each province or house should agree on implementation, and that agreement should be subject to approval. This requires getting down to the nitty gritty, but that must be done if every local superior is going to understand what communal poverty means and hold to it.) Provinces and houses should share their resources, the better off should help those in need. And insofar as possible there should be some help for other needs of the Church and help to the poor.

Communities within their own rules have the right to acquire what they need for life and their works. (Note here how open that is to abuse. There is more room for good tools, what is needed to do the job, than for comfort in other respects.) But they must avoid every appearance of luxury, of immoderate gain, and of accumulation of wealth.

My comment: The Council takes it for granted that the corresponding realities must be ruled out. Because we are dealing with a sign, appearances do count. No matter how various institutes practice poverty, they must do something that is visible and significant: others must be able to see that they are living differently and more austerely, and the difference must be enough to make the point. Since appearances matter, there is a temptation to hypocrisy: keeping up an outward appearance of poverty adequate for sign while at the same time living it up in private—e.g., providing plenty of variety in foods so that everyone has plenty of what she likes, and discarding large amounts of food.

My comment: Communities should prefer things that are durable, serviceable, and low maintenance; should have multi-use spaces rather than seldom used ones, rented or leased

items if seldom used, do much dirty work themselves rather than being well staffed (what family can afford servants?). Need to look at and imitate practices of large families that are smart and conscientious, and who have barely enough income to meet all their needs at a reasonable level. Should stress caring for things so as to make them last. Travel must be limited to trips that are really necessary; poor people cannot travel to distant weddings and funerals or to visit friends. And not every gift should be accepted; some—for example, a luxurious vacation—can neither be used to serve genuine needs nor given away, and then should be rejected.

Religious communities and their superiors and members as such owe obedience to relevant and applicable Church law and to the lawful directives of ordinaries and the Holy See. CIC 590, §2, makes it clear that the obedience due to the pope personally pertains to the vow of obedience—he is their top religious superior.

In practice, exceptionally talented and successful religious often tend to be treated by their superiors as if they were dispensed from their vows of obedience and poverty. While sound grounds can exist for allowing some members of an institute more discretion than others in carrying out their assignments and allowing some the use of more, and more costly, things than others, the integrity of keeping the vows and the equal dignity of all members require that the same standards be applied consistently to all. Thus, the highly talented and successful religious may be rightly assigned exclusive use of a car if that is necessary to meet responsibilities, but should be expected to share its use during stretches when it is not needed to meet them. Failure to maintain the same standards will lead, due to a sense of fairness and equal dignity, to a lowering of standards for everyone. Also, the very talented and successful are likely to be exposed to more occasions of sins of unchastity, and relaxing standards with respect to the other vows is likely to lessen resistance to such temptations.

What about the rules of institutes that expressly say they do not bind under pain of sin?

1) Sometimes what they call for is morally obligatory in itself; so, one should not say: "Since the rule does not require this under pain of sin, I can sinlessly do otherwise."
2) Whatever reasons one had for entering the institute are reasons for following its rule. So, one should presume that following the rule will be good and not doing so will be stupid and self-defeating. Acting in stupid and self-defeating ways always is at least venially sinful. Therefore, one always should follow the rule unless one has a reason—not just an emotional motive—for acting otherwise.
3) Not every reason to depart from the rule will be decisive. Commitment to anything means excluding genuinely good alternatives. Those can continue to provide genuine reasons for acting in ways that, at least, detract from wholeheartedly fulfilling one's commitments. When fulfilling those commitments would be sufficient to make one holy, acting on reasons that detract from doing so is self-defeating, even if not stupid.
4) Only if one is convinced that departing from the rule will better carry out one's fundamental commitment of faith and/or commitments made to implement it should one set the rule aside.

To support celibacy/chastity and to implement poverty, some self-denial is needed. Limits on food and drink, especially alcoholic beverages, are very appropriate.

Subsidiarity does apply to religious communities. Each individual and each group that shares a distinctive common good (which may be subgroups within a local community, or a community, or a province, etc.) has proper responsibilities to be fulfilled, and the group or larger group should provide the support and assistance for fulfilling those proper responsibilities rather than take over the functions. However, the idea of subsidiarity must not be abused. It does not mean that general superiors should not direct all the groups and members belonging to the institute to its common good, which always will be distinctive in comparison with other institutes and a fortiori in comparison with a lay organization, or that regions or provinces should not carry on common apostolates and so establish, change, and end local communities for doing so. It does not mean institutes should not have common rules about poverty, perhaps subject to certain adaptations at provincial or even local levels. In short, subsidiarity does not take the bite out of obedience.

In the postconciliar renewal, some groups within many institutes sought changes in practice more drastic than acknowledged or authorized in their approved documents, and in many cases succeeded in bringing them about. Those institutes still need authentic renewal to bring them into conformity to a reasonable reading of their approved documents. In some extreme cases, the approved documents themselves were not entirely sound, and those institutes will die out. In some cases, to try to satisfy as many as possible, quite different life styles or ways of life have been established within institutes, and many members are off on their own, functioning like members of a secular institute. Even if the accepted diversity remained within the range of possible solutions to the problem of renewal, and even if the some have adequate reasons for separating from the institute while continuing to belong to it, this state of affairs, if it continues, also probably will lead to the institute's eventual demise.

That does not mean changes were unnecessary. Much rigidity and many useless practices needed to be overcome. Now, still, superiors must be prepared to consider new ideas seriously and on their merits.

Habits of individuals and customs of groups are of very diverse sorts.

Some arise as practical ways of dealing with a recurrent problem. They can be unsound from the outset, because shaped by human weakness to facilitate states of affairs that are in some way morally defective. Or, they can become unsound because changing needs or technology results in their no longer being reasonable ways for dealing with the problem. But even if there are equally good (or even, arguably, considered abstractly somewhat better) alternatives, if habits and customs remain practical, they should be maintained—e.g., people in the U.S. should drive on the right, while those in England and some other places should drive on the left. Not only is there a practical cost in changing customs that still work well, but changing anything that belongs to an individual or a group is discontinuity that reduces, even if slightly, the individual's or group's identity over time.

Other habits and customs arise as ways of regularly realizing an intrinsic good whose regular realization contributes to the well-being or flourishing of an individual or community. These are sound at the outset. Since these contribute to and express the unique character of the individual or group, they are powerful symbols that provide a sense of identity and they also

help to maintain real identity over time. For this reason, there is a very strong presumption in favor of retaining such customs. Still, circumstances can require exceptions to following them and permanently changed circumstances can require their modification or even their abandonment. Yet they never should be abandoned or altered without a good reason, and, even then, should be replaced without something more rather than less like them, if possible, not with nothing or something appealing only due to association with the currently popular character of some other individual or group.

Some argue that the habit or clerical attire suppresses the individuality of religious, takes from them an important way of self-expression. The idea is that in some sense clothes do make the man/woman. The answer is that individuality is more genuinely developed and manifested by faithfully carrying out one's unique personal vocation, an important part of which is the service and witness for whose sake one wears the habit rather than choosing a personal wardrobe.

It also is worth pointing out, especially in respect to women religious, that the personal wardrobe usually is not very personal, for it is determined more by fashion and merchandising than by individual genius and taste. If women designed their own clothing or at least shopped for and cleverly adapted patterns, wove fabrics or at least carefully shopped for them, and then made their own clothing, the argument would have a lot more plausibility!

Reducing the habit to an inconspicuous pin or an outfit that hardly anyone will recognize as religious garb undermines its witness value and also eliminates a valuable signal of sexual unavailability and religious availability.

People committed to poverty by vow or promise should not argue that, as professionals, they must live up to the level of fellow professionals. They only have genuine need for the means for practicing their profession—and that need can be met modestly, rather than pleasantly and conveniently.

If a community provides more than it should, individuals must restrict their own consumption and use. At the same time, they should, when possible, appropriate things to change the situation. Meanwhile, they should not judge others or make an issue of superiors' bad judgment.

Superiors have specific needs that must be met. But apart from that, they should share what is commonly available, and even take care to serve others by providing them with the better part—the father who serves the chicken, accepting the least desirable part as his share.

Provinces and houses of an institute should share their wealth with one another. All should resist carelessness and waste with respect to things held in common. Superiors should take due care in conscientious administration.

The idea that every apostolic work must be self-supporting is incompatible with evangelical zeal. It arises almost inevitably when common apostolate is abandoned or subordinated to a variety of disparate apostolates that do not constitute a common good.

Religious should avoid the rationalization that apostolate to the wealthy requires presenting oneself as their peers—in dress, accommodations, and so on. The wealthy are poor and do

need service, but that includes showing by word and deed the need for evangelical poverty appropriate to their vocation.

Beyond the common responsibilities about poverty, religious living in communities accept poverty according to their rule. Sharing use of common property is appropriate for many reasons: it is economical, it more clearly shows detachment, it expresses the charity that should bind the community together (in a good large family, nobody has much that he/she can regard as personal property), it enhances mobility, it puts all resources at disposal of the superior for meeting needs in more orderly way, it eliminates problem of inheritance, it mirrors the kingdom in which abundance makes property unnecessary.

The superior who gives reasons should give the reasons people need to do the job—to see what they are to try accomplish as ends. In most cases, we are not concerned with setting out behavior and simply saying: do it. Thus, the reasons are part of the command—without them, the action to be taken is unclear. Also, superiors are disciplined by having to give reasons, not to act arbitrarily. Yet giving reasons cannot be an absolute requirement.

With respect to governance, which pertains to obedience, Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "Participation in Goverance," *Review for Religious,* 50/5 (Sept./Oct. 1991): 665–80, points out that some communities fail to meet the canonical requirement that professed members participate actively in governance. They do that by a system of so-called full participation in chapters, in which the active participants do the actual decision making, and these are self-selected by undertaking to do the preliminary work, attend all sessions of the chapter, and so on. The old and sick do not get the opportunity they ought to have to elect a representative group to the chapter and to submit their proposals which would then have to be considered. So, it is a case of what supposedly is more participation violating the right of some to participate in the only ways they can.

There also are problems with the cost of such a process and the amount of time and energy that it requires. The value is not in people participating but in the input they can bring to the process, and once a representative group is elected and everyone has a chance to offer proposals, the additional input in having large numbers actually debate and vote has only marginal value.

Notice that having a preparatory meeting (or set of them in each province) to which everyone who wants might come could be an informal, additional way of stimulating useful input for chapters and enabling professed religious to pick delegates more prudently.

Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Experimenta circa regiminis,* 2 February 1972 (*Enchiridion Vaticanum,* 4, pp. 976–79; *AAS* 64 (1972) 393–94), made it clear that entirely collegial forms of governance in religious institutes are not acceptable. The Congregation considered two questions, the first of which was: "Whether, contrary to canon 516 [of the 1917 Code], ordinary and exclusive collegial rule—whether for an entire religious institute, or for a province, or for particular houses—should be admitted as lawful, so that the superior, if there is one, is a mere executor." The Congregation responded

negatively, citing PC 14 and *Evangelica testificatio,* and saying that the superior should exercise personal authority. Paul VI approved the answer on 18 February 1971.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "Authority in Institutes of Consecrated Life," *Review for Religious,* 55/2 (March/April 1996): 204–8, makes some points about authority in institutes. She points out that numerous major obligations are attached to the office of moderators of institutes (superiors) and lists eight of them from CIC, cc. 618–19:

1) require those in positions of authority to exercise it in a spirit of service;
2) urge them to be docile to the will of God;
3) remind them that all members of the institute are children of God and are owed reverence as human persons;
4) require them to listen to members and to foster cooperation among them;
5) mandate them to nourish members with the word of God and to lead them to liturgical celebrations;
6) insist that they be examples in both virtue and observance;
7) require them to assist members who are physically, spiritually, or emotionally in need;
8) and urge them to strive, along with the members, to build community in which God is sought and loved above all else.

She then adds: "Canon 618 also indicates that those in authority are competent 'to decide and command what is to be done.' Unfortunately, this one right included among the many obligations of superiors is too often given more attention than all the other aspects combined."

She notes significantly that some of the specified obligations of superiors are responsibilities that all members of institutes owe to one another, but that it is necessary that the superior have a special obligation, because members sometimes fail to fulfill their duties toward one another—for example, to help others in need.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "Basic Governance Structures in Religious," *Review for Religious,* 49/6 (Nov./Dec. 1990): 928–33, does a good job of explaining the roles and interrelationahsips of general chapters, superiors, and councils. CIC, c. 631, §1: general chapters enact norms—they exercise the legislative power for the community as a whole. CIC, c. 631, §3: all members may present suggestions to general chapters, so there is an opportunity for dissenting views to be heard and a requirement that they be considered without prejudice to their proponents. Superiors are necessary to make decisions and to see to it that members are treated fairly by one another and that community's responsibilities for members are met. Councils limit superiors' authority by providing required advice and sometimes by being able to withhold required consent; they also support the sound exercise of authority.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "General Chapters: Historical Background," *Review for Religious,* 55/3 (May/June 1996): 320–25, explains how general chapters developed beginning with chapters in monasteries—most decisively with the Dominicans, who were

organized into priories and provinces—as a genuine collegium (a body exercising both power and authority whose members functioned as equals and each had one vote).

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "General Chapters: Current Legislation," *Review for Religious*, 55/4 (July/Aug. 1996): 431–35, says that according to CIC, c. 631, § 1, the general chapter guards the institute's spiritual patrimony, promotes renewal in keeping with it, elects the head of the whole institute, deals with matters of major import, and enacts binding norms for the whole community.§2 leaves it to the institute's approved constitutions to determine the specifics about how those involved in the general chapter are determined, what it can do, and how it proceeds.§3 says that proper law must provide a way for provinces, local communities, and individual members to send their wishes and suggestions to the general chapter—and, it implies—have them considered. She points out that the elected chapter should be representative—but that does not mean elected to promote the interests of different groups, but rather to promote unity around the common good according to the common charism. She also makes the points that (1) the collegium must not include nonmembers; (2) no other body holds supreme authority in an institute; (3) the five functions must be carried out by the chapter and cannot be delegated; (4) only the collegium, once it meets, can determine its own agenda and procedure (of course, according to law); (5) every member of an institute has a vested right to participate in a way the law specifies.

It is worth noticing that, no matter what form the structure of authority takes—e.g., even if it is entirely democratic on a town-meeting basis—one often must submit to decisions other than those one would have made oneself, and sometimes, to preserve unity, decisions that are mistaken or somehow unreasonable. Citizens often should obey laws that make unjust requirements on them. Not every sort of cooperation justifies trying to minimize the need for such submission: doing so often is costly in terms of other goods, not only but not least the common purpose.

In the case of religious institutes, there are special reasons for not trying to minimize submission to decisions other than those one would have made and even to mistaken or somehow unreasonable decisions. Submitting makes it clear that the transcendent purpose and the solidarity of communio are especially valuable, and thus enhances witness value. That value is only compromised when members submit to the abuse of authority, not when they accept a system (in their constitutions and so on) that is reasonable in itself despite the fact that it minimizes autonomy and permits otherwise preventable mistakes in decision making.

While there are definite limits to the duty of consecrated persons and institutes to obey bishops and the pope, they do have duties of obedience toward the hierarchy, and those go beyond the duties every other Catholic has. So, religious whose principle is to claim the liberty due the laity in general are mistaken. The additional duties of consecrated persons are specified by their own documents and by canon law, and are undertaken when one commits oneself to membership in an institute approved by the Church.

In formulating norms and in directing actions, clarity is required both in respect to what is to be done and in respect to the norm's or directive's obligatory character. Of course, diplomatic language is appropriate. But the communication must not be clouded and

ambiguous, so that individuals who are conscientious are frustrated and those who are relaxed are supported in irresponsibility.

In general, there is a serious violation of poverty when funds are expended for the sake of practices that deviate from traditional religious life. For example, high costs of travel to constant meetings involving large part of members is wasteful; big expenditures for nontraditional retreats outside community of questionable value; travel for personal growth (actually just tourism). Again, funding up more individualized associational relationships that require separate dwellings for individuals or small groups is wasteful as well as contrary to the familial community.

In some religious institutes, poverty is currently being abused by some members who are working and living apart. Some are not obtaining fair compensation (which they owe it to their institute to do) or/and are spending most of what they earn while also depending on the institute for some current or (especially) future benefits. Some also resent supporting the "dead wood" of elderly members who do not earn their keep. The office in charge of finances for a province should function as agent in making employment contracts for members employed by entities outside the institute. In doing so, clear arrangements ought to be made to ensure that compensation, including insurance and retirement benefits, are fair, and that all income be paid to the institute. Regular bills probably should be paid by the institute, and the member should receive only a minimal, reasonable allowance.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "Poverty, Patrimony, and Nest Eggs," *Review for Religious*, 50:4 (July/Aug. 1991): 620, points out that CIC, c. 668, §3, applies to every professed member of every religious institute who has made a public vow of poverty, whether temporary or perpetual; it assigns the legal ownership of any income in any form that comes to any member through personal work or by reason of the institute to the ownership of the institute as such and not the individual member.

She also offers (620–23) a good treatment of a contemporary abuse in respect to poverty, by which patrimony and income from patrimony are personally used, contrary to canon law but with permission of superiors. Other nest eggs are restricted gifts and perpetual income from trusts (perhaps set up to provide income for the religious precisely so as to circumvent the limits accepted by the vow of poverty), or even perks related to jobs. These separate members of institutes into haves and have-nots, and frustrate the point of vow of poverty. Superiors fail in their duty if they go along with such devious ways of getting around poverty.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "The Evangelical Counsel of Poverty," *Review for Religious*, 57:3 (May/June 1998): 314–19, goes back to PC 13, and comments on CIC, c. 600; also canons 634, 635, 640, 668. CIC, c. 660: The evangelical counsel of poverty in imitation of Christ who, although he was rich, was made poor for us, entails, besides a life which is poor in fact and in spirit and is to be led productively in moderation and foreign to earthly riches, a dependence and limitation in the use and dispostion of goods according to the norm of the proper law of each institute." CIC, c. 634 affirms the right of the institute to own property but warns against the appearance of luxury, excess wealth, and the accumulation of possessions.

She points out that approval by superiors is not enough. The requirement is for real limitation and real dependence, a real austerity that is plain for all to see. Living up to the common standard, comfortable community life, and a nice allowance violate the reality of the vow.

Richard J. DeMaria, C.F.C., "Let's Talk Again about Poverty," *Review for Religious*, 54:4 (July/Aug. 1995): 601, comments on the redefinition of poverty as meaning "not materially poor, but simplicity of life: "Many religious employ servants, live in high-rent apartments, drive expensive cars, dine in the best restaurants. We can be found in luxury resorts, on cruise ships. We take midwinter and midspring as well as fairly extensive summer vacations. We have personal bank accounts, personal resources. Our lives are not materially poor, nor for that matter simple."

The central canon on obedience in institutes of consecrated life: CIC, c. 601: "The evangelical counsel of obedience, undertaken in the spirit of faith and love in the following of Christ obedient unto death, requires the submission of the will to legitimate superiors, who stand in the place of God, when they command according to the proper constitutions."

Note that it limits superiors' authority by the institute's own constitutions—though CIC, c. 590, §2, which says the pope is the highest superior of members of institutes is not limited by their proper constitutions. Still, canon 601 makes it clear that someone who professes the vows in a particular institute is undertaking a specific obligation to cooperate with others in that institute according to its peculiar rules, and that this cooperation includes listening to superiors and conforming to their legitimate decisions.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "The Evangelical Counsel of Obedience: Concrete Expression and Practical Consequences," *Review for Religious*, 57/6 (Nov./Dec. 1998): 652, points out that, among other things, in a religious institute superiors always can determine one's assignment to apostolate and where one will reside. The legitimate superior's assignment to an apostolate is what makes it a ministry exercised in the name of the Church herself and by her mandate (see CIC, c. 675, §3, which says it must be exercised in the communion of the Church, which means subject to legitimate authority). She goes on (653–55) to explain that, while members can be dismissed from the institute for obstinate disobedience in grave matter, problems arise where an individual is troublesome but cannot be dismissed, and cannot be forced into psychological therapy, since that would involve manifestation of conscience, which superiors are forbidden to require (CIC, c. 630, §5).

CIC, c. 625, §3, provides that elected superiors be confirmed (which implies they may not be confirmed) by a competent major superior. Major superiors can fail to fulfill this responsibility in two ways. Either they virtually automatically confirm anyone who is elected, not wishing to frustrate electors, or they treat the election as a mere nomination or proposal that leaves the matter up to their own decision. Instead, they should consider three things: (1) information they have, and may not be able to communicate, that the electors did not have; (2) the wider common good of the institute that the electors might not be taking sufficiently into account; (3) evidence, if any, that the electors or some of them acted wrongly or irresponsibly. Only if these considerations warrant requiring another election should the

superior refuse to confirm the election. In other words, the superior should not do so merely because he or she would have appointed someone else.

Living the vows in religious life—as against doing so as a hermit, consecrated virgin, or member of a secular institute—requires self-sacrifice by the individual for the common good. At the same time, it does not require loss of individuality, as is falsely alleged by some who do not wish to sacrifice personal tastes, preferences, career opportunities, and so on. Consider an army at war. Sometimes victory depends on individuals doing things for which they are not well equipped, setting aside the work they do well. Often it requires accepting pain. Orders have to be followed, because there must be a plan and it has to be carried out. Resources must be shared, because they are not plentiful and life depends on sharing. People put up with one another because it is vital to get along and to have everyone ready to function with as much steadiness as possible.

If many religious do not accept the self-sacrifice that is necessary, that may be because they are not really committed to any common purpose that justifies it. To keep a family intact, a husband and a wife must put up with a good deal. To support themselves, most people at times must work at jobs that don't use their talents well, either wasting them or over-stretching them. Do religious expect an easier and more comfortable life than that available to most people—though perhaps available to their yuppie colleagues and other acquaintances?

The driving force for community is the common mission that cannot be carried on effectively without it. If a group does not believe it has a common mission, it cannot continue to exist as a religious community. If it does, it should be driven by love of Christ who sends and those he sends to serve. Jesus himself was so driven; he entirely subordinated himself to his mission.

Remember, too, here that the mission of religious is not simply the outward apostolic activity—whether prayer or other service—they do for others. It is in being community, faithful to the vows, so as to be sign. And to be effective, that community must be evident to all without faith and even without much comprehension of subtle relationships.

CIC, c. 634, §1, says institutes, provinces, and houses may own temporal goods with restrictions by their proper law but §2 adds: "Nevertheless, they are to avoid any appearance of excess, immmoderate wealth, and accumulation of goods." This comes from PC 13, toward the end.

There certainly is an appearance of immoderate wealth when a house buys and remodels an apartment building so as to provide each member with his own apartment away from the school where they teach, which hitherto provided each with both a private room with bath and an office, and still provides meals in a common refrectory, which most sometimes skip, with considerable waste of food.

What about cases in which the problems of sharing cars are solved by providing everyone who drives frequently with a car for his or her exclusive use? The result is that community members do not have to make the sacrifices and work around the problems any one-car family must.

CIC, c. 636, §1, provides that in each institute and province there must be "a finance officer, distinct from the major superior and constituted according to the norm of proper law."

This significant separation of powers is not maintained when everything is handled by a single, collegial leadership.

CIC, c. 640: “Taking into account local conditions, institutes are to strive to give, as it were, a collective witness of charity and poverty and are to contribute according to their ability something from their own goods and to provide for the needs of the Church and the support of the poor.” This is violated when religious engage in needless travel for celebrations and retreats at remote locations, whilst limiting the help they give to the poor with whom members deal in their supposed apostolates.

Some argue that when superiors made decisions, they were too prone to subordinate individuals to the good of the institute—for example, to send a middle-aged member for a degree in another field, simply because someone was needed to fill a slot in “our college” or “our hospital,” while disregarding the hardship and frustration that imposed, the bad effect on fruitful work being carried on in a successful apostolate, and the unlikelihood that the individual would ever be able to do a really good job in the slot that needed to be filled. There certainly were examples of that. But the problem was imprudence on superiors’ part, not subordination to the common good. Such decisions simply were stupid. The lack of consultation was part of a failure to gather facts and attend to relevant realities.

The failure of that approach does not at all show that so-called communal discernment and consensus are a better and effective way to cooperate in pursuit of a common good.

Moreover, the idea that individuals’ rights and the common good are always in tension is a mistake that follows from ignoring much of what is really good for individuals. Those who have been freed up for individual apostolates and life alone or in small, consensual settings often become cogs in some other system. The difference is that the other system may not involve any real community at all but be no more than an arrangement in which selfish people give what they must to get what they can. Of course, some have got into individual “ministries” as DREs or parish administrators or the like that allow them to dominate everyone they deal with and answer to nobody.

CIC, c. 670: “An institute must supply the members with all those things which are necessary to achieve the purpose of their vocation, according to the norm of the constitutions.”

Superiors violate their own vow of obedience in a grave way when they fail to do what they can and should to meet members’ real needs for authentic community, protection against others’ wrongdoing, sound liturgy, cooperation in their service to the institute’s apostolate, and so on—all of which are necessary for members to achieve some of the essential elements of their vocation according to the norm of the constitutions. Lax superiors who are overly tolerant have a lot to answer for.

A superior who fails to fulfill his/her obligation to do what he or she can rightly do to protect the common good and the rights of other members against those who gravely and persistently injure them is disobeying in grave matter. In the old days, superiors who failed to stand up to bishops who made illegitimate demands but passed those through to members, who thereby were exploited and injured, failed to obey.

Poverty must be normed by vocation—by what is really necessary to carry out God's will. Sometimes God really does call on people to change their apostolate, to undertake something entirely new in midlife. But in some cases one wonders whether religious are not changing apostolate, undertaking a new career, and so forth for subjective emotional motives that are not integrated with their basic commitment. The fact that one sees an unmet need is not a reason to shift; there always are unmet needs, and many people have gifts that could be put to other uses than in fulfilling God's plan for them.

Similarly, traveling long distances and taking long stretches for gathering information and experiences that may be helpful can be luxurious self-indulgence of a sort unavailable to most lay people. In this respect, some religious behave more like upper middle class and wealthy college students who are constantly trying out new things and finding themselves than like seriously committed people.

For poverty in religious institutes, real ownership by the community and nonownership by individuals is important: it supports members in avoiding sins and frees them from ownership responsibilities, and it contributes to the eschatological sign, where all have plenty and nobody needs to own anything. So, not only how much but who controls matters greatly. Discretionary spending must be very limited, as it would be by spouses who are working poor. Personal possessions also must be very limited, as among members of a good family of working poor. The inconvenience of sharing the use of expensive items, such as automobiles, is appropriate to manifest poverty. And so is conscientiousness in caring for common possessions, rather than treating them as soldiers treat government provided things.

At the same time, community ownership is not enough. The community also needs to avoid luxury and meet real needs modestly—the whole set of saving, caring for, doing with considerations. Communal poverty argues against becoming burdened with property that takes a lot of time and effort to care for, or that will tie the outfit down. For example, owning a big institution like a school or hospital is questionable: when it no longer has the original apostolic pay off, there is reluctance to give it up. Since institutes for active apostolate are not monasteries for immobile contemplation, their houses for administration, formation, and dwelling might better be leased or rented than purchased, to avoid being tied down and to minimize time and effort spent in care. Moreover, the poor cannot own their own dwellings!

If the secular culture floods into the house, one has problems living according to the vows. Having popular magazines and papers, videos, TV with cable, the internet without restriction: a flood of soft porn, which is hardly conducive to modesty; seductive examples of pursuing an agenda; promotion of higher standards with respect to material goods: better wine, better taste in clothing, etc.

Religious individually and as communities need to refuse many gifts: those they cannot rightly use, those from sources that would damage their witness to accept or provide leverage they cannot rightly provide. But also, they should refuse some things they could rightly use and that a layperson might rightly accept but that are substantial and do not meet any real need. For example, if a religious house being redecorated is offered free carpeting by a Catholic dealer who says they can pick out whatever they want, they should not start from the

top. Rather, they should look for something suitable and serviceable. If offered an automobile by a dealer, same idea. If an individual religious is guest at a four star restaurant of a very wealthy friend, he/she should not start at the top of the menu and order expensive wine but choose something in the lower price range.

Hurrying to get the most or the best or what one prefers of what is available in a community is childish and hardly in accord with the spirit of poverty. When serving others, however, trying to make sure each gets what he or she would prefer is appropriate—dad with the chicken.

Not having a place to live of one's own is psychologically hard for any adult. So, the tendency of religious in recent years to move into apartments as individuals or pairs is understandable. Sometimes, legitimate apostolate requires that, of course. But when not, it impinges severely on community and on poverty. Few poor people anywhere in history have had better living space than most religious houses in first-world countries provided their members pre-Vatican II. Men working at some occupations—e.g., seafarers; the military—mostly had to do with little space and privacy. Jesus had nowhere to lay his head. So, the psychological need for space and privacy should not dictate living arrangements.

Common ownership of property is an element of community in many forms of religious life. It often was thought to be mandated by the Gospel and exemplified in the NT community described in Acts. Early communal forms of religious life (Pachomius, Basil, Jerome, Augustine) often took as a model the primitive Christian community described in Acts 2.42–47, 4.32–35; that community was formed by the apostles' teaching, shared in the "breaking of the bread" (presumably the Eucharist), prayed regularly, and lived together and shared common property so that everyone's needs were met.

Where common ownership is part of a charism, it really needs to be carried out in a significant way. But what that is needs to be thought through. In families where all is shared, some things are there for all to use (and even use up) as needed. Others, everyone has to clear to make sure no one will be inconvenienced or has a better claim. Members have very small amounts for discretionary spending. No major investment or purchase can be made without discussion and authoritative decision.

Lozano, *Discipleship*, 175–80, describes various forms of poverty from the earliest times through the mendicant orders to modern times. In many cases, actual poverty and solidarity with the poor were required; in communal religious life, common property often was an element of community; in some cases, poverty involved deliberate avoidance of providing for future contingencies, so that one would have to trust the Lord; manual labor and begging sometimes were required ways of obtaining sustenance.

Where inheritance is renounced, it ought if possible to be in favor of those in real need. Sometimes individuals from wealthy families renounce in favor of other family members; that is unfitting. First, the poor deserve it; second, renouncing in favor of the poor is a fitting sign of priority of the kingdom, in which there will be no rich and poor, and also tends to reconcile. If renunciation in favor of the institute, that should not be made known to more people than necessary, and should not lead to any special treatment.

Lozano, *Discipleship*, 196–98, the public profession of poverty was accomplished by divesting oneself of one's goods not only for the present but for the future. This renunciation is for the sake of avoiding slavery to riches—avoiding serving mammon—so as to be a slave to God: to be possessed not by one's possessions but by God's word and reign—to serve him and those he wants served. One is refusing to carry on as a member of one's family of origin, or to pursue one's own social advancement and gain.

I think that when this is understood, one must take into account that today capital is in professional training rather than in land etc. Lozano, *Discipleship*, 198:

When poverty is professed by a community, it also means to work for others. Divestment implies a refusal to draw wealth, power, and prestige from one's work. This is very important in our times, especially for societies composed predominantly of a middle class, whose main source of security, and often of power too, is constituted by a higher level of education rather than by acquired wealth. Here we are dealing with an unalienable asset, often acquired with the help of one's religious community. The only way one can renounce this is to turn it to the advantage of others, of the brothers and sisters who form one's evangelical community, of the Church, of those who are deprived of these advantages.

So, there is a danger in being professionally trained that one will act very much like other upwardly mobile people in the society. I think that the only thing that will really stop that is if one's professional training is subordinated by obedience to group apostolate over which the individual has no real control. Also, community practice needs to take care that those with higher education and more prestigious (and perhaps better paying) jobs do not get different and better treatment. If they have first call on or complete control over the use of a car because they need it, it ought to be as economical as possible while still adequate for the purpose, and the same way with other equipment; moreover, these things ought to be available to other members of the community when they are not using them.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 87, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XVII, deals with the relationship between the three vows and original sin:

> The decision to follow the counsels, far from involving an impoverishment of truly human values, leads instead to their transformation. The evangelical counsels should not be considered as a denial of the values inherent in sexuality, in the legitimate desire to possess material goods or to make decisions for oneself. Insofar as these inclinations are based on nature, they are good in themselves. Human beings, however, weakened as they are by original sin, run the risk of acting on them in a way which transgresses the moral norms. The profession of chastity, poverty and obedience is a warning not to underestimate the wound of original sin and, while affirming the value of created goods, it relativizes them by pointing to God as the absolute good. Thus, while those who follow the evangelical counsels seek holiness for themselves, they propose, so to speak, a spiritual "therapy" for humanity, because they reject the idolatry of anything created and in a certain way they make visible the living God.

The point is that this radical approach to nonreligious goods provides a model of life that challenges moral compromise with the flesh, the world, and the devil.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 88, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XVII, deals with "The challenge of consecrated chastity," which applies equally to the cleric's celibacy:

> 88. The first challenge is that of a hedonistic culture which separates sexuality from all objective moral norms, often treating it as a mere diversion and a consumer good and, with the complicity of the means of social communication, justifying a kind of idolatry of the sexual instinct. The consequences of this are before everyone's eyes: transgressions of every kind, with resulting psychic and moral suffering on the part of individuals and families. The reply of the consecrated life is above all in the joyful living of perfect chastity, as a witness to the power of God's love manifested in the weakness of the human condition. The consecrated person attests that what many have believed impossible becomes, with the Lord's grace, possible and truly liberating. Yes, in Christ it is possible to love God with all one's heart, putting him above every other love, and thus to love every creature with the freedom of God! This testimony is more necessary than ever today, precisely because it is so little understood by our world. It is offered to everyone—young people, engaged couples, husbands and wives and Christian families—in order to show that the power of God's love can accomplish great things precisely within the context of human love. It is a witness which also meets a growing need for interior honesty in human relationships.

"Idolatry of the sexual instinct" is an apt description of what those who rely on dissent are giving in to. And the main argument is that one simply cannot be chaste. So, the model of chastity/celibacy for the kingdom's sake genuinely lived is very important.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 89–90, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XVII, deals with poverty:

> 89. Another challenge today is that of a materialism which craves possessions, heedless of the needs and sufferings of the weakest, and lacking any concern for the balance of natural resources. The reply of the consecrated life is found in the profession of evangelical poverty, which can be lived in different ways and is often expressed in an active involvement in the promotion of solidarity and charity.
>
> 90. Even before being a service on behalf of the poor, evangelical poverty is a value in itself, since it recalls the first of the Beatitudes in the imitation of the poor Christ. [note omitted] Its primary meaning, in fact, is to attest that God is the true wealth of the human heart. Precisely for this reason evangelical poverty forcefully challenges the idolatry of money, making a prophetic appeal as it were to society, which in so many parts of the developed world risks losing the sense of proportion and the very meaning of things. Thus, today more than in other ages, the call of evangelical poverty is being felt also among those who are aware of the scarcity of

> the planet's resources and who invoke respect for and the conservation of creation by reducing consumption, by living more simply and by placing a necessary brake on their own desires.

This does not get out as clearly the effective witness to the relativity of all means and resources, and their right ordering by love of God and neighbor.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 91, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XVII, deals with "The challenge of freedom in obedience":

> 91. The third challenge comes from those notions of freedom which separate this fundamental human good from its essential relationship to the truth and to moral norms. [note: 227. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (6 Aug. 1993), 31–35: *AAS* 85 (1993) 1158–62.] In effect, the promotion of freedom is a genuine value, closely connected with respect for the human person. But who does not see the aberrant consequences of injustice and even violence, in the life of individuals and of peoples, to which the distorted use of freedom leads?
>
> An effective response to this situation is the obedience which marks the consecrated life. In an especially vigorous way this obedience reproposes the obedience of Christ to the Father and, taking this mystery as its point of departure, testifies that there is no contradiction between obedience and freedom. Indeed, the Son's attitude discloses the mystery of human freedom as the path of obedience to the Father's will and the mystery of obedience as the path to the gradual conquest of true freedom. It is precisely this mystery which consecrated persons wish to acknowledge by this particular vow. By obedience they intend to show their awareness of being children of the Father, as a result of which they wish to take the Father's will as their daily bread (cf. Jn. 4:34), as their rock, their joy, their shield and their fortress (cf. Ps. 18:2). Thus they show that they are growing in the full truth about themselves, remaining in touch with the source of their existence and therefore offering this most consoling message: "The lovers of your law have great peace; they never stumble" (Ps. 118:165).

This unfortunately involves confusion about freedom. The sort of freedom that is problematic is freedom to do as one pleases, and that freedom is incompatible with obedience. In reality, the promotion of freedom is not per se a genuine good. The promotion of freedom from unjust constraints and from conditions that impede the pursuit of authentic human goods is good. Freedom of choice is an instrumental good, which is used badly when people sin; what deserves respect are people's upright choices. The idol to which obedience corresponds is not normless freedom but individualistic self-realization. Obedience bears witness to the common good: that fulfillment is in communio with others realized by and in cooperation.

Also on consecrated life and the vows: John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 92, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XVII:

> 92. This testimony of consecration takes on special meaning in religious life because of the community dimension which marks it. The fraternal life is the

> privileged place in which to discern and accept God's will, and to walk together with one mind and heart. Obedience, enlivened by charity, unites the members of an Institute in the same witness and the same mission, while respecting the diversity of gifts and individual personalities. In community life which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, each individual engages in a fruitful dialogue with the others in order to discover the Father's will. At the same time, together they recognize in the one who presides an expression of the fatherhood of God and the exercise of authority received from God, at the service of discernment and communion. [note omitted]
>
> Life in community is thus the particular sign, before the Church and society, of the bond which comes from the same call and the common desire—notwithstanding differences of race and origin, language and culture—to be obedient to that call. Contrary to the spirit of discord and division, authority and obedience shine like a sign of that unique fatherhood which comes from God, of the brotherhood born of the Spirit, of the interior freedom of those who put their trust in God, despite the human limitations of those who represent him. Through this obedience, which some people make their rule of life, the happiness promised by Jesus to "those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk. 11:28) is experienced and proclaimed for the good of all. Moreover, those who obey have the guarantee of truly taking part in the mission, of following the Lord and not pursuing their own desires or wishes. In this way we can know that we are guided by the Spirit of the Lord and sustained even in the midst of great hardships by his steadfast hand (cf. Acts 20:22–23).

This treatment, though even it is somewhat confused, is far more relevant and helpful than #91, which involves confusions about freedom.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Starting Afresh from Christ," 14, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 26 June 2002, IV:

> A personal and confident participation in the community's life and mission is required of all its members. Even if, in the end, according to proper law, it is the task of authority to make choices and decisions, daily living in community requires a participation which allows for the exercise of dialogue and discernment. Each individual, then, and the whole community can work out their own life with the plan of God, together carrying out God's will. [note omitted]

This strongly supports the view that, while superiors rightly make decisions, deliberation ought to be communal.

In some cases in the past, women's communities were in fact governed by priests or bishops in such a way that their internal structure was distorted. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, *Verbi sponsa: Instruction on the Contemplative Life and on the Enclosure of Nuns* (13 May 1999), 26, deals with one residue of such a situation:

> In the new vision and perspective in which the Church today envisages the role and presence of women, it is necessary to overcome, wherever it may still exist, that

> form of juridical supervision by Orders of men and regular Superiors which de facto limits the autonomy of monasteries of nuns.
>
> Men Superiors are to carry out their task in a spirit of cooperation and humble service, without creating improper submission to themselves, in order that the nuns may make decisions regarding all that concerns their religious life with freedom of spirit and a sense of responsibility.

The same norms should be applied to other situations—e.g., where diocesan bishops have de facto assumed responsibilities proper to the communities own superiors for making decisions—for example, about sisters' assignments.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 47–49:

> 47. It is generally agreed that the evolution of recent years has contributed to the maturity of fraternal life in communities. In many communities, the climate of life in common has improved: there is more space for the active participation of all; there has been a move from a common life based too much on observance to a life that is more attentive to individual needs, that is better attended to on the human level. The effort to build communities that are less formalistic, less authoritarian, more fraternal and participatory, is generally considered to be one of the more visible fruits of these recent years.
>
> 48. These positive developments in some places have risked being compromised by a distrust of authority.
>
> The desire for deeper communion among the members and an understandable reaction against structures felt as being too rigid and authoritarian have contributed to a lack of understanding of the full scope of the role of authority; indeed, some consider it to be altogether unnecessary to community life, and others have reduced it to the simple role of co-ordinating the initiatives of the members. As a result, a certain number of communities have been led to live with no one in charge while other communities make all decisions collegially. All of this brings with it the danger, not merely hypothetical, of a complete breakdown of community life; it tends to give priority to individual paths, and simultaneously to blur the function of authority—a function which is both necessary for the growth of fraternal life in community and for the spiritual journey of the consecrated person.
>
> However, the results of these experiments are gradually leading back to the rediscovery of the need for and the role of personal authority, in continuity with the entire tradition of religious life.
>
> If the widespread democratic climate has encouraged the growth of co-responsibility and of participation by all in the decision-making process, even within the religious community, nevertheless, we must not forget that fraternity is not only a fruit of human effort but also and above all a gift of God. It is a gift that comes from obedience to the Word of God, and also, in religious life, to the authority who

> reminds us of that Word and relates it to specific situations, in accordance with the spirit of the institute.
>
> "But we beseech you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work" (1 Thes. 5:12–13). The Christian community is not an anonymous collective, but it is endowed, from the beginning, with leaders, for whom the Apostle asks consideration, respect and charity.
>
> In religious communities, authority, to whom attention and respect are due also by reason of the obedience professed, is placed at the service of the fraternity, of its being built up, of the achievement of its spiritual and apostolic goals.
>
> 49. The recent renewal has helped to redesign authority with the intention of linking it once again more closely to its evangelical roots and thus to the service of the spiritual progress of each one and the building up of fraternal life in community.
>
> Every community has a mission of its own to accomplish. Persons in authority thus serve a community which must accomplish a specific mission, received and defined by the institute and by its charism. Since there is a variety of missions, there must also be a variety of kinds of communities, and thus a variety of ways of exercising authority. It is for this reason that religious life has within it various ways of conceiving and exercising authority, defined by proper law.
>
> Authority is, evangelically, always service.

On the one hand, they wish to accept what is beneficial in the changed attitude toward authority in religious institutes. On the other, they wish to exclude excesses that negate authority and/or its proper and firm exercise. Article 50 goes on to deal with what it calls "aspects of authority," and the third and final aspect it deals with is:

> c) Authority capable of making final decisions and assuring their implementation
>
> Community discernment is a rather useful process, even if not easy or automatic, for involving human competence, spiritual wisdom and personal detachment. Where it is practised with faith and seriousness, it can provide superiors with optimal conditions for making necessary decisions in the best interests of fraternal life and of mission.
>
> When a decision has been made in accordance with the procedures established by proper law, superiors need perseverance and strength to ensure that what has been decided not remain mere words on paper.

Here there is awareness of the appropriateness of input, while at the same time the need to exclude that becoming a mere consideration of individuals' interests. At the same time, common deliberation is no substitute for decision but the basis for it, and it should be made in accord with proper law and then carried out resolutely.

In various situations, obedience is compromised when individuals and groups within an institute or society press for their desires and preferences to be satisfied, with a threat, usually

implicit, that they might leave if superiors do not give them their way. Some superiors negotiate with such individuals and work out a modus vivendi, much as parent do with adolescent children. Various things can lead to such a situation.

1) Sometimes a group of likeminded individuals want to live together and have their own style of community. In some cases, substantial expenditures are required; in many cases, they insist on controlling who they will live with, so that superiors cannot assign anyone to "their house."

2) Sometimes an individual wants to undertake a certain job or pursue a certain degree, and superiors accommodate, even though doing so contributes nothing except (perhaps) money to any common undertaking.

3) Sometimes one or more individuals becomes deeply involved in his/her family of orgin's affairs, some ecclesial movement, or some secular cause, and virtually takes a leave of absence from his/her community to pursue that interest.

In all such cases, radical disobedience is involved, even if the superior goes along. For individuals and groups are violating the commitment they made when they undertook to serve God and the Church in the institute according to its charism. The superior is manipulated into collusion in subverting the constitutions and proper law of the institute.

One of the things that needs to be dealt with is the role of self-deception and rationalization in violating the vows.

A religious provides some service for a wealthy person (perhaps exceptional pastoral care for a dying parent or counseling for a troubled child) who then offers some luxurious gift that either must be rejected or personally enjoyed (a meal in a gourmet restaurant or a luxury cruise). Accepting might be okay for a lay person—though the experience might involve occasions of sin it would be prudent to avoid. Religious and their superiors may rationalize: must not offend the one offering this gift. Refusing it rightly, as poverty requires, will bear strong witness to the offerer.

A religious might have some legitimate use for experiences and information that can be got only through popular forms of entertainment or media of communication that also will or may involve occasions of sins (at least of thought) against chastity. It cannot be assumed that taking the risk is legitimate; that is a judgment that requires prudence. The safeguards of oversight by a superior or spiritual director might be appropriate. The legitimate benefit might not be essential or may be obtained in some other way.

Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio* (On the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council), 27, explains how obedience is compatible with mature freedom of self-determination:

> Christian obedience is unconditional submission to the will of God. But your obedience is more strict because you have made it the object of a special giving, and the range of your choices is limited by your commitment. It is a full act of your freedom that is at the origin of your present position: your duty is to make that act

> ever more vital, both by your own initiative and by the cordial assent you give the directives of your superiors. Thus it is that the Council includes among the benefits of the religious state "liberty strengthened by obedience,"(42)[LG 43] and stresses that such obedience "does not diminish the dignity of the human person but rather leads it to maturity through that enlarged freedom which belongs to the sons of God."(43) [PC 14]

Sometimes religious called upon to obey complain that they are being dehumanized, reduced to subservience, treated as children, and the like. The key is that one is bound by obedience only because one has committed oneself; faithfulness to one's own commitment requires doing what will preserve and deepen it, and also carrying it out in the particular acts that fall within its domain.

Congregation for Bishops and Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church*, 13, under the heading "Service characteristic of religious authority" outlines the responsibilities of religious superiors:

> 13. Superiors fulfill their duty of service and leadership within the religious institute in conformity with its distinctive character. Their authority proceeds from the Spirit of the Lord through the sacred hierarchy, which has granted canonical erection to the institute and authentically approved its specific mission.
>
> Considering then the fact that the prophetic, priestly and royal condition is common to all the People of God (cf. LG 9, 10, 34, 35, 36), it seems useful to outline the competency of religious authority, paralleling it by analogy to the threefold function of pastoral ministry, namely, of teaching, sanctifying and governing without, however, confusing one authority with the other or equating them.
>
> a) Regarding the office of teaching, religious superiors have the competency and authority of spiritual directors in relation to the evangelical purpose of their institute. In this context, therefore, they must carry on a veritable spiritual direction of the entire Congregation and of its individual communities. They should accomplish this in sincere harmony with the authentic magisterium of the hierarchy, realizing that they must carry out a mandate of grave responsibility in the evangelical plan of the Founder.
>
> b) As to the office of sanctifying, the superiors have also a special competency and responsibility, albeit with differentiated duties. They must foster perfection in what concerns the increase of the life of charity according to the end of the institute, both as to formation, initial and ongoing, of the members and as to communal and personal fidelity in the practice of the evangelical counsels according to the Rule. This duty, if it is rightly accomplished, is considered by the Roman Pontiff and the bishops a valuable help in the fulfillment of their fundamental ministry of sanctification.

> c) As to the office of governing, superiors must render the service of ordering the life of the community, of organizing the members of the institute, of caring for and developing its particular mission and seeing to it that it be efficiently inserted into ecclesial activity under the leadership of the bishops.
>
> Institutes then have an internal organization all their own (see CD 35.3) which has its proper field of competency and a right to autonomy even though in the Church this autonomy can never become independence (see CD 35.3–4). The correct degree of such autonomy and the concrete determination of competency are contained in common law and in the Rules or Constitutions of each institute.

I think that the claim that the authority of superiors is mediated by the hierarchy is not strictly correct. The hierarchy can and must discern and recognize charisms, and so there are no canonical superiors without the action of the hierarchy. But the Spirit gives the charism independently of the hierarchy and individuals discern and commit themselves to it independently of the hierarchy, and it is these two things that generate superiors and their authority. Only the juridical effects within the Church of the superiors' acts depend on the hierarchy for their "authority."

The proper teaching role of superiors as such seems to me to be specified by the institute's charism. While they may more generally evangelize and catechize their subjects, so may the latter evangelize and catechize one another, much as members of families do. I am not at all sure that this teaching role is properly described as spiritual direction of the communities. So far as sanctification is concerned, that too is specified by the charism, and so is not per se a contribution to the bishops' fulfillment of their proper responsibilities in this regard. Obviously, insofar as religious superiors with respect to their own members or with respect to outsiders do engage in activities that pertain to the pastoral responsibilities of the bishop, the bishop rightly oversees those activities.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life*, 14:

> 14. Indispensable personal and community asceticism.
>
> A generous asceticism is constantly needed for daily "conversion to the Gospel" (cf. Const. Poenitemini, II–III, 1, c; Mk 1:15). It would, therefore, seem indispensable for the contemplative dimension of every religious life also.
>
> For this reason, religious communities must be manifestly praying and also penitential communities in the Church (cf. ES II, 22), remembering the conciliar guideline that penance "must not be internal and personal only, but also external and social" (SC 110).
>
> In this way, religious will also bear witness to the "mysterious relationship between renunciation and joy, between sacrifice and greatness of heart, between discipline and spiritual liberty" (ET 29). In particular, growth in the contemplative dimension certainly cannot be reconciled, for example, with indiscriminate and sometimes imprudent use of the mass media; with an exaggerated and extroverted activism; with an atmosphere of dissipation which contradicts the deepest

> expectations of every religious life. “The search for intimacy with God involves the truly vital need of silence embracing the whole being, both for those who must find God in the midst of noise and confusion and for those who are dedicated to the contemplative life” (ET 46).
>
> “To achieve this, their entire being has need of silence, and this requires zones of effective silence and a personal discipline to favor contact with God” (Pope’s message to the Plenaria, n. 2).
>
> All these means will be more effective and fruitful if they are accompanied by the personal and communal practice of evangelical discernment; by a periodic and serious evaluation of activities; by the uninterrupted practice of an ever more profound interpretation of the sacramental significance of everyday realities (events, persons, things), with the explicit aim of never allowing the activities of religious to be downgraded from their ecclesial level to a mere horizontal and temporal one.

In many cases, communities have ignored requirements of their own particular law for collective practices of penance and self-denial. Though superiors have gone along with such disobedience, it remains disobedience. The final paragraph is calling for communal examination of conscience about practices that may fall short.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life,* 16, says that the superiors of communities ought to be primarily spiritual fathers or mothers, nurturing the spiritual lives of everyone in the community:

> This service of unifying animation demands, then, that superiors not be strangers to or indifferent to pastoral needs; neither should they be absorbed merely in administrative duties. Rather they should feel and in fact be accepted primarily as guides for the spiritual and pastoral growth of each individual and of the whole community.

Superiors who don’t fulfill that responsibility are failing to keep their own vow of obedience, which requires them to exercise appropriately the authority with which they have been entrusted.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church’s Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate,* 31, under the heading “5. Asceticism”:

> 31. The discipline and silence necessary for prayer are a reminder that consecration by the vows of religion requires a certain asceticism of life “embracing the whole being” (ET 46). Christ’s response of poverty, love, and obedience led him to the solitude of the desert, the pain of contradiction, and the abandonment of the cross. The consecration of religious enters into this way of his; it cannot be a reflection of his consecration if its expression in life does not hold an element of self-denial. Religious life itself is an ongoing, public, visible expression of Christian conversion. It calls for the leaving of all things and the taking up of one’s cross to follow Christ throughout the whole of life. This involves the asceticism necessary to live in poverty of spirit and of fact; to love as Christ loves; to give up one’s own will

> for God's sake to the will of another who represents him, however imperfectly. It 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 their profession. It is true that much of today's penance is to be found in the circumstances of life and should be accepted there. However, unless religious build into their lives "a joyful, well-balanced austerity" (ET 30) and deliberately determined renunciations, they risk losing the spiritual freedom necessary for living the counsels. Indeed, without such austerity and renunciation, their consecration itself can be affected. This is because there cannot be a public witness to Christ poor, chaste, and obedient without asceticism. Moreover, by professing the counsels by vows, religious undertake to do all that is necessary to deepen and foster what they have vowed, and this means a free choice of the cross, that it may be "as it was for Christ, proof of the greatest love" (ET 29).

The argument is:
(1) asceticism is necessary for prayer (not a strong argument);
(2) Jesus was ascetical, so self-denial is necessary to be like him (that's true, but the self-denial in question may not be what is generally called "asceticism");
(3) consecration "calls for the self-giving without which it is not possible to live either a good community life or a fruitful mission" (true and very important, but again maybe not what is usually called "asceticism");
(4) without "deliberately determined renunciations," religious risk losing the spiritual freedom to live the counsels (religious need to deal with occasions of sins against the counsels, but it's not clear that other renunciations are helpful);
(5) "there cannot be a public witness to Christ poor, chaste, and obedient without asceticism" (true if they mean the asceticism involved in faithfully and consistently being poor, chaste, and obedient, but otherwise not);
(6) the final, question-begging argument is that ascetical practices are a free choice of the cross that deepen and foster what religious have vowed.

What sort of case can be made for ascetical practices that are chosen independently of some other moral motive? (1) To develop resistance to temptations (e.g., to masturbate), people can choose to thwart within prudent limits other natural urges that could be satisfied sinlessly (e.g., by fasting on some days); (2) to do communal penance, leaders can prescribe some practice that most people can rightly and fairly easily do.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, 34–35, under the heading "6. Public Witness":

> 34. The totality of religious consecration requires that the witness to the Gospel be given publicly by the whole of life. Values, attitudes and life-style attest forcefully to the place of Christ in one's life. The visibility of this witness involves the forgoing of standards of comfort and convenience that would otherwise be legitimate. It requires

> a restraint on forms of relaxation and entertainment (cf. ES 1, §2; CD 33–35). To ensure this public witness, religious willingly accept a pattern of life that is not permissive but largely laid down for them. They wear a religious garb that distinguishes them as consecrated persons, and they have a place of residence which is properly established by their institute in accordance with common law and their own constitutions. Such matters as travel and social contacts are in accord with the spirit and character of their institute and with religious obedience. These provisions alone do not ensure the desired public witness to the joy, hope, and love of Jesus Christ, but they offer important means to it, and it is certain that religious witness is not given without them.

Here we have a plausible argument. The important thing is not to simply load in everything that was common in the past, but to make sure every item in the prescribed pattern of life really contributes to witness by both affirming authentic human goods and differentiating members from the secular world in which they live.

> 35. The way of working, too, is important for public witness. What is done and how it is done should both proclaim Christ from the poverty of someone who is not seeking his or her own fulfillment and satisfaction. In our age powerlessness is one of the great poverties. The religious accepts to share this intimately by the generosity of his or her obedience, thereby becoming one with the poor and powerless in a particular way, as Christ was in his Passion. Such a person knows what it is to stand in need before God, to love as Jesus does, and to work at God's plan on God's terms. Moreover, in fidelity to religious consecration, he or she lives the institute's concrete provisions for promoting these attitudes.

An upwardly mobile careerist, carrying out his or her agenda from success to success, hardly is likely to serve as a good sign. So, it is not just a matter of giving up much of one's liberty to do as one pleases, but giving up status that makes for effective witness.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate,* "9. Government" (49–52), deals with the sources, structures, and exercise of authority in apostolic religious institutes:

> 49. The government of apostolic religious, like all the other aspects of their life, is based on faith and on the reality of their consecrated response to God in community and mission. These women and men are members of religious institutes whose structures reflect the Christian hierarchy of which the head is Christ himself. They have chosen to live vowed obedience as a value in life. They therefore require a form of government that expresses these values and a particular form of religious authority. Such authority, which is particular to religious institutes, does not derive from the members themselves. It is conferred by the Church at the time of establishing each institute and by the approving of its constitutions. It is an authority invested in superiors for the duration of their term of service at general, intermediate, or local level. It is to be exercised according to the norms of common and proper law

> in a spirit of service, reverencing the human person of each religious as a child of God (cf. PC 14), fostering cooperation for the good of the institute, but always preserving the superior's final right of discerning and deciding what is to be done (cf. ET 25). Strictly speaking, this religious authority is not shared. It may be delegated according to the constitutions for particular purposes but it is normally ex officio and is invested in the person of the superior.

The notion that authority does not derive from the members, though Christians are not subject to it except by freely committing themselves by a vow to obedience, but is conferred by the Church when the hierarchy approves the institute, is bizzare. This is a juridicist rather than moral notion of authority.

> 50. Superiors do not exercise authority in isolation, however. Each must have the assistance of a council whose members collaborate with the superior according to norms that are constitutionally established. Councilors do not exercise authority by right of office as superiors do, but they collaborate with the superior and help by their consultative or deliberative vote according to ecclesiastical law and the constitutions of the institute.

The notion that the authority is not shared though superiors often cannot legally act without the advice and sometimes without the consent of a council, and though the chapter in session exercises supreme authority is absurd; it works on the model of the monarchical pope and in doing so reduces authority to primacy.

> 51. Supreme authority in an institute is also exercised, though in an extraordinary manner, by a general chapter while it is in session. This again is according to the constitutions, which should designate the authority of the chapter in such a way that it is quite distinct from that of the superior general. The general chapter is essentially an ad hoc body. It is composed of ex officio members and elected delegates who ordinarily meet together for one chapter only. As a sign of unity in charity, the celebration of a general chapter should be a moment of grace and of the action of the Holy Spirit in an institute. It should be a joyful, paschal, and ecclesial experience which benefits the institute itself and also the whole Church. The general chapter is meant to renew and protect the spiritual patrimony of the institute as well as elect the highest superior and councilors, conduct major matters of business, and issue norms for the whole institute. Chapters are of such importance that the proper law of the institute has to determine accurately what pertains to them whether at general or at other levels: that is, their nature, authority, composition, mode of proceeding and frequency of celebration.

And it is worth noticing that, inasmuch as general chapters can operate when there is no superior, so as to elect one after one has died, they are unlike ecumenical councils which are not similarly independent of the pope. Moreover, within the limits of the constitutions, general chapters can make particular law that binds superiors. So, it is clear that, though ad hoc, general chapters really exercise supreme authority in religious institutes.

> 52. Conciliar and post-conciliar teaching insists on certain principles with regard to religious government which have given rise to considerable changes during the past twenty years. It laid down clearly the basic need for effective, personal, religious authority at all levels, general, intermediate, and local, if religious obedience is to be lived (cf. PC 14; ET 25). It further underlined the need for consultation, for appropriate involvement of the members in the government of the institute, for shared responsibility, and for subsidiarity (cf. ES II, 18). Most of these principles have by now found their way into revised constitutions. It is important that they be so understood and implemented as to fulfill the purpose of religious government: the building of a united community in Christ in which God is sought and loved before all things, and the mission of Christ is generously accomplished.

What this paragraph says is true, but is not entirely consistent with what precedes it!

In the same document, in the part proposing norms, one finds under "XI. Government" the following:

> §42. It belongs to the competent ecclesiastical authority to constitute stable forms of living by canonical approval (can. 576). To this authority are also reserved aggregations (can. 580) and the approval of constitutions (can. 587.2). Mergers, unions, federations, confederations, suppressions, and the changing of anything already approved by the Holy See, are reserved to that See (can. 582–584).
>
> §43. Authority to govern in religious institutes is invested in superiors who should exercise it according to the norms of common and proper law (can. 617). This authority is received from God through the ministry of the Church (can. 618). The authority of a superior at whatever level is personal and may not be taken over by a group. For a particular time and for a given purpose, it may be delegated to a designated person.

CIC, c. 618 says that superiors' authority (potestas) is received from God through the ministry of the Church. That should not be misunderstood: the charism and each member's vocation is from God, and the ministry of the Church facilitates the members' commitment and faithfulness. It is not as though God gave power to the hierarchy, and religious superiors are simply their helpers.

> §44. Superiors should fulfill their office generously, building with their brothers or sisters a community in Christ in which God is sought and loved before everything. In their role of service, superiors have the particular duty of governing in accordance with the constitutions of their institute and of promoting the holiness of its members. In their person, superiors should be examples of fidelity to the magisterium of the Church and to the law and tradition of their institute. They should also foster the consecrated lives of their religious by their care and correction, their support and their patience (cf. can. 619).

> §45. Conditions for appointment or election, the length of term of office for the various superiors, and the mode of canonical election for the superior general are stated in the constitutions according to common law (can. 623–625).
>
> §46. Superiors must each have their own council, which assists them in fulfilling their responsibility. In addition to cases prescribed in the common law, proper law determines those cases in which the superior must obtain the consent or the advice of the council for validity of action (can. 627.1 and 627.2).
>
> §47. The general chapter should be a true sign of the unity in charity of the institute. It represents the entire institute and when in session exercises supreme authority in accordance with common law and the norms of the constitutions (can. 631). The general chapter is not a permanent body; its composition, frequency, and functions are stated in the constitutions (can. 631.2). A general chapter may not modify its own composition but it may propose modifications for the composition of future chapters. Such modifications require the approval of the competent ecclesiastical authority. The general chapter may modify those elements of proper law which are not subject to the authority of the Church.
>
> §48. Chapters should not be convoked so frequently as to interfere with the good functioning of the ordinary authority of the major superior. The nature, authority, composition, mode of procedure and frequency of meeting of chapters and of similar assemblies of the institute are determined exactly by proper law (can. 632). In practice, the main elements of these should be in the constitutions.

The effort to protect the "good functioning of the ordinary authority of the major superior" from overly frequent chapters obviously is meant to maintain the analogy of governance with papal primacy as it has been exercised.

> §49. Provision for temporal goods (can. 634–640) and their administration as well as norms concerning the separation of members from the institute by transfer, departure, or dismissal (can. 684–704) are also found in the common law of the Church and must be included, even if only in brief, in the constitutions.

This final norm really does not concern governance within the institute.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate,* under III. Identity, has a couple of points worth noting:

> §13. Religious should regard the following of Christ proposed in the Gospel and expressed in the constitutions of their institute as the supreme rule of life (can. 662).
>
> §14. The nature, end, spirit, and character of the institute, as established by the founder or foundress and approved by the Church, should be preserved by all, together with the institute's sound traditions (can. 578).
>
> . . .

> §17. By their religious profession, the members of an institute bind themselves to observe the constitutions faithfully and with love, for they recognize in them the way of life approved by the Church for the institute and the authentic expression of its spirit, tradition, and law.

Here are basic norms bearing on obedience. Religious have made a commitment and they ought to be faithful in keeping it. Everyone, including participants in general chapters and superiors, ought always to obey these norms. If those exercising authority do not obey them, their directives will not bring about cooperation for the real common good.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate,* in its norms, includes one on chastity that well-stated: "§19.Discretion should be used in all things that could be dangerous to the chastity of a consecrated person (cf. PC 12; can. 666)."

CIC, c. 666, is concerned only with "the use of means of social communication"—a point that is important but hardly the only one to be made. PC 12 advises religious to "practice mortification and custody of the senses," to "take advantage of those natural helps which favor mental and bodily health," and to remember (superiors especially) "that chastity has stronger safeguards in a community when true fraternal love thrives among its members."

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate,* includes two norms on poverty, of which the first might be useful:

> §20. The evangelical counsel of poverty in imitation of Christ calls for a life poor in fact and in spirit, subject to work and led in frugality and detachment from material possessions. Its profession by vow for the religious involves dependence and limitation in the use and disposition of temporalities according to the norms of the proper law of the institute (can. 600).

This is close to the canon it cites.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate,* includes the following norms under the heading "VI. Obedience":

> §22. The evangelical counsel of obedience, lived in faith, is a loving following of Christ who was obedient unto death.
>
> §23. By their vow of obedience, religious undertake to submit their will to legitimate superiors (can. 601) according to the constitutions. The constitutions themselves state who may give a formal command of obedience and in what circumstances.
>
> §24. Religious institutes are subject to the supreme authority of the Church in a particular manner (can. 590.1). All religious are obliged to obey the Holy Father as their highest superior in virtue of the vow of obedience (can. 590.2).

> §25. Religious may not accept duties and offices outside their own institute without the permission of a lawful superior (can. 671). Like clerics, they may not accept public offices which involve the exercise of civil power (can. 285.3; cf. also can. 672 with the additional canons to which it refers).

§22 is an inadequate description of religious obedience, since it is something more specific than the loving following of Christ, which is possible for every Christian.

§23 does better (though canon 601 says the evangelical counsel of obedience "requires the submission of the will to legitimate superiors"); the norm overlooks the fact that those undertaking the counsel are first submitting their will to the constitutions and particular law. Their commitment is to Jesus and to their fellow members of the institute as a whole, for the sake of the common good to be realized.

§24 is very close to the cited canon, though it uses the expression "Supreme Pontiff." In fact, the counsel implies submission in what pertains to religious life to the legitimate commands of the Church's supreme authority, whether that be exercised by the pope alone or by the collegium including the pope.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes,* 14, speaking of poverty, says: "God loves the whole human family and wishes to bring all together without exclusion.[(43) Cf. GS 32]. For religious it is consequently a kind of poverty not to let themselves be bound within a certain milieu or social class." The point is an important one for some institutes, which definitely have a predeliction for wealthy and upper-middle-class people.

In explaining poverty, I first will have to review the common Christian responsibilities about property pertaining both to justice and mercy. The standard of adequately meeting genuine needs can be satisfied in a variety of ways. If those committed to poverty are to go beyond what they already are bound to, they must systematically settle for less than they otherwise might legitimately use. Also, within the context of a community, poverty will require that decisions that impact on each individual be made by others. This tying in of poverty with community and obedience not only should help prevent the standard from being gradually softened but free conscientious individuals from worries about their own decisions.
In thinking about what is minimally adequate, one needs to look at what the really poor have to put up with. What would seem adequate to a family of slender means—that is, a family that had enough to get by, but no more, and needed to make real sacrifices?

4–E Responsibilities with respect to apostolate; differentiation from lay apostolate

Should members of religious institutes collaborate more with lay people instead of simply trying to serve them? If collaboration means working together in apostolates, that depends on the institute's capacities and the needs of the lay people; the issue is like any other vocational decision. Sometimes collaboration is good; sometimes it compromises the apostolic service or is involvement in something that would better be left to lay people. To collaborate with lay people should not be a principle, since often it is not good; it disperses resources that should be used to fulfill the basic mission of the institute. But if collaboration means helping those served to become active for their own good rather than rendering them passive, there should be collaboration, since the involvement of those served is better for them, at least by realizing their abilities. This is a case of providing a boat and teaching fishing rather than just giving hungry people some fish. The paradigm is God: he gets the most out of us not for himself or to get results efficiently but because it is better for us: he gives us more by getting us to do more. So, even if it is less efficient, those helped should be helped to help themselves; for example, a handicapped boy perhaps could be cared for more cheaply for life than trained and helped to help himself, but the latter is better, because the boy will realize his limited capacities, whereas otherwise he will simply exist—if not be killed.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 25, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, IV, speaks of the "missionary nature"—that is, the responsibility to provide witness—of consecrated life:

> The first missionary duty of consecrated persons is to themselves, and they fulfill it by opening their hearts to the promptings of the Spirit of Christ. Their witness helps the whole Church to remember that the most important thing is to serve God freely, through Christ's grace which is communicated to believers through the gift of the Spirit. Thus they proclaim to the world the peace which comes from the Father, the dedication witnessed to by the Son and the joy which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
>
> Consecrated persons will be missionaries above all by continually deepening their awareness 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 which could hinder the totality of their response. In this way they will become true signs of Christ in the world. Their lifestyle too must clearly show the ideal which they profess and thus present itself as a living sign of God and as an eloquent, albeit often silent, proclamation of the Gospel.
>
> The Church must always seek to make her presence visible in everyday life, especially in contemporary culture, which is often very secularized and yet sensitive to the language of signs. In this regard the Church has a right to expect a significant contribution from consecrated persons, called as they are in every situation to bear clear witness that they belong to Christ.

For any apostolate to be genuine, it must provide witness, and so must be shaped by this "missionary" concern.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 26, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, V, teaches that apostolate must be animated and shaped by hope for heaven:

> "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6:21). The unique treasure of the Kingdom gives rise to desire, anticipation, commitment and witness. In the early Church, the expectation of the Lord's coming was lived in a particularly intense way. With the passing of the centuries, the Church has not ceased to foster this attitude of hope: she has continued to invite the faithful to look to the salvation which is waiting to be revealed, "for the form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31; cf. 1 Pt. 1:3–6). (LG 42)
>
> Immersed in the things of the Lord, the consecrated person remembers that "here we have no lasting city" (Heb. 13:14), for "our commonwealth is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). The one thing necessary is to seek God's "Kingdom and his righteousness" (Mt. 6:33), with unceasing prayer for the Lord's coming.

This orientation toward the coming kingdom must shape the life and mission—that is, every apostolate—of those who have undertaken consecrated life.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 27, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, V:

> 27. "Come, Lord Jesus!"(Rv. 22:20). This expectation is anything but passive: although directed toward the future Kingdom, it expresses itself in work and mission, that the Kingdom may become present here and now through the spirit of the Beatitudes, a spirit capable of giving rise in human society to effective aspirations for justice, peace, solidarity and forgiveness.
>
> This is clearly shown by the history of the consecrated life, which has always borne abundant fruit even for this world. By their charisms, consecrated persons become signs of the Spirit pointing to a new future enlightened by faith and by Christian hope. Eschatological expectation becomes mission, so that the Kingdom may become ever more fully established here and now. The prayer "Come, Lord Jesus!" is accompanied by another: "Thy Kingdom come!" (Mt. 6:10).

Any so-called apostolate that is not explicitly and clearly oriented toward the kingdom therefore is inappropriate for those in consecrated life. (There is, however, the problem that members of secular institutes consecrate themselves for lay apostolate. JP II is not thinking about them!)

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 51, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, IX, speaks of a general apostolic responsibility of communities of consecrated life to be exemplars of communio:

> 51. The Church entrusts to communities of consecrated life the particular task of spreading the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries, by opening or continuing a dialogue in charity, especially where today's world is torn apart by ethnic hatred or senseless violence. Placed as they are within the world's different societies—

> societies frequently marked by conflicting passions and interests, seeking unity but uncertain about the ways to attain it—communities of consecrated life, where persons of different ages, languages and cultures meet as brothers and sisters, are signs that dialogue is always possible and that communion can bring differences into harmony.
>
> . . .
>
> In an age characterized by the globalization of problems and the return of the idols of nationalism, international Institutes especially are called to uphold and to bear witness to the sense of communion between peoples, races and cultures. In a climate of fraternity, an openness to the global dimension of problems will not detract from the richness of particular gifts nor will the affirmation of a particular gift conflict with other gifts or with unity itself. International institutes can achieve this effectively inasmuch as they have to face in a creative way the challenge of inculturation, while at the same time preserving their identity.

The first paragraph focuses on the notion of opening or continuing a dialogue in charity. What he has in mind is something analogous to ecumenism, to be carried on to overcome divisions within institutes, the Church, and amongst various groups in society. (I omit the second paragraph.) The third paragraph seems to leave dialogue behind and to focus more on international institutes trying to be exemplary and even pioneering in bridging gaps among nations and cultures.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 54–55, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, X, talks of the laity sharing the charism of institutes and engaging in pastoral cooperation; he regards this as potentially mutually beneficial:

> 54. In recent years, one of the fruits of the teaching on the Church as communion has been the growing awareness that her members can and must unite their efforts, with a view to cooperation and exchange of gifts, in order to participate more effectively in the Church's mission. This helps to give a clearer and more complete picture of the Church herself, while rendering more effective the response to the great challenges of our time, thanks to the combined contributions of the various gifts.
>
> Contacts with the laity, in the case of monastic or contemplative institutes, take the form of a relationship that is primarily spiritual, while for institutes involved in works of the apostolate these contacts also translate into forms of pastoral cooperation. Members of secular institutes, lay or clerical, relate to other members of the faithful at the level of everyday life. Today, often as a result of new situations, many institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these institutes. We may say that, in the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the secular or third orders, a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.
>
> **For a renewed spiritual and apostolic dynamism**

> 55. These new experiences of communion and cooperation should be encouraged for various reasons. They can in fact give rise to the spread of a fruitful spirituality beyond the confines of the institute, which will then be in a position to ensure the continuity in the Church of the services typical of the institute. Another positive consequence will be to facilitate more intense cooperation between consecrated persons and the laity in view of the institute's mission. Moved by the examples of holiness of the consecrated members, lay men and women will experience at first hand the spirit of the evangelical counsels, and will thus be encouraged to live and bear witness to the spirit of the Beatitudes, in order to transform the world according to God's design.(125)
>
> The participation of the laity often brings unexpected and rich insights into certain aspects of the charism, leading to a more spiritual interpretation of it and helping to draw from it directions for new activities in the apostolate. In whatever activity or ministry they are involved, consecrated persons should remember that before all else they must be expert guides in the spiritual life, and in this perspective they should cultivate "the most precious gift: the spirit."(126) For their part, the laity should offer religious families the invaluable contribution of their "being in the world" and their specific service.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 56, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, X, deals (after another subject) with consecrated persons' involvement in lay apostolates and primarily law ecclesial movements:

> Consecrated persons, sent by their Superiors and remaining subject to them, can take part in specific forms of cooperation in lay initiatives, particularly in organizations and institutions which work with those on the margins of society and which have the purpose of alleviating human suffering. Such collaboration, if prompted and sustained by a clear and strong Christian identity and respectful of the particular character of the consecrated life, can make the radiant power of the Gospel shine forth brightly even in the darkest situations of human life.
>
> In recent years many consecrated persons have become members of one or other of the ecclesial movements which have spread in our time. From these experiences, those involved usually draw benefit, especially in the area of spiritual renewal. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that in certain cases this involvement causes uneasiness and disorientation at the personal or community level, especially when these experiences come into conflict with the demands of the common life or of the Institute's spirituality. It is therefore necessary to take care that membership in these ecclesial movements does not endanger the charism or discipline of the Institute of origin, [note omitted] and that all is done with the permission of Superiors and with the full intention of accepting their decisions.

The issue about such involvment is that it is likely to compromise an Institute's commitment to a common apostolate. Members in fact are likely to become absorbed either in lay

apostolate or in pastoral service to members of a movement not especially shaped by the charism of their institute.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 73, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XIV, deals with signs of the times and consecrated life and apostolate:

> 73. The consecrated life has the prophetic task of recalling and serving the divine plan for humanity, as it is announced in Scripture and as it emerges from an attentive reading of the signs of God's providential action in history. This is the plan for the salvation and reconciliation of humanity (cf. Col. 2:20–22). To carry out this service appropriately, consecrated persons must have a profound experience of God and be aware of the challenges of their time, understanding the profound theological meaning of these challenges through a discernment made with the help of the Spirit. In fact, it is often through historical events that we discern God's hidden call to work according to his plan by active and effective involvement in the events of our time. [note omitted]
>
> Discerning the signs of the times, as the Council affirms, must be done in the light of the Gospel, so as to "respond to the perennial questions which people ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other." [note omitted to GS 4] It is necessary, therefore, to be open to the interior promptings of the Holy Spirit, who invites us to understand in depth the designs of Providence. He calls consecrated men and women to present new answers to the new problems of today's world. These are divine pleas which only souls accustomed to following God's will in everything can assimilate faithfully and then translate courageously into choices which are consistent with the original charism and which correspond to the demands of the concrete historical situation.
>
> Faced with the many and pressing problems which sometimes seem to compromise or even overwhelm the consecrated life, those called to it cannot fail to feel the commitment to bear in their hearts and in their prayer the entire world's needs, while at the same time they work with zeal in the fields determined by the founding charism. Clearly, their dedication must be guided by supernatural discernment, which distinguishes what is of the Spirit from that which is contrary to him (cf. Gal. 5:16–17, 22; 1 Jn. 4:6). By means of fidelity to the Rules and Constitutions, this discernment safeguards full communion with the Church. [note omitted to LG 12]

This passage deals with the mistake of saying: "We have considered the signs of the times and discerned that we need to take this new departure," when the new departure is inconsistent with what the group has committed itself to, and perhaps even at odds with the Church's teaching. The light of the Gospel is the principle for discerning the signs of the times. The outcome must be choices, consistent with the original charism, that correspond to the real needs of others in the actual situation. One can be concerned about every need and pray for everything, but one must concentrate on fulfilling one's prior commitments in meeting needs—thus, in fields determined by the founding charism.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 74, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XIV, does two very different things under the heading "Ecclesial cooperation and apostolic spirituality." First, he urges dialogue; he wants people in consecrated life not to go off on their own, but to realize they are part of the universal Church, and to function as such. He says: "The challenges of evangelization are such that they cannot be effectively faced without the cooperation both in discernment and action of all the Church's members. It is difficult for individuals to provide a definitive answer; but such an answer can arise from encounter and dialogue." Second, he takes up the question of apostolic spirituality:

> Institutes involved in one or other form of the apostolate must therefore foster a solid spirituality of action, seeing God in all things and all things in God. . . . Jesus himself gave us the perfect example of how we can link communion with the Father to an intensely active life. Without a constant search for this unity, the danger of an interior breakdown, of confusion and discouragement, lurks always near. Today as yesterday the close union between contemplation and action will allow the most difficult missions to be undertaken.

The opening sentence suggests that this follows from what preceded it, but it does not. The idea obviously is to urge that apostolate not degenerate into secular activism. The key is that one does what one does with the right set of reasons and the right emotional motives, but JP II does not get that out here.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 75 (end) and 76, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XIV, makes points about evangelization that ought to shape the apostolate of everyone in consecrated life:

> Today, among the possible works of charity, certainly the one which in a special way shows the world this love "to the end" is the fervent proclamation of Jesus Christ to those who do not yet know him, to those who have forgotten him and to the poor in a preferential way.
>
> **The specific contribution of the consecrated life to evangelization**
>
> 76. The specific contribution of consecrated persons, both men and women, to evangelization is first of all the witness of a life given totally to God and to their brothers and sisters, in imitation of the Savior who, out of love for humanity, made himself a servant. In the work of salvation, in fact, everything comes from sharing in the divine agape. Consecrated persons make visible, in their consecration and total dedication, the loving and saving presence of Christ, the One consecrated by the Father, sent in mission. [note omitted] Allowing themselves to be won over by him (cf. Phil. 3:12), they prepare to become, in a certain way, a prolongation of his humanity. [note omitted] The consecrated life eloquently shows that the more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve him in others, going even to the furthest missionary outposts and facing the greatest dangers. [note omitted]

Evangelization shows love in a special way. Consecrated persons can evangelize just by their witness of life, provided their life really flows from love of God and neighbor. The idea that

works of charity prolong Jesus' humanity fits well with the notion that consecrated people make Jesus' own acts available to people, though only the ordained make them present, and in doing so prolong Jesus' humanity in a unique sense.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 78, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XV, deals further with the responsibility to evangelize of those in consecrated life:

> 78. "The love of Christ impels us" (2 Cor. 5:14): The members of every Institute should be able to repeat this truth with St. Paul, because the task of the consecrated life is to work in every part of the world in order to consolidate and expand the Kingdom of Christ, bringing the proclamation of the Gospel even to the most far-off regions. [note omitted to LG 44] . . .
>
> Today too this duty continues to present a pressing call to Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: they are expected to make the greatest possible contribution to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. . . .
>
> The Church's mission *ad gentes* offers consecrated women, religious brothers and members of Secular Institutes special and extraordinary opportunities for a particularly fruitful apostolate. The members of Secular Institutes, by their presence in fields more suited to the lay vocation, can engage in the valuable work of evangelizing all sectors of society, as well as the structures and the very laws which regulate it. Moreover, they can bear witness to Gospel values, living in contact with those who do not yet know Jesus, thus making a specific contribution to the mission.
>
> It should be emphasized that in countries where non-Christian religions are firmly established, the presence of the consecrated life is of great importance, whether through its educational, charitable and cultural activities or through the witness of the contemplative life. For this reason the establishment of communities devoted to contemplation should be encouraged in the new Churches, since "the contemplative life belongs to the fullness of the Church's presence." [note omitted includes reference for the quotation to AG 18] It is necessary, then, to use appropriate means to foster an equitable distribution of the various forms of consecrated life in order to give new momentum to evangelization, either by sending missionaries or by Institutes of Consecrated Life giving special help to poorer Dioceses. [note omitted]

This section makes it clear that those in consecrated life ought to shape their apostolate insofar as they rightly can to directly evangelize whether abroad or at home, or at least to contribute to or support the work of evangelization. The remarks to people in secular institutes and contemplatives indicate that the responsibility bears also on those whom, one might suppose, have charisms that minimize that they can do by way of evangelization.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 80, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XV, deals with the potential transformative impact of consecrated life upon cultures under the heading "The inculturation of the consecrated life":

> 80. For its part, the consecrated life itself is the bearer of Gospel values, and where it is authentically lived, it can make an innovative contribution in meeting the challenges of inculturation. As a sign of the primacy of God and his Kingdom, it can, through dialogue, elicit a positive reaction in people's consciences. If the consecrated life maintains its prophetic impact, it serves as a Gospel leaven within a culture, purifying and perfecting it. This is demonstrated by the lives of many saints who in different periods of history were able to immerse themselves in their time without being overcome by it, but opening new paths to the people of their generation. The Gospel way of life is an important source for proposing a new cultural model. A great many founders and foundresses, perceiving certain needs of their time, with all the limitations which they themselves recognized, have given these needs an answer which has become an innovative cultural proposal.
>
> Communities of Religious Institutes and of Societies of Apostolic Life can, in fact, offer concrete and effective cultural proposals when they bear witness to the evangelical manner of practicing mutual acceptance in diversity and of exercising authority, and when they give an example of sharing material and spiritual goods, of being truly international, of cooperating with other Institutes, and of listening to the men and women of our time. The manner of thinking and acting of those who follow Christ more closely gives rise to a true and proper point of reference for culture; it serves to point out all that is inhuman; it bears witness that God alone strengthens and perfects values. In turn, a genuine inculturation will help consecrated persons to live the radical nature of the Gospel according to the charism of their Institute and the character of the people with whom they come into contact. This fruitful relationship can give rise to ways of life and pastoral approaches which can bring enrichment to the whole Institute, provided that they are consistent with the founding charism and with the unifying action of the Holy Spirit. In this process, which entails discernment, courage, dialogue and the challenge of the Gospel, a guarantee of being on the right path is offered by the Holy See, whose task it is to encourage the evangelization of cultures, as well as to authenticate developments and to sanction results in the area of inculturation. [note omitted] This is "a difficult and delicate task, since it raises the question of the Church's fidelity to the Gospel and the Apostolic Tradition amid the constant evolution of cultures." [note omitted]

This passage is interesting, in that it looks at inculturation not so much in terms of what the evangelizers are to leave behind and give up as in terms of their transformative impact on the culture they are evangelizing. The idea ought to apply not only to arcane cultures in distant lands but to the post-Christian culture of affluent nations that have become secularized.

The differences from the overconfidence of past missionary attempts ought to be three:
(1) people in consecrated life ought to be able to recognize and appreciate whatever truth and and piety there is in other religions;
(2) people in consecrated life now ought to be able to discriminate what in their own cultural kit really belongs to the God-given essentials and what does not, and in the latter between genuine but limited ways of instantiating human goods and evils such as sinful social structures;

(3) people in consecrated life now ought to be able to recognize genuine though unfamiliar realizations of nonreligious human goods, respect them, and see how they might be hamoniously integrated with the God-given essentials.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 83, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XVI, deals with health-care apostolate, under the heading "Care of the sick":

> 83. Following a glorious tradition, a great number of consecrated persons, above all women, carry out their apostolate in the field of health care, according to the charism of their respective Institutes. Down the centuries, many consecrated persons have given their lives in service to victims of contagious diseases, confirming the truth that dedication to the point of heroism belongs to the prophetic nature of the consecrated life.
>
> The Church looks with admiration and gratitude upon the many consecrated persons who, by caring for the sick and the suffering, contribute in a significant way to her mission. They carry on the ministry of mercy of Christ, who "went about doing good and healing all" (Acts 10:38). In the footsteps of the Divine Samaritan, physician of souls and bodies, [note omitted] and following the example of their respective founders and foundresses, those consecrated persons committed to this ministry by the charism of their Institute should persevere in their witness of love toward the sick, devoting themselves to them with profound understanding and compassion. They should give a special place in their ministry to the poorest and most abandoned of the sick, such as the elderly, and those who are handicapped, marginalized, or terminally ill, and to the victims of drug abuse and the new contagious diseases. Consecrated persons should encourage the sick themselves to offer their sufferings in communion with Christ, crucified and glorified for the salvation of all. [note omitted] Indeed they should strengthen in the sick the awareness of being able to carry out a pastoral ministry of their own through the specific charism of the Cross, by means of their prayer and their testimony in word and deed. [note omitted]
>
> Moreover, the Church reminds consecrated men and women that a part of their mission is to evangelize the health care centers in which they work, striving to spread the light of Gospel values to the way of living, suffering and dying of the people of our day. They should endeavor to make the practice of medicine more human, and increase their knowledge of bioethics at the service of the Gospel of life. Above all therefore they should foster respect for the person and for human life from conception to its natural end, in full conformity with the moral teaching of the Church. [note omitted] For this purpose they should set up centers of formation [note omitted] and cooperate closely with those ecclesial bodies entrusted with the pastoral ministry of health care.

In the first paragraph, he makes the point that health care, like everything else, is to be provided in accord with an institute's specific charism. He also points to cases in which people have laid down their lives in caring for those with contagious diseases: that is really a

significant health care apostolate! In the second, Jesus' model is taken up and it is pointed out that he is a physician of souls and bodies; and this is linked with the example of founders and foundresses, most of whom were obviously strongly apostolic and hardly into providing secularized health care. So, apostolate should be a "witness of love," and those involved should devote themselves "to the poorest and most abandoned of the sick." Running a modern hospital is not the way to do that; serving the people who fall through the cracks of secular health care would be a much better way. He then urges that those served be encouraged to offer their sufferings—something that obviously cannot be done without evangelizing in an explicit way. In the third paragraph, he says they should evangelize health care centers, make the practice of medicine more human, and promote the Gospel of life. He urges conformity to and communication of the Church's moral teaching.

PC 8 deals with active apostolic institutes. On this, see Mary Paul Ewen, S.S.C.J. et al. "Theological Reflections on Apostolic Religious Life," *Review for Religious,* 43 (Jan./Feb. 1984): 2–25.

Suitable apostolates must make Jesus' actions more readily available to those served. Thus, they will be either in specifically religious activities or in clearly charitable activities. Managing general educational programs or health care facilities for those who can pay is neither, and should not be carried on as if it were an apostolate for those in consecrated life. A shift occurs in these things when they become effectively secularized. One factor is the attempt to conform to common criteria. Another is that members of the institute become a small minority of personnel in a large operation, a school with mainly lay (and even non-Catholic) faculty or a hospital with only a few sisters, mainly working as administrators. That is quite different from a situation in which lay collaborators who share the institute's vision and commitment associate themselves with its apostolate and, perhaps, receive some compensation to enable them to do so on a full time basis.

In general, so-called apostolates that do not help make Jesus' saving actions more readily available to those served, but only promote other human goods, are lay apostolates unsuited to people in consecrated life.

Large-scale institutions fail of being genuine apostolates for religious for many reasons. The ideal apostolate in one that allows freedom to suffuse what one does with obvious faith—one's behavior must be able to be very different from what people are used to experiencing from nonbelievers. But if it is big, it will be subject to governmental regulations, professional standards, and requirements of cooperation with nonbelievers that will suppress distinctiveness. If big and not fully staffed by religious, their witness will be diluted. If very big and many religious are included, they will be a very big community, and so lose familial character. Their having a big institution involves them in things of the world very deeply, so that, like married persons, they are divided (in Paul's sense). And their attachment to the institution is likely to lead them to rationalize continuing with it when it no longer pays off as it once did, and there are other more urgent needs they could be serving.

The prophetic or witness value of consecrated life is calling attention to what God reveals: his truth, his love, his offer, his claims on us, etc. The point of it is to promote others' better

relationship with God. Actions that have evil side effects, including obvious material cooperation with others' wrongdoing, that might be obligatory for a secular layperson generally are inappropriate for members of an institute of consecrated life because such actions generally obscure what God reveals. Effective prophecy must not be ambiguous and obscure.

PC 16 deals with enclosure of nuns—cloister. The strictly contemplative are to maintain papal enclosure, though obsolete practices are to be updated. This is in keeping with the special apostolate of contemplatives; the segregation goes with consecration to prayer as against secular activity. (N.B.: There are many institutes that have less strict enclosure; therefore, only those who regard strict enclosure as a benefit and desire it live with it—and they enjoy it.) Other monasteries of nuns are not held to strict cloister, since this would interfere with their apostolate, but to cloister according to their constitutions.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, *Verbi sponsa: Instruction on the Contemplative Life and on the Enclosure of Nuns* (13 May 1999), makes it clear (14, §1) that papal enclosure simply means cloister in accord with the norms specified by the Holy See.

PC 20: Institutes are to keep and fulfill their proper works, with attention to the utility of the universal Church and the dioceses where they work. They should adapt them to the needs of the times, and use efficient means, including the latest. They should abandon apostolates that are ill-adapted to the charism of the institute as authentically renewed.

They should have enough missionary spirit that they contribute to the effective proclamation of the gospel to all nations—in other words, avoid the ethnocentrism that serves only us and our own.

The various institutes need to make the effort to coordinate what they are doing (1) with the bishops and diocesan clergy where they are working, so that their work will really build up the one body; and (2) with one another, so that they will not waste effort in duplication or, worse, in competition.

AG 33 makes this point explicitly with respect to missionary situations.

Among communities of active apostolate, nobody should suppose that those who become handicapped, ill, or too old to engage in it no longer can contribute significantly to it. They can contribute to and support it by their prayer and by offering their suffering as penance. Also, those unable to engage in the usual apostolate fully (say, teaching) should still actively contribute whatever service they can to their community, and perhaps can assist others in the apostolate (say, by grading a set of papers now and then, or by tutoring a slow student who needs extra help).

In some cases, an individual will be received and professed, and only then will it become clear that he/she simply cannot function adequately in any appointment pertaining to the institute's apostolate. For example, someone who seemed promising and is prepared to teach may fall short so badly that continuing efforts to do so not only are very painful but ill serve those to be taught. In such cases, various attempts to overcome the difficulty probably will be made. But the truth must be accepted without undue delay. When it is, consideration

should be given to transferring the individual to a different institute. If that is judged inappropriate or is found to be unworkable, the individual's gifts should be developed and applied as well as possible, just as with those who become disabled or grow old. In no case is it acceptable to compel such a person to return to the world or to continue service once it is judged to be inadequate.

Must try to cultivate genuine affection for those served. This is important to serve them well, to witness God's love to them, and to fulfill oneself by the service. The alternatives to strong motivation by affection for those served are: interest in the work and motivation by satisfaction in doing it well—which is bad for those served when they are uncooperative and frustrating; self-interests such as desire to please and impress others and be approved of by them—which again subordinates those served and undermines the witness value of the work; moral interest in fulfilling commitment and avoiding wrongdoing—again undermines witness value of work, and by itself leads to unhappiness or something like pharisaism.

Faithfully cooperating in one's institute's common apostolate does not preclude individuals' conduct—by themselves or with others—additional, personal apostolates in the time available for use at their discretion. These ought to be conducted with the, at least reasonably presumed, approval of relevant superiors and, of course, should not require assuming responsibilities that could conflict with other, prior responsibilities. It remains the case that such individual apostolates should be ones suitable for people in consecrated life, should not merely be involvement in secular activities, suitable for lay apostolate, in fields such as politics. Thus, in respect to prolife activities, religious need to choose carefully what to engage in. Civil disobedience, activities in the vicinity of abortion clinics likely to provoke violence, and public partisan political activity are seldom if ever appropriate for religious.

GE 5: Points out the formative importance of schools for children. "Therefore, the vocation of all those who take up the *munus* of educating in schools—who help parents fulfill their duty and act as agents of the wider human community—is beautiful and very weighty."

The apostolate of education in which so many religious participated in the past is indeed still a much needed and very appropriate one, and always will be. Other apostolates that are works of real mercy insofar as they come to grips with great evils that afflict people also are worthwhile. But health care that has become a routine service mostly for people who are not greatly suffering, high-tech, and an accepted part of the economy is no more suitable than running a bus line or a grocery store.

AA 2–5 and 7 sets out a description of lay apostolate. It is to flow from theological virtues and permeate the secular with the spirit of the gospel. It is to bear witness precisely by dealing with nonreligious goods and appropriating them as material for the kingdom. In this regard, members of secular institutes are not religious but lay. By contrast, religious bear witness primarily by subordinating nonreligious goods to religious ones.

AA 6 and 8 also speak of lay apostolate that is more like that of religious: sharing in the work of the clergy and doing works of charity.

AA 7 speaks of the renewal of the temporal order as the proper *munus* of the laity. AA 13 says that the apostolate of the social ambit is so much proper to the laity that it cannot be performed rightly by others. So clergy and religious: keep out of politics, etc.; but (AA 24) as helpers of the hierarchy, help them carry on their role in relation to lay apostolate.

AG 11–12 provide guidance for Christian witness for the faithful in general that applies fully to any apostolate undertaken by religious.

AG 40: "Institutes of contemplative life, by their prayer, penance and suffering, have a very great importance in the conversion of souls, because it is God who, when beseeched, sends laborers into his harvest (see Mt 9:38), opens the souls of non-Christians to hear the Gospel (see Acts 16:14), and makes the word of salvation fruitful in their hearts (see 1 Cor 3:7)."

AG 40 calls on contemplative communities to pray for the missions and to consider foundations in mission territories. It calls on active ones, including those not specifically ordered to missionary work, to consider contributing more to the missions. (These calls must be considered with an awareness that most Catholics in the past have not regarded with adequate gravity the imperative to evangelize those who've not yet heard the gospel.)

GS 30 calls for transcending individualism. This call of the Council, along with other teachings of the magisterium, led many religious to take a new interest in social justice and peace issues. The concern is right in principle, but sometimes distorted in two ways. First, the agenda of the secular liberals is not entirely consonant with the Church's social teaching, and the latter should shape Catholics' understanding of social issues, judgment about what to do, and action. Second, consecrated persons' apostolates rightly subordinate other goods to religion, and so transcend individualism precisely by seeking the kingdom and working for others salvation, not by pursuing merely worldly goods.

GS 73 says: "Nothing is better for renewing a truly human political life than to foster an interior sense of justice and benevolence and service to the common good, and to strengthen fundamental convictions about the true character of political community and about its end, the right exercise and the limits of public authority." As part of their apostolate, people in consecrated life can rightly contribute to this fostering and strengthening by their example and also by nonpartisan instruction.

The apostolate of consecrated persons centers on bearing consistent witness to the reality of the kingdom and the importance of seeking it first of all. Like any other apostolate of witness, its effectiveness heavily depends on deeds. But it also requires words, when appropriate. And the requirement of appropriate words extends not only to men and to those in active apostolates, but to women and contemplatives.

At times, women religious, including contemplatives, have provided very valuable witness to men religious and to the diocesan clergy, including popes and bishops. Seldom is that a matter of publications or public actions. It is a matter of recalling others to the basics from which they've become distracted by worldliness, ambition, excessive concern with the institutional, and so forth. It is analogous to what a good wife and mother does when she gently but firmly

calls her husband to fulfill his fatherly responsibilities, to provide better example, to be more gentle, and so on.

CIC, c. 311, provides that members of institutes of consecrated life who direct or assist associations somehow united with their institute (a third order, auxiliary group, or the like) are to take care that these associations help the works of apostolate already existing in the diocese, especially cooperating under the ordinary's direction with associations ordered to exercising apostolate in the diocese.

The idea here seems to be to avoid duplication and wasteful competition.

CIC, c. 680, speaks in a similar vein about cooperation in apostolate between members of institutes and secular clergy.

In old days, most religious communities had a definite apostolate or apostolates, which the whole group carried on. Now, unity of apostolate has been given up to a great extent. Even where many still share in some common work, some go off to do other things, though they may live in some common house. That tends to lead to the community losing much of its unity and becoming little more than a boarding house. And where many share one apostolate but some do not, those who don't may be isolated.

Perhaps these problems cannot be overcome entirely, but they can be to some extent if everyone works at them. First, those with different apostolates need to remain active and contributing to the community as a whole, and not only by bringing home the bacon. They are in much the same situation in this regard as the father of a family: he may let his demanding job take over and contribute little more than income to the family, but needs to be involved in the other family members' concerns. Second, the rest of the community needs to regard any approved apostolate as a community activity, no matter whether most engage in it or only one. So, they need to contribute to it as they can. That always includes support of prayer, which should not just be general petition for everybody's work: perhaps can take turns praying for various apostolates. But it should include advice, concrete help with work when possible, taking an interest and commending, and so on—much as a good wife and mother who stays home takes in her husband's job, and just as good parents take in their kids' jobs.

What about apostolate of those in secular institutes? If they are to sanctify the world from within, as spiritual leaven, is there any difference between their apostolate and that of the laity in general? Yes. By their consecration, they are freed up to focus more completely on the apostolic purpose and to seek to maximize that value, much as religious do, though in a different way. They need not pursue a particularly lucrative career—for example, one might be able to work in journalism or education rather than practice law, or manage a nonprofit educational or charitable organization rather than manage a corporation that provides some legitimate product. Their threshold for refusing to accept bad side effects, not least those of material cooperation in evil, ought to be much lower than that of laity responsible for a family.

Albert DiIanni, S.M., "Religious Life: Directions for a Future," *Review for Religious*, 55:4 (July/Aug. 1996): 342–64, says that for survival, religious institutes must be visible as unified collectives, and members must try to follow Christ in a distinctive way. Institutes need a

common goal that transcends themselves, and members must be committed so that they subordinate individual interests to pursuing that goal. While commitment to social justice is important, that must not eliminate orientation to the kingdom beyond this world and life.

His argument points strongly to the importance of corporate apostolate that clearly is not simply a lay apostolate. The trouble with a typical lay apostolate meant to deal with serious social evils is that the human benefit often is questionable, the need to accept bad side effects all too obvious, and the opportunities for explicit witness to faith and support for religious acts on the part of those served too limited. Corporate apostolates that use donations and volunteer help of those who wish to help the suffering in meeting needs quite directly—at least as directly as a Peace Corps type project—are the right sort of thing: material cooperation with evildoers can be minimized, benefits are clearer and more obvious to most people, and there are many opportunities to promote and support religious activities on the part of those helped.

Mother Teresa's focus on the poor is on individuals, each of whom served is serving Christ himself. Thus, each individual is precious and to be served directly and at once. That spiritual focus differentiates their apostolate from social work.

Some argue that individual members of any institute need to be free to use their gifts to the full, and so never should be constrained, especially not by any superior, to spend themselves in some common apostolate to which their institute once committed itself. The issue here is more complex than it seems.

On the one hand, if one is a loyal member of any community and it has made commitments, one simply does not have the freedom to disregard them. So, one must contribute fairly to fulfilling them. And that always requires self-sacrifice, and can require it even to the point of laying down one's life. And it is the proper function of superiors to call for self-sacrifice when the common good requires it. Moreover, nobody ever is free to use all his/her gifts to the full. Making commitments means giving up possibilities and leaving some gifts more or less unrealized. The good Christian, a slave to Christ, uses his/her gifts to build up the one body, not for individualistic self-fulfillment. One does that with the prospect of an eventual greater self-fulfillment in the fulfillment of God's plan for the kingdom.

On the other hand, one must distinguish between a community's apostolate and the projects that carry it out. For example, a congregation might have as its apostolate loving care for the sick who are unable to care for themselves and are too poor to hire others to care for them. To carry it out, the congregation may have set up a number of hospitals. Members may no longer find that hospital work uses their special gifts. Well, it could be that it no longer is a very good way of carrying on the apostolate either. If such members find a better way of carrying out the apostolate, superiors who did not facilitate new projects would be at fault. But if members think their talents would be put to better use in political action to overcome poverty, they propose abandoning the apostolate to which the community is committed in favor of one that would be more suitable for members of a secular institute or committed laity who belong to no institute at all.

Moreover, institutes' sound projects' personnel needs sometimes change so that some members can contribute very little to those projects while they truly could carry on the institute's proper apostolate much more effectively in some other way. In such cases, a good superior will not be overly attached to the projects and will direct such members to devote themselves to the common apostolate rather than to waste their time in the common project.

George B. Wilson, S.J., "Corporate Commitments?" *Review for Religious*, 49:5 (Sept./Oct. 1990): 747–53, recognizes and tries to clarify some of the confusions that arise through failure to distinguish among diverse relationships of projects to the institute's apostolate: projects of the institute as such, commitments to supply personnel to another entity's projects, and approved projects of members of the institute. All can carry out the common apostolic commitment if really related to it, but they impose diverse and perhaps competing demands.

CIC, c. 671: "A religious is not to accept functions and offices outside the institute without the permission of a legitimate superior." The self-giving of religious commitment ought to exclude independence in making other commitments, even small ones. Of course, for very small matters that need to be done immediately, permission sometimes is reasonably presumed, and permission to undertake functions and offices essential to carrying out some larger commitments—for example, accepting outside employment—is implicit in permission to make those commitments. Individuals should not assume that the permission is merely pro forma and presume it; superiors really should consider relevance to the purpose of the institute (if none, say no) and impact on already-existing apostolates (if significantly negative, say no).

As the new CLSA commentary points out (p. 841), "religious are by profession public ministers in the Church, and certain activities have been judged generally inappropriate or unbecoming for public ecclesial ministers." In other words, whatever a particular institute's apostolate might be, certain sorts of activities, for one reason or another, are at odds or, at least, in tension with the purpose of apostolate, which is to bear witness to the kingdom and the gospel's truth and importance. Thus, CIC, c. 672 applies to religious, both clerical and lay, several canons regarding clerics, including 285, 286, 287, and 289. CIC, c. 285, says that clerics are to refrain from things unbecoming to or foreign to their state according to the prescriptions of particular law. The canon expressly excludes assuming any public office that entails participation in the exercise of civil power. C. 286: Clerics are barred from various secular activities involving money and from conducting a profit making business or trade, except with permission of appropriate ecclesiastical authority. C. 287, § 1: Clerics are to foster peace and harmony based on justice which are to be observed among people. They are not to have a part in conducting political parties or governing labor unions unless the rights of the Church or the common good requires it in the judgment of ecclesiastical authority. (C. 288: The restrictions in 285–87 do not apply to permanent deacons.) C. 289: Clerics are not to volunteer for military service and are to use exemptions from exercising functions and public civil offices foreign to the clerical state (which includes jury duty)—though the ordinary can give permission to volunteer and proper authority not to use exemptions.

CIC, c. 672, says that the proper major superior can grant the permission mentioned in c. 285, §4, to engage in certain offices and transactions that involve financial responsibility. Presumably, major superiors also can apply the institute's particular law and make allow other exceptions (e.g., under c. 287), though they should seek the bishop's approval in those cases in which he would reasonably be interested.

CIC, c. 1392: "Clerics or religious who exercise a trade or business contrary to the prescripts of the canons [i.e., cc. 286 and 672] are to be punished according to the gravity of the delict."

2 Tm 2.3–4: "Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him."
On the one hand, the good soldier puts up with hardships and accepts battle scars; on the other, he resists getting distracted from the single purpose to which he has committed himself, the goal of his leader in combat. That applies to those who enlist for special service as close collaborators with Jesus. They must not be distracted into secular interests; they must concentrate on the things of the Lord, and make sure that everything they do contributes to the end. Their models should be Jesus' monomania and Paul's reasonable facsimile of it.

CIC, c. 673: "The apostolate of all religious consists first of all in the witness of their consecrated life, which they are bound to foster by prayer and penance." In the Latin, it is clear that what they are bound to foster by prayer and penance—understood to be both communal and individual acts—is the witness. Life is consecrated so as to bear a specific sort of witness, for that is the way it serves the kingdom as nothing else does—cf. c. 573, which speaks of religious as "having been made a unique sign in the Church, foretell the heavenly glory."

Prayer and penance are required to live out the consecration, and so promote the witness in that way. But prayer and penance per se manifest the importance of union with God and overcoming sin, which alienates from him, of earthly reconciliation and heavenly communio.

Since this witness is the primary apostolate of all religious, they must not abandon it or compromise the prayer and penance appropriate for it in order to do more in terms of nonreligious goods—social justice, people's health, and so on. Much less should they undertake works that so focus on this-worldly goods or so involve taking sides on social issues that they detract from the witness that is the primary apostolate. Any active apostolate ought, rather, to contribute to the primary one.

CIC, c. 674, applies the idea of c. 673 to institutes entirely ordered to contemplation. It first makes clear how such institutes contribute to the witness of consecrated life: "they offer an extraordinary sacrifice of praise to God, illumine the people of God with the richest fruits of holiness, move it by their example, and extend it with hidden apostolic fruitfulness."
CIC, c. 674 then emphasizes the value of that apostolate: "For this reason, members of these institutes cannot be summoned to furnish assistance in the various pastoral ministries however much the need of the active apostolate urges it."

Here is a virtually exceptionless negative norm, which reflects the priorities in apostolate for religious life as such. By the same token, then, the contemplative dimension of the lives of religious committed to active apostolates must not be compromised to maximize the

substantive benefits of those works: doing that destroys their value as apostolate, which is all that justifies engaging in them as a ministry of the Church.

Obviously, in the history of the Church, insistence on various features of monasticism has impeded the appropriate development of consecrated life involving active apostolate of various sorts. But it is a fallacy and an abuse to resist or set aside anything compatible with active apostolate that does contribute to the witness of consecrated life—corporate works, common life, wearing a habit, real poverty, and authentic obedience.

CIC, c. 675, applies the idea of c. 673 to institutes dedicated to apostolic activity
§1 lays down a premise: apostolic action belongs to the nature of these religious institutes; then it draws a conclusion: "Accordingly, the whole life of the members is to be imbued with an apostolic spirit; indeed the whole apostolic action is to be informed by a religious spirit." The idea clearly is that there must be integrity rather than compartmentalization: their focus should be on bearing witness to the kingdom, so their charitable works ought really to do that.
§2: "Apostolic action is to proceed always from an intimate union with God and to confirm and foster this union." The soul of the apostolate idea: the overarching intention of religious life must permeate apostolic work for it to be truly apostolic. Otherwise, even if the work is morally sound and really beneficial to those served, it ceases to bear witness, is no longer apostolic, and so no longer suitable for religious.
§3: "Apostolic action, to be exercised in the name and by the mandate of the Church, is to be carried out in the communion of the Church." This point formally means that nothing is to be done except in harmony with the bishop and in cooperation with others who are serving the Church and acting in her name. Implicit in this is that all the active apostolates of religious institutes ought to contribute to the over-all salvific service of clerics. That obviously is not by doing these things *in persona Christi* but rather by their being done in such a way that they never detract from and always promote the fruitfulness of Jesus' acts made available through the ministry of clerics.

It follows that, religious, like lay people, who engage in apostolic activity that participates in clerical apostolates of any sort ought to attend to and conform to the norms to which clerics themselves must conform. E.g., if clerics ought not to promote the formation of small groups having certain characteristics, neither should religious (or any other Catholic). *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58, sets out criteria for the soundness of such small groups.

Thus, CIC, c. 676, makes it explicit that lay institutes, whether of men (a few) or women (all), participate in the pastoral function of the Church through spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Brothers and sisters need not get involved in running parishes, directing religious education, and other per se religious ministries; their works of mercy with respect to all sorts of secular goods are themselves, if genuine apostolate, a pastoral service.
For example, they dispose people to hear the gospel and so make possible its effective preaching; they dispose people to perceive the Holy Spirit at work in the Church, and so to be interested in joining or remaining within her; they dispose people to seek the kingdom more energetically, and so receive the sacraments fruitfully.

CIC, c. 677, §1, requires institutes to stay with the mission and works proper to their institute; they are not to change what pertains to their proper patrimony, what they are committed to in the first place. But they are to accommodate, which means to adapt rather than substitute. That can be changing methods, giving up projects, and so forth, while pursuing the same sort of benefits.§2 says that institutes that have allied lay associations should imbue them with the genuine spirit of their family. The point is: don't just use lay people as hands who help get the work done; instead, form them so that they cooperate as fully as possible in the apostolic work precisely as such, for that will both add to its witness value and benefit, as is only fair, these lay helpers in a profoundly spiritual way.

CIC, c. 678, §1: "Religious are subject to the power of bishops whom they are bound to follow with devoted submission and reverence in those matters which regard the care of souls, the public exercise of divine worship, and other works of the apostolate." The first two are obvious, but why with respect to "other works of the apostolate," which should include everything else that religious in active life do to benefit nonmembers of their institute. The answer is in the above: these works really are apostolic only if they bear witness, and in doing that, any work of mercy that is done in the Church's name contributes to her pastoral mission. The bishop is in charge of that mission. So, he has charge of those works to see to it that they contribute to the mission and don't impede it. Religious who reject legitimate episcopal control of their apostolic works are violating their vow of obedience and damaging their witness—very counterproductive.

The commitment to any genuine apostolate should include a commitment to promote social justice, especially the vindication of the rights of the poor and oppressed. Still, that means to promote social justice in ways that are appropriate for a religious institute and faithful to the charism of the institute, not in ways that might be acceptable for lay apostolate but are unsuited to a religious institute (e.g., involving close material cooperation with evildoing, or carrying out proposals involving justified violence) or outside the charism of the particular institute (e.g., for an institute committed to teaching to set up a shelter for the homeless).

In the past and sometimes still today, institutes have failed drastically in their obligations toward the poor. Committed to educating the poor, some have dealt mainly and almost exclusively with the well to do, and rationalized by trickle-down theories; others committed to nursing the poor have abandoned doing that so as to keep their institutions in business.

Any real option for the poor in education must involve an option for teaching sound Catholic moral doctrine, without which its social doctrine is baseless—and leaves comfortably well off students only nice-sounding words that make no real dent in their agendas and consciences easily salved by gestures and public policy proposals demanding sacrifices by others, usually those only slightly better off than the very poor.

The only way compatible with their consecration and witness to the Gospel for religious to struggle by direct action against serious injustices would need to be nonviolent. The nonviolent approach is not merely passive, as Gandhi made clear. It involves taking action and accepting injury and suffering for oneself while avoiding injuring anyone else. Still, even this approach may not be compatible with the charism of most institutes.

CIC, c. 778: “Religious superiors and superiors of societies of apostolic life are to take care that catechetical instruction is imparted diligently in their churches, schools, and other works entrusted to them in any way.” The meaning obviously is that they are to make sure that appropriate catechesis is provided whenever and wherever their members are carrying on any apostolate. So, sisters engaged in health care should be directed by superiors to catechize appropriately patients open to it about their responsibilities—for example, to prepare for death or to avoid contraceptive, sterilizing, and abortifacient means of birth regulation.

CIC, c. 783: “Since by virtue of their consecration members of institutes of consecrated life dedicate themselves to the service of the Church, they are obliged to engage in missionary activity in a special way and in a manner proper to their institute.” That means the contemplative should pray. Those in active life apostolates must contribute in accord with their charism—e.g., teaching about the missions. But some can actually contribute to this work in a direct way by sending personnel. In such cases, they should not begrudge their best people.

CIC, c. 801, says that religious institutes with an education apostolate are to persist in it.

Anger or outrage at social injustices and those responsible for them can be judgmental in the bad sense—a form of self-righteousness covering hypocrisy. Of course, oppressors and exploiters and those who practice unjust discrimination are sinners, as are we, too. They too need compassion and help—to recognize their situation and wake up to their spiritual peril. Our concern must be to help both them and their victims, by breaking through the framework both sides take for granted with the light of the Gospel and the shocking witness of selfless direct action to help and heal (like Mother Teresa). Of course, one cannot meet the needs of many of the poorest and most wretched; of course, one seems to make no impact on the overall situation, when that is defined in a way intelligible to the compassionate nonbeliever. But that is no reason for giving up and moving on to something else or going into politics or revolutionary action. Religious, indeed, are ill-equipped by their spiritual formation and formal education to do what good secular lay people can and should be doing; moreover, anything but the shocking witness of selfless direct action will undercut the clarity of the witness religious can give.

The most effective way—and in the end the only really effective way—to fight injustice is to convert exploiters and oppressors, beginning with oneself.

It might seem that the apostolates to which institutes are committed by their charism are rather ineffectual; caring for a few people does not affect structural injustices. But note that Jesus did not deal with structural injustices. Apostolates should continue his work, which primarily is concerned with witnessing to God’s truth and love. Jesus could have overthrown the Roman oppressors of his native land but chose not to do that. It would not have been so effective a witness as the limited cures and raisings from the dead and feeding the hungry and exorcisms and so on that he did do. True, the Church should be concerned about social injustices and the big picture, but doing what is possible about that inevitably involves one in morally ambiguous action and provokes partisanship—not good for those who represent the Church. This is work for the laity, who also are likely to have the relevant competences. But even they must not have any illusions about what can be accomplished, especially if one limits oneself

to using morally acceptable means. There simply are no solutions to social injustice; every effort to deal with them leads to bad effects as well as good, and new injustices develop as quickly as old ones are mitigated. Salvation is not to be expected in this world.

Evangelii Nuntiandi points out the importance of witness of life:

> 21. Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst? Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelization. The above questions will ask, whether they are people to whom Christ has never been proclaimed, or baptized people who do not practice, or people who live as nominal Christians but according to principles that are in no way Christian, or people who are seeking, and not without suffering, something or someone whom they sense but cannot name. Other questions will arise, deeper and more demanding ones, questions evoked by this witness which involves presence, sharing, solidarity, and which is an essential element, and generally the first one, in evangelization.(51)
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> 51. Cf. Tertullian *Apologeticum*, 39: CCL, I, pp. 150–153; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9 and 31: CSLP, Turin 1963, pp. 11–13, 47–48.

This responsibility is incumbent on all Christians. But it can and should be fulfilled in an especially powerful and fruitful way by religious, inasmuch as their lives are so different from what people of almost all cultures would expect. And so religious who fulfill their commitments can be especially effective and fruitful in preparing the way for the proclamation of the gospel among people who otherwise would be unreceptive to it, or in situations where explicit proclamation is blocked.

Evangelii Nuntiandi, 30, says there is a duty (as part of evangelization) to proclaim and assist the birth of liberation.
31 says that the Gospel includes the new commandment of love, and that cannot be credibly proclaimed without “promoting in justice and peace the true, authentic advancement of man.” (By authentic advancement he means both development and liberation.) So evangelization must deal with problems regarding “justice, liberation, development and peace in the world.”
32 teaches that concern about liberation must not lead to reducing the Church’s message and mission to temporal and nonreligious concerns; evangelization has a specifically religious finality, namely, the kingdom of God.
33 says that liberation must not be limited to certain aspects of man but must envisage the

whole, including openness to the Absolute; so evangelization cannot give up that view of man.
34 summarizes: evangelization must deal with man's temporal problems but only secondarily; primarily it is the proclamation of the kingdom.
35 suggests that not every liberation movement is motivated, as it should be, by justice in charity—unsound movements carry in themselves the germ of their own negation; it also repeats that even sound liberationism is not by itself enough.
36 says its necessary to promote just structures, but that even the best structures become inhuman unless those who live in them and rule them are really converted.
37 rejects violence, i.e., the unjust use of force that some mistakenly promote as justified.
38 says that the Church encourages people to contribute to liberation, understood as part of the universal plan of salvation.
39 emphasizes the importance of freedom of religion, for oppression violating this right directly attacks evangelization.

Pope Paul fails to get out the reason why temporal and secular goods are important, and consequently why this-worldly liberation is intrinsic to the gospel message. For that, he could have worked from GS 38–39. (In making that point, it would be good to point out how JP II uses it in *Solicitudo rei socialis,* 48.) Had he done that, he also would have been in a position to point out that lay people have the primary and direct responsibility to act for this-worldly liberation, and that the proper role of clerics and religious will be compromised or completely abandoned if they do the kinds of things that only lay people rightly should. Their roles are different: clerics to teach the norms and about personal vocation; religious to deal with human goods in ways that most clearly manifest charity, bear witness to the kingdom, and allow chances to promote religious good in a straightforward way—while at the same time avoiding the ambiguities of material cooperation in evil, partisanship, and so on that are inevitable in lay action for liberation.

Apostolates appropriate for religious must be ones that the Church as such can sponsor because they serve well her mission as Church to bear witness to the gospel. Such apostolates must be ones which put forward the Church's best foot. It is not enough for actions to be done out of charity; they must be recognizable as "charitable" by all who are not vicious and closed minded. A suitable apostolate absolutely must not be ambiguous—e.g., fighting political battles. Only apostolates that every decent person will see to be doing good qualify—e.g., picking people out of the gutter. Actions that even the wicked are likely to do well—e.g., taking good care of oneself and those near and dear—are not adequate.

Can't lay people also engage in such markedly suitable apostolates? Yes. But if they do, their doing so will do the job most effectively only if it is identified as "Catholic." To accomplish that, the project needs to be made into an official ministry of the diocese or parish, or else taken under the wing of a religious institute. Typical lay apostolate works differently. Primarily it deals with nonreligious goods in order to recapture them for the kingdom. It has witness value because it also is a matter of living a life that is, as a whole, holy, so that those who observe it closely eventually catch on and provide opportunities for explicit witness to faith.

Some good causes, such as protecting the environment against unreasonable damage or preventing cruelty to animals, do not involve dealing with or significantly serving particular persons. Others do: Mother Teresa's hands-on care for the very poor. Causes of the former sort can be taken up for ideological or purely selfish reasons, and, while they can be suitable work for lay people, are not suitable apostolic concerns for religious. Causes of the latter sort are, because they both manifest love of neighbor and provide opportunities to promote directly for those served not only secular goods but the blessings of Catholic faith and life. NB: some trendy causes may not in fact even be good ones, or, though truly good, may require material cooperation in wrongdoing of a sort acceptable for lay people but scandalous for religious.

A paralytic is brought to Jesus; he forgives his sins, and, when his doing so is questioned, cures the man. The cure is subordinate to faith and the forgiveness of sins: that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins (see Mt 9.1–8, Mk 2.1–12; Lk 5.17–26). Apostolates of religious involving the promotion and protection of nonreligious goods ought to be like that: action for those goods should be undertaken in order to support the Church's primary apostolate of bringing to all human beings the message and grace of Christ (AA 5).

While religious must be committed to all the appropriate requirements for properly promoting and protecting the nonreligious goods—for example, professional competence, meeting all the sound standards nonbelievers accept—they must not take up such activities or expand them or persist in them in the same way a nonbeliever, even a very upright one, would. Rather, the ulterior religious motive must control: do we get into this at all; whom do we serve; do we continue doing that? Even for laypeople, the approach of the upright nonbeliever is not an adequate standard. For though laypeople's proper apostolate focuses on nonreligous goods as such, their involvement in any such good is for the sake of retrieving them for the kingdom and therefore is subject to limits set by their personal vocation as a whole—a consideration that does not enter into the reflection of a nonbeliever. The difference between the layperson and the religious is that the latter's vocation as a whole focuses on the good of religion: consecration is to Christ, the monomaniac.

Lk 6.22–23, 26: "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. . . . Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."

The point is that in fulfilling their prophetic responsibilities, Christians' words and deeds should be shaped to bear witness as effectively as possible to the whole truth of Jesus' message and, insofar as possible, to communicate nothing that would obscure or impede the hearing of that truth. Insofar as Christians do that, those who reject Jesus' message will react negatively: hate, exclude, revile, and so forth. (That will be so because there is no reason for rejecting the message except sin and its rationalization and other defenses. People either hear and believe or flee into the darkness, and hate the light, as Jn puts it.) So, disciples are blessed when they provoke the negative reaction on account of the Son of man. Obviously, they're not

blessed if they provoke negative reactions because of faults that also limit and impede their own holiness. “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account” (Mt 5.11; italics added).

For the laity, the possibilities of straightforward witness are limited by their vocational responsibilities with respect to nonreligious goods. That is most obvious in respect to their responsibility to support and care for their families. But it also is true because they are directly committed to promoting specific nonreligious goods in their work, civic life, and so forth: the good of the health for professionals in that field, the good of justice for people engaged in civic affairs, etc. So, in general the laity are often compelled not only to limit what they say and do so as not to antagonize people who would thwart their efforts to fulfill their responsibilities (e.g., don’t piss the boss off and have your kids starving), but even to cooperate materially in more or less grave evil that obscures and impedes the reception of their witness.

Celibate clerical and consecrated life, even in a secular institute, change the situation. The overarching commitment, to which everything is subordinated, is the religious one of service to Jesus and the kingdom. Everything one undertakes must be for that purpose, and everything that one must do incidentally—e.g., protect one’s own life and health—must be limited by the overarching commitment’s requirements. So, faithful close collaborators with Jesus never allow the opposition of those who reject (or may be about to reject) the Gospel to limit their witness. Isaac Jogues went back again. Missionaries of Charity caring for victims of AIDS may take chances with being infected that a laywoman with a family could not rightly take; at the same time, the MCs must refuse to supply condoms to men they test for AIDS even if that refusal deprives them of governmental funds that would be available if they conformed to a public policy requiring condom distribution to homosexuals showing up at clinics testing for AIDS, while the laywoman might well be obliged to materially cooperate in condom distribution. A member of a secular institute working as a scientist in a governmental program could rightly judge herself obliged to sacrifice her position and even her career by blowing the whistle on an abuse by well-connected superiors and colleagues, while a similarly placed layman might be obliged to remain silent—perhaps because of family responsibilities, but perhaps even if he had none, because of his responsibilities to continue his scientific research. For the secular institute woman’s commitment would not be to science for its own sake; she would be genuinely committed to science and would fulfill its requirements as long as she continued in the field, but at the same time she would be detached from it so that she could abandon it altogether for witness’ sake.

How are those in the various forms of consecrated life called to be prophetic with respect to social injustices?

The authentic Christian prophet really has put on the mind of Christ, and so is able to see and judge reality from his point of view and with his sensibility. By their special relationship with Jesus and deep prayer life, those who fulfill well a commitment to any form of consecrated life should have met that requirement for authentic prophecy. The authentic prophet promotes changes by pointing out how injustices violate God’s plan and how everyone concerned

would be truly better off with a just structure. But something else also is required for effective prophecy: well-grounded credibility. For that, one must be personally well acquainted with the concrete realities to be seen and judged yet not so involved in them that one is (or seems to be) compromised.

The pronouncements of popes and bishops on public policy issues and social injustices often fall short of authentic prophecy: they either differ little from politically correct secularist views or lack the immediacy of personal involvement or both. The same sometimes is true of similar pronouncements by institutes of consecrated life and their individual members. Attempting to catechize nonbelievers, they avoid appealing to divine revelation and say virtually nothing that right-thinking nonbelievers could not agree with; at the same time, not being involved, they sound like uninformed complaints about the performances and judgment of players and coaches by fans watching a professional sports event.

Religious engaged in apostolic activity involving a nonreligious good could carry out a prophetic function on behalf of those they serve. For example, health care in the United States involves gravely unjust social structures: the working poor who neither qualify for public assistance nor have health insurance are deprived of adequate care; greedy physicians do everything possible to prevent patients from evaluating them and making them compete for clients. But religious in health care are impeded by their own involvement in the business from taking a genuinely prophetic stance on such matters. To develop a genuine prophetic function, such religious would have to ignore their ties to the establishment and sacrifice the institutions to which they have become attached—contrary to their vow of poverty.

Individuals who are members of secular institutes, consecrated virgins or hermits living in world, and so on are well placed for authentic prophetic witness with respect to social injustices with which they have an immediate acquaintance. Of course, they need the courage to be faithful to their calling so as to bear witness which may damage or even end their career. But they generally will have far more freedom than other lay people, whose family obligations will require greater restraint.

Gerald A. Arbuckle, S.M., *Healthcare Ministry: Refounding the Mission in Tumultuous Times* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), explains how healthcare “ministry” must be “refounded”—i.e., rethought and reformed—if it is to continue as a genuine apostolate. A central element is that it strive for holistic healing—that is, to benefit those served as integral persons rather than as mere biological systems, as Jesus did when he not only cured the sick but forgave their sins.

A genuine apostolate certainly must pursue the integral liberation of those served. The model for that is Jesus’ curing of the paralytic (Mt 9.1–8, Mk 2.1–12, Lk 5.17–26). He both raises him up, empowers him to pick up his own mat and take himself home, and forgives his sins. What Jesus does really bears effective witness to the kingdom: seeing Jesus’ action with their own eyes, the crowd glorifies God. That is what real healthcare apostolate must be. Even if operating hospitals and so forth delivers good care to people who really need it, if it fails to bear effective witness, it is not the sort of thing to which religious ought to devote their time and energy.

A cloistered contemplative, by prayer and sacrifice, can participate in an active apostolate in an eminent way. For example, St. Therese of the Child Jesus truly participated in the mission *ad gentes,* and is the patroness of the missions along with the great Jesuit missionary to India and Japan, St. Francis Xavier. While Therese was in the Carmel of Lisieux, she volunteered to go to Vietnam. When she was found to have tuberculosis, this desire could not be granted. Yet she knew that like all followers of Jesus, she was still called to be a missionary. She offered her prayers, her sacrifices, and the intense sufferings of her last illness for those missionaries serving in the poor countries of the world. Because of her great love for the missions, Pope Pius XI made Saint Therese Patroness of the Catholic Missions throughout the world.

It is obvious that an appropriate apostolate will illuminate the world: the religious lifestyle together with the goodness of works of mercy will lead people to recognize that God exists and is merciful, and will point toward the kingdom (see Mt 5.14–16). But what about salt?

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men" (Mt 5.13; cf. Mk 9.50, Lk 14.34–35). The role of salt is different. Salt flavors, and that's the feature or it that's at stake here, because the alternative is to lose savor. The salt contrasts sharply with the taste of what it flavors. Good works also contrast sharply with the "world"—which is not heaven. It is not the positive witness of good works but their critical witness this analogy brings out. If the salt loses its savor, it is like common dirt, and so will be cast out and commingled with it. That's becoming secularized. Religious who become secularized no longer call people to repentance by presenting a model of better behavior than the world is used to. Having lost their savor, they also lose respect, for they are now playing the same games as everyone else, though perhaps like those in secular environmentalist, feminist, peace and justice movements.

Institutes must obtain material means. In many cases, they do that by providing services to those who can pay for them. Serving such people, religious are likely to be influenced by them at least as much as influencing them. The salt loses its savor. To avoid that requires prayer, reflection, and discipline. Outfits founded to instruct the poor wind up catering for the wealthy—and they devise trickle-down theories of conversion to rationalize what they have done. Moral theologians have been careful not to bite the hand of the business people who feed them.

Those belonging to institutes or societies whose charism is for something other than parochial pastoral ministry should not willingly undertake such ministry unless by exception and briefly. Doing so undermines their proper commitment; in the case of the nonordained, what needs to be done can as well be done by chosen and suitably trained persons who have no incompatible commitment. If clerical religious are to be assigned to parish pastoral service on a virtually permanent basis, unless that service pertains to their outfit's charism, they ought to be released and incardinated in the diocese where they serve, which ought to provide them with the same benefits (including retirement) provided other diocesans ordained when they were as well as fair compensation to their outfit for their training and experience.

Participation in Church governance or any pastoral leadership role also is inappropriate for members of institutes and societies, unless called for by their specific charism, for another reason: it tends to obscure the fact that what they do can be done by a layperson and thus prevents the Church at large and those involved from facing up to the real state of affairs in the Church.

Getting involved in politics by campaigning on issues or holding offices, and civil disobedience is very unlikely to pertain to appropriate apostolate for justice and peace. Why? Because these sorts of activities are likely to be divisive, very unclear as to their significance, burdened with a lot of material cooperation with evil.

There is profound social criticism and social justice apostolate in a convent of holy and happy contemplative nuns. It shows the worth in loving God and living out that love seamlessly. That is prophetic with respect to the foundation of social injustice—secularism itself, including its inroads in theoretically orthodox and conservative believers who separate love of neighbor from love of God. Their life also shows at the nitty-gritty level the vacuity of secular life—of relationships in which people use one another rather than love one another with genuine benevolence, of wealth and possessions for emotional gratification rather than to meet authentic needs in a just and merciful way, of ambitiously pursuing one's agenda rather than obediently carrying out one's vocation. Much overt action for social justice is questionable: it may involve wrongdoing, even if not it may do no good; it may be motivated by resentment or envy; it may be motivated by self-righteousness and the urge to humiliate others by making them feel guilty or morally inferior; it may be a conscience-calming dodge for neglecting harder and more demanding works of real mercy; it may be pseudo love of neighbor used to help rationalize self-indulgence such as sexual immorality.

One very important element of the apostolate or religious, especially women religious, is the fraternal correction of bishops and diocesan clergy. Religious generally know better than lay people what bishops and clergy ought to be doing, and also what they are in fact doing. Often religious have avenues of communication not available to most laity, plenty of contacts. Bishops and diocesan clergy may fail grossly: misuse of funds, sex abuse of minors, gross liturgical abuses, mistreatment of subordinates. But they also may fail less obviously by failing to do what they should, taking a managerial perspective, evaluating by measurable results. Religious need to be friendly, gentle, kind, and persistent—as Catherine of Siena was with the pope. In some cases, they need to blow the whistle by going to a higher authority, if need be the curia. If they go out as advocates for justice for themselves, they lose their power to do this important job.

Women religious can be especially effective with bishops and diocesan priests, just as mothers are with fathers in calling them to do their duty.

Lozano, *Discipleship*, 111–12, distinguishes sharply between two sorts of "external ministerial activities": apostolate and works of mercy. By *apostolate* he means activities that transmit the divine word and nurture it by means of the sacraments (here could be included everything that I regard as ecclesial ministries). He says (112) of this: "Its purpose is to foster a life of faith." By works of mercy he means activities "directed toward relieving our

neighbor's sufferings, thus embodying Christ's love for the needy. Jesus himself combined the two ministries . . .."

This certainly is partly confused. Jesus did healings and so on as part of his single mission of proclaiming and inaugurating God's reign. He is not into health care or hunger amelioration in general. Also, since the sign value of consecrated life style is basic, not every sort of activity directed toward relieving neighbor's sufferings will do, since some involve material cooperation with evil at a level that makes them ambiguous. Also, teaching often is not relieving suffering.

Works of mercy done by members of an institute that is publicly Catholic are going to have apostolic value for transmitting the word. Given that fact, it is best if those engaged know and intend that end, and so act for it and for fostering solidarity with those served already in the Church, thus directing their care for the suffering to the ulterior end of the Church's common good.

Members of secular institutes who do not live in community and cooperate in a common apostolate (some do one or the other or perhaps both!) can make poverty and obedience have some meaning insofar as, being celibate, they can subordinate considerations about wealth and status to using their gifts in service, and passing up opportunities for "better jobs" by the usual standards.

Since religious specialize in the things of the Lord, what they have to give others is not essentially in secular goods as such. So, if they really want to serve others, they must look for opportunities to use what they really have. The mistake is to consider needs and set out to meet them by developing or enlisting secular capacities. Injustices and conflicts in the world have many dimensions. More than one sort of evil is involved and more than one competence is needed to overcome such evils.

Religious need to ask what their specific gifts can contribute. How can they bring to bear the word of the Lord? How can they foster repentance and forgiveness? Consciousness-raising has its place, but people whose consciousness is raised only with respect to the injustices they suffer and not also with respect to the Christian way of redemption are not served in a way appropriate for religious apostolate.

Convents of contemplative nuns are a very special sign. They flourish in domesticity. Active religious life presents more problems for women than for men, because it requires cooperation in non-domestic work, which suits men's dispositions better than women's. Many women in active life might do better in secular institutes, with no common apostolate but small-community living.

The miracle of the curing of the man born blind in Jn 9 includes an example of pre-evangelization. Jesus sees the man born blind, sets aside the false notion that his blindness is a result of sin, explains that it is an occasion for manifesting the works of God, and cures him—not immediately, but by doing something (making a clay poultice and applying it) and then sending him to bathe (symbolically, be baptized) in the pool at Siloam. Subsequently, the man is gradually enlightened and explicitly evangelized by Jesus, whereupon he believes in him

and worships him. The benefit of being cured disposes the man born blind to think well of Jesus, take his side, and finally believe in him.

Religious in their service to nonreligious human goods need to operate in this same way. Sincere interest in others' welfare manifests the works of God, and so bears witness in a way that is especially effective inasmuch as it also motivates gratitude and openness, thus paving the way to hearing the gospel and believing.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 59, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, X, has a special section on "Cloistered nuns":

> . . . Indeed, the life of cloistered nuns, devoted in a special way to prayer, to asceticism and diligent progress in the spiritual life, "is nothing other than a journey to the heavenly Jerusalem and an anticipation of the eschatological Church immutable in its possession and contemplation of God." [The quotation is from: 133. Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Instruction on the Contemplative Life and on the Enclosure of Nuns, Venite Seorsum,* (15 August 1969), V: *AAS* 61 (1969), 685.] In the light of this vocation and ecclesial mission, the cloister responds to the need, felt as paramount, to be with the Lord. Choosing an enclosed space where they will live their lives, cloistered nuns share in Christ's emptying of himself by means of a radical poverty expressed in their renunciation not only of things but also of "space," of contacts, of so many benefits of creation. This particular way of offering up the "body" allows them to enter more fully into the Eucharist mystery. They offer themselves with Jesus for the world's salvation. Their offering, besides its elements of sacrifice and expiation, takes on the aspect of thanksgiving to the Father by sharing in the thanksgiving of the beloved Son.
>
> . . .
>
> Even in the simplicity of their life, cloistered communities, set like cities on a hilltop or lights on a lamp stand (cf. Mt. 5:14–15), visibly represent the goal toward which the entire community of the Church travels. . . .
>
> . . . As an expression of pure love, which is worth more than any work, the contemplative life generates an extraordinary apostolic and missionary effectiveness. [A note here: 137. Cf. St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle,* 29, 1.]

There are two things of interest here.
(1) The poverty of cloistered life is in giving up space, contact, and so on. That points to a potential extension of poverty for all religious beyond the legalistic minimum. In many cases, less would be enough.
(2) The life of cloistered nuns is apostolic and missionary: it provides a unique sort of witness to the kingdom, and supports other apostolic works with prayer.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 96–97, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XVIII–XIX, begins dealing with education apostolate:

> . . . The whole Church is enlivened by the Holy Spirit and with him carries out her educational work. Within the Church, however, consecrated persons have a specific duty. They are called to bring to bear on the world of education their radical witness to the values of the Kingdom, proposed to everyone in expectation of the definitive meeting with the Lord of history. . . .
>
> Equipped with this charism, consecrated persons can give life to educational undertakings permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity in which young people are helped to mature humanly under the action of the Spirit. [note: GE 8.] In this way a community of learning becomes an experience of grace, where the teaching program contributes to uniting into a harmonious whole the human and the divine, the Gospel and culture, faith and life.
>
> The history of the Church from antiquity down to our own day is full of admirable examples of consecrated persons who have sought and continue to seek holiness through their involvement in education, while at the same time proposing holiness as the goal of education.
>
> 97. With respectful sensitivity and missionary boldness, consecrated men and women should show that faith in Jesus Christ enlightens the whole enterprise of education, never disparaging human values but rather confirming and elevating them. . . .
>
> It is for this reason that the Synod emphatically urged consecrated persons to take up again, wherever possible, the mission of education in schools of [p. XIX] every kind and level and in universities and institutions of higher learning. [note omitted] . . .
>
> Because of the importance that Catholic and ecclesiastical universities and faculties have in the field of education and evangelization, Institutes which are responsible for their direction should be conscious of their responsibility. They should ensure the preservation of their unique Catholic identity in complete fidelity to the Church's Magisterium, all the while engaging in active dialogue with present-day cultural trends. . . .

These passages make it clear that for consecrated persons work in education needs to be a true apostolate, and that its being so requires that holiness be the objective of the entire educational process. Especially at the level of higher education, it also requires "complete fidelity to the Church's Magisterium."

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 100–101, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XIX–X, deals with ecumenism, which can be regarded as an element and/or form of apostolate:

> The Synod emphasized the close connection between the consecrated life and the cause of ecumenism, and the urgent need for a more intense witness in this area. Since the soul of ecumenism is prayer and conversion, [245. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Ut Unum Sint (25 May 1995), 21, AAS 87 (1995) 934.] Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life certainly have a special duty to

> foster this commitment. There is an urgent need for consecrated persons to give more space in their lives to ecumenical prayer and genuine evangelical witness, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit the walls of division and prejudice between Christians can be broken down.
>
> 101. Sharing of the *lectio divina* in the search for the truth, a participation in common prayer, in which the Lord assures us of his presence (cf. Mt. 18:20), the dialogue of friendship and charity which makes us feel how pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity (cf. Ps. 133), cordial hospitality shown to brothers and sisters of the various Christian confessions, mutual knowledge and the exchange of gifts, cooperation in common undertakings of service and of witness: these are among the many forms of ecumenical dialogue. . . .
>
> I wish to encourage those Institutes which, either because they were founded for this purpose or because of a later calling, are dedicated to promoting Christian unity and therefore foster initiatives of study and concrete action. Indeed, no Institute of consecrated life should feel itself dispensed from working for this cause. . . .
>
> In a special way I entrust to the monasteries of contemplative life the spiritual ecumenism of prayer, conversion of heart, and charity. To this end I encourage their presence wherever Christian communities of different confessions live side by side, so that their total devotion to the "one thing needful" (cf. Lk. 10:42)—to the worship of God and to intercession for the salvation of the world, together with their witness of evangelical life according to their special charisms—will inspire everyone to abide, after the image of the Trinity, in that unity which Jesus willed and asked of the Father for all his disciples.

Nothing very clear or striking here.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 39, mentions Vatican II's call for respect for the human person and the subsequent spread of individualism among religious, then goes on:

> On the other hand, we must continue to seek a just balance, not always easy to achieve, between the common good and respect for the human person, between the demands and needs of individuals and those of the community, between personal charisms and the community's apostolate. And this should be far from both the disintegrating forces of individualism and the levelling aspects of communitarianism. Religious community is the place where the daily and patient passage from "me" to "us" takes place, from my commitment to a commitment entrusted to the community, from seeking "my things" to seeking "the things of Christ".

In 40, the document goes on to mention various things necessary to realize community, including:
c) to focus on a common mission: each institute has its own mission, to which all must contribute according to their particular gifts. The road of consecrated men and women consists precisely in progressively consecrating to the Lord all that they have, and all that they

are, for the mission of their religious family;
d) to recall that the apostolic mission is entrusted in the first place to the community and that this often entails conducting works proper to the institute. Dedication to this kind of community apostolate helps a consecrated person mature and grow in his or her particular way of holiness;
e) to consider that religious, on receiving in obedience personal missions, ought to consider themselves sent by the community. For its part, the community shall see to their regular updating and include them in the reviews of apostolic and community commitments.

Actually, individuals whose gifts obviously will not be used reasonably well by a given community should not commit themselves to it in the first place. In some cases, people ought to have undertaken consecration in a secular institute or as consecrated virgins or hermits rather than in a religious institute or society of apostolic life. Those in whom unrecognized gifts somehow emerge after they have committed themselves are in no different state than people generally, who cannot expect those to whom they've made commitments to release them so as to follow their own course of development.

Of course, there also is the possibility that someone's vocation has really unfolded: a Mother Teresa finds that she has a charism and is called to found a new institute, rather different from the one to which she had committed herself. There is a huge difference between the unfolding of one's vocation and pursuit of individual self-fulfillment. Those who think that the former may be occurring ought at first to suspect themselves guilty of rationalization and self-deception.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 54:

> 54. The relationship between fraternal life and apostolic activity, in particular within institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate, has not always been clear and has all too often led to tension, both for the individual and for the community. For some, "building community" is felt as an obstacle to mission, almost a waste of time in matters of secondary importance. All must be reminded that fraternal communion, as such, is already an apostolate; in other words, it contributes directly to the work of evangelization. The sign par excellence left us by Our Lord is that of lived fraternity: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (cf. Jn. 13:35).
>
> Along with sending them to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mt. 28:19–20), the Lord sent his disciples to live together "so that the world may believe" that Jesus is the one sent by the Father and that we owe him the full assent of faith (Jn. 17:21). The sign of fraternity is then of the greatest importance because it is the sign that points to the divine origin of the Christian message and has the power to open hearts to faith. For this reason, "the effectiveness of religious life depends on the quality of the fraternal life in common". [note omitted]

If apostolate is misunderstood as mere delivery of services, fraternal life may come to be thought of as a mere means to that end or as an interest potentially at odds with it. If apostolate is understood rightly in terms of witness, fraternal life is—as is said here—recognized as an important element in apostolate itself.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 59, quotes LG 46, which says that religious life manifests Jesus in various ways, then goes on:

> From participation in the various aspects of Christ's mission, the Spirit makes different religious families arise, characterized by different missions, and therefore by different kinds of community.
>
> . . .
>
> b) The contemplative type of community (showing forth Christ on the mountain) is centred on the twofold communion with God and among its members. It has a most efficacious apostolic impact, even though it remains to a great extent hidden in mystery. The "apostolic" religious community (showing forth Christ among the multitudes) is consecrated for active service to others, a service characterised by a specific charism.
>
> Among "apostolic communities", some are more strongly centered on common life so that their apostolate depends on the possibility of their forming community. Others are decidedly oriented towards mission and for them the type of community depends on the type of mission. Institutes clearly ordered to specific forms of apostolic service accent the priority of the entire religious family, considered as one apostolic body and one large community to which the Holy Spirit has given a mission to be carried out in the Church. The communion which vivifies and gathers the large family is lived concretely in the single local communities, which are entrusted with carrying out the mission, according to the different needs.
>
> There are thus various kinds of religious community that have been handed down over the centuries, such as monastic, conventual, and active or "diaconal".
>
> It follows that "common life lived in community" does not have the same meaning for all religious. Monastics, conventuals and religious of active life have maintained legitimate differences in their ways of understanding and living religious community.
>
> This diversity is presented in their constitutions, which outline the character of the institute, and thus the character of the religious community.

This passage does at least two things. First, it supports the view that every form of religious life is apostolic. Contemplative life "has a most efficacious apostolic impact." Second, it makes it clear that there can be a legitimate priority for common life or for mission, and that differences in charism reflected in particular law therefore legitimately differentiate "ways of understanding and living religious community."

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 59, goes on to deal with more recent developments:

> c) It is generally recognised, especially for religious communities dedicated to works of the apostolate, that it proves to be somewhat difficult in daily experience to balance community and apostolic commitment. If it is dangerous to oppose these two aspects, it is also difficult to harmonize them. This too is a fruitful tension of religious life, which is designed to cultivate simultaneously both the disciple who must live with Jesus and with the group of those following him and the apostle who must take part in the mission of the Lord.
>
> d) In recent years, the great variety of apostolic needs has often resulted in co-existence, within one institute, of communities considerably different from each other: large and rather structured communities exist alongside smaller, much more flexible ones, but without losing the authentic community character of religious life.
>
> All of this has a considerable impact on the life of the institute and on its makeup, which is now no longer as compact as it once was, but is more diversified and has different ways of living religious community.
>
> e) The tendency, in some institutes, to emphasise mission over community, and to favor diversity over unity, has had a profound impact on fraternal life in common, to the point that this has become, at times, almost an option rather than an integral part of religious life.
>
> The consequences of this have certainly not been positive; they lead us to ask serious questions about the appropriateness of continuing along this path, and suggest the need to undertake a path of rediscovering the intimate bond between community and mission, in order creatively to overcome unilateral tendencies, which invariably impoverish the rich reality of religious life.

Here they are trying to take an optimistic view of developments
In (c) they admit a tension between community and apostolic activity, and say the two can be hard to harmonize.
In (d) they note the development within the same institute of diverse sorts of community, and here rationalize that without mentioning that in some cases the smaller communities have been allowed (and at times at considerable expense) to satisfy the demands of small groups of people who were unhappy with the common life and otherwise would have quit.
In (e) they deal with cases in which fraternal life in common becomes an option due to an emphasis of mission over community, and treats that as something bad. But within the context of the previous treatment of the relationship between mission and form of common life, the charism should match the form of common life and apostolate. So, it would seem that mission that undermines common life must be inappropriate activity—not the apostolate specified by the charism.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, “Fraternal Life in Community,” 67, deals with “Reorganization of works.” The Congregation no doubt has in mind cases in which institutes are closing institutions they had founded and staffed or

withdrawing from them, giving up parishes that had been assigned to them, and so on. The document then goes on to try to articulate criteria:

> Criteria which cannot be overlooked and which enlighten communities at the time of decisions, sometimes bold and painful, are: commitment to safeguard the significance of their own charism in a specific setting, concern to keep alive an authentic fraternal life and attention to the needs of the particular Church. A trusting and ongoing dialogue with the particular Church is therefore essential, as is effective connection with those responsible for communion among the religious.
>
> In addition to attention to the needs of the particular Church, religious communities must be concerned also for all that the world neglects—that is to say, for the new forms of poverty and suffering in the many forms in which they are found in different parts of the world.
>
> Reorganization will be creative and a source of prophetic signs if it takes care to announce new ways of being present—even if only in small numbers—in order to respond to new needs, especially those of the most abandoned and forgotten areas.

This supports my view that old vehicles of apostolate that no longer serve that purpose ought to be abandoned—e.g., close or sell the hospital that cannot any longer be operated as a truly Catholic facility, and serve the people who fall through the cracks of the secular health care system.

The witness of religious life is to the kingdom precisely insofar as it is not of this world. The vows point to the discontinuity between this life and heaven. Preserving this otherworldliness is, therefore, a criterion for the suitability of an apostolate.

Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio* (On the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council), 9, having mentioned contemplative life begins speaking of "Apostolic Life":

> 9. Others are consecrated to the apostolate in its essential mission, which is the proclaiming of the Word of God to those whom He places along their path, so as to lead them towards faith. Such a grace requires a profound union with the Lord, one which will enable you to transmit the message of the Incarnate Word in terms which the world is able to understand. How necessary it is therefore that your whole existence should make you share in His passion, death and glory. (15) [see Phil 3.10–11]

That is clearly saying that every apostolate appropriate for people in consecrated life must aim directly at evangelization—transmitting the message in a way the world will understand. Pope Paul goes on (10) to argue that "other tasks in the service of men—pastoral life, missions, teaching, works of charity and so on" will be apostolically fruitful only in proportion to that interior union with the Lord.

Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio* (On the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council), 17, rejects violence:

> In a world experiencing the full flood of development this persistence of poverty-stricken masses and individuals constitutes a pressing call for "a conversion of minds and attitudes," (29) [GS 63] especially for you who follow Christ more closely in this earthly condition of self-emptying.(30)[see Mt 19.21, 2 Cor 8.9] We know that this call resounds within you in so dramatic a fashion that some of you even feel on occasion the temptation to take violent action. As disciples of Christ, how could you follow a way different from His? This way is not, as you know, a movement of the political or temporal order; it calls rather for the conversion of hearts, for liberation from all temporal encumbrances. It is a call to love.

He is making an argument which, unfortunately, is not entirely sound. It is not qua disciples of Christ but qua religious that violent action is absolutely excluded. The laity must take action, though seldom violent action, in the political and temporal orders. But the role of religious is directly to promote conversion of hearts. He goes on in the next section:

> 18. How then will the cry of the poor find an echo in your lives? That cry must, first of all, bar you from whatever would be a compromise with any form of social injustice. It obliges you also to awaken consciences to the drama of misery and to the demands of social justice made by the Gospel and the Church. It leads some of you to join the poor in their situation and to share their bitter cares. Furthermore, it calls many of your institutes to rededicate for the good of the poor some of their works—something which many have already done with generosity. Finally, it enjoins on you a use of goods limited to what is required for the fulfillment of the functions to which you are called. It is necessary that in your daily lives you should give proof, even externally, of authentic poverty.

So, here is a program for responding to poverty, oppression, and injustice.

Congregation for Bishops and Congregation for Relgious and Secular Institutes, *Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church,* 38:

> 38. Major superiors will take great care not only to have a knowledge of the talents and possibilities of their religious but also of the apostolic needs of the dioceses where their institute is called to work. Wherefore it is desirable that a concrete and global dialogue be carried on between the bishop and the superiors of the various institutes present in the diocese, so that, especially in view of certain precarious situations and the persistent vocational crisis, religious personnel can be more evenly and fruitfully distributed.

Major superiors here are told to be sure they gather the information about needs in dioceses required for proper discernment in making appointments. That of course assumes that they make them, and don't just let members look for and find what they want to do, and then assign them to that—a system that is likely not to take very much account of comparative

needs for services, except insofar as individuals are very diligent about gathering information and discerning, rather than simply pursuing some career agenda of their own.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Religious and Human Promotion,* 4–6:

> 4. d) This presence for the defense and promotion of justice ought to manifest itself most actively and particularly in those persecuted sectors of "voiceless injustices" to which the Synod of 1971 referred [note omitted].
>
> In fact, while some social groups are able to form vigorous structures of protest and support, we see, on the other hand, much suffering and injustice which have little resonance in the hearts of so many of our contemporaries: the plight of refugees; those persecuted for their political views or their profession of the faith [note omitted]; violations of the rights of the unborn; unjustified curtailment of human and religious liberty; lack of social assistance which increases the trials of the elderly and marginalized.
>
> . . .
>
> e) The witness of religious for justice in the world, however, implies, for themselves in particular, a constant review of their life-options, their use of goods and their manner of relating, because the one who dares to speak to others about justice must above all be just in the eyes of others [note omitted].
>
> . . .
>
> 5. The various activities and works which, through a diversity of charisms, characterize the mission of religious are one of the most important means by which the Church carries out its mission of evangelization and human promotion in the world [note omitted].
>
> . . .
>
> a) The activities and "social works" which were always part of the mission of religious bear witness to their constant commitment to integral human promotion. Schools, hospitals, charity centers and initiatives on behalf of the poor and for the cultural and spiritual improvement of people not only retain their relevance but, suitably updated, are often discovered to be privileged means of evangelization, of witness and of authentic human promotion.
>
> In the evangelical service of so many and such urgent activities for human and social promotion, religious translate into a convincing "sign" [note omitted] the gift of a life totally available to God, to the Church and to others.

The point is that the action of religious to promote genuine human fulfillment, especially insofar as that action manifests unselfish love of others and tends to overcome grave evils from which some people suffer far more than the affluent and influential, contributes to the Church's mission. The good works of religious not only are true apostolate appropriate for them insofar as those activities offer occasion for explicit evangelization and catechesis but also insofar as they manifest God's redemptive work in Jesus having an effect for human good in the present world, simply because these works are evidently charitable and are done by religious.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Religious and Human Promotion*, II (General Criteria for Discernment), attempts to articulate the "basic motivation and guide of role of religious in human promotion" under four headings, articulated as four "great loyalties":

— fidelity to humanity and to our times
— fidelity to Christ and the Gospel
— fidelity to the Church and to its mission in the world
— fidelity to religious life and to the charism of one's own institute.

These then determine the headings of four sections:

A. Present to humanity and to our times (14–16)
B. By the transforming power of Christ and the Gospel (17–19)
C. In the organic ecclesial communion (20–27)
D. In dynamic fidelity to their own consecration according to the charism of the founder (28–31)

The main point of A is that conditions in the contemporary world challenge Christians "to make courageous choices in the process of renewal so as to draw modern men and women to the Gospel, the source of all authentic human and social progress" (14). Then within (15):

> Religious, because of the radicality of their evangelical options, feel more profoundly challenged. They know that, in the measure they themselves are converted to God's original plan for humanity as revealed in the New Man Jesus [note omitted], they will help accelerate in others that conversion of mentality and outlook which will make the reform of economic, social and political structures authentic and stable and place them in the service of a more just and peaceful coexistence [GS 63].

In other words, religious need to be better religious to make their proper contribution to human promotion, which is to provide an example and bring others to conversion. Underlying this is the conviction that no change that does not involve some people's real change of heart ever will radically improve anything in the social, political, and economic field so as to overcome impediments to genuine human development. The main point of B then is that what religious must bring to the world is the transforming power of Christ and his gospel. So:

> 19. The power of transformation, which is contained in the spirit of the beatitudes and penetrates dynamically the life of religious, characterizes their vocation and mission [LG 31]. For them the first beatitude and primary liberation is the encounter with Christ, poor among the poor, testifying that they really believe in the pre-eminence of the kingdom of God above all earthly things and in its highest demands [LG 44].
>
> By spreading in this way the Christian and profoundly human meaning of the realities of history, which finds its origin in the beatitudes which have now become the criterion for life, religious show how close is the bond between the Gospel and human promotion in social coexistence. For this reason, the Church can point to the evangelical witness of religious as a splendid and singular proof that the way of the beatitudes is the only one capable of "transforming the world and offering it to God" [LG 31].

C then makes the point that all members of the Church share responsibility for building up the secular city, and that it belongs to the laity to deal with temporal things and order them according to God's plan. Various institutes of consecrated life have their own roles to play:

> 23. . . .
>
> The secular nature of some institutes, among the various forms of consecrated life, permits a more direct presence and a fuller involvement in secular realities and structures. In these institutes, on this account called secular, the members individually exercise their specific apostolate in any appropriate context, thus strengthening the structures of the world [note omitted].
>
> On the other hand, religious, by their choice of life, limit their participation in secular structures, but do not alienate themselves from the actions of the other members of the Church in building the secular city as a place capable of receiving the kingdom of God [LG 46]. However, they are present to it in their own special way, not by substituting for other groups in the Church either in duties or methods, but by becoming an increasingly radical sign of an evangelical way of life and of involvement through the public witness of their profession which is carried out communally in all its dimensions.
>
> . . .
>
> 25. . . .
>
> In speaking of the variety of gifts and ministries, it should be noted that the laity and members of secular institutes can take on apostolic, social and political responsibilities as individuals in accordance with the purpose assigned them by the Spirit.
>
> This is not the case with religious. They have freely and consciously chosen to participate completely in their mission of witness, presence and apostolic activity in obedience to the common purpose and to the superiors of their institute. This participation expresses fraternity and support, especially when the apostolic mandate exposes religious to greater and more demanding responsibilities in the sphere of difficult social contexts.

The point is that the Church as a whole has to do the job, and religious have their proper role. They need to make their unique contribution, not try instead to do what members of secular institutes and lay people properly should be doing.

In C there also is a reference (in 26) to Paul VI's teaching in *Octogesima adveniens*, which is then quoted in note 78:

> When it is a question of choices which, in an evangelization-human promotion context, necessarily involve both one's own community and the ecclesial community, there is the need always to bear in mind the directive of *Octogesima Adveniens*, 4 (78).
>
> (78) "Confronted with such diverse situations," we read in OA 4, "it is difficult to sum it up in one word or to propose a universally valid solution. . . . It is for the

> Christian communities to analyze objectively the situation in their own country, clarify it in the light of the unchanging words of the Gospel, draw principles for reflection, criteria for judging and directives for action from the Church's social teaching. . . . It is for the Christian community to discern, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops concerned and in dialogue with the other Christian brethren and all men of good will, the choices and commitments that must be made to bring about the social, political, and economic changes that are obviously needed in many cases. In looking for what changes ought to be made, Christians should firstly renew their trust in the power and originality of Gospel demands"; cf. Puebla document, n. 473.

This is an extremely important statement. The first elipsis in the quote deletes the sentence: "Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission." Paul VI is not saying it is for the bishops to decide, but for the Christian community in communion with the bishops and in dialogue with separated Christians and non-Catholics. In effect, this means that the Christian community as a whole needs to make judgments and decisions on these matters, and that no part ought to proceed without the rest, so that religious and clerics will in practice need to subordinate themselves to lay people. Here, the point is to urge religious not to go off on their own.

In the final section (D), the emphasis is on religious making their contribution to human promotion precisely by faithfully fulfilling their commitment as religious, which includes their commitment to live out their consecration in the specific form of the charism of their particular institute. In (30), there is a reference to Paul VI's "burning question" in *Evangelica testificatio,* 52. It is not quoted in this document, not even in a note, but, as it were, taken as well known. That section reads as follows:

> 52. A burning question of the present day preoccupies Us: how can the message of the Gospel penetrate the world? What can be done at those levels in which a new culture is unfolding, where a new type of man is emerging, a man who no longer believes he needs redemption? Since all men are called to the contemplation of the mystery of salvation, you can understand how these questions create such a serious obligation in your lives and such a challenge to your apostolic zeal! Dear religious, according to the different ways in which the call of God makes demands upon your spiritual families, you must give your full attention to the needs of men, their problems and their searching; you must give witness in their midst, through prayer and action, to the Good News of love, justice and peace. The aspirations of men to a more fraternal life among individuals and nations require above all a change in ways of living, in mentality and in hearts. Such a mission, which is common to all the People of God, belongs to you in a special way. How can that mission ever be fulfilled if there is lacking an appreciation of the absolute, which results from a certain experience of God? This does but emphasize the fact that authentic renewal of the religious life is of capital importance for the very renewal of the Church and of the world.

In sum, the general criteria of discernment in Part II of *Religious and Human Promotion* actually come down to the rather basic point, that love of neighbor requires every Christian to take seriously the questions of human promotion—of justice and peace—and that same love requires every Christian to find and fulfill his or her vocation, which is a life of service. So, whatever anyone does for human promotion ought to be what his or her unique vocation requires, no more and no less.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life,* 26, deals with the apostolate of purely contemplative institutes:

> The way of life of these Institutes—"a particular way of living and expressing the paschal mystery of Christ which is death ordained towards resurrection" (*Venite seorsum,* I)—is a special mystery of grace which manifests the Church's holiness more clearly as a "praying community" which, with her Spouse, Jesus Christ, sacrifices herself out of love for the Father's glory and the salvation of the world.
>
> Their contemplative life, then, is their primary and fundamental apostolate, because it is their typical and characteristic way in God's special design to be Church, to live in the Church, to achieve communion with the Church, and to carry out a mission in the Church. In this perspective which fully respects the primary apostolic purpose of the cloistered life, in which contemplative religious give themselves to God alone (cf. PC 7), they offer assistance—without prejudice to enclosure and the laws that govern it—to persons in the world and share with them their prayer and spiritual life in fidelity to the spirit and traditions of their institute (cf. *Mutuae relationes,* 25).

This passage does not unpack the witness value of contemplative life which is mentioned under the words "manifests the Church's holiness more clearly," but which certainly is a substantial service to the Church.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate,* after introductory considerations in 23–24, lays out in 25–27 an argument for fidelity to the apostolate to which each institute committed itself, allowing only for new ways of undertaking the mission that pertains to its particular charism:

> 25. Whatever may be the works of service by which the word is transmitted, the mission itself is undertaken as a community responsibility. It is to the institute as a whole that the Church commits that sharing in the mission of Christ which characterizes it and which is expressed in works inspired by the founding charism. This corporate mission does not mean that all the members of the institute are doing the same thing or that the gifts and qualities of the individual are not respected. It does mean that the works of all the members are directly related to the common apostolate, which the Church has recognized as expressing concretely the purpose of the institute. This common and constant apostolate is part of the institute's sound traditions. It is so closely related to identity that it cannot be

> changed without affecting the character of the institute itself. It is therefore a touchstone of authenticity in the evaluation of new works, whether these services will be done by a group or by individual religious. The integrity of the common apostolate is a particular responsibility of major superiors. They must see that the institute is at once faithful to its traditional mission in the Church and open to new ways of undertaking it. Works need to be renewed and revitalized, but this has to be done always in fidelity to the institute's approved apostolate and in collaboration with the respective ecclesiastical authorities. Such renewal will be marked by the four great loyalties emphasized in the document, *Religious and Human Promotion:* "fidelity to humanity and to our times; fidelity to Christ and the Gospel; fidelity to the Church and its mission in the world; fidelity to religious life and to the charism of the institute" (RHP 13).

The opening makes it clear that any authentic apostolate of a religious institute must be truly apostolic, a sharing in spreading the word, in carrying on Jesus' mission, which he entrusted to his Church. It goes on to emphasize the idea that the apostolate is assigned by the Church. Here there clearly is a clericalist confusion between the Church and the hierarchy. Lay people also share in the Church's mission without any formal assignment, and clerics would be going beyond their pastoral authority to try to hold them to any apostolate except insofar as they have a moral obligation growing out of their own commitment. Religious do have some moral obligation growing out of their commitment to a particular apostolate, because they enter into a community to which others always have contributed and contribute, including benefactors and from which sometimes some beneficiaries rightfully expect promised services. But in addition, religious, unlike ordinary laity, seek an official ecclesial status with the result that their activities are done in the Church's name, and in doing that take on a special obligation of submission to the hierarchy.

> 26. The individual religious finds his or her personal apostolic work within the ecclesial mission of the institute. Basically it will be a work of evangelization: striving in the Church and according to the mission of the institute to help bring the Good News to "all the strata of humanity and through it to transform humanity itself from within" (EN 18; RHP Intro.). In practice, it will involve some form of service in keeping with the purpose of the institute and usually undertaken with brothers or sisters of the same religious family. In the case of some clerical or missionary institutes, it may sometimes involve working alone. In the case of other institutes, working alone is with the permission of superiors to meet an exceptional need for a certain time. At the end of life, the apostolate will be for many a mission of prayer and suffering only. But at whatever stage, the apostolic work of the individual is that of a religious sent in communion with an ecclesially missioned institute. Such work has its source in religious obedience (cf. PC 8, 5c, 10). Therefore, it is distinct in its character from those apostolates proper to the laity (cf. RHP 22; AA 2, 7, 13, 25). It is by their obedience in their corporate and ecclesial works of evangelization that religious manifest one of the most important aspects of their lives. They are genuinely apostolic, not because they have an "apostolate," but because they are

> living as the apostles lived: following Christ in service and in communion according to the teaching of the Gospel in the Church he founded.

This section is strongly trying to exclude the undertaking of individual works that have nothing to do with the institute's apostolate. Even if in some cases, an individual may live and work alone (which they frown on except for clerics and missionaries), the individual's work ought to contribute to the institute's proper apostolate. If this is held to, a good many religious women who are involved in pastoral ministry need to get out of it. Of course, categories can be stretched and a case can be made: Sister Bill who belongs to a congregation founded to teach poor children may serve as treasurer of a college not operated by her outfit on the ground that what she is doing contributes to the education of young people, including a few poor ones. The final line is interesting: genuine apostolate is in living as the apostles lived. That certainly is not true for lay people, and is a fallacious argument here.

> 27. There is no doubt that, in many areas of the world at the present time, religious institutes dedicated to apostolic works are facing difficult and delicate questions with respect to the apostolate. The reduced number of religious, the fewer young persons entering, the rising median age, the social pressures from contemporary movements are coinciding with an awareness of a wider range of needs, a more individual approach to personal development, and a higher level of awareness with regard to issues of justice, peace, and human promotion. There is a temptation to want to do everything. There is also a temptation to leave works which are stable and a genuine expression of the institute's charism for others which seem more immediately relevant to social needs but which are less expressive of the institute's identity. There is a third temptation to scatter the resources of an institute in a diversity of short-term activities only loosely connected with the founding gift. In all these instances, the effects are not immediate but, in the long run, what will suffer is the unity and identity of the institute itself, and this will be a loss to the Church and to its mission.

This listing of temptations and problems might well be useful near the beginning of the discussion of apostolate. What has not been said in the treatment of apostolate is that institutes might well need to change their apostolate, just as lay individuals sometimes must. When that is necessary, they need to discern what God is calling them to as best they can, perhaps with some alternatives, and make the case to the relevant members of the hierarchy, who ought to consider the reasons and approve reasonable proposals. If that process is impossible or overly difficult due to unreasonable rigidity, those in authority themselves share responsibility for the abuses.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, 36–37, under the heading "6. Public Witness":

> 36. Fidelity to the mandated apostolate of one's own religious institute is also essential for true witness. Individual dedication to perceived needs at the expense of the mandated works of the institute can only be damaging. However, there are ways

> of living and working which witness to Christ very clearly in the contemporary situation. The constant evaluation of use of goods and of style of relationships in one's own life is one of the religious' most effective ways of promoting the justice of Christ at the present time (cf. RHP 4e). Being a voice for those who are unable to speak for themselves is a further mode of religious witness, when it is done in accordance with the directives of the local hierarchy and the proper law of the institute. The drama of the refugees, of those persecuted for political or religious beliefs (cf. EN 39), of those denied the right to birth and life, of unjustified restrictions of human freedom, of social inadequacy that causes suffering in the old, the sick, and the marginalized: these are present continuations of the Passion which call particularly to religious who are dedicated to apostolic works (cf. RHP 4d).

Here there is the material for an argument to withdraw from projects (hospitals, schools) that no longer can be carried on as authentic apostolate and move into others that can be, such as helping the poor who lack health insurance and tutoring youngsters whose schools are badly letting them down.

> 37. The response will vary according to the mission, tradition and identity of each institute. Some may need to seek approval for new missions in the Church. In other cases, new institutes may be recognized to meet specific needs. In most cases, the creative use of well-established works to meet new challenges will be a clear witness to Christ yesterday, today, and forever. The witness of religious who, in loyalty to the Church and to the tradition of their institute, strive courageously and with love for the defense of human rights and for the coming of the Kingdom in the social order can be a clear echo of the Gospel and the voice of the Church (cf. RHP 3). It is so, however, to the extent that it manifests publicly the transforming power of Christ in the Church and the vitality of the institute's charism to the people of our time. Finally, perseverance, which is a further gift of the God of the covenant, is the unspoken but eloquent witness of the religious to the faithful God whose love is without end.

Authentically prophetic witness is not just promoting whatever current causes a group finds appealing—e.g., feminism, ecology—in the same fashion they are promoted by secular liberals. Real witness "manifests publicly the transforming power of Christ in the Church and the vitality of the institute's charism."

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, under "VIII. Apostolate": "29. The apostolate of all religious consists first in the witness of their consecrated life which they are bound to foster by prayer and penance (can. 673)."

The norm is straight from the canon. This implies that every religious, including the purely contemplative, has an apostolate.

> §30. In institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate, apostolic action is of their very nature. The life of the members should be imbued with an apostolic spirit, and all apostolic activity should be imbued with the religious spirit (can. 675.1).

This norm also is right from the cited section of canon 675.

> §31. The essential mission of those religious undertaking apostolic works is the proclaiming of the word of God to those whom he places along their path, so as to lead them towards faith. Such a grace requires a profound union with the Lord, one which enables the religious to transmit the message of the Incarnate Word in terms which today's world is able to understand (cf. ET 9).

The norm is drawn from the cited *Evangelium testificatio.* It is interesting inasmuch as it makes clear that the point of religious apostolate is different from lay apostolate. Here the point is not to recapture secular goods for the kingdom, and to bear witness by one's life and by words as opportunity arises, but to proclaim the word so as to lead people towards faith!

> §32. Apostolic action is carried out in communion with the Church, and in the name and by the mandate of the Church (can. 675.3).

Again, the norm is from the cited section of the canon. This makes clear the official nature of religious apostolate.

> 33. Superiors and members should faithfully retain the mission and works proper to the institute. They should accommodate them with prudence to the needs of times and places (can. 677.1).

The norm follows the canon but omits the word "means"; the idea of accommodation is that it is right to use new means but not to change the ends.

> 34. In apostolic relations with bishops, religious are bound by canons 678–683. They have the special obligation of being attentive to the magisterium of the hierarchy and of facilitating for the bishops the exercise of the ministry of teaching, and witnessing authentically to divine truth (cf. MR 33; cf. LG 25).

The point is not that religious are to undertake whatever the bishops needs and wants done. Rather, in whatever they do, they are to maintain communio with the bishop—to fulfill specific responsibilities toward him that are necessary for the effectiveness of the work of the particular church as a unified whole.

John Paul II, *Redemptionis donum,* 15, deals with apostolate:

> From this witness of spousal love for Christ, through which the entire salvific truth of the Gospel becomes particularly visible, there also comes, dear brothers and sisters, as something proper to your vocation, a sharing in the Church's apostolate, in her universal mission which is accomplished contemporaneously in every nation in many different ways and through many different charisms. Your specific mission is in harmony with the mission of the Apostles, whom the Lord sent "to the whole world" to "teach all nations," [95. (Cf. Mt. 28:19)] and it is also linked to the mission

> of the hierarchical order. In the apostolate which consecrated persons exercise, their spousal love for Christ becomes, in an organic way as it were, love for the Church as the Body of Christ, for the Church as the People of God, for the Church which is at one and the same time Spouse and Mother.
>
> It is difficult to describe, or even to list, the many different ways in which consecrated persons fulfill their love for the Church through the apostolate. This apostolate is always born from that particular gift of your founders, which, received from God and approved by the Church, has become a charism for the whole community. That gift corresponds to the different needs of the Church and the world at particular moments of history, and in its turn it is extended and strengthened in the life of the religious communities as one of the enduring elements of the Church's life and apostolate. In each of these elements, in each field—both of contemplation, so fruitful for the apostolate, and of direct apostolic action—the Church's constant blessing accompanies you, as does at the same time her pastoral and maternal solicitude, with regard to the spiritual identity of your life and the correctness of your activity in the midst of the great universal community of the vocations and charisms of the whole People of God. Through each of the institutes separately and through their organic integration in the whole of the Church's mission, special emphasis is given to that economy of the Redemption, the profound sign of which each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, bears within himself or herself through the consecration and profession of the evangelical counsels.
>
> And thus, even though the many different apostolic works that you perform are extremely important, nevertheless the truly fundamental work of the apostolate remains always what (and at the same time who) you are in the Church. Of each one of you can be repeated, with special appropriateness, these words of St. Paul: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."[96. (Col. 3:3)]. And at the same time this "being hidden with Christ in God" makes it possible to apply to you the words of the Master Himself: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." [97. (Mt. 5:16)].

Though he does not explain how, JP II here makes it clear that the apostolate of religious, being an exercise of love for the Church and part of her mission, must be linked to that of the apostles and of the hierarchy. He makes it clear that the apostolate of contemplatives is their prayer, and that the fundamental apostolate of all religious is their sign value—just being what and who they are in the Church. Obviously, for that to work effectively, religious must be identifiable and easily recognized, and they need to provide very good example.

John Paul II, General Audience (5 May 1993), 2, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 12 May 1993, 11:

> . . . today too, as throughout the history of the pastoral ministry, the division of labor can stress preaching or worship and the sacraments, according to the individual's abilities and the assessment of the situation. However, one can never

> doubt that for presbyters teaching and preaching, even at the highest academic and scholarly level, must always retain their purpose of serving the ministry of sanctification through the sacraments.

This remark makes it clear that presbyters belonging to religious institutes must order any academic or scholarly work they do to a payoff in sanctification through the sacraments. If they become essentially secular scholars, they have abandoned to responsibilities to which they were ordained.

John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte,* 50, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 10 Jan. 2001, X, broadens out the category of the "poor":

> The scenario of poverty can extend indefinitely, if in addition to its traditional forms we think of its newer patterns. These latter often affect financially affluent sectors and groups which are nevertheless threatened by despair at the lack of meaning in their lives, by drug addiction, by fear of abandonment in old age or sickness, by marginalization or social discrimination. In this context Christians must learn to make their act of faith in Christ by discerning his voice in the cry for help that rises from this world of poverty. This means carrying on the tradition of charity which has expressed itself in so many different ways in the past two millennia, but which today calls for even greater resourcefulness. Now is the time for a new "creativity" in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by "getting close" to those who suffer, so that the hand that helps is seen not as a humiliating handout but as a sharing between brothers and sisters.

Poverty must not be narrowly conceived, and there needs to be creativity—e.g., in providing aid without requiring recipients to pay an unfair price in terms of other genuine human goods.

Religious life, like Christian life in general, has a prophetic dimension: a very important part of what consecrated life is for is to bear witness to the truth and effectiveness of NT revelation. However, there is no more reason to suppose that the Holy Spirit, who breathes where he will, is speaking through a religious than through any other Christian; religious have no special claim on the mantle of OT or apostolic times NT prophecy. Moreover, it is ordination, not being a religious, that enables someone to preach and teach *in persona Christi*.

Congregation for Bishops and Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church,* 34:

> 34. It would be a serious mistake to make the two realities—religious life and ecclesial structures—independent one of the other, or to oppose one to the other as if they could subsist as two distinct entities, one charismatic, the other institutional. Both elements, namely, the spiritual gifts and the ecclesial structures, form one, even though complex reality (cf. LG 8).
>
> Wherefore religious, even while showing a particular spirit of enterprise and foresight for the future (cf. Part. I, ch. III), should be intensely loyal to the intention and spirit of their institute, in full obedience and adherence to the authority of the hierarchy (cf. PC 2; LG 12).

The point is that consecrated life is part of the Church, and every institutionalization of it is subordinate to the good of the Church as a whole and subject to the authority of the pastors. Charisms are given to build up the Church, and the Church is hierarchical by Jesus' choice.

On the apostolic value of the contemplative life, see Pius XI, *Umbratilem,* in Courtois, *States of Perfection.*

Hospital apostolate by the Ladies of Charity initially focused on seeing to it that people had a chance to receive the sacrament of penance before they died; see Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul,* trans. Joseph Leonard, C.M., vol. 1 (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1952), 241, 280; they counted 760 converts, some from Judaism and Islam, during the first year.

In *Origins,* 16 June 2005 (35:5, pp. 69–74) is an address, "Catholic Health Care's Witness," by Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Texucigalpa, Honduras, that is not entirely sound, perhaps, but makes many good points. He is arguing for a more than sacramental ministry, more than activities immediately directed toward soul-saving—a witness of God's and Jesus' love toward the afflicted. That is certainly right, and it is entirely appropriate for non-clerics in consecrated life and appropriate for clerics as a means to and accompaniment of their actions *in persona Christi.*

There is a lot of depersonalization in contemporary health care, and any outfit that presents itself as Catholic needs to communicate genuine, human caring and consideration for each person, regardless of his/her condition, attitudes, problems, characteristics that provoke and even deserve dislike and irritation.

At the same time, the Cardinal tends to move on to the terrain of lay apostolate—the struggle for justice for those who are mistreated, etc. When a religious institute is working at health care, direct action in the secular arena, which involves carrying on struggles against opponents, is not the way to go. Such work necessarily involves a good deal of material cooperation with evil and making compromises. It is appropriately carried on by people who don't act in persona ecclesiae, as religious do.

I would not use Jesus' miracles as a model for Christian charitable work. While he was moved with compassion to cure people and feed them, he did miracles of curing and feeding mainly as signs. Had he been committed to curing and feeding simply to meet people's needs, he could and would have cured all the sick and fed all the hungry. But that was not his mission, and for that reason it is not the primary mission of the Church as such or of those who act *in persona Christi.* In teaching that the works of mercy are Christian obligations, Jesus does not recall what he has done but points out that his disciples will do to him whatever they do to his. Thus, while the works of mercy are Christian obligations and pertain the Church's mission, they pertain especially, though not exclusively, to lay apostolates (including institutes of consecrated lay people, such as Mother Seton's Daughters of Charity and Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity).

See Charles M. Murphy, "Charity, Not Justice, as Constitutive of the Church's Mission," *Theological Studies,* 68 (2007): 274–86. One needs to nuance this. The Church's mission

includes the laity's mission to work for social justice. But the apostolate of religious must focus on charity rather than on social justice, for they act *in persona ecclesiae.* See my treatment in LCL, 102–4, where I also quote an earlier article of Murphy's in fn. 40.

See Francisco J. Egaña, S.J., "Collaboration between Religious and Laity: Areas and Limits," *Consecrated Life*, 26 (2006): 267–86, deals with some of the limits that need to be observed.

4–F Responsibilities with respect to life in community; mutual communication

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 2 (a): "Religious community is not simply a collection of Christians in search of personal perfection. Much more deeply, it is a participation in and qualified witness of the Church-Mystery, since it is a living expression and privileged fulfillment of its own particular 'communion,' of the great Trinitarian 'koinonia.'" Later in 2 (d): "The purpose of apostolate is to bring humanity back to union with God and to unity among itself, through divine charity. Fraternal life in common, as an expression of the union effected by God's love, in addition to being an essential witness for evangelization, has great significance for apostolic activity and for its ultimate purpose. It is from this that the fraternal communion of religious community derives its vigor as sign and instrument. In fact, fraternal communion is at both the beginning and the end of apostolate."

This reinforces the shift in focus from personal sanctification to service to the Church, and makes it clear that the primary service of life in community is its witness value.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 41, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VIII, speaks of common life:

> The consecrated life can certainly be credited with having effectively helped to keep alive in the Church the obligation of fraternity as a form of witness to the Trinity. By constantly promoting fraternal love, also in the form of common life, the consecrated life has shown that sharing in the Trinitarian communion can change human relationships and create a new type of solidarity. In this way it speaks to people both of the beauty of fraternal communion and of the ways which actually lead to it. Consecrated persons live "for" God and "from" God, and precisely for this reason they are able to bear witness to the reconciling power of grace, which overcomes the divisive tendencies present in the human heart and in society.

This passage points up ways in which common life, lived well, contributes greatly to effective witness: to the Trinity, to the value of genuine human community, and to the power of grace to bring it about.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 41, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VIII, begins with the "new family" of the Twelve his chapter on consecrated life as a sign of communion in the Church, in which he treats, among other things (but first of all) fraternal life in communion in institutes of religious life and societies of apostolic life:

> 41. During his earthly life, the Lord Jesus called those whom he wished in order to have them at his side and to train them to live according to his example, for the Father and for the mission which he had received from the Father (cf. Mk. 3: 13–15). He thus inaugurated the new family which down the centuries would include all those ready to "do the will of God" (cf. Mk. 3:32–35). After the Ascension, as a result of the gift of the Spirit, a fraternal community formed around the Apostles gathered in the praise of God and in a concrete experience of communion (cf. Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–35). The life of that community and even more the experience of

> complete sharing with Christ lived out by the Twelve have always been the model to which the Church has looked whenever she has sought to return to her original fervor and to resume with fresh evangelical vigor her journey through history. [note omitted, begins with reference to PC 15]

Thus, once again, the source of religious life is with the Twelve, who are and ought to be exemplars first of all for the clergy.

Common life must provide some protection from the world and its temptations. There must be peace and quiet for prayer and work. So, entertainment must be limited, and community activities structured with restraint. Communal poverty must be practiced, simplicity in food. Prayer in common is essential, at least a community Mass. If conflict over tastes, the simple rule is: accept anything consistent with the Church's liturgical norms; do nothing that violates those norms. Nothing clearer as sign of disastrous division—and a countersign to heavenly communion—that a priestly community in which there must be two Masses or in which some must celebrate by themselves.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 45, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, VIII, provides a general exhortation to live fraternal community:

> 45. The fraternal life plays a fundamental role in the spiritual journey of consecrated persons, both for their constant renewal and for the full accomplishment of their mission in the world. This is evident from the theological motivations which sustain it and is amply confirmed by experience. I therefore exhort consecrated men and women to commit themselves to strengthening their fraternal life, following the example of the first Christians in Jerusalem, who were assiduous in accepting the teaching of the Apostles, in common prayer, in celebrating the Eucharist and in sharing whatever goods of nature and grace they had (cf. Acts 2:42–47). Above all I call upon men and women religious and members of Societies of Apostolic Life to show generous mutual love, expressing it in ways which are in keeping with the nature of each Institute, so that every community will be revealed as a luminous sign of the new Jerusalem, "the dwelling of God with men" (Rv. 21:3).
>
> The whole Church greatly depends on the witness of communities filled "with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52). She wishes to hold up before the world the example of communities in which solitude is overcome through concern for one another, in which communication inspires in everyone a sense of shared responsibility and in which wounds are healed through forgiveness and each person's commitment to communion is strengthened. The nature of the charism in communities of this kind directs their energies, sustains their fidelity and directs the apostolic work of all toward the one mission. If the Church is to reveal her true face to today's world, she urgently needs such fraternal communities, which by their very existence contribute to the new evangelization inasmuch as they disclose in a concrete way the fruitfulness of the "new commandment."

Genuine fraternal life makes for constant renewal, because it keeps people up to the standard of the institute. It also supports common mission, when the group lives and works together. JP II uses the example of the Jerusalem community to point out some important things: the community should receive and be formed by apostolic teaching, prayer, and the Eucharist, and members ought to share freely and generously all their gifts. If they truly and manifestly love one another, the community's members offer effective witness to the coming kingdom. They also provide an exemplar for how people can and should live together with unselfish mutual love. And they witness in other ways.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata,* 60, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XI, deals with "Religious Brothers," and deals first with "Lay Institutes," which the Synod proposed might better be called "Religious Institutes of Brothers." He affirms their character and discourages clericalization by ordaining more members than needed to supply clerical service or by preferring clerics as superiors. But then he adds:

> The vocation of Brothers in what are known as "clerical" Institutes is different, since, according to the design of the founder or by reason of legitimate tradition, these Institutes presuppose the exercise of Holy Orders, are governed by clerics, and as such are approved by Church authority. [note omitted to CIC, c. 588, §2.] In these Institutes the sacred ministry is constitutive of the charism itself and determines its nature, purpose and spirit. The presence of Brothers constitutes a different form of participation in an Institute's mission through services rendered both within the community and in the apostolate, in collaboration with those who exercise the priestly ministry.

Thus, JP II insists on maintaining clerical governance in clerical institutes. This seems to be necessary, insofar as clerical life must be shaped by the demands of clerical service, and the clerical apostolate ought to be directed by clerics. JP II offers no theological interpretation of the role of brothers in such institutes. In 61 (same page in *OR* Eng.), JP II goes on to deal with so-called "Mixed Institutes": "Some Religious Institutes, which in the founder's original design were envisaged as a brotherhood in which all the members, priests and those who were not priests, were considered equal among themselves, have acquired a different form with the passing of time." He leaves the question open as to whether these can "return to their original inspiration" and consigns the problem to a special commission.

Some religious have an illusion that laypeople can choose their own associates, and think that the demands of community life are particularly trying inasmuch as one has no such choice. In fact, hardly anyone has a great deal of choice about associates. People do not choose their parents, brothers, and sisters. People do consent to marry a particular person, but spouses do change. Parents cannot choose their children, and are much more bound to them than most religious are to anyone in particular. People may have a choice about whom to work for, but usually have no choice about whom to work with. Most people have no choice about neighbors, who can make life very difficult; religious usually live in larger establishments and so have fewer problems with neighbors.

Communication must be absolutely without lies and intentional deception of any sort. And while not everything should be communicated to everyone, communication should be candid—that is, the truth others might reasonably desire should be given them. That means that superiors must not keep subjects in the dark about what is going on, what plans are being made, what problems are arising, and so on.

Relationships including those between superiors and subjects ought to be like those of brothers and sisters; there should be no castes, superior groups, or outcastes. The elderly and debilitated should be treated kindly and with respect. When responsibilities do not call for a different way of acting, all should pitch in to do onerous and distasteful tasks, and all should have the same access to items available for common use, such as cars.

PC 12: Everybody and especially superiors must remember that chastity is more securely maintained when real fraternal affection flourishes among members sharing in the community's life.

PC 15: Uses community life of the early Church as recorded in Acts (2.42, 4.32) as a model for community life. The theological ground for this community of life is in charity and common membership in Christ. By the love of God poured forth in hearts by the Holy Spirit, a community, as a real family gathered in the Lord, enjoys his presence. Fraternal unity manifests that Christ has come and from it results great apostolic power.

The Council goes on to suggest bringing brothers and second-class sisters into the life and activity of the community, eliminating caste distinctions; at the same time, it allows for diversity based on aptitudes and functions, so that all members are not simply to be homogenized.

The analogy with family is good up to a point, but also misleading if pushed too far. A community is entirely based on the faithful fulfillment of commitments. It is a group of adults of the same sex, who are usually much more alike in personal competence than family members are. Community is not based on one-flesh unity and blood ties, and so does not have the sort of natural emotional glue of children's familial relationships with their parents and one another. Unlike the family, the basic concern of a religious community is not survival and the handing on of life. The natural family prepares children to do without it, to live on their own. What takes the place of all that in the religious community is common religious activity—especially liturgy and Scripture reading (see PC 6)—and common work in a shared apostolate, fellowship in service. If that is lost, community cannot be maintained. Members will more and more relate as residents in a boarding house—perhaps affable toward one another and manifesting a friendly superficial interest in and decent concern for each other's interests, but without any profound bond that would make it unthinkable to withdraw if it seems more advantageous to live alone or with some other group.

In some ways, a religious community is like a voluntary association—it is not a natural society, and its members' mutual duties derive from their free commitment to participate. So, members must not let one another down; they have obligations owing to their promises. Yet their obligations go beyond ordinary promises, because vows are to the Lord. And the

community's origin also is not exactly in mutual agreement, but in common response to a common vocation; the Lord forms the community, as he does the Church, though in both cases one participates by a free choice—of faith or of the vows.

The Council's concern about brothers in mixed institutes and auxiliary sisters in some women's institutes is important. Historically, clericalism and an elitism based on the supposed intrinsic superiority of contemplative over active life have led to unreasonable and objectively unfair differences in status and treatment. As the Church is one body with many members, so should institutes and societies within the Church be one community for all their members.

In what concerns common life, all should regard one another as brothers or sisters, care for one another's human needs, and so on; there must be no patronizing or exploitation. For example, there should be no separation except on the basis of different needs and responsibilities in respect to liturgy, meals, recreation, health care, and so on. (Having the brothers quasi-concelebrate is not appropriate; nor is providing annual medical check ups for one group but not the other.)

Whether those in either group may serve as superiors should be determined by the requirements of that role according to the charism of the particular group; in some mixed institutes of men, no cleric should be allowed to be superior. In any case, professed members should be eligible on the same basis for participation in general chapters and councils. If a society or institute of men includes both clerics and brothers who engage in the same or similar apostolates together, it should not be constituted as a clerical society or institute, but as mixed. Both clerical and lay members should be eligible for office as provinicial and general superior; the rule might well be that when a cleric holds such an office, only a brother may be his assistant, and vice versa. Governance within an institute or society must be distinguished from governance within the Church itself; the latter is for clerics inasmuch as it is exercised *in persona Christi;* insofar as the former is not so exercised, it need not be reserved for clerics.

Moreover, insofar as functions differ, leadership in respect to carrying out the differing functions should be within the group that performs them: for example, managing the homemaking tasks of the auxiliary sisters in a contemplative convent should be left to their own leader; the principal of a school staffed by teaching brothers should be a teaching brother adequately trained for administration, whereas a priest might serve there as chaplain.

PC 22: Independent institutes and monasteries, if advantageous and approved by the Holy See, should promote among themselves federations (if they belong to the same religious family), union (especially if they are too small, if they have practically the same constitutions and customs and are animated by a similar spirit), or association (if they are into the same or similar active apostolates).

PC 23: Favor to be shown to conferences or councils of major superiors: the idea seems to be to promote cooperation and rationalization of work in collaboration with bishops, so to eliminate wasteful duplication and competition. They also can work together for the missions, and cooperate in dealing with common problems arising from their relationship to extra-ecclesial society, the law, and so on. Similarly for secular institutes.

Elderly religious should contribute to the life of their communities in whatever ways they can. Regardless of their earlier status, they should be glad to perform simple services. The younger should not deprive the elderly of such opportunities, and should not be too quick to do things simply so as to get them done quickly and more neatly, if the elderly can do them adequately.

The elderly should be attentive to whatever anyone does that is good and commend it, to good efforts and encourage them. As they become less able, they should spend more of their time in prayer to support others' lives and apostolic works, and should regard their isolation and inactivity as an opportunity, as leisure for prayer and devotion. Others should enlist their prayer. In many cases, the younger can benefit by seeking understanding, sympathy, and advice from the elderly, who have time to listen and wisdom to share.

It is a mistake to suppose that a community must be homogeneous, even to the extent that groups of friends often are. Husbands and wives, and even more so parents and children, are seldom homogeneous like that. Members of a community should have much in common, but also need the complementarity of diverse gifts and personalities both for effective apostolate and for mutual help in spiritual growth. The desire for small, compatible group-living is understandable, but also is a sign of moral and spiritual immaturity, and of resistance to the growth that life according to the vows should facilitate. A homogeneous group tends to suppress mutual criticism, and its like-thinking members tend to gain confidence in their views so that they easily resist outside criticism. It follows that, when superiors have in view the common good of providing the benefits of apostolic service, they ought not to be constrained in assigning people to a community or welcoming people higher superiors propose to assign despite objections: "I/we could not stand living/putting up with him/her."

To have a workable community life, everyone must consider what others can and cannot cooperate with in good conscience. On this basis, St. Paul urges people to give in to those who cannot accept eating idol meat. It is people who won't give in who are being divisive—that is, who are uncharitable.

So, people who can conform to relevant liturgical norms but would rather not must therefore give way to those who cannot deviate from the norms in good conscience. (People who cannot in good conscience participate together in liturgy carried out in conformity with relevant liturgical norms simply do not belong in a Catholic community.) At the same time, people who don't like various permitted liturgical options should not resist their legitimate use. It is interesting that, for all their doctrinal latitudinarianism (and perhaps partly due to it), Anglicans generally are pretty good about conforming to liturgical norms. It is pitiful when the members of a community of consecrated life (or a group of diocesan clerics) cannot share in liturgy due to deviations or create a situation in which those troubled in conscience by deviations are expected to put up with them.

Community should have meals together. But that does not mean regularly and constantly talking. The old practice of reading during meals had its value, but need not eliminate conversation entirely. Gourmet food and high-quality beverages should be avoided except for very special occasions when gifts received might be used. That does not mean meals should

not be appetizing. And, of course, they should be adequately and soundly nutritious. Careful planning and selection of ingredients can accomplish that.

The printed matter and entertainment provided for the community should be checked. Things a serious Catholic family cannot have in the house bringing up children almost never should be welcomed into a religious community. But aren't community members adults? Yes, but so-called adult printed matter and entertainment almost always is unsuitable for any serious Christian.

The Council's teaching in GS 25 on the interdependence of the person and of society must be understood correctly. The principle, subject, and goal of all social institutions must be the human person—but that does not mean that all societies are merely instrumental goods, as if all intrinsic values were individualistic. Friendship, marriage, justice, and many other basic human goods can be realized only in two or more people together and by their cooperation. Human beings are by nature in need of social life—but that does not mean that all of their goods pertain to any society other than the kingdom. So, in respect to every community short of the kingdom, members must have a life of their own in some respects, autonomy, privacy. That is especially true with respect to their self-examination, personal prayer, and legitimate friendships, which may be with individuals who do or do not belong to the community.

Of course, friendships legitimate in themselves—not romantic relationships—nevertheless must be conducted appropriately and limited insofar as necessary so that they do not interfere with the fulfillment of other responsibilities. Friendships among members of the community that make others outsiders are not being conducted rightly. Legitimate friendships with outsiders can draw a member out of the community and can lead to relaxation of discipline with respect to poverty and obedience.

Community life, like family life, ideally should be joyful but actually is, at best, a mixture of alternating joys and sorrows, and in too many instances is for one or more persons involved virtually endless misery. When joy is lacking, fidelity is necessary but difficult. Those who suffer must bear in mind that when God called them he never promised joy in this life. And Jesus said that anyone who wished to be his disciple would have to take up his/her cross daily and follow him. Therefore, it is necessary to rejoice in the Lord, to rejoice in hope, to look forward without anxiety to the blessed coming of our Savior.

Building sound community requires a sound spirituality of the Eucharist. By it we are incorporated into Jesus and become bodily united with one another. Members must presume that fellows in Eucharistic communio really are united with them in Christ. On this basis, they must treat everyone with perfectly good will for Jesus' sake. To provide the emotional underpinning for this good will, they need to practice devotion to Jesus substantially present in the Eucharist, so that they will intensely feel themselves part of him and united to the others in him.

There should be some community recreation, and all should participate, but not necessarily by engaging in a single form of activity. Should not be occasion for members of different exclusive groups to enjoy each other's company. Should not be passive—watching TV and movies—but

of a sort to foster communication and acting together: creative projects, sports, games. Can be utilitarian, such as gardening and yard work, preparing a feast, and so on—provided the work is experienced as fun rather than taxing and does not become a regular duty.

The problem of community life where there is disagreement about what some consider to be essentials is more complex than our outline supposed. There is no solution to everyone's problems without considering the diverse roles individuals play in the community. The less authority and scope for action an individual has, the more likely he or she will be able to agree to disagree and take a live-and-let-live attitude.

Nobody may ever compromise by doing what he or she regards, after conscientious reflection, to be wrong. All should be open to being shown that a judgment of conscience is mistaken, but should not accept as authoritative supposedly expert advice, the word of a superior, or the opinion of the many. The person should calmly and quietly inform superior(s) that he/she cannot go along with the action and why. Must, if necessary, ask to be relieved of the duty or office, or even separate from the community in order to avoid violating conscience.

What about cases of others' apparent wrongdoing that a member believes a superior should deal with but is not dealing with? Perhaps the superior is not aware. Good members quietly call superior's attention to the problem. The superior's inaction after that might or might not be considered another instance of wrongdoing to be called to the attention of a higher superior. If one has followed the chain of command and nothing happens or if one cannot reasonably expect the process to lead to any change for the better, good members do not nag.

Where cooperation is needed and some are convinced only one or certain ways of acting are morally acceptable, while others think other ways acceptable and would prefer them, the latter, if good community members, will accept the narrower limits for community's sake. St. Paul on idol meat exemplifies this. For example, if some feel bound to abide by liturgical norms (including permissible alternatives) without exception whereas others have a relaxed attitude about various liturgical matters, the latter should give when the former participate in the liturgy.

GS 28 on love of enemies—beginning with adversaries and those who think differently—applies to life in community. One must make a distinction between error and those in error. Does not mean compromising truth, and one must proclaim saving truth to all. Not judge the inner guilt of anyone—thus one can very well judge what others are doing wrong.

Ecclesiae sanctae, on implementing PC, II, V (25–29), sets some norms for community. They open the door to different schedules for individuals. They push for more equitable status for second-class members such as lay brothers and sisters who serve the choir nuns.

Gerald A. Arbuckle, S.M., "Clarifying Community Models: Essential for Refounding," *Review for Religious*, 50/5 (Sept./Oct. 1991): 697–704, sets out three sorts of community life: the monastic, the relational or conventual, and the mission-oriented. While his focus is on getting things clear in the documents, the point also is fundamental for living community life. The mission-oriented subordinates community to the service to which the outfit is committed. If members want to undo that, they are violating their commitment. But the monastic requires

staying in place and sharing in the community's liturgy; the monk who wants to cut corners on that so as to provide some service outside the monastery also is cutting corners.
The middle type is locked into cooperative apostolate, and this should be worked out so as to harmonize with requirements of a solidly maintained community life.

It follows that there are different degrees of obligation to maintain community life. For someone committed to monastic life to be off on some individual apostolate or service can be justified only by the greatest need—e.g., being called on by a bishop for some special, short-term service. For a Jesuit to be off by himself only calls for a need for his apostolic service such that his superiors judge it appropriate to send him to meet the need. But in no case does it make sense for religious of any sort to have separate domiciles or friendship-based group houses when there is no real apostolic need—e.g., for people working in the same apostolate in the same place to have their separate apartments and commute to work, seeing one another only there. Why not? (1) Community life is part of the sign value; overcoming the natural obstacles to living in harmony with others is a sign of heavenly communio. (2) Separate dwellings remove the moral support members can and should provide for one another to remain faithful to commitments to prayer, service, etc. In other words, separate living is an occasion of grave sin for religious, and so is not to be undertaken without real necessity, in which case the occasion of sin must be neutralized.

Humor can be a form of aggression. Kidding can be a light way of conveying correction. But it also can be an expression of contempt. Often, humor at others' expense is ambiguous and causes pain. Self-deprecating humor can express a false claim to humility and so be hypocritical. Joking often is time wasting and distracting. In dealing with serious matters, humor often is a way of slipping across very questionable points, because it blocks critical reflection. Much contemporary humor is cynical. That cannot be helpful in a community. The remedy is not to be humorless, but to recognize the many possible pitfalls and to take care that one's humor is really charitable and constructive, is not a distraction, does not detract from sober reflection.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "Common Life," *Review for Religious,* 52/2 (March/April 1993): 304–10, deals with the obligation of common life. This is distinct from community, since secular institute members must form a community but need not live together. Common life involves living together and sharing; it is closely connected with the vow of poverty. She also points out the ascetic advantage, since one must practice charity in many small matters to live together.

She does not mention that common life also is part of the obligation of religious to be a sign of the heavenly communion. While any genuine Christian community provides some sign, a community actually living common life in harmony on a long-term basis is a very substantial sign, because that is not easy and, in the modern world is becoming increasingly difficult.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "Common Life and Houses," *Review for Religious,* 52/3 (May/June 1993): 462–68, deals with common life as a canonical requirement for religious and members of societies of apostolic life. While not always technically met, because houses

may not have been established according to canonical requirements, professed religious and incorporated members of societies have a right to a place to live.

This rules out the practice of members who already reside together deciding whether or not they will accept a fellow member of their institute into their local community. Such groups are making a judgment from which there is no recourse and that is not theirs to make, since assignments should be up to superiors. (It also is worth noting that a system of references from the previous community to the prospective new one, which can on that basis refuse to accept someone, totally undercuts the idea of the community as a whole as a brotherhood or sisterhood. The houses of an institute are all essentially residences of all the members, subject only to availability of space and assignment or at least approval by superiors. Home is where you always can go when you have no place else to go, and they always will take you in. What sort of a sign of the heavenly community is a religious institute whose houses decide whether or not to accept any member of good standing on criteria that single young people might use in deciding whether to accept housemates or individuals into a fraternity or sorority.

CIC, c. 667, §1, requires that cloister according to the character and mission of each institute and its proper law be observed in every house: at least part of it must be reserved exclusively for members. This duty corresponds to an important right: people need some privacy. And so enclosure or cloister should be maintained, and sometimes it is disregarded as least for same-sex guests. The problem this poses is analogous to that of a college student whose room-mate brings in a “friend” to share the common space.

CIC, c. 667, §2: “A stricter discipline of cloister must be observed in monasteries ordered to contemplative life.” Being cut off from the world, living a countercultural, otherworldly existence, contemplatives need a stricter cloister.

The current law allows for necessary and reasonable exceptions to cloister. Those exceptions ought not to be stretched arbitrarily; else the privacy all religious are entitled to and the separation from the world that is part of the sign are damaged or lost.

Finally, CIC, c. 666, needs to be observed: “In the use of means of social communiction, necessary discretion is to be observed and those things are to be avoided which are harmful to one’s vocation and dangerous to the chastity of a consecrated person.” Religious must be careful in their use of the media, not only with respect to content but with respect to quantity. Television and other media can obstruct interpersonal relationships essential for community and take time away from work and prayer. Amplified sound often is distracting to others; sometimes discretion requires using headphones so as not to disturb others.

Members who are involved in an apostolate that requires them to live outside any house of their institute can maintain community, just as husbands and wives forced to reside—for example, by military service, work, the need to obtain health care, or the like—at some distance can maintain their marital relationship. But that requires real involvement in a particular community to which they really belong. It means not only going to a provincial house from time to time for assemblies and big events and to a particular community for

holidays and celebrations. It means keeping in touch with what is going on in their community, sharing its hardships and problems. It might mean, for instance, having someone who needs help come and visit for a while.

In a house, some people are likely not to like each other, while others tend to become friends. Both present problems. Those who don't like each other and who may well be opposed with regard to serious matters must treat each other with restraint, courtesy, and kindness: loving enemies overcomes evils and builds up the image of heaven. Those who are friends certainly can share with and support each other, yet must not become exclusive: openness to others also is part of heaven's image. Groups of friends must take care to avoid gossiping and griping about those outside the group: that surely detracts from heaven's image.

Jean Shively, O.S.C., "Enclosure: Sacramental Sign," *Review for Religious,* 54 (May/June 1995): 454–61, makes a good case in favor of the enclosure practiced by her Monastery of Poor Clares. The argument in many respects also is a good argument for maintaining cloister in any religious house and for members thereof limiting much more than most now do there forays outside.

Some people are horrified by the idea of strict cloister, which they regard as a frightful restriction of nuns' freedom. Their horror really is at what leads some women freely to choose this sort of life. It is not their lack of freedom but their exercise of it that is upsetting: they prefer to be free from the outside world in order to relate to God without distractions, much as other women on occasion shut out others to be with men they love. What the critics do not understand and appreciate is contemplative nuns' love of God, which takes all their time, energy, and attention.

In clerical institutes, nonclerical professed members are not excluded by canon law from participating on an equal basis in governance, according to Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "The Potestas of Religious Superiors according to Canon 596," *Review for Religious,* 55:1 (Jan./Feb. 1996): 87–91, esp. 91.

For members of any institute that provides for daily Mass, common participation in it is central for restoring, maintaining, and promoting real community. For that reason, division must be avoided, and the only sure way to avoid it is for everyone both to adhere absolutely to all requirements of canon law and the liturgical books and to accept humbly and meekly the use of all legitimate options and results of planning of music and so on by those assigned to do it. While participation is a duty, its grounds should be understood and endorsed so that one would participate quite regularly even if there were no requirement to do so.

Proper nursing unit care for disabled and elderly members is an important part of the countercultural sign for religious institutes. It also should offer a model for care for all the elderly. At the same time, those members ought to be content with good hospice-type care and forgo expensive and burdensome hospital stays, surgery, examinations, and treatments for the community's sake, though that means accepting an earlier—in some cases years earlier—death.

Flourishing community not only is beneficial to members but an important part of the mission of religious institutes. For whatever other apostolic activities religious may engage in, their primary apostolic activity is to witness to the kingdom simply by being what they are and living a chaste, poor, and meek life in authentic and joyful human communio.

It is worth noticing that right after the canons on the vows, the section of canon law on institutes of consecrate life in general has a canon on "communion of life" which is broad enough to cover secular institutes: CIC, c. 602: "The life of brothers or sisters proper to each institute, by which all the members are united together as a special family in Christ, is to be defined in such a way that it becomes a mutual support for all in fulfilling the vocation of each. Moreover, by their communion as brothers or sisters rooted and founded in charity, members are to be an example of universal reconciliation in Christ."

Here the issue is not about life in common, but about the community: life is to be mutually supportive in the quest for perfection via the vows, and is to be a sign of the eschaton by its inner harmony—a family living in love.

Congregation For Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 26:

> 26. The communitarian ideal must not blind us to the fact that every Christian reality is built on human frailty. The perfect "ideal community" does not exist yet: the perfect communion of the saints is our goal in the heavenly Jerusalem.
>
> Ours is the time for edification and constant building. It is always possible to improve and to walk together towards a community that is able to live in forgiveness and love. Communities cannot avoid all conflicts. The unity which they must build is a unity established at the price of reconciliation (see CIC, c. 602; PC 15a) Imperfection in communities ought not discourage us.

Rather than waste time and energy griping about defects in community—which contributes to their persistence—members should work to overcome obstacles, to seek reconciliation.

CIC, c. 686 provides for voluntary and for imposed exclaustration—that is, separation from the life of the institute without severing membership, analogous to separation of married couple without divorce. This is to be done only for grave reasons. Involuntary exclaustration can be imposed only by the pope (pontifical institutes) or a diocesan bishop (diocesan right institutes).

In some cases this is the only way to deal with someone who is persistently disobedient or who has psychological problems and refuses to deal with them. Such individuals cannot be forced into treatment, since that would imply compelling manifestation of conscience and probably would be fruitless anyway. They can be assigned to a residence where they can cause minimal trouble and responsibility, and that seems a reasonable alternative in some cases. CIC, c. 687 says the exclaustrated member remains under the care of the superior and the local ordinary, is freed from obligations incompatible with the new condition, but cannot participate in its processes (lacks active and passive voice). Is expected to keep vow of celibacy and usually to support herself/himself. May wear habit unless indult excludes doing so.

Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., "The Troubling Religious: Further Considerations," *Review for Religious,* 49:4 (July/Aug. 1990): 618–24, discusses the problem and suggests that superiors trying to arrange psychological health care need to check things out in advance, because once in treatment, individuals have a right to privacy and superiors must put up with treatment that can be openended and costly while seeming to benefit little.

CIC, c. 608: "A religious community must live in a legitimately established house under the authority of a superior designated according to the norm of law. Each house is to have at least an oratory in which the Eucharist is to be celebrated and reserved so that it is truly the center of the community."

Obviously, the house need not be one building; it can be several small buildings close to one another; and it need not be a whole building, it can be a part of a big building. Still, it cannot be a lot of different places chosen to avoid living together, with a superior off somewhere. CIC, c. 629 says that the superior is to reside in the house. And the canon clearly means there is someone who is superior; it cannot be that all share that role.

The canon's provision that the house have at least an oratory where the Eucharist is celebrated and reserved so that it is really the center of the community also is important. Living in dispersion rather than in Jesus' house undermines the essence of religious community.

CIC, c. 665, §1: "Observing common life," religious are not to be absent from the house of the institute in which they are to live without the superior's permission; for a long absence, a major superior needs a grave reason and the consent of the council, and the absence is not to be for more than a year except for three purposes: caring for ill health, studies, an apostolate in the name of the institute.

The implication is that other serious reasons can be taken as allowing absences for up to one year. An example might be caring for a dying or aged family member. Exceptions to the one-year limit may be made with permission of the Holy See. However, such prolonged absences are, practically, temporary withdrawal from religious life, since the institute's proper apostolate also is set aside. The fiction, sometimes used, of being assigned to care for the relative does not help, for the real reason for doing so is the family tie. Yet that is supposed to have been relativized by entering religion, and "compassionate leave" undercuts the totality of commitment and the witness to the overriding importance of the kingdom's urgent claim.

CIC, c. 628, §1, requires superiors to visit houses at the times designated by the institute's proper law, and §3 requires truthful answers to legitimate questions and that nobody try to divert members from that duty or impede visitation in any other way. This obligation is a real and serious one, and should not be carried off in a superficial and pro forma way. It means a regular self-study and manifestation of the community's (not the individual's) sincere conscience to the superior so that problems will not be shoved under the rug. It also is an opportunity to which each individual member has a strict right to let the superior know what is going wrong and to seek help with problems. Simply knowing that the duty of visitation will be conscientiously fulfilled will greatly strengthen houses to maintain self-discipline and persevere in fulfilling community responsibilities.

Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M., "Community Living: Beginning the Conversation," *Review for Religious,* 58:2 (Mar./Apr. 1999): 137–49, argues for community living, though she tends to soften it up in some respects by assuming many deviations from the old norms as givens. She likes the CICLSAL document on fraternal life in community and *Vita Consecrata* on relevant matters.

Life in common contributes powerfully to the sign-value of consecrated life for many reasons. (1) The fact that many people can live harmoniously as a permanent quasi-family is astounding in itself. (2) That harmonious and stable common life makes it clear that fulfilling the vows is not something insane and inhuman. (3) The concrete reality of common life mirrors the communio of the heavenly kingdom except for the one-flesh aspect of the latter, which only marriage and marital sex can mirror.

Mary Johnson, S.N.D.deN., "Bowling Alone, Living Alone: Current Social Context for Living the Vows," *Review for Religious,* 59:2 (Mar./Apr. 2000): 118–30 at 124–25, provides some data concerning contemporary living arrangements and preferred ones of women in U.S. institutes.

With many members of religious institutes living alone or in very small group apostolates, trauma arises when they eventually—due to disability, sickness, old age, or retirement—must "come home" to life in a community. Some are setting up old folks homes, places for these to languish and die, but that is not an ideal solution except, perhaps, for those who are demented. Such people need to be listened to and allowed to express their feelings, but not patronized. Others should not let them alone to stew any more than a spouse or parent would allow the other spouse or a child to stew; one asks what the trouble is, and then listens patiently and tries to help, at least by responding with thoughtful and kind words.

Every effort should be made to get those returning to do whatever they can to contribute to the community's apostolate and life, even if that is only supporting others' work or the common life in very simple ways; and their contribution should be recognized and appreciated. (Al served as receptionist, and for a long time ran errands and got the cars serviced.) In some cases, a sort of re-novitiate is needed to help recent arrivals relearn how to adapt to and fit into the community as it now is—perhaps considerably changed from what it was when they left it. The returnees may not have served the community so well, and may not be glad to function again as part of it. So, they are a test of the genuineness of community, of mutual love, which needs to go beyond that of other human associations: If you are kind only to friends, what merit is there in that? Utter nonbelievers do as much!

In general, religious and religious institutes ought not to assume any fixed age for retirement. That notion makes sense for those whose work is burdensome rather than personally fulfilling—hard laborers for whom advancing age and physical impairment make it too hard to go on. Requiring people to offer to retire at some age—e.g., bishops at 75—may be necessary so as to allow superiors to make a judgment and end someone's tenure without crushing him. But that should not be necessary for religious, who ought always to be ready to accept a new assignment.

The key is not to cut people off from contributing to significant activity but to free people from the obligation to contribute on a regular basis—which would not take into account their inability to do that and consequent undependability. So, as people age or begin to suffer from debilitating conditions, they need assignments in which they can use their gifts as fully as possible yet not push themselves unreasonably hard and not let others down unreasonably often. In many cases, that means not going back to a provincial house or special facility for the elderly, but remaining or moving to some small and functioning community where others can care for them.

The last thing that religious should do is retire and regard their time as their own to fritter away in time-passing activities, like watching a lot of TV or playing and reverting to pre-adolescent childhood. At the same time, though, they do need and deserve some of the freedom to grow spiritually that good preadolescent children used to enjoy during summer vacations, when they have time to read and think and pray without the burdens of constant tasks, appointments, and assignments.

Small groups of members of a religious institute can constitute a good community—down to a point at which the group dynamics works against the benefits of community as distinct from tighter forms of association. Two people living together have no common life distinct from their personal lives—their relationship is too much a factor in their personal lives. For a community to take on much of a life of its own, numbers are needed—four or more or least.

Moreover, smaller houses are not cost effective. Poverty argues for a house of at least four.

When a community, like any family, seeks to keep its conflicts and inadequacies to itself so as to deal better with them, not lose others' respect, not scandalize others, and so on; that is not of itself hypocrisy. But when a community seeks to keep things secret so that it need not deal with them but can accept and at least tolerate them, that is hypocrisy.

Vita consecrata, 95: "By its very nature the Eucharist is at the center of the consecrated life, both for individuals and for communities. It is the daily viaticum and source of the spiritual life for the individual and for the institute." Yet, alas, there are problems in having a good community Eucharist.

Some are practical ones. Schedules do not coincide, making it impossible for members of some communities to participate in a common Eucharist. Some women's communities cannot get a priest to come in and some members cannot easily go to a parish. Members of clerical institutes often must scatter to provide service. Some of these problems can be mitigated by planning. In some cases, at least part of the Liturgy of the Hours can be said together. Women's communities may be able to conduct a well-organized Communion service sometimes.

Some difficulties arise due to ideology. In liturgy as in other important matters, there ought to be unity with respect to essentials (which in this case means remaining within the bounds of the Church's liturgical norms) and liberty about nonessentials (which in this case means accepting anything, however much one dislikes it, that those norms allow). Then there is the problem for women's communities of feminist rejection of various things, beginning with the

translations regarded as exclusive but extending to the male priest and even the very idea of the Eucharist. Some of this is justified (language need not be rigid) but on the whole it is either a reaction to clericalism and shares in its mistake about the role of clerics or abandonment of essential truths of faith. On this see Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M., "Community and Communion: Making the Connections," *Review for Religious,* 60:2 (March/Apr. 2001): 139–51 at 149–51.

CIC, c. 765: "Preaching to religious in their churches or oratories requires the permission of the superior competent according to the norm of the constitutions." That permission is not required for a bishop (c. 763) or the community's own chaplain (c 566, §1), but in other cases the superior has a duty to watch who preaches and to see to it that someone whose preaching is not sound is not allowed to continue preaching to the community.

CIC, c. 567, §1: the superior of a house of lay religious institute must be consulted by a bishop before he appoints a chaplain for that house, and the superior has the right, after consulting the community, to nominate a priest to be chaplain.

§2: the chaplain should celebrate or direct liturgical functions, not involve himself in the governance of the institute (obviously, that does not preclude his being asked for and giving advice, e.g., about canonical questions or other matters where he has appropriate information and/or expertise.

Some idealize the early Christian community described in Acts 4.32–35, and argue that a religious community should be as egalitarian as possible: not only should possessions be common and shared indiscriminately, but there should be no distinctions of status such as those between clerical and lay members of many men's institutes, or those between choir sisters and working sisters in some women's institutes. Egalitarianism also motivates the desire of some to reduce superiors to leaders with very limited authority and to rotate leadership frequently.

The property arrangements in Acts are like those in a family: from each according to his or her ability, to each according to her or his needs. Yet that early Christian community still included the apostles, and they had status other members lacked. In the same community, Stephen and the other six men chosen to serve so as to ensure fair treatment for the widows were given a special status by the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them (cf. Acts 6.1–6).

What's more important: a community of religious needs to be an apt sign of the heavenly kingdom, where there will be permanent differences of status. Rather than being egalitarian, Jesus is forever Lord. Among created persons, Mary is superior to the angels and all other saints. What is important is not equality but harmony grounded in mutual love rather than—as so often is the case in this world—on resignation to and tolerance of evil to avoid even greater evil. So, that is what a community of religious really need to manifest: harmony based on mutual love, a love of each for every other that wills constantly that all be fulfilled as much as they can be and so rejoices in that being so.

What is essential to community is that persons live together (in some sense; they need not reside in the same dwelling, but must communicate with one another) and cooperate for a common good. I lay out conditions for community in LCL, 332–39. Religious communities are formed by the commitments of everyone concerned and are open-ended, not contractual but covenantal.

Given relevant law and mutual commitments, there are mutual responsibilities and rights; everyone belongs and has definite status, and everyone has bonds with everyone else.

The community is good insofar as members fulfill their responsibilities and respect one another's rights. A good community need not be very warm; members may treat each other in a rather formal and businesslike way as each does his or her work while all respect one another's privacy. However, a good religious community involves so great a sharing of values that are vitally important to everyone and typically involves regular face-to-face cooperation, sharing prayer and meals, and so on. Under these conditions, mutual affection among some members begins to develop. For the sake of maintaining solidarity and preventing others from feeling left out, all must strive to treat everyone else with the same consideration and kindness with which they treat those toward whom they feel affection. So, a good community tends to become quite familial.

In many religious communities, the rule or practice calls for nonordained persons—superiors or persons appointed by them—to preach, that is, to unpack the significance of God's word in a way that promotes the spiritual life not only of community members as individuals but of the community as a whole. If those persons were ordained, they could do that by preaching homilies at community liturgies, and some do that despite not being ordained. They should not. Rather, they should do it outside the liturgy. The celebrant of the liturgy need not give a homily when it is not a Sunday or holyday of obligation; but it would be well if he did provide a very brief and carefully prepared one, because that would provide something that would link the day's liturgy to whatever other *lectio divina* or scripturally based instruction would be done during the day.

In many cases, a religious community of women involves closer interpersonal relationships and a great deal of shared domestic activity. Women tend more to mind one another's business and to take care of one another—generally a good thing. Men tend to live together, even in a monastery, more independently, especially when they have outsiders doing household chores. But in general, it is easier for them to get along in a community without being close to most other members. One result of that is that community and active life work together better for men than for women. With more professional training and different apostolic interests, women's communities encounter greater problems. So, for some of them, changing into secular institutes would seem to be a reasonable move.

Community takes many forms. There can be real community between/among any persons who communicate and genuinely cooperate by doing good acts for any authentically good end. These days communication at a distance is very easy. So, there can be real and very strong community among, say, members of a secular institute who very seldom see one another face to face. On the other hand, community can be very rich between/among those

who communicate every day face to face and by gestures and body language as well as words, and who cooperate in very much of what they do.

Being very close physically and doing many things together need not mean much, or even any, real community, because communication may be very poor and the parties may be acting in a coordinated way for different agendas, mutually using one another. That can be a very bad situation, and a countersign for the kingdom. Still, a very close, familial community with genuine cooperation and mutual affection, and very clear and intense focus on the things of the Lord is a strong sign—thus the significance of a healthy and spiritually sound community of contemplative nuns.

Communication is not just superficial conversation. A lot of that goes on among people who in no real sense form community; indeed, a lot of it is just to prevent communication. People need to express their true selves with right intent, need to talk about what matters to them and one another. If lying is needed, community is absent and increasingly impeded. A lot of communication is just paying attention to others, to their needs and interests, and listening to what they have to say, trying to understand it, asking gentle questions to get clearer, pondering, and then responding with what one thinks will help and prepare for or contribute to cooperation.

When people are pursuing an agenda—providing certain services, maintaining a pleasant life together, etc.—rather than discerning and accepting vocations, some responsibilties seem burdensome and unreasonably onerous, and they are likely not to be fulfilled. For example, in a community there may be someone old, hard to get along with, a nuisance. One needs to meet such a person's legitimate needs, gently encourage repentance and a better attitude, forgive, try to see things from their point of view and try to cultivate one's affection for the old fart. None of this may pay off. But one should realize that it is good for oneself to keep on doing it. One is called to this. Whether there seems to be a point to it or not, one must keep trying, and not begrudge the time or regard it as wasted, even if one could be doing more in some apostolate that seems really to be paying off big time.

Secular society heavily rewards people for their gifts. But gifts are not a ground of entitlement. They ought to be regarded like material goods, as given for the benefit of all, as given for service. Like the richer, the more gifted have greater responsibilities for others' well-being. So, it is atrocious if religious communities allocate high status, more respect, and perks to more gifted people. Distinguish: they may need things others don't to use their gifts in service, and such things should be reasonably supplied. They may need to travel more. But one must be careful. Where no such basis for different treatment, the gifted themselves, their superiors, and the community must work together to avoid what the world wrongly takes for granted: the gifted don't per se deserve more and better things, more freedom to do as they please, and tolerance of self-indulgence of various sorts.

Given the commitment to concentrate on the things of the Lord and the leaving behind of family and possessions, individuals can either try to proceed by themselves or band together to cooperate. If the latter, a new ecclesial reality emerges, gathered around Jesus, ready to be formed by him and to follow him together.

Communities are structured somewhat differently, according to differences in charisms. The community Pachomius started was a brotherhood, but he was head; eventually there were multiple houses, each with its own head, and the entire village was under the authority of an Apa and an administrative vicar. Basil and his friends established a more fraternal community, presided over by a president (proestes) rather than an Apa. Benedict's monastery was a community built up around the Abbot, who represented Christ and taught the divine commandments to the brothers. With the Franciscans, relationships were more personal, and the friars united among themselves around their minister (guardian). Augustine's approach was more that of community shaped by the word of God, sharing material goods—the ideal of Acts—studying Scripture together by dialogue. Later, Dominicans and others are founded for ecclesial ministry or a specific apostolate; community is shaped for cooperation, and leadership to facilitate the common effort.

Religious community must be both genuinely religious and an authentic human community. As religious, it must center upon the things of the Lord; the common commitment that forms the community is to cooperate with respect to those things. Cultivating the community itself is not extrinsic to the basic commitment, since it is a communion with one another in Christ. But in addition, members have other human needs that must be met and mutual responsibilities in meeting them.

The common good is realized ad intra and ad extra. Ad intra, by mutual help in fulfilling each member's personal vocation—his or her growth in holiness—which includes the increasing holiness of the community as such, its increasing approximation to heaven. Ad extra, by the contribution the community's action makes to the Church, built up by prayer, by sign, by example, and by services, whether ministries or apostolates according to charism. These two sides of the common good are by no means in competition; they are realized together in and by seamless, harmonious cooperation.

Besides its members, every community also is constituted by a multitude of entities that are not in themselves persons: second-order (common memories and beliefs), third-order (common commitment, necessary consequent norms, mutual rights and duties) and fourth-order (documents, rules, material goods, property and money). To some extent, these entities contribute directly to the well-being and full being of members of the community as such. Insofar as that is so, they share in personal dignity and demand respect. But to some extent, these constitutive entities are do not directly contribute to the well-being and full being of persons but are mere means. To that extent, these entities belong to the community as an institution whose whole meaning and value is subordinate to the good of its members, not, of course, considered individually but collectively. Thus, some elements that constitute the community as institution can fairly be—and even sometimes should be—sacrificed for the good of the members. But others cannot; sacrificing them damages or destroys the community and therefore cannot be truly good for but rather injures the members as members.

Religious communities do not originate as voluntary organizations do: by noticing a common interest and mutually consenting to pursue it together. So, the consent model of voluntary organization does not really apply. (The same is true for real Christian marriage established in

response to vocation.) Rather, the origin is God's word calling individuals to join together in serving him. Of course, each must listen and accept the vocation, commit himself/herself to it freely—and in that respect it is like a voluntary association. But the commitment is in principle of one's whole self, and so every member remains fully bound to the terms of the common commitment to the Lord's summons. The community remains collectively bound to hear the word of the Lord and to be constantly formed and renewed by it.

Called together by the word of God, the religious community is a church, a particular instantiation of the Church. (Of course, lacking a bishop, it exists as part of the particular church where it is.) Like the early Church described at the beginning of Acts, the memory of Jesus' death and resurrection is the point of departure for the community: it lives toward the second coming and anticipates heaven.

The religious community is radically different from the family insofar as the family has secular goods to pursue: marriage in itself is a secular good, and the family is the basic survival community; it is rightly focused on nurturing children and equipping them to leave it. The religious community is purely ecclesial; its whole reason for being is religious.

The love of the members of the religious community for one another and for outsiders, like that of members of the Church as a whole, should not be merely responsive to already existing goodness. Rather, the love should be creative or generative, like Christ's, bringing about lovability that was lacking, generating goodness and holiness, overcoming sin. It should be self-sacrificing, not seeking to be loved but to love and serve. Of course, in fact, there is much falling short, but that needs to be recognized and repented, and new efforts always made to realize the ideal of a Church built up by mutual self-sacrifice and reaching out to those in need of what she has to give.

The Eucharist is central for a religious community's communio much as the family meal is for a family. So, there ought to be, as often as possible, a Eucharist for the community as such, with everyone participating. All the arguments against liturgical abuses require conformity to the liturgy as authorized, and charity requires mutual tolerance about options. The sick and dying condition of a religious house is manifested by quarreling about liturgy, inability to celebrate together, imposition of deviations from liturgical norms, and/or common agreement to follow deviant practices.

The sharing of goods that characterizes evangelical poverty should extend to sharing of all one's gifts and human resources with other community members for the common good. In other words, nobody should wish to star or insist on having a fair share of opportunities to stand out; but everyone should be willing to throw everything they have into the common life and work, and all should gladly accept the best that anyone has to offer.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 10:

> It is impossible to speak of religious community univocally. The history of consecrated life witnesses to a variety of ways of living out the one communion according to the nature of the various institutes. Thus, today we can admire the

> "wondrous variety" of religious families which enrich the Church and equip her for every good work (see PC 1) and, deriving from this, the variety of forms of religious communities.
>
> Nevertheless, in the various forms it takes, fraternal life in common has always appeared as a radical expression of the common fraternal spirit which unites all Christians. Religious community is a visible manifestation of the communion which is the foundation of the Church and, at the same time, a prophecy of that unity towards which she tends as her final goal. . . . "In fact, in a world frequently very deeply divided and before their brethren in the faith, [religious] give witness to the possibility of a community of goods, of fraternal love, of a program of life and activity which is theirs because they have accepted the call to follow more closely and more freely Christ the Lord who was sent by the Father so that, firstborn among many brothers and sisters, he might establish a new fraternal fellowship in the gift of his Spirit" (Religious and Human Promotion, 24).

How members of a religious institute or society of apostolic life should live together depends on their charism. Not all communities ought to be alike, just as not all good families need be alike. At the same time, the function of religious life as a sign of the kingdom to a great extent depends on the authenticity of visibly fraternal life in common.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 21:

> 21. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). In the entire dynamic of community life, Christ, in his paschal mystery, remains the model of how to construct unity. Indeed, he is the source, the model and the measure of the command of mutual love: we must love one another as he loved us. And he loved us to the point of giving up his life for us. Our life is a sharing in the charity of Christ, in his love for the Father and for his brothers and sisters, a love forgetful of self.
>
> All of this, however, is not in the nature of the "old man", who wants communion and unity but does not want or intend to pay the price in terms of personal commitment and dedication. The path that leads from the "old man", who tends to close in on himself, to the "new man" who gives himself to others is a long and difficult one. The holy founders realistically emphasized the difficulties and dangers of this passage, conscious as they were that community cannot be improvised. It is not a spontaneous thing nor is it achieved in a short time.
>
> In order to live as brothers and sisters, a true journey of interior liberation is necessary. Israel, liberated from Egypt, became the People of God after walking for a long time through the desert under the guidance of Moses. In much the same way, a community inserted within the Church as People of God must be built by persons whom Christ has liberated and made capable of loving as he did, by the gift of his liberating love and the heartfelt acceptance of those he gives us as guides.

> The love of Christ poured out in our hearts urges us to love our brothers and sisters even to the point of taking on their weaknesses, their problems and their difficulties. In a word: even to the point of giving our very selves.

This section quite well states what is essential for genuine communio: mutual love that is really self-sacrificing. It is true of a family, and equally true of religious communities. There must be a real effort to grow in such love, not merely to reach some sort of tolerable arrangement for living more or less together.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 28:

> 28. We must not forget, in the end, that peace and pleasure in being together are among the signs of the Kingdom of God. The joy of living even in the midst of difficulties along the human and spiritual path and in the midst of daily annoyances is already part of the Kingdom. This joy is a fruit of the Spirit and embraces the simplicity of existence and the monotonous texture of daily life. A joyless fraternity is one that is dying out; before long, members will be tempted to seek elsewhere what they can no longer find within their own home. A fraternity rich in joy is a genuine gift from above to brothers and sisters who know how to ask for it and to accept one another, committing themselves to fraternal life, trusting in the action of the Spirit. . . .
>
> Such a testimony of joy is a powerful attraction to religious life, a source of new vocations and an encouragement to perseverance. It is very important to cultivate such joy within a religious community: overwork can destroy it, excessive zeal for certain causes can lead some to forget it, constant self-analysis of one's identity and one's own future can cloud it.
>
> Being able to enjoy one another; allowing time for personal and communal relaxation; taking time off from work now and then; rejoicing in the joys of one's brothers and sisters, in solicitous concern for the needs of brothers and sisters; trusting commitment to works of the apostolate; compassion in dealing with situations; looking forward to the next day with the hope of meeting the Lord always and everywhere: these are things that nourish serenity, peace and joy. They become strength in apostolic action.
>
> Joy is a splendid testimony to the evangelical quality of a religious community; it is the end point of a journey which is not lacking in difficulties, but which is possible because it is sustained by prayer: "rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12).

What is needed, of course, is authentic joy, an attitude of mind and heart. A well-practiced and carefully maintained but superficial affability and cheerfulness is not enough. Moreover, the joy in question must be built up among all those who share the common commitment, rather than depend on natural affinities and likemindedness. When religious seek joy by dividing into smaller sub-groups of simpatico people, they have abandoned religious community entirely and replaced it with merely natural circles of friendship.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 34:

> 34. The considerable impact of mass media on modern life and mentality has its effect on religious communities as well, and frequently affects internal communication.
>
> A community, aware of the influence of the media, should learn to use them for personal and community growth, with the evangelical clarity and inner freedom of those who have learned to know Christ (cf. Gal. 4:17–23). The media propose, and often impose, a mentality and model of life in constant contrast with the Gospel. In this connection, in many areas one hears of the desire for deeper formation in receiving and using the media, both critically and fruitfully. Why not make them an object of evaluation, of discernment and of planning in the regular community meetings?
>
> In particular when television becomes the only form of recreation, relations among people are blocked or even impeded, fraternal communication is limited and indeed consecrated life itself can be damaged.
>
> A proper balance is needed: the moderate and prudent use of the communications media, [note omitted] accompanied by community discernment, can help the community know better the complexity of the world of culture, receive the media with awareness and a critical eye and, finally, evaluate their impact in relation to the various ministries at the service of the Gospel.

What is said here, so far as it goes, is sound advice with respect to the media. The problem not only is with television. Newspapers and magazines also can be a problem, and the internet certainly is. It differs from TV, because it can draw individuals into addiction. The strategy of dialogue, rational policy making, and mutual helping in abiding by reasonable norms is sound.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 38:

> A special occasion for human growth and Christian maturity lies in living with persons who suffer, who are not at ease in community, and who thus are an occasion of suffering for others and of disturbance in community life.
>
> We must first of all ask about the source of such suffering. It may be caused by a character defect, commitments that seem too burdensome, serious gaps in formation, excessively rapid changes over recent years, excessively authoritarian forms of government, or by spiritual difficulties.
>
> There may be some situations when the one in authority needs to remind members that life in common sometimes requires sacrifice and can become a form of *maxima poenitentia*, grave penance.

The document recognizes that in some cases, psychpathology calls for professional care.

In all cases, in choosing specialists, preference is to be given to those who are believers and are well experienced with religious life and its dynamics. So much the better if these specialists are themselves consecrated men or women.

The advice about choosing specialists is okay so far as it goes, but the convictions and competence of the caregiver are more important than his/her antecedent experience with religious life and its dynamics. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that because the specialist is a consecrated person that he/she will meet the more essential criteria.

Members must not suppose that they are entitled to a free shot, with no difficult people to live with. Married couples do not choose their children, and often encounter great difficulties with them, their spouses and/or friends, and so on.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 41, recognizes that some of the increase in smaller communities is justified by reasons of apostolate, and that smaller communities can enjoy various real benefits, such as closer personal relationships and prayer more deeply shared. But the document then goes on:

> But there are some motives which are questionable, such as sameness of tastes or of mentality. In this situation, it is easy for a community to close in on itself and come to the point of choosing its own members, and brothers or sisters sent by the superiors may or may not be accepted. This is contrary to the very nature of religious community and to its function as sign. Optional homogeneity, besides weakening apostolic mobility, weakens the Pneumatic strength of a community and robs the spiritual reality which rules the community of its power as witness.
>
> The effort involved in mutual acceptance and commitment to overcoming difficulties, characteristics of heterogeneous communities, show forth the transcendence of the reason which brought the community into existence, that is, the power of God which "is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9–10).
>
> We stay together in community not because we have chosen one another, but because we have been chosen by the Lord.

This is heading in exactly the right direction even though the articulation is imperfect in some respects. A situation in which members of an existing "community" have a veto over who can come in or the power to excommunicate someone is no longer a religious community at all. Such an arrangement bears witness to the primacy of whatever common interests those involved have, and the subordination of that to which they committed themselves when they undertook consecrated life. Without choosing one another, members have committed themselves to other legitimate members, and if they will not live with them, they are breaking that commitment.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 65, states the norm, subject to exceptions, that religious should live in their own religious house, observing a common life. When there is a serious reason to live at a

distance from any house of their institute, the exception must be evaluated and authorized by the competent superior. The document then goes on to make various points:

> While it is the responsibility of superiors to cultivate frequent contacts with members living outside community, it is the duty of these religious to keep alive in themselves the sense of belonging to the institute and a sense of communion with its members, seeking every means suitable for strengthening fraternal bonds. Periods of intense communal living must be scheduled, as well as regular meetings with fellow religious for formation, fraternal sharing, review of life, and prayer, for breathing in a family atmosphere. Wherever they may be, members of an institute shall be bearers of the charism of their religious family.
>
> A religious living alone is never an ideal. The norm is that religious live in fraternal communities: the individual is consecrated in this common life and it is in this form of life that such men and women normally undertake their apostolate; it is to this life that they return, in heart and in person, as often as it is necessary for them to live apart for a time, long or short.
>
> a) The demands of a particular apostolic work, for example of a diocesan work, have led various institutes to send one of their members to collaborate in an inter-congregational team. There are positive experiences in which religious who collaborate in serving a particular work in a place where there is no community of their own institute, instead of living alone, live in the same house, pray together, have meetings to reflect on the word of God, share food and domestic duties, etc. As long as this does not become a substitute for living communication with their own institute, this kind of “community life” can be advantageous for the work and for the religious themselves.
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> Religious should be prudent in wanting to take on work which normally requires them to live outside community, and superiors should likewise be prudent in assigning members to these works. [This call for prudence does not mean much. Its implication is just that both religious and their superiors ought to consider the need to live alone a significant negative factor.]
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> b) Also, requests for attending to elderly and sick parents, often involving long absences from community, need careful discernment and possibly such needs can be satisfied by other arrangements in order to avoid excessively long absences of the son or daughter. [The problem is that the religious who is long absent to attend to elderly or sick parents is, in fact, taking a leave from religious life. While that may be justified when there is no other solution, families certainly should not be allowed to assume that the family member who is a religious has greater freedom to set aside his/her commitment for such service than one who is married and has children, and/or is engaged in some secular career.]
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> c) It must be noted that the religious who lives alone, without an assignment or permission from the superior, is fleeing from the obligation to common life. Nor is

> it sufficient to take part in a few meetings or celebrations to be fully a religious. Efforts must be made to bring about the progressive disappearance of these unjustified and inadmissible situations for religious men and women.
> [Someone who is living along without assignment or permission has gravely violated his/her vows, and abandoned religious life. If superiors cannot get such an individual to return to obedience, they ought to set out to expel him/her.]
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> d) In each case, it is helpful to recall that religious, even when living outside community, are subject in areas relating to apostolate to the authority of the bishop (see CIC, c. 678, §1), who is to be informed of their presence in his diocese.
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> e) Should there be institutes in which, unfortunately, the majority of members no longer live in community, such institutes would no longer be able to be considered true religious institutes. Superiors and religious are invited to reflect seriously on this sorrowful outcome and, consequently, on the importance of resuming with vigor the practice of fraternal life in common.
> [This statement reflects the impotence of the Holy See dealing appropriately with institutes that have substantially set aside their own constitutions and particular law. While saying that they are no longer true religious institutes, no action is taken to make that official. Instead, the superiors and members are "invited" to reform!]

The Congregation says nothing here about one of the most important reasons why individuals are living alone: divisions over what at least one side regards as essentials or actions by one side that the other regards as intolerable injustices make separation seem necessary—much as in marriage where one spouse is unfaithful or gravely abusive. In many cases, these difficulties reflect divisions that run through the collegium itself, and the failure of the pope and other bishops to resolve them is burdening the Church as a whole.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 66, states that in mission territories, religious communities are an especially important sign and in some cases "are almost the only sign and silent and effective witness of Christ and of the Church." At the same time, though, in mission territories there often are great obstacles to establishing and carrying on fraternal life in community. So, religious must promote community as best they can "and, as soon as possible, set up fraternal religious communities with a strong missionary character so that they can offer the missionary sign par excellence: 'that they may all be one . . ., so that the world may believe' (Jn. 17:21)."

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Fraternal Life in Community," 68, deals with "Elderly religious". In general, the document wants to take an optimistic stance toward this. It fails to discuss the cultural context in which families are fleeing their responsibility to care for elderly members. The document makes the important point that treating the elderly properly is essential to the sign-value of the community: "religious who take care of the elderly give evangelical credibility to their own institute as a 'true family convoked in the name of the Lord'" (PC 15)). Correspondingly, though the document does not say it: failing to take good care of elderly members manifests the inauthenticity of communio in a religious institute. One substantive paragraph:

> Consecrated persons also should prepare themselves long in advance for becoming old and for extending their "active" years, by learning to discover their new way of building community and collaborating in the common mission, responding positively to the challenges of their age, through lively spiritual and cultural interests, by prayer, and by continued participation in their work for as long as they can render service, even if limited. Superiors should arrange courses and meetings to assist personal preparation and to prolong and enhance as much as possible the presence of religious in their normal workplaces.

The idea is to keep people as active and contributing as possible in whatever ways are possible for them, given their condition, and to try to get the elderly and everyone else to take the right attitude toward them.

The document says nothing about bishops' obligation in justice to provide support for elderly religious who have served their dioceses without just provision for their care when they can no longer work. It is a glaring injustice when sisters who served in a diocese are not supported to the same extent as priests.

Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio* (On the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council), 39, under the head, "Cheerful simplicity of community life," focuses on the responsibility, pertaining to community, to give one another moral and spiritual support, to "bear one another's burdens" so as to fulfill the law of charity:

> 39. Even if—like every Christian—you are imperfect, you nevertheless intend to create surroundings which are favorable to the spiritual progress of each member of the community. How can this result be attained, unless you deepen in the Lord your relationships, even the most ordinary ones, with each of your brethren? Let us not forget that charity must be as it were an active hope for what others can become with the help of our fraternal support. The mark of its genuineness is found in a joyful simplicity, whereby all strive to understand what each one has at heart.(52) [see Gal 6.2] If certain religious give the impression of having allowed themselves to be crushed by their community life, which ought instead to have made them expand and develop, does this perhaps happen because this community life lacks that understanding cordiality which nourishes hope? There is no doubt that community spirit, relationships of friendship and fraternal cooperation in the same apostolate, as well as mutual support in a shared life chosen for a better service of Christ, are so many valuable factors in this daily progress.

A so-called community in which members are hardly concerned about the moral and spiritual state of other members is hardly a religious community at all. That mutual concern is a feature even of truly Christian family life. It is more than a concern to promote psychological well-being, to cheer one another up and make one another feel good—though that sort of thing often helps. It may involve a sort of gentle meddling or nosiness—because each regards himself/herself as the others' keeper.

Paul VI, *Evangelica testificatio* (On the Renewal of Religious Life according to the Teachings of the Second Vatican Council), 41, makes the point that the size of communities is not so vital as some think:

> Besides, whatever their size, communities large or small will not succeed in helping their members unless they are constantly animated by the Gospel spirit, nourished by prayer and distinguished by generous mortification of the old man, by the discipline necessary for forming the new man and by the fruitfulness of the sacrifice of the Cross.

Communities succeed to the extent that their members are seriously trying to be faithful and holy. Small size has been oversold. Just as the psychological demands of a small family —e.g., parents with an only child—can be very great, so of a small community, while a large community, like a big family, has more capacity to hang loose much of the time yet provide massive support when that is needed.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, 18–19, tries to ground fraternal life in community theologically in communion with and in God:

> 18. Religious consecration establishes a particular communion between religious and God and, in him, between the members of the same institute. This is the basic element in the unity of an institute. A shared tradition, common works, well-considered structures, pooled resources, common constitutions, and a single spirit can all help to build up and strengthen unity. The foundation of unity, however, is the communion in Christ established by the one founding gift. This communion is rooted in religious consecration itself. It is animated by the Gospel spirit, nourished by prayer, distinguished by generous mortification, and characterized by the joy and hope which spring from the fruitfulness of the cross (cf. ET 41).

One may question whether this theology is not too ambitious. While those who profess the vows in an institute do thereby become a special community in relation to God, that is true of all the members, whether or not they live in the same particular community, and remains true—at least for those who remain faithful—even if they are by some necessity separated for a long time from their comrades.

> 19. For religious, communion in Christ is expressed in a stable and visible way through community life. So important is community living to religious consecration that every religious, whatever his or her apostolic work, is bound to it by the fact of profession and must normally live under the authority of a local superior in a community of the institute to which he or she belongs. Normally, too, community living entails a daily sharing of life according to specific structures and provisions established in the constitutions. Sharing of prayer, work, meals, leisure, common spirit, "relationships of friendship, cooperation in the same apostolate, and mutual support in community of life chosen for a better following of Christ, are so many valuable factors in daily progress" (ET 39). A community gathered as a true family

> in the Lord's name enjoys his presence (cf. Mt 18:25) through the love of God which is poured out by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rm 5:5). Its unity is a symbol of the coming of Christ and is a source of apostolic energy and power (cf. PC 15). In it the consecrated life can thrive in conditions which are proper to it (cf. ET 38) and the ongoing formation of members can be assured. The capacity to live community life with its joys and restraints is a quality which distinguishes a religious vocation to a given institute and it is a key criterion of suitability in a candidate.

Here we have a shift from communion with and in God to communion in Christ. That can be expressed in a stable and visible way through community life, but only insofar as it is good. Thus, evils that afflict the life of a religious community detract from its expression of communion in Christ, though some and perhaps many members of the community may be living in grace.

Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, in section III. Some Fundamental Norms:

> II. Community
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> §8. Community life, which is one of the marks of a religious institute (can. 607.2), is proper to each religious family. It gathers all the members together in Christ and should be so defined that it becomes a source of mutual aid to all, while helping to fulfill the religious vocation of each (can. 602). It should offer an example of reconciliation in Christ, and of the communion that is rooted and founded in his love.
> §9. For religious, community life is lived in a house lawfully erected under the authority of a superior designated by law (can. 608). Such a house is erected with the written approval of the diocesan bishop (can. 609) and should be able to provide suitably for the necessities of its members (can. 610.2), enabling community life to expand and develop with that understanding cordiality which nourishes hope (cf. ET 39).
> §10. The individual house should have at least an oratory in which the Eucharist may be celebrated and is reserved so that it is truly the center of the community (can. 608).
> §11. In all religious houses according to the character and mission of the institute and according to the specifications of its proper law, some part should be reserved to the members alone (can. 667.1). This form of separation from the world, which is proper to the purpose of each institute, is part of the public witness which religious give to Christ and to the Church (cf. can. 607.3). It is also needed for the silence and recollection which foster prayer.
> §12. Religious should live in their own religious house, observing a common life. They should not live alone without serious reason, and should not do so if there is a community of their institute reasonably near. If, however, there is a question of prolonged absence, the major superior with the consent of his or her council, may permit a religious to live outside the houses of the institute for a just cause, within the limits of common law (can. 665.1).

This set of norms obviously are fairly close to the documents, and seem to be a fairly crisp and accurate summary.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, #26, wisely says: "The community is established and endures, not because its members find that they are happy together due to an affinity in thought, character, or options, but because the Lord has brought them together and unites them by a common consecration and for a common mission within the Church." Religious must not have unrealistic expectations with respect to community. Like members of a large and not always harmonious family, each member must make the sacrifices necessary for fraternal life—the sort of community that is an effective sign of the hoped for kingdom.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, 28, deals with the need to maintain the community's privacy vis-á-vis guests:

> It must be remembered, finally, that in countries and cultures where hospitality is held in particularly high esteem, a religious community, with regard to times and places, insofar as possible, ought to be able to maintain its autonomy and independence with respect to its guests. This is undoubtedly more difficult to realize in religious houses of a modest dimension, but it should always be taken into consideration when a community makes plans for its communitarian life.

Too much openness damages the community's specific character and functioning, and excessive openness to individual member's guests can be unfair to other members. Of course, in emergencies communities should exercise hospitality as a work of charity.

There are legitimate communities that are formed for their own sake—personal friendships. These generally are limited to two persons or two married couples, but can be a larger group of people who enjoy one another's company—e.g., a circle of friends formed from a larger group of people who are thrown together in some situation, such as being in the same school class or assigned to the same naval vessel. Members of such groups enjoy being together and find fulfillment in the relationship itself; they promote each others' interests in a purely voluntary way, and do everything by consensus, so that nobody even has to participate in activities he or she would prefer to avoid.

Religious communities cannot be like that. They are based on a serious commitment to goods that transcend the community itself. So, though the community should not be merely instrumental and should be valued for its own sake, its requirements will be set by the ulterior good to which its members are committed together. Not everything can be by consensus. Cooperation is necessary for some common purposes, and decision making must be structured so that those purposes are well served even when members do not spontaneously agree on common courses of action.

Pressure on communities to meet the unrealistic expectation of friendship and consensus has led in some cases to dissolution of real religious community. They need to remember that families do not have the luxury of pursuing satisfactory relationships as the supreme good.

They need to focus on attaining unity by individually uniting themselves with Jesus and seeking to do God's will.

In many ways the challenge for religious community—as for the Christian family—is to become a communio of mutual love and generosity while carrying on the serious business of meeting needs and fulfilling demanding commitments of service.

The people who should be elected to general chapters/congregations etc. where really important decisions are made ought to be faithful and holy members of the institute. Only they have a good sense of the charism, and so have a sound principle for making policy judgments.

The issue of an either/or between community and service is very like that between service and prayer—a false one but understandable. An important part of the service provided is witness, and this is not separable from other service—for the communio of religious bears witness in and through whatever other services they perform. It's essential to show a communion that is a real sacrament of the Church, which invites those served to enter it or rejoice in their membership in the Church. Only good communities serve well, and serving well together builds up community.