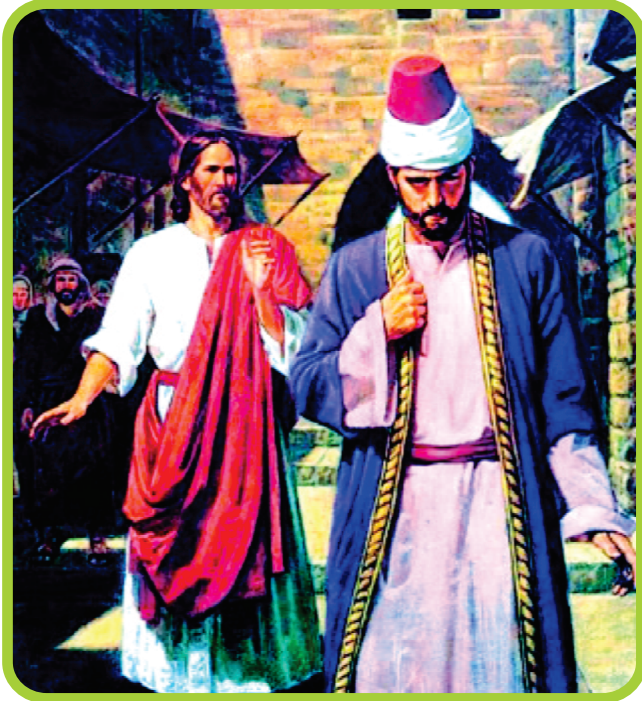


THE CONSECRATED LIFE



Once a rich young man asked Jesus: “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied: “You know the commandments”. The youngster responded happily: “I have kept all these since my youth”. Looking at him Jesus said lovingly: “ Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Lk 18:18-22).

Right from the beginning of the Church, there were sets of people who aspired and tried for perfection. They renounced all the luxuries of life and through a life of penance, imitated Jesus closely.

Religious Life and Martyrdom

During the time of kings, who were religious persecutors, many had to sacrifice their lives to preserve faith. Those who confessed their faith in Jesus and accepted death amidst severe torture are venerated as saints by the Church. The faithful



embraced martyrdom as an easy way to achieve eternal bliss. Once the religious persecution was over, the faithful found the religious life as a way to attain perfection. There were many sages who spent their lives in loneliness and meditation in the forests and deserts.

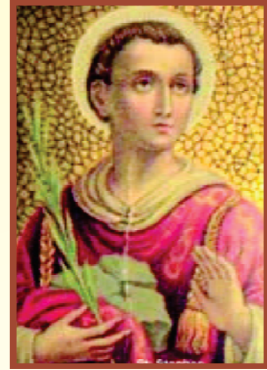
The religious life started with the intention of following Jesus more freely and intimately. The religious attain realization of life and bliss in an interpersonal relationship with Jesus.

Religious Life, the Sign of the Kingdom of God

The religious life is a supreme sign of the Kingdom of God according to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (The Religious Life 1). It remains as a visible sign of ability and responsibility that can persuade the members of the Church to render the duties of Christian vocation. The religious life inspires the members of the Church to forgo the evanescent material pleasures and try for the permanent heavenly bliss. The religious life makes it clear that the Kingdom of God is very important and beyond that all is material (The Church 44).

Religious Life: an Intimate Imitation of Jesus

The aim of the religious life is to imitate Jesus of the Gospel. The religious are obliged to reveal Jesus, who prayed in loneliness, healed the sick,



comforted the sorrowful, led the sinners through the correct path, blessed the children, and did good to all the people of the world. Through the religious, the Church is able to introduce Jesus who fulfilled the will of his Father both to the believers and non-believers (The Church 46).

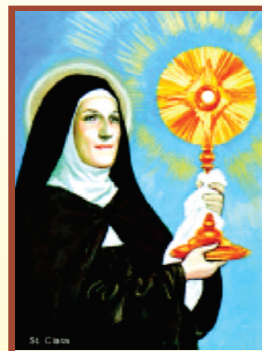
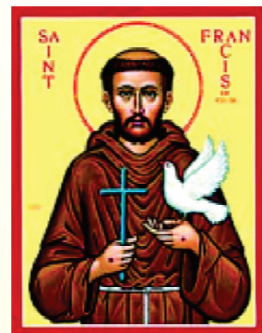
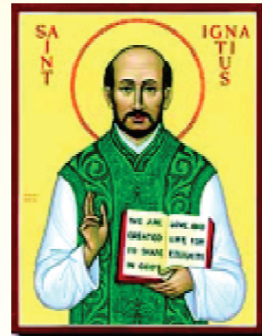
Religious Life and the Evangelical Counsels

The foundation for religious life is the evangelical counsels of obedience, chastity, and poverty. The religious accept these vows and follow them faithfully so as to be witnesses of Christ. They try to grow into the perfection of the heavenly Father by a vow-bound community life. The vows of the religious life enable a person to outlive the obstructions that block his way to imitate Jesus.

Reward for Self-Denial

Jesus ordered his disciples: “He who wishes to follow me should renounce himself and carry his cross and come after me. He who wishes to save his life will get it lost and he who loses it for my sake shall find it.” The religious are those who take into account this command and follow him. They follow the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity and dedicate their lives to God.

The superb example of obedience is Jesus. Just as Jesus was obedient even to the extent of his death on the cross, the religious too sacrifice their pleasures for



the sake of fulfilling the will of God. Poverty proclaims that God is the true treasure of man (The Religious Life 21).

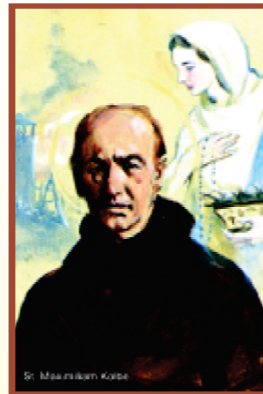
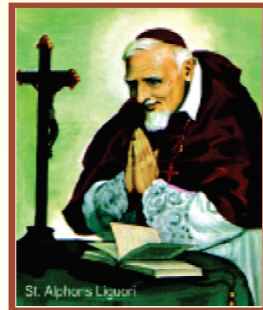
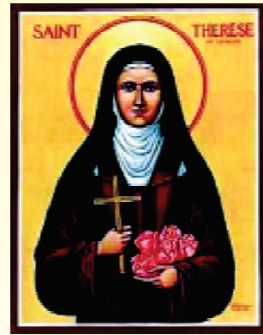
The religious accept the vow of poverty just as Jesus, despite being rich, has become poor for our sake. Chastity helps the religious to love God and serve both God and man with an undivided heart (1Cor. 7:32-34).

Religious Life, in the Church and for the Church

The place of Christian religious life is in the Church. Every religious community must have its own identity and activity so as to work for the good of the Church (The Religious Life 1). The religious are dedicated to work for the welfare of the Church. Being inspired by the Holy Spirit, they dedicate their lives to Jesus and the Church. All the religious communities must partake in the life of the Church. Every religious order, true to its spirit, should own and nurture the diverse attempts of the Church in various fields such as the holy scripture, liturgy, theology, pastoral care, ecumenism, missionary work , social activity etc (The Religious Life 2).

Religious Life in the Church and in the World

The spiritual wisdom acquired by the yogic monks through their constant contact with God was ever an asset to the Church. The ancient monks



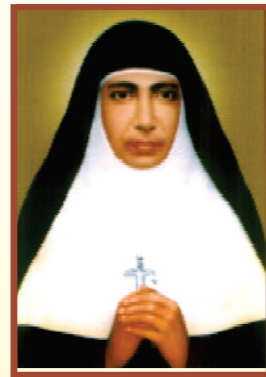
through the translation of the Holy Scripture and the writing of spiritual books enriched the spiritual fund of the Church.

Today, the religious render praiseworthy service in the Church through prayer and a life of perpetual vows. Late Pope John Paul II said that the religious life is ingrained in the heart of the Church. It is a gift to the Church given by God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

Through their service in schools, hospitals, orphanages, the houses for the mentally retarded and the handicapped, old-age homes etc., the religious congregations partake in the evangelization ministry of the Church. Thus, many people experience peace, happiness and love through their service.

Vocation is a Gift of God

Divine vocation is a gift of God to mankind. It is not a selection by man, but by God. God said to prophet Jeremiah: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you...I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jer.1:5). Jesus said: “You did not choose me; but I chose you”.(Jn.15:16). Even today Jesus invites the youth for a life founded on vows. “Follow me and I will make you fish for people” (Mt.4:19). Jesus who invited the first disciples makes the same invitation even today. Hence, we must all lend our ears to know if he calls us. All the youngsters-boys and girls-are duty-bound to respond to the divine call for dedication of life and be of Jesus to serve the people of God. Let us pray God to grant His grace for the same.



ACTIVITY - 1

Look at the pictures of the saints given in this chapter and find out their names.

Explain shortly the life history of one of these saints.

**LET US
READ AND
MEDITATE THE
WORD OF GOD**

(1Cor. 7 : 25 - 35)

A Verse to Remember

"If you wish to be perfect, go,
sell your possessions and give the
money to the poor, and you will have
treasure in heaven; then come, follow me"
(Mt.19:21).

Let us Pray

O Lord Jesus, please empower us to
recognize your call to a life of dedication
and render you service accepting the call.

My Resolution

I will pray for the
grace needed to
recognize my
vocation and respond
accordingly.

Teachings of the Fathers of the Church

The life of dedication is what remains in the heart of the
Church itself; it remains as a critical element of her mission.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do we say that the life of the religious stands in place of martyrdom?
2. Why is the religious life considered as a symbol of the kingdom of God?
3. What is the basic rule of the religious life?
4. The religious life is in the Church and for the Church. Explain.
5. Why is it said that the divine call is a gift of God?