

YEAR FOR CONSECRATED LIFE

Consecrated Life: Purpose, Freedom and Fulfillment

This year, the Catholic Church will celebrate consecrated life. When I felt Christ Jesus call me to this way of life I had fears and questions, but many aspects of consecrated life resonated with desires deep within me. My desires to live a *purpose* driven life alongside others, to have the space and *freedom* to continually listen and respond to God's call and will, and to seek *personal fulfillment* through the reception and gift of love to others drew me to some of the core aspects of consecrated life: community, prayer and work.

Each consecrated religious community has a particular mission that provides direction and influences a community and its members' way of life. Community and mission are not mutually exclusive parts of consecrated life, but overlap and intertwine to provide a sense of belonging, direction, and support system for its members. This is not unlike an athletic team, school newspaper, or business. Members working alongside one another with an understood purpose and direction. Consecrated life allows even deeper relationships between members because you are brothers or sisters in Christ, who live and work together. Consecrated life provides *purpose* in two senses; being valued as a brother or sister in Christ, and *purpose* in one's efforts and contributions towards the mission.

In the Book Exodus, God tells Moses what to tell the Egyptian Pharaoh: "Let my son go, so that they may worship me." God through Moses frees the people from Egyptian enslavement. Israel is finally provided the space and *freedom* to worship God. In a similar way, consecrated life creates this with its rootedness in prayer. Beyond communal worship, private prayer encourages individuals to converse with and listen to God. Where is God calling me? How is God working in my life? This attitude is supported by the community, who discerns along with you, God's invitations. The openness and desire to follow God's will is *freedom* in the truest sense.

Is there any greater desire than to love and be loved? In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis reminds us authentic *personal fulfillment* does not happen in isolation. *Personal fulfillment* and love are powerfully linked. Consecrated life calls for you to step outside the boat, your comfort zone, and to encounter others where they are at through the mission's work. A combination of openness and gift of self allows for the exchange of Christ's love between others. The work of consecrated life is always directed towards this end regardless of the work itself. Consecrated life offers opportunities for intimate relationships as people enter into the reality of each other's lives, and ultimately, *personal fulfillment* and love.

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