

Dear Confreres & Sisters:

I hope you are well and keeping warm with or after the latest snowstorm. And a **Happy Day of Consecrated Life to you!**

On February 2, 2021 Pope Francis shared the following...

Simeon “looked forward to the consolation of Israel” (Lk 2:25). He took the Messiah into his arms. He, an elderly man who had patiently awaited the fulfillment of the Lord’s promises.

The patience of Simeon. For his entire life, he had been waiting, exercising the patience of the heart. In his prayer, Simeon had learned that God does not come in extraordinary events but works amid the apparent monotony of our daily life, in the frequently dull rhythm of our activities, in the little things that, working with tenacity and humility, we achieve in our efforts to do his will. By patiently persevering, Simeon did not grow weary with the passage of time. The flame still burned brightly in his heart. He did not lose hope. He trusted in the promise and did not let himself be consumed by regret for times past or by the sense of despondency that can come as we approach the twilight of our lives. His hope and expectation found expression in the daily patience of a man who, despite everything, remained watchful, until at last “his eyes saw the salvation” that had been promised (cf. Lk 2:30).

The patience of Simeon is a mirror of **God’s own patience**. From prayer and the history of his people, Simeon had learned that God is indeed merciful, gracious, faithful, and patient. By that patience, Saint Paul tells us, he “leads us to repentance” (Rom 2:4). The theologian Fr. Romano Guardini once observed that patience is God’s way of responding to our weakness and giving us the time we need to change. More than anyone else, the Messiah, Jesus, whom Simeon held in his arms, shows us the patience of God, the merciful Father who keeps calling us, even to our final hour. God never tires of waiting for us. His love gives us the courage to start anew. This teaches us resilience, the courage always to start again, each day. God is patient.

Let us look to **our patience**. Let us look to the patience of God and the patience of Simeon as



St. Guido Maria Conforti

we consider our own lives of consecration. We can ask ourselves what patience really involves. Certainly, patience is not a sign of weakness, but the strength of spirit that enables us to “carry the burden”, to endure, to bear the weight of personal and community problems, to accept others as different from ourselves, to persevere in goodness when all seems lost, and to keep advancing even when overcome by fatigue and listlessness.

Patience in our personal life. There was a time when we responded to the Lord’s call, and with enthusiasm and generosity offered our lives to him. Along the way, together with consolations we have had our share of disappointments

and frustrations... We must be patient with ourselves and await in hope God's own times and places, for he remains ever faithful to his promises. This is the foundation stone: God is true to his promises. Remembering this can help us retrace our steps and revive our dreams, rather than yielding to interior sadness and discouragement. Brothers and sisters, in us consecrated men and women, interior sadness is a worm, a worm that eats us from within. Flee from interior sadness!

Patience in community life. We all know that human relationships are not always serene, especially when they involve sharing a project of life or apostolic activity. There are times when conflicts arise and no immediate solution can be expected, nor should hasty judgments be made. Time is required to step back, to preserve peace and to wait for a better time to resolve situations in charity and in truth. We will never be able to discern well, to see the truth, if our hearts are agitated and impatient. Never. Our communities need this kind of reciprocal patience: the ability to support, that is, to bear on our own shoulders, the life of one of our brothers or sisters, including his or her weaknesses and failings, all of them. The Lord call us to be part of a choir that can sometimes miss a note or two, but must always try to sing in unison.

Patience in our relationship with the world. Simeon and Anna cherished the hope proclaimed by the prophets...They did not complain about how wrong things are, but patiently looked for the light shining in the darkness of history.... We too need that kind of patience, so as not to fall into the trap of complaining. Many consecrated men and women lost hope, simply through impatience.

Patience helps us to be merciful in the way we view ourselves, our communities and our world. In our own lives, do we welcome the patience of the Holy Spirit? In our communities, do we bear with one another and radiate the joy of fraternal life? In the world, do we patiently offer our service, or issue harsh judgments? These are real challenges for our consecrated life: we cannot remain stuck in nostalgia for the past or simply keep repeating the same old things or everyday complaints. We need patience and courage in order to keep advancing, exploring new paths, and responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit ... with humility and simplicity.

Let's take this message to heart and journey together patiently. With deep gratitude,

~ ***Fr. Mark***