



BISHOP'S RESIDENCE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF BATHURST

Bathurst, February 2nd, 2021

Dear religious brothers and sisters,

On this February 2nd, World Day for Consecrated Life, I sincerely wanted to write you these few words. You know, I am starting to miss not being able to visit you in the flesh or, if you prefer the new vocabulary, to be together "face-to-face"! These visits, both impromptu and planned, have always been strong moments of fraternity and sharing for me. That is why I miss them so much now.

Initially, we thought that these visitation bans would only be a matter of a few weeks, at worst a few months. However, this pandemic "never stops ending" and health measures are still well in place. Let us wait patiently for the arrival of these vaccines, which we hope will finally allow us to reconnect in the near future!

In 1997, on the first day of consecrated life, Saint Pope John Paul II said: *"It is beautiful and just to thank the Lord for the great gift of consecrated life, which enriches and rejoices the Church through multiplicities of charisms and the dedication of so many lives totally given to the Lord as well as to our brothers and sisters"*. Yes, it is truly beautiful to thank the Lord for this gift made to the Church of consecrated life and the Holy Father is right to affirm it, but it is even more important for me to thank you personally, each and every one of you because you embody this precious gift of consecrated life in our midst! I especially want to give thanks for all that you have accomplished and continue to accomplish among us, even in this time of pandemic!

We owe all of this to that "yes" you once said with confidence and abandonment, a "yes" to giving your life totally to the Lord and to his Church. This gift of self now colors your whole life and forms the roots of your being. That "yes" undoubtedly asked you for certain sacrifices (and still today, I am convinced of it) but it is the source of your happiness and generates so much joy around you.

Pope Francis affirmed in **Patris Corde**, his apostolic letter for the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as patron of the Universal Church: *"Fathers are not born. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another... Being a father entails introducing children to life and reality... Joseph is traditionally called a "most chaste" father. Chastity is freedom from possessiveness in every sphere of one's life. Only when love is chaste, is it truly love... The logic of love is always the logic of freedom, and Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the center of things. He did not think of himself, but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus."*

I could echo this text by telling you that we are not born a religious brother or sister, spiritual mother or father, we become so over the years! We become so with the grace of God, with the example and support of the saints (our founders) as well as with the help of the sisters and brothers we meet in life. What you are now, you owe mainly to all those people, big or small, young or old, rich or poor, believer or non-believer, sick, suffering, destitute or dependent, whom you have put with chaste love at the center of your life, just as Saint Joseph put Mary and Jesus at the center of his. This is how you have become, over time, consecrated persons, spiritual mothers and fathers who guide and advise, care for and console, and who, in short, never cease to protect and give life.

Dear religious brothers and sisters, thank you for continuing to grow as consecrated persons, always placing the poorest and most suffering among us at the center of your life with love! Have no fear; we thrive at any age because we never stop loving!

In closing, this day dedicated to you, is also the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, the light of the world. You are therefore also sources of light for us all. Not as stars in the sky (we will reserve this for saints already in heaven with the Lord!) but rather as lighthouses firmly anchored on our shores in order to always guide us, the baptized of this Acadian land, on the path of holiness and self-giving..

Have a good Day of Consecrated Life, and a happy Feast of The Presentation of the Lord. I look forward to meeting soon...

Fraternally yours in Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Jodoin", with a small cross symbol to its left.

+ Daniel Jodoin, your Bishop