



May 29, 2014

Reverend Father Michel Proulx, O.Praem., President of the Canadian Religious Conference,  
Beloved Sisters, Brothers and Fathers, members of the Canadian Religious Conference:

The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your Conference arrives at an important juncture in the life of the Church. Inspired and prodded by *Evangelii Gaudium*, we are together exploring how to be better evangelizers. We are repeatedly reminded by the Holy Father, Pope Francis, of the need for what he calls “pastoral conversion”. We are at the same time preparing for two consecutive Synods on the theme of the family in the context of evangelization.

At the beginning of this year, the Commission for Doctrine of our Conference released a text entitled “The Essential Elements of Evangelization Today”. In its pastoral reflection, the Commission proposes a threefold witness, which we all recognize from the Acts of the Apostles: a personal, living encounter with Christ; the love lived in Christian community; and service to others. Religious institutes and apostolic societies, in their respective commitment and charisms, exemplify this triple witness. Your communities and societies are called to live in response to a personal encounter with Our Lord. You are members of what are generally referred to as “communities”. Your witness and work are at the service of community – not only your own institute or society, but the larger human community in which you each live, and the specific ecclesial community to which you witness and which you serve. The individual charisms that “consecrate” your institutes and societies are in order to do the work of the Lord, leading all humanity, with the Church, toward the Reign of God, and assisting all humans, again with the Church, on the pilgrim path of reconciliation and hope, healing and renewal.

Surely it was the prompting of the Holy Spirit that led Pope Francis to situate the upcoming Year for Religious with evangelization as the backdrop, but under the spotlight of the family. So many of you have traditionally been involved with families – praying, teaching, healing, doing social work, counselling, giving retreats, offering spiritual and physical shelter. Yet the relationship of the consecrated life with family life is even more profound. There is an underlying ecclesial reality: apostolic societies and religious institutes traditionally recognize themselves as families, even traditionally using family vocabulary – mother, father, sister, brother – to describe their internal dynamic. So profound is this relationship of family life and consecrated life that some have suggested the health and wellbeing of families are evident in the wellbeing and health of those in consecrated life, just as vocations to consecrated life are at their strongest when families are healthy, joyful, and imbued with the spirit of loving service.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops congratulates the Canadian Religious Conference on its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We thank you for the “coordination and cooperation” which have enriched both our Conferences, just as the Second Vatican Council had envisaged (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 23). On the national, regional and diocesan levels, the Bishops of our country, and of the whole world, are grateful for how religious institutes and apostolic societies, each in its own diverse way, shares “in the life of the Church”, adapting and implementing in accordance with its own charisms “the Church's undertakings and aims in matters biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social” (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 2c). As the vision and renewal of Vatican II continue to unfold, we ask you, particularly at this moment in history, to help each of our diocesan Churches, and the Universal Church, in appreciating, deepening, and even rediscovering, the sense of what it means to be the household of God. We need you as witnesses and facilitators in how to be “the family of believers”, blessed with “unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind” (1 Peter 2.17b, 3.8).

United with you,



+ Paul-André Durocher  
Archbishop of Gatineau and  
President of the Canadian Conference  
of Catholic Bishops



(Rev. Msgr.) Patrick Powers, P.H.  
General Secretary