

Year Dedicated to Consecrated Life



Prayer Service for Open House

Welcome and Introduction:

We are delighted that you have taken the time to join us in celebrating this special *Year of Consecrated Life*. Pope Francis has great hopes that this year-long observance throughout the Church, will challenge women and men religious to more joyfully live their radical, prophetic way of life in the midst of the current world reality. “I am counting on you to wake up the world,” the Pope said. “This is the priority that is needed right now.” Francis also emphasized that “*The Year of Consecrated Life* concerns not only consecrated persons, but the entire Church”; and called each religious congregation to consciously unite its special gifts with those of their lay co-partners, to further the mission of Jesus wherever they are.

Please join us now in our prayer based on the stated threefold purpose for this *Year of Consecrated Life*:

to look to the PAST with **gratitude**;
to live the PRESENT with **passion**; and
to embrace the FUTURE with **hope**.

Opening Song: (Choose one of the following or one of your choice)

Wake the World with Dawning Joy nrvc.net/.../year-of-consecrated-life-2841 (for music and audio recording)

God’s Cause is the Only Concern of our Hearts – David Haas – (could use General Chapter DVD with music)

Hymn to Mother Theresa (Melody: *Ode to Joy* – words by Sister Mary Coleman, SSND) - attached

Standing on the Shoulders, by Joyce Rouse (Earth Mama)

*Look to the PAST with **gratitude**:*

Reader: From Pope Francis' letter to religious:

“All religious Institutes are heir to a history rich in charisms, their special Spirit-given gift to be shared with the entire Church. ... Like the seed which becomes a tree, each Institute grew and stretched out its branches to *respond to the urgent needs not being met by others*. During this year, it would be appropriate for each charismatic family to reflect on its origins and history, in order to thank God who grants the Church a variety of gifts which embellish her and equip her for every good work. Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging.

I invite every Christian community to experience this Year, above all, as a moment of thanksgiving to the Lord and grateful remembrance for all the gifts we continue to receive, thanks to the sanctity of founders and foundresses, and from the fidelity to their charism shown by so many consecrated men and women.”

Moment of Silent Reflection:

We now take a moment to remember those men and/or women religious whose lives have enriched us throughout the years, and give thanks to God.

(If a smaller group, you may want those present to mention names aloud.)

All Respond:

Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger,
thank you for following the Spirit within you
to courageously, and with deep faith,
respond to the urgent educational needs of your time,
always preferring the poor, and educating with a world vision.
You struggled for unity within our international community.
Grace our SSND family today, to faithfully discern and live your spirit
of unity within diversity in these challenging times.
We ask this in Jesus' name. AMEN.

Live the PRESENT with passion:

Reader: From Pope Francis' letter to religious:

“For the various founders and foundresses, the Gospel was the absolute rule, whereas every other rule was meant merely to be an expression of the Gospel and a means of living the Gospel to the full. For each, the ideal was Christ ... vows were intended as a concrete expression of this passionate love.

The Gospel is demanding: it demands to be lived radically, sincerely, *and passionately*. It is not enough to read it...; nor is it enough to meditate on it. Jesus asks us to practice it, to put his words into effect in our lives. Once again, we have to ask ourselves: Is Jesus really our first love ...?

Moment of Silent Reflection: (play soft music, if you like)

As co-partners in Jesus' mission, let us all reflect silently:

How passionate is my love for Jesus and for living His Way of Life?

All Respond in the words of Blessed Theresa:

“Focus your gaze and your heart steadfastly on Jesus.”

“Follow the star in your heart. It will certainly lead you to Jesus.”

“Now I am in Jesus!

Jesus may do with me what He wants;

I trust Him.

‘Remain in me, as I remain in you.’

On Him will I build.”

Embrace the FUTURE with hope:

Reader: In the words of Pope Francis:

“You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things.” (*Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata* - # 110)

“Embrace the unknown future with hope – a hope not based on statistics or accomplishments, but on the One in whom we have put our trust, the One for whom “nothing is impossible.” (Lk 1:37). This is the hope which does not

disappoint; it is the hope which enables consecrated life to keep writing its great history well into the future. It is to that future that we must always look, conscious that the Holy Spirit spurs us on so that she can still do great things with us. So do not yield to the temptation to see things in terms of numbers and efficiency, and even less to trust in your own strength; ... rather, clothe yourselves in Jesus Christ....Let us constantly set out anew, with trust in the Lord.”

Response:

Prayers through the Intercession of Blessed Theresa: (on separate paper for leader) – Respond to each with:

Blessed Theresa, intercede for us !

Magnificat - (optional)

Antiphon: “God has helped us wondrously until now;
neither will God abandon us in the future.” (Mother Theresa – letter #5032)
(if used, pray a Magnificat of choice)

Closing Prayer:

Faithful God, You promised to be with us always.
In deep faith, we stand at the gate of tomorrow,
trusting You to lead us day-by-day into the future.
Grace us to embrace fully and passionately each present moment,
where You are waiting to meet us.
Thank You for the SSND tree planted by Your servant, Blessed Theresa,
And for its growth throughout the world during these 180+ years.
Stir in us Your hopes, visions and dreams for a new tomorrow –
for a world awakened to You in our midst.
Keep our hopes high even as we face obstacles that may arise in our path,
knowing that You will always be there.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Song: (Choose One)

Holy God, we Praise Thy Name
Now Thank we all our God
Hymn of Choice

Hymn to Mother Theresa

Melody: *Ode of Joy* – Adapted from text by Sister Mary Coleman, SSND

Mother Theresa, loving foundress,
Hear us now in earnest prayer.
In each other's very presence
Let us join our thoughts to share.

You loved youth, the poor, the needy;
You trained girls for womanhood;
God Alone, your daily motto,
Service was your highest good.

Poverty for you was blessed,
Gift of God, and guarantee
That your Order's firm foundation
Would endure in unity.

From your childhood you loved Mary,
Acted always in her name;
Gave her charge of your foundation;
Called your Order Notre Dame.

At your death in those last moments,
Close to God, you testified:
"I have cherished every Sister;
Sought that each be sanctified."

Pray that we may keep your spirit,
Serve the Church in word and deed;
Grow in love for one another,
Selfless, helping those in need.

Prayers through the Intercession of Blessed Theresa

Leader:

To each petition please respond:

Blessed Theresa, intercede for us !

- Blessed Theresa opened her heart to the fullness of God's love. May we receive the gifts of love, goodness and joy that come from God and through our loved ones, **we pray ...**
- Blessed Theresa was convinced that the world could be changed through an education which transforms people, their ideas and the ways they make choices. May we continue to value Christian education, embracing opportunities to grow in our faith and be open to letting Jesus transform us into His image, **we pray...**
- Blessed Theresa dreamed of a world united in the love of God as one family. May we accept everyone as our brother or sister, treasuring the diversity among us as gift, **we pray...**
- Blessed Theresa was a woman of staunch faith and never gave up even when her life was difficult. May we trust in God's power within us and face courageously our personal and communal struggles for unity, **we pray ...**
- Blessed Theresa believed in the potential of youth and always preferred the poor. For ourselves, and all young people, that we may discover new ways to serve today's needy by utilizing our gifts to the fullest, **we pray ...**

Blessed Theresa, you lived in Jesus, and spent many hours in prayer to know the Will of God in order to *do whatever He told you*. Your heart burst with a love that sent your sisters into the whole world because "Love could not wait." Impelled by that same love, send us to continue the mission of Jesus today. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.