



**Pastoral letter on the 25th World Day for Consecrated Life
To the faithful and clergy of St Andrews & Edinburgh**

Edinburgh, 2 February 2021

My dear friends,

Today we join with Catholics all over the world in observing the World Day for Consecrated Life. It is a time when we step forward to offer our heartfelt gratitude and prayers for those who are consecrated to the Lord through their special vocation to religious life.

Pope Saint John Paul II initiated this day of prayer for religious men and women, attaching it to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, to highlight and remind us of the great gift that consecrated persons and their communities are for the whole Church.

The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem, also known as Candlemas, is traditionally when candles are blessed at Mass and distributed to the faithful. Symbolically, their luminosity calls us to reflect on the significance of Jesus Christ as “The Light of the World.” So, too, in awe we recognize the gift of consecrated life that God has freely and mercifully given us for the salvation of the world. It is a gift with a rich tradition dating back from the work of the first disciples in the early Church to the many religious ministries of our present time.

In his gospel St. Luke tells us of the devout man, Simeon, who is filled with the Holy Spirit and so recognises the infant Jesus, presented to God in the Temple, as “The Light”, the long-awaited Messiah. In a similar way, through stirrings of the Holy Spirit in the temple of one’s own heart, a person today may recognise the Lord in a calling for religious life. Pope Francis reminds us that *“Becoming a priest or a man or woman religious is not primarily our own decision. Rather it is the response to a call and to a call of love”*.

Through that specific calling, consecrated religious men and women serve the Church worldwide, in charity, for the salvation of all. Helping the poor and the elderly, teaching, healing the sick, evangelizing and forming the faithful are just a few examples of religious callings. Other religious are called to a contemplative life devoted to God exclusively through prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist. We find a wide diversity of ministries in consecrated life, but always a unity of mission in the joyful service of love.

Prayer is the most powerful way we can help support men and women religious. So please offer prayers of thanksgiving for those men and women who have consecrated themselves faithfully to serve the Church. And please pray also for those discerning a call to religious life.

Each of us, however, can also help to encourage religious by gently inspiring and supporting any young adult in our families and communities who may be searching and considering what plan God has for them. We can offer an invitation to such young people to “Come & See”; to learn more about religious communities in their many charisms and activities; to hear personal stories and ask questions.

Finally, we can learn again to understand, respect and honour the call to religious life. Those who embrace this call wish to give themselves completely to Christ and His service, and it is a noble and beautiful gift of self that young people aspire to when they respond in this way to their loving Creator. It is my prayer that every mother and father in this Archdiocese will see the beauty and encourage the goodness of any sons and daughters of theirs who express the wish to dedicate their lives to God in this way.

On this World Day for Consecrated Life, I warmly encourage any such men or women wishing to test their vocation, to get in touch with our Diocesan Vocations Directors, Fr Andrew Garden and/or Sr Mirjam Hugens.

With an assurance of my prayers for you all and asking you to pray also for me, I am

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Leo Cushley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the end.

+Leo Cushley
Archbishop of St Andrews & Edinburgh

Contact information for the Vocation Directors

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