



# Called and summoned

On the path  
towards the General  
Chapter 2024



**Circular 320**  
October 2023

**Brother Hervé ZAMOR**  
Superior General





# **Called and summoned**

**On the path towards the General Chapter 2024**

**Brother Hervé Zamor, Superior General**

**BROTHERS OF CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION**

**October 2023**

**Circular 320**

## INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this circular is to bring to the attention of the entire Institute and the Mennaisian Family the names of the Brothers and Lay people who are "called and summoned" to our next General Chapter which will take place in Ariccia in the hills above Castel Gandolfo, from March **26 to April 24, 2024**.

*"Called and summoned!"* Two verbs in the passive form to signify that the Brothers Capitulants respond to a double call: that of their confrères - they have been elected, and from the Brother Superior General who summons them. This is the way in which our Rule of Life designates those who are called to render this collegial service to the Congregation. I therefore invite the elected members, as well as those by right and those invited, to welcome their convocation to the General Chapter as an expression of God's will for them, here and now. As the Chapter Book reminds us, *"a Brother summoned to the Chapter is obliged to attend, unless there is a serious reason accepted by the Superior General. An elected delegate who is duly excused is replaced by the first substitute of the circumscription or, in his absence, by the next in line"* (n° 20).

*"Called and summoned!"* Following in the footsteps of Mary, the humble daughter of Nazareth, we want to learn to be servants of hope, by daring to ask her Son to anticipate his hour, by listening to and putting into practice his Word, by filling our jars with water, by drawing and bringing the good wine to the Master of the meal. Will we respond to the Lord's important appointment for our Family?

The Lord is passing by...  
Will we wait for another call, another summons?  
Why delay?  
Let's take the path of hope with him.

Here is the complete list of General Chapter members. After the names of the General Council and Major Superiors, the list of elected Delegates is drawn up in the order of votes obtained for each Province or District (cf. Chapter Book, n° 17).

The following Brothers are therefore "*called and summoned*" to take part in the 28th General Chapter:

# I

## MEMBERS OF THE 2024 GENERAL CHAPTER2024

### 1- Members by Right

#### 1.1- Members of the General Council

|           |           |                         |
|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Br. Hervé | ZAMOR     | Superior General        |
| Jean-Paul | PEUZÉ     | First General Assistant |
| Vincent   | SSEKATE   | General Assistant       |
| Miguel    | ARISTONDO | General Assistant       |

#### 1.2- Major Superiors

|               |          |                              |    |
|---------------|----------|------------------------------|----|
| Br. Casio     | AÏZIRE   | St Teresa of the Child Jesus | K  |
| Éric          | MUGISA   | St-Jean-Paul II              | AC |
| Jean-Baptiste | NDIAYE   | St-Paul                      | AO |
| Carlos        | LOVATTO  | Divina Providencia           | DP |
| Mario         | HOULE    | Jean de la Mennais           | J  |
| Géniaud       | LAUTURE  | St-Louis-de-Gonzague         | H  |
| Carlos        | CAPELLÁN | Nuestra Señora del Pilar     | S  |
| Yannick       | HOUSSAY  | St-Jean-Baptiste             | JB |
| Gildas        | PRIGENT  | St-François Xavier           | FX |
| Yvon          | DENIAUD  | St-Pierre Chanel             | P  |

### 2- Elected Members

|                |               |    |
|----------------|---------------|----|
| Br. Anthony    | KAMUHANDA     | KT |
| Benedict       | ODHIAMBO      | KT |
| Gerard         | BYARUHANGA    | K  |
| Rogers Michael | KAZIBWE       | K  |
| Vincent        | BARIGYE       | K  |
| Franklin       | RUKUNDO       | K  |
| Herman         | TAMALE        | K  |
| Joseph         | KANAABI ZZIWA | K  |
| Pius           | OCHWO         | K  |
| John Bosco     | SSENKABIRWA   | K  |
| Fidèle         | NGUWA         | AC |

|                |                  |    |
|----------------|------------------|----|
| Damien         | HABIMANA         | AC |
| Wilfried       | FARA             | AO |
| Ricardo        | MORZÁN           | DP |
| Claude         | GELINAS          | J  |
| Pierre         | LEBLANC          | J  |
| Mario          | COUTURE          | J  |
| Simon          | ALPHONSE         | H  |
| Valmyr-Jacques | DABEL            | H  |
| Stéphane       | LE PAPE          | FX |
| Josu           | FDEZ OLABARRIETA | S  |
| Raúl           | BLANCO RUIZ      | S  |
| Laurent        | BOUILLET         | JB |
| James          | HAYES            | JB |
| Régis          | LEFRERE          | JB |
| Olivier        | MIGOT            | JB |
| Michel         | GUYOMARC'H       | JB |
| Denis          | CHAMARET         | JB |
| Pierrick       | BUSSON           | JB |

### 3- Members by Right Without Voting Rights

|           |          |                   |
|-----------|----------|-------------------|
| Br. Hervé | ASSE     | General Secretary |
| Claude    | GRÉGOIRE | General Bursar    |
|           |          | Procurator        |

### 4- Invited Members

The 2024 General Chapter will welcome two categories of guests: young Brothers and Lay members of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family. This decision was taken with the consent of my Council, after consulting the Major Superiors at the General Conference held in Rome from ***September 26 to October 4, 2022.***

4.1- Young Brothers

In response to Pope Francis' invitation to follow the path of synodality, *"the path that God expects of the Church in the third millennium"*<sup>1</sup>, the participation of some young Brothers in our Chapter Assembly is a concrete way of expressing our desire, as an Institute, to walk more closely together and to listen to each other, and all of us, to the Spirit. Of course, by its very nature, a Chapter Assembly is synodal, but by welcoming young Brothers, we translate into action our vocation and mission of communion and fraternity, of participation and solidarity in the rich diversity of our ages and cultures. This is the way to let the Spirit *"forge in us a truly synodal mentality, entering with courage and freedom of heart into a process of conversion, without which that ongoing reform which the Church always needs as a human and earthly institution will not be possible"*<sup>2</sup>. The participation of young Brothers in our General Chapter, a time of discernment par excellence, will enable us to be especially attentive to them, because *"often the Lord discovers from a younger brother what is best"*<sup>3</sup>.

The following six young Brothers have been "called and summoned" to the 28th General Chapter:

|     |                                  |            |    |
|-----|----------------------------------|------------|----|
| Br. | Paul                             | MWITI      | KT |
|     | Aiden                            | RUKUNDO    | K  |
|     | Olivier                          | IGIRANEZA  | AC |
|     | Philippe                         | DOUTI      | AO |
|     | Rony                             | PIERRE     | H  |
|     | Fransiscus Xaverius <sup>4</sup> | GUA MAKING | FX |

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Speech for the Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, October 17, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Synod of Bishops, For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission, Preparatory Document, no. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Saint Benedict, Rule, 3, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Frère Fransiscus Xaverius GUA MAKING will participate in the Chapter from March 26 to April 16 2024.



These guest members take part in the work of the Chapter from beginning to end, but without voting rights at the General Meeting.

**4.2- Lay members of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family**

For more than twenty years, Lay members have taken part in the work of the General Chapter. In line with the various orientations of our last two Chapter Assemblies, particularly the one that *"commits each Brother and each community to think about living more and more 'in Mennaisian Family mode'"*<sup>5</sup>, the participation of Lay members of the International Commission of the Mennaisian Family is more than obvious.

The six Lay members of the International Mennaisian Family Commission are therefore *"called and summoned"* to take part in the work of the General Chapter from **March 26 to April 3, 2024**.

|                 |              |                   |    |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|----|
| Mr.             | John Bosco   | DDUNGU            | K  |
| M <sup>rs</sup> | Ana Victoria | DRAPER            | DP |
| M <sup>rs</sup> | Luz Martha   | DE LA CRUZ ROMERO | J  |
| M <sup>rs</sup> | Yvette       | MÉUS              | H  |
| M <sup>rs</sup> | Belén Coruña | MOZO              | S  |
| M <sup>rs</sup> | Françoise    | LEBRETON          | JB |

Arrival is scheduled for March 25, with departure on the evening of April 3 or April 4, 2024.

**The 2024 General Chapter will be attended by 45 Capitulants, including 43 with voting rights and 12 invited members (6 young Brothers and 6 Lay Mennaisians)**

<sup>5</sup> 2018 General Chapter Document, New Pathways of Fraternity, n° 16.

9

## II

### SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

If one of the members by right or elected is unable to take part in the Chapter, for reasons accepted by the Superior General, the substitute from his Province or District who has obtained the most votes will be summoned, or in his absence, the next in line (cf. Chapter Book, n° 20). The Chapter Book stipulates that there should be as many substitutes as there are delegates. Here is the list of substitutes:

|     |             |              |    |
|-----|-------------|--------------|----|
| FF. | Deusdedit   | NKUNGA       | KT |
|     | Martin      | MUTHEE       | KT |
|     | Onesimus    | MUTAKIRWA    | K  |
|     | Delefino    | MUHINDO      | K  |
|     | Denis       | KATUSIIME    | K  |
|     | Martin      | WANAMBWA     | K  |
|     | Christopher | MUKWIRE      | K  |
|     | Raymond     | TUMWESIGYE   | K  |
|     | Augustine   | MUGABO       | K  |
|     | Marius      | MURONGO      | K  |
|     | Emmanuel    | GBIRO        | AC |
|     | Emmanuel    | RWANDAMURIYE | AC |
|     | Benoît      | MAPAYENE     | AO |
|     | Benito      | ZAMPEDRI     | DP |
|     | Yvon R.     | ROY          | J  |
|     | Gaétan      | ARSENEAULT   | J  |
|     | Robert      | SMYTH        | J  |
|     | Joslyn      | GONTRAND     | H  |
|     | Milo        | FREDERIQUE   | H  |
|     | Israel      | DE OCAMPO    | FX |
|     | Óscar       | RUIZ CASTRO  | S  |
|     | Rafael      | ALONSO       | S  |
|     | Jean-Yves   | HAMON        | JB |

|        |            |    |
|--------|------------|----|
| Hervé  | ASSE       | JB |
| Dino   | DE CAROLIS | I  |
| Michel | BOUVAIS    | JB |
| Claude | GREGOIRE   | JB |
| Xavier | FROGIER    | P  |

### III

## CONTENT AND METHODOLOGY OF THE 2024 GENERAL CHAPTER

In addition to the election of the Superior General and Assistants, three topics are on the agenda of our Chapter Assembly.

The first is **the updating of our Rule of Life**. Begun two years ago, it is still in progress. At present, the ad hoc Commission is working to integrate the various contributions of the Provinces and Districts. The next step will be to submit this work to all the Capitulants before the official opening of the Chapter, thanks to new information and communication technologies, in order to gather their opinions and suggestions. This should enable us to better assimilate the text and facilitate discussions at the Chapter Assembly with a view to adopting our new Rule of Life. These meetings are scheduled to take place from November 2023 to February 2024. More detailed information will be sent to delegates at the appropriate time.

The second theme aims to discern together **the orientations and lines of action** that will enable us to be servants of hope. Based on the contributions that will be sent to the General Secretariat, the General Council intends to draw up an "*Instrumentum Laboris*", a working instrument that will

include the reflections and suggestions of the Brothers and communities. It is of the utmost importance that Provinces and Districts adhere to the mailing schedule published in Circular 319.

The final theme concerns **the Generalate and the financing of the General Administration**. The aim is to establish a stable mechanism, similar to the *International Solidarity Fund* (ISF) for formation, which would enable the future financing - at least in part - of the General Administration and the expenses of the Generalate from the interest earned on an invested capital. Bearing in mind the diminishing human and financial resources of the Provinces and Districts that currently fund our General Government, it is urgent that the next Chapter adopt orientations and lines of action that clarify our strategy in this area.

This is the invitation extended to us by the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (DICLSAL) when it states:

*"Doing things together involves... coordination and sharing... which, if carried out seriously, could guarantee continuity to a good number of works, their apostolic effectiveness and their economic sustainability. Efficiency bears witness to the Gospel of charity and to the sustainability of a Church that creates a network of solidarity to promote the quality and reliability of services"*<sup>6</sup>.

Obviously, the General Chapter is the supreme collegial authority in the Congregation (C 83). It may add or remove items to or from this agenda.

---

<sup>6</sup> DICLSAL, Economics at the service of charism and mission, n° 33.

## IV

### JOURNEYING WITH MARY

In principle, since the beginning of September 2023, we have been journeying together as a community towards the General Chapter in the company of Mary, Mother of the Church and Patroness of our Institute (Cf. Circular 319). As at Cana, the Lord's humble handmaid asks us to do whatever her Son Jesus tells us. This is the secret of turning our water into good wine. So I encourage every Brother and every community to set out joyfully and generously on the road with Mary. How can we walk with her towards our Chapter Assembly?

- 1- **By being servants of hope.** Like Saint Francis of Assisi, where there is sadness, let us sow joy. Where there is darkness, let us bring light. Where lies flourish, let truth blossom. Where there is hatred and discord, let us plant love. Where there is despair, let us rekindle the flame of a better tomorrow. Where indifference and individualism prevail, let us weave bonds of brotherhood, sharing and friendship.
- 2- **By actively participating in the seven stages of preparation proposed in Circular 319.** In case you don't have it, it's available on the Congregation's website ([www.lamennais.org](http://www.lamennais.org)). Every Brother and Lay person in the Mennaisian Family has something to bring to fill the jars. This will be our contribution to the celebration of the New Covenant. It will also be our synodal experience, whose horizon is always communion in mission, with a view to announcing the new wine of the Gospel to children and young people. It will also be our school for learning to listen together to *"the Spirit through listening to the Word, listening to*

*the events of history and listening to one another"*<sup>7</sup>. Finally, it will be our laboratory for promoting a culture of encounter and dialogue, where no one is useless, and where we can always learn something from others.<sup>8</sup>

**3- By praying.** Let's pray personally and as a community. Let's get our students, family members, colleagues and friends to pray for the success of the next General Chapter with the prayer text that has been prepared for this purpose. It can be found at the end of Circular 319. It has been sent to you as a bookmark. It is also available on the Institute's website. In preparation for the General Chapter, the year's theme booklet suggested that we insistently ask the Lord for the seven gifts of the Spirit, one per month.<sup>9</sup> *"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain"* (Ps 126:1). So let us be faithful in praying for the Chapter. Let us ask for the help and assistance of the Holy Spirit for the Institute, and especially for the Capitulants. He is the protagonist of our Chapter Assembly.

**4- By imitating Mary's attitudes of faith and service. This means:**

- Living the events of daily life with joy, availability, boldness and generosity.
- Letting Jesus take flesh in us through frequent meditation on his Word.
- Listen with our ears, look with our eyes, sympathize with our hearts and act with the faith of the humble servant of Nazareth.
- Witness to hope through service, compassion, presence and closeness.

---

<sup>7</sup> Synod of Bishops, For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission. Instrumentum Laboris, no. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, no. 215.

<sup>9</sup> As a reminder: Here's the calendar: September: Wisdom, October: Intelligence, November: Advice, December: Strength, January: Science, February: Piety and March: Fear of God.

- Live personal and community prayer as our vocation and mission!

**5- By listening to the Church's recent calls to the consecrated life.** To this end, there are two texts to read, meditate on, work on and deepen. The first, which is attached to this circular, "*Feast of Consecrated Life - Homily of Pope Francis at St. Peter's Basilica, February 2, 2022*", echoes in our ears three fundamental questions to which we must bring elements of response:

- "*By what are we driven?*"
- "*What do our eyes see?*"
- "*Whom shall we hold in our arms?*"

The second document, "*The Gift of Fidelity - The Joy of Perseverance*" was published by the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (DICLSAL) on February 2, 2020. The first two parts, "*Looking and Listening*" and "*Reviving Consciousness*", should be prioritized for further study. The digital version of the book in question will be sent to you by e-mail. It will also be possible to download it from the Congregation's website (see *General Chapter*).

The call to fidelity and to the joy of perseverance is based on a double observation of the Dicastery:

- Our time is **a time of trial**: "*It is more difficult to live as a consecrated person in the present moment*" when the culture of the provisional predominates (no. 1).
- **Fidelity is put to the test**: the numerous departures that constitute a veritable hemorrhage in religious life have a negative influence on the understanding of the identity of consecrated life, cast doubt on the credibility of Congregations and tend to undermine the trust of the people of God in consecrated persons (no. 2).

**May Mary, the first on the road**, guide and accompany our steps towards our 2024 General Chapter, so that we may reach the Father through Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6), our Hope (1 Tim 1:1). With her, we can learn to move forward without falling, on roads both old and new, and to rise courageously when we fall.

**A woman of everyday life**, she is ready to teach us to walk with Jesus, to welcome him into our homes, and to always start afresh from him. This is where our Mother leads us, to be formed, reformed and transformed daily by her Son Jesus.

Are we ready, at his invitation, *to do **each day** whatever he tells us* (Jn 2:5)?

God alone in time!

God alone in eternity!

**Brother Hervé Zamor, s.g.**

**September 26, 2023,**

**last day of prayer for the beatification of**

**Jean-Marie de la Mennais,**

**in memory of Saints Como and Damian.**



**Feast of Consecrated Life**  
**Homily of his Holiness Pope Francis,**  
**St Peter's Basilica, 2 February 2022**

Two elderly people, Simeon and Anna, await in the Temple the fulfilment of the promise that God made to his people: the coming of the Messiah. Yet theirs is no passive expectation, it is full of movement. Let us look at what Simeon does. First, *he is moved* by the Spirit; then *he sees* salvation in the Child Jesus and finally *he takes him* into his arms (cf. *Lk 2:26-28*). Let us simply consider these three actions and reflect on some important questions for us and in particular for the consecrated life.

First, *what moves us?* Simeon goes to the Temple, “moved by the spirit” (v. 27). The Holy Spirit is the protagonist in this scene. He makes Simeon’s heart burn with desire for God. He keeps expectation alive in his heart: He impels him to go to the Temple and he enables his eyes to recognize the Messiah, even in the guise of a poor little baby. That is what the Holy Spirit does: he enables us to discern God’s presence and activity not in great things, in outward appearances or shows of force, but in littleness and vulnerability. Think of the cross. There too we find littleness and vulnerability, but also something dramatic: the power of God. Those words “moved by the spirit” remind us of what ascetic theology calls “movements of the Spirit”: those movements of the soul that we recognize within ourselves and are called to test, in order to discern whether they come from the Holy Spirit or not. Be attentive to the interior movements of the Spirit.

We can also ask, who mostly moves *us*? Is it the Holy Spirit, or the spirit of this world? This a question that everyone, consecrated persons in particular, needs to ask. The Spirit moves us to see God in the littleness and vulnerability

of a baby, yet we at times risk seeing our consecration only in terms of results, goals and success: we look for influence, for visibility, for numbers. This is a temptation. The Spirit, on the other hand, asks for none of this. He wants us to cultivate daily fidelity and to be attentive to the little things entrusted to our care. How touching is the fidelity shown by Simeon and Anna! Each day they go to the Temple, each day they keep watch and pray, even though time passes and nothing seems to happen. They live their lives in expectation, without discouragement or complaint, persevering in fidelity and nourishing the flame of hope that the Spirit has kindled in their hearts.

Brothers and sisters, we can ask, what moves *our days*? What is the love that makes us keep going? Is it the Holy Spirit, or the passion of the moment, or something else? How do we “move” in the Church and in society? Sometimes, even behind the appearance of good works, the canker of narcissism, or the need to stand out, can be concealed. In other cases, even as we go about doing many things, our religious communities can appear moved more by mechanical repetition – acting out of habit, just to keep busy – than by enthusiastic openness to the Holy Spirit. All of us would do well today to examine our interior motivations and discern our spiritual movements, so that the renewal of consecrated life may come about, first and foremost, from there.

A second question: *What do our eyes see?* Simeon, moved by the Spirit, sees and recognizes Christ. And he prays, saying: “My eyes have seen your salvation” (v. 30). This is the great miracle of faith: it opens eyes, transforms gazes, changes perspectives. As we know from Jesus’ many encounters in the Gospel, faith is born of the compassionate gaze with which God looks upon us, softening the hardness of our hearts, healing our wounds and giving us new eyes to look at ourselves and at our world. New ways to see ourselves, others and all the situations that we experience, even those that are

most painful. This gaze is not naïve but sapiential. A naïve gaze flees reality and refuses to see problems. A sapiential gaze, however, can “look within” and “see beyond”. It is a gaze that does not stop at appearances, but can enter into the very cracks of our weaknesses and failures, in order to discern God’s presence even there.

The eyes of the elderly Simeon, albeit dimmed by the years, see the Lord. They see salvation. What about us? Each of us can ask: what do our eyes see? What is our vision of consecrated life? The world often sees it as “a waste”: “look at that fine young person becoming a friar or a nun, what a waste! If at least they were ugly... but what a waste”! That is how we think. The world perhaps sees this as a relic of the past, something useless. But we, the Christian community, men and women religious, what do we see? Are our eyes turned only inward, yearning for something that no longer exists, or are we capable of a farsighted gaze of faith, one that looks both within and beyond? To have the wisdom to *look at things* – this is a gift of the Spirit – to look at things well, to see them in perspective, to grasp reality. I am greatly edified when I see older consecrated men and women whose eyes are bright, who continue to smile and in this way to give hope to the young. Let us think of all those times when we encountered such persons, and bless God for this. For their eyes are full of hope and openness to the future. And perhaps we would do well, in these days, to go make a visit to our elderly religious brothers and sisters, to see them, to talk with them, to ask questions, to hear what they are thinking. I consider this a good medicine.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord never fails to give us signs that invite us to cultivate *a renewed vision* of consecrated life. We need to do this, but in the light of the Holy Spirit and docile to his movements. We cannot pretend not to see these signs and go on as usual, doing the same old things, drifting back through inertia to the forms of the past, paralyzed by fear of

change. I have said this over and over again: nowadays the temptation to go back, for security, out of fear, in order to preserve the faith or the charism of the founder... is a temptation. The temptation to go back and preserve ""traditions"" with rigidity. Let's get this into our head: rigidity is a perversion, and beneath every form of rigidity there are grave problems. Neither Simeon or Anna were rigid; no, they were free and had the joy of celebrating: Simeon by praising the Lord and prophesying with courage to the child's mother. Anna, like a good old woman, kept saying: "Look at them!" "Look at this!" She spoke with joy, her eyes full of hope. None of the inertia of the past, no rigidity. Let us open our eyes: the Spirit is inviting us amid our crises – and crises there are –, our decreasing numbers – "Father, there are no vocations, now we will go to the ends of the earth to see if we can find one" – and our diminishing forces, to renew our lives and our communities. And how do we do this? He will show us the way. Let us open our hearts, with courage and without fear. Let us look at Simeon and Anna: although they were advanced in years, they did not spend their days mourning a past that never comes back, but instead embraced the future opening up before them. Brothers and sisters, let us not waste today by looking back at yesterday, or dreaming of a tomorrow that will never come; instead, let us place ourselves before the Lord in adoration and ask for eyes to see goodness and to discern the ways of God. The Lord will give them to us, if we ask him. With joy, with courage, without fear.

Finally, a third question: *what do we take into our own arms?* Simeon took Jesus into his arms (cf. v. 28). It is a touching scene, full of meaning and unique in the Gospels. God has placed his Son in our arms too, because embracing Jesus is the essential thing, the very heart of faith. Sometimes we risk losing our bearings, getting caught up in a thousand different things, obsessing about minor issues or plunging into new projects, yet the heart of everything is Christ, embracing him as the Lord of our lives.

When Simeon took Jesus into his arms, he spoke words of blessing, praise and wonder. And we, after so many years of consecrated life, have we lost the ability to be amazed? Do we still have this capacity? Let us examine ourselves on this, and if someone does not find it, let him or her ask the grace of amazement, amazement before the wonders that God is working in us, hidden, like those in the temple, when Simeon and Anna encountered Jesus. If consecrated men and women lack words that bless God and other people, if they lack joy, if their enthusiasm fails, if their fraternal life is only a chore, if amazement is lacking, that is not the fault of someone or something else. The real reason is that our arms no longer embrace Jesus. And when the arms of a consecrated man or woman do not embrace Jesus, they embrace a vacuum which they try to fill with other things, but it remains a vacuum. To take Jesus into our arms: this is the sign, the journey, the recipe for renewal. When we fail to take Jesus into our arms, our hearts fall prey to bitterness. It is sad to see religious who are bitter: closed up in complaining about things that never go right, in a rigidity that makes them inflexible, in attitudes of supposed superiority. They are always complaining about something: the superior, their brothers or sisters, the community, the food... They live for something to complain about. But we have to embrace Jesus in adoration and ask for eyes capable of seeing the goodness and discerning the ways of God. If we embrace Christ with open arms, we will also embrace others with trust and humility. Then conflicts will not escalate, disagreements will not divide, and the temptation to domineer and to offend the dignity of others will be overcome. So let us open our arms to Christ and to all our brothers and sisters. For that is where Jesus is.

Dear friends, today let us joyfully renew our consecration! Let us ask ourselves what “moves” our hearts and actions, what renewed vision we are being called to cultivate, and above all else, let us take Jesus into our arms. Even if at times we experience fatigue and weariness – this too happens – , let us do as Simeon and Anna did. They awaited with patience the fidelity of the Lord and did not allow themselves to be robbed of the joy of the encounter with him. Let us advance to the joy of the encounter: this is beautiful! Let us put the Lord back in the centre, and press forward with joy. Amen.



