

**HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**HOLY MASS FOR THE MEMORIAL OF ST. BENEDICT
DEDICATION OF MEMBERS OF *CARITAS CHRISTI* SECULAR INSTITUTE
SAN DAMIANO SPIRITUAL LIFE CENTER – WHITE POST, VIRGINIA
JULY 11, 2024**

Good morning!

Dear brothers and sisters, it is good for us to be here. I am grateful to Therese-Anne Druart, national sponsor for *Caritas Christi*, for inviting me to these ceremonies of dedication for Charice, Hillary, Emily, and Natasha. Welcome to all of our guests, including Maria Lukas, who has come from Austria to represent the General Council, and Anne-Elisabeth Giuliani, the Delegate for Consecrated Life in the Archdiocese of Washington.

As the Holy Father’s representative to the Church in this country, it is my privilege to convey to everyone here the closeness of Pope Francis, and especially to assure the members of *Caritas Christi* that the Holy Father is spiritually united with you: that he values your vocation. The Pope has said: “Consecrated secularity is a prophetic sign that urges us to *reveal the Father’s love with our lives rather than with words*, to show it daily on the roads of the world.”¹

The Father’s love. This is what each one of you has received, beginning with your Baptism, which remains the basis of your consecrated life. As you have grown in Christian maturity, each of you has sensed more deeply how rich and life-giving is this Father’s love. So deeply has God impressed his love in your inner self, that you have looked for a way to live completely from that love, and thus to spread that love as fully as possible to your fellow human beings. In the words of today’s Gospel, you are willing to give up “houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands” for the sake of Christ’s name, because you have already tasted the “hundred times more” that Jesus promises you. As Pope St. Paul VI said to leaders of secular institutes: “You are an advanced wing of the Church ‘in the

¹ Pope Francis, Letter to the President of the World Conference of Secular Institutes on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, 2 February 2022.

world’.” That is to say, by the combination of your consecration and your secularity, “you are a particularly concrete and effective manifestation of what the Church wants to do to build the world described and hoped for by [the Second Vatican Council].”²

I want to assure you, the members of this Institute, that your vocation is a work of grace and a choice full of wisdom. It may be that there are times in your life when you need to hear this. Times when you feel that you are not well-understood – by your companions in secular society, but perhaps also by people within the Church! Maybe, too, there are times when you feel discouraged or doubtful, or simply alone. It is easy to ask – not unlike Peter did – *Is it really worth it? Is there meaning in this choice I have made?*³ In those moments, remember what we heard from Proverbs: “If you receive my words and treasure my commands, turning your ear to wisdom, inclining your heart to understanding,” then “the knowledge of God you will find.”⁴ Return to the Word of God. Return to what the Holy Father likes to call your own personal “Galilee”⁵: a moment in your life when you realized that the Lord was looking at you with love, and calling you to follow him. He still calls you. He still gives you his counsel. He is still your guard and your shield.⁶

Your sponsor will soon remind you before you make your dedication: The Lord is the vine, and you are his branch.⁷ Your dedication to poverty, chaste celibacy, and obedience create the opening in your life for “remaining” or “abiding” in the Lord, as a branch on the vine. The strength of your dedication is found in that personal communion with the living in God which you foster through daily prayer. It is Christ who will nourish you with the “sap” that fills your spirit from within: the hidden grace that will make you continue to radiate the love of God and bear fruit. As the Psalm says: “those who seek the Lord want for no good thing.”⁸

² Pope St. Paul VI, Address to the International Congress of Leaders of Secular Institutes, 20 September 1972.

³ Cf. *Matthew* 19:27.

⁴ *Proverbs* 2:1-2, 5.

⁵ Cf. Pope Francis, Homily for Mass of the Easter Vigil, 8 April 2023.

⁶ Cf. *Proverbs* 2: 7-8.

⁷ Cf. *John* 15:5.

⁸ *Psalms* 34:11.

My words to you, then, are first: thank you for saying “yes” to God in your choice to follow this vocation of secular consecration. And second: be encouraged, for God who has called you will never abandon you. Allow me to conclude with words that Pope Francis spoke to people of secular institutes:

“I ask you today to renew this spirit of anticipation of the Church’s journey, to be sentinels looking upwards and forwards, with the Word of God in your hearts and love for your brothers and sisters in your hands. You are in the world to testify that it is loved and blessed by God. You are consecrated for the world, which awaits your witness to a freedom that gives joy, that nourishes hope, that prepares the future.”⁹

May God bless you, both today and throughout the days of your life.

⁹ Letter for the 75th anniversary of *Provida Mater Ecclesia*.