

**MESSAGE OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE**  
**TO THE 2021 ASSEMBLY OF THE CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN**  
**“WAKE UP THE WORLD: LIVING OUR PROPHETIC WITNESS”**  
**AUGUST 3 - 4, 2021**

My Dear Brothers in Christ,

I greet you in the name of Pope Francis, assuring you of his closeness, fraternal support and prayers as you gather for this Virtual Assembly of the Conference of Major Superiors of Religious Men. I thank your Executive Director, Father Frank Donio, and your President, Father Adam Gregory Gonzalez, for their kind invitation to deliver a short message as you address the theme: “Wake Up the World: Living Our Prophetic Witness”.

Living your prophetic witness as consecrated men takes on a greater importance not only as parts of the world emerge from the pandemic but also as the pandemic, and the suffering it brings, continues in other parts of the world that do not have access to vaccines or adequate medical treatment. Your witness and your solidarity with them will be a living reminder of the presence of Christ, who never abandons His flock. Waking up the world also involves reawakening conscience to the value of fraternity, as Pope Francis has attempted throughout his Pontificate, but especially in his encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*.

At the beginning of his Pontificate, the Holy Father wrote:

“In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ’s closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this ‘art of accompaniment’” (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November 2013, 169).

While calling us to make present the “fragrance of Christ’s closeness”, the Pope, through *Fratelli Tutti*, forces us to think about what type of Church we want to be: a Church closed in on itself or a Church that goes forth? A Church of the Priest and the Levite or a Samaritan Church? A self-referential church or one concerned with fraternity and the common good? As a Church, and you as religious, in particular, we have a duty to be a Samaritan Church. The story of the Good Samaritan is at the heart of *Fratelli Tutti*, but it is also at the heart of the Gospel.

If we want to “heal the world”, emerging from the pandemic, then we must witness to Christ the Good Samaritan who offers healing, mercy, and compassion to a suffering world. The Church suffers from the same problems, the same maladies as the rest of society – polarization, secularization, indifference, worldliness, and the like. These problems not only affect us, but they divide us. Our mission is to heal the world.

As Catholics – whether in dioceses, religious communities, or parishes, – are we trying to offer hope through a different type of witness, through the type of witness offered by the Samaritan? It is this witness that will attract believers and transform society; the witness to compassion and mercy. Jesus Himself says, “Go and do likewise.”

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis explores the parable of the Good Samaritan, which illustrates powerfully how healing can be brought to a wounded world:

“The parable eloquently presents the basic decision we need to make in order to rebuild our wounded world. In the face of so much pain and suffering, our only course is to imitate the Good Samaritan. Any other decision would make us either one of the robbers or one of those who walked by without showing compassion for the sufferings of the man on the roadside. The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbors, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good” (Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 3 October 2020, n. 67).

So, “are we in the skin of the Samaritan or of the priest and Levite?” We cannot afford to be a Church that is “illiterate” in caring for the frail and vulnerable (nn.64-65) or that is indifferent to the plight of the suffering as the passers-by were, hiding under the guise of religiosity (cf. 74). In a world of suffering, we are called to become neighbors to others. As consecrated people, we have a special responsibility to lead by example, demonstrating what it means to be a neighbor.

We must answer honestly whether we are receiving this parable or transforming it to fit our own ideas. In a polarized society, the Holy Father asks us to help our people overcome prejudices, personal interests, and historic and cultural barriers. We accept a co-responsibility with others – but we have something to offer – to create a society which includes, integrates and lifts up those who are suffering. It is my sincere hope that as you gather for this virtual assembly that you discover and explore more profoundly what it is that you as religious uniquely have to offer.

The Lord Jesus calls us to go outside of ourselves just as the Samaritan did. Love is the measure of the spiritual stature of a person. Love of neighbor begins with recognizing the dignity and worth of every human person and expands through what the Pope calls “social friendship”, a friendship that transcends borders. This inherent dignity, rooted in our origins in God, gives us mutual kinship.

Could you as religious identify how we could follow the Holy Father in promoting this social friendship? You are acutely aware of the challenges of migration, racism, and abortion, but what is something “new” that you could contribute in our world that has been changed by the pandemic?

What the Holy Father suggests in *Fratelli Tutti* is moving from seeing someone merely as a neighbor to viewing them as a brother or sister. Can you live the prophetic charism of respecting, defending, loving, and serving every life, including the lives of the least of our brothers and sisters?

This Assembly has the opportunity to wake up the world to the plight of our brothers and sisters and to remind the world that we are all children of God. Pope Francis proposes fraternity, not just as a human virtue but as a Christian virtue, which you as religious live daily. The relief of suffering, the invitation to the life of grace, and the art of accompaniment are different forms of love, which religious men show forth. Augustine says that if you have seen love, you have seen the Trinity. The Holy Father invites us to go forth just as Francis of Assisi went forth to meet the Sultan – unarmed, but clothed in the virtues of faith, hope, and, above all, love.

With these sentiments, assuring you of my prayers, I impart the Apostolic Blessing upon all joining the 2021 Virtual National Assembly of the CMSM as a pledge of peace and joy in the Lord Jesus Christ.