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Video Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the 50th National Week for Institutes of Consecrated Life in Spain

The following is the text of the video message sent by Pope Francis to the participants in the fiftieth National Week for Institutes of Consecrated Life in Spain, taking place online from 17 to 22 May on the theme: "Consecrated for life in the world. Consecrated life in today's society":

Video Message of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters participating in this 50th Week of Religious Life (or 49th-50th, since last year it was not possible to hold it), which began when the now Cardinal Aquilino Bocos Merino, of the journal "*Vita Religiosa*", started to stir the waters.

I would like to thank publicly Don Aquilino, the priest, the religious, who never stopped being a religious brother and a priest, and always serves the Church thus. I wish to thank him for continually sowing the seeds of restlessness, to understand the richness of consecrated life and to make it bear fruit. Not only to understand it, but live it. Not just theory, no, practice. In any case, catechesis to practice it better. So I publicly thank Cardinal Aquilino for all of this.

And I am looking at the programme. I have it here, I see that there are people who have much experience of religious life, and universal experience, and experience of the limit. For example, the president of the CLAR, Sister Lilibiana: at the limit in Latin America, which appeared many times in the Synod for Amazonia; or Cardinal Cristóbal, of Rabat: the border with the Islamic world. And many other participants from every point of view.

I like the message, I am now looking for the first time at the programme. And I would like to tell you that I am close to you in this 49th-50th, more 50th, National Week for the Institutes of Consecrated Life. In consecrated life one understands by journeying, as always. One understands by consecrating oneself every day. It is understood in dialogue with reality. When consecrated life loses this dimension of dialogue with reality and reflection on what is happening, it starts to become barren. I wonder about the barrenness of some institutes of consecrated life, and I see that the cause, generally speaking, lies in the lack of dialogue and engagement with reality. Some might say, "Yes, now this modern form"... No! Let us think of Saint Teresa. Saint Teresa saw

reality and took the opportunity for reform, and went ahead. Then, along the way, there were attempts to transform that reform into closure: there always are. But reform is always a journey, it is a journey in contact with reality and a horizon under the light of a founding charism. And these days, these meetings, these weeks of consecrated life, help us to leave behind our fear.

And it is also sad to see how some institutes, in search of a certain security, so as to be able to control themselves, give in to ideologies of any tendency, left, right, centre. When an institute reformulates its charism in terms of an ideology it loses its identity, it loses its fruitfulness. Keeping the founding charism alive means keeping it on the move and growing, in dialogue with what the Spirit is telling us in the history of the times, in different places, in different epochs, in different situations. This presupposes discernment and it presupposes prayer. You cannot maintain a founding charism without apostolic courage, that is, without journeying, without discernment and without prayer. And that is what you are trying to do this week. It is not a matter of gathering together to play the guitar and say "how beautiful consecrated life is", no, - yes, play the guitar from time to time because it is good to sing, it is good, as Saint Augustine says, to "sing and walk", it is good - but rather, to try together not to lose ourselves in formalisms, in ideologies, in fears, in dialogues with ourselves and not with the Holy Spirit.

Do not fear limits! Do not be afraid of frontiers! Do not fear the peripheries! For it is there that the Spirit will speak to you. Put yourselves "within range" of the Holy Spirit. And these weeks will certainly help you to get "within range".

May God bless you, may the Virgin protect you. And if you have a "little" time left, pray for me. Thank you.
