



**Message to the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of Kalamazoo  
for the  
World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life  
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, February 2, 2022**

As we continue to celebrate our Diocesan “*Jubilee Year of the Holy Spirit*” which will culminate on the great Solemnity of Pentecost (June 5, 2022). I once more urge everyone to take advantage of these final five months of this Jubilee Year as an opportunity to enter ever more deeply into a life of prayer, invoking the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit, both to strengthen our relationship with Jesus, as well as to pray for the Grace to celebrate the Gifts and to respond to the challenges which lie before us.

Among the wonderful Gifts we have here in our Diocese are the many women and men who have given themselves in service to the Church through **Consecrated Life**. Two Religious Orders of particular note have a long-standing presence. For more than 130 years, the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph, have served in many of our Catholic schools and parishes in the past, and continue to support the Diocese primarily through their life of prayer at Nazareth Center. Even earlier than the Sisters’ apostolate, the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Cross at Notre Dame have served various parishes in what is now the Diocese of Kalamazoo and are still caring for the faithful of St. Mark Parish, Niles. More recently, we have been blessed with Religious Priests from many parts of the world who are serving as pastors and parochial vicars in a number of our parishes, and Religious women, including Sisters from Colombia and Nicaragua, who are providing pastoral care in many of our parishes with large Hispanic populations. We are so grateful to all those who are here with us and have chosen to make our Diocese their “home away from home” for the time they are here as missionaries among us.

Every year on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, our Holy Father asks each Diocese to observe the “**World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life**”, so that we can pray in a special way for the men and women whom the Lord has called to a special consecration within the Church, and who bring the unique and irreplaceable charisms from the Holy Spirit in helping to build up the Church and to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On that Day, we give thanks to God for the Gift of Consecrated Life, and we pray for and promote vocations to Consecrated Life.

In his Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), Pope Francis addressed all of us - and all people of good will - regardless of each person’s state in life, with a particular mention of Religious Brothers and Sisters, urging us to contribute to “the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity” (n. 8), as well as the unity for which we have long been praying, especially in the recent “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity”.

Consecrated men and women of different ages, cultures and places currently serve the needs of the Church of Kalamazoo with great love, bringing to their pastoral ministry or apostolate the unique dimensions of the charism of their Religious Community. As Pope Francis noted, “...consecrated men and women are called first and foremost to be men and women of

*encounter.*” They foster this “culture of encounter” within the diversity of our parishes, sharing gifts and ministries that benefit many others. Their consecration is itself a gift, which invites us to “encounter” the Giver of all gifts, and to rejoice in sharing our own gifts with the entire Body of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He leads us to build the Church as we share the Gifts we have received (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, nn. 216-221).

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is also known as “Candlemas Day”, which reminds us of the Lord’s call to be the “light of the world” (*John* 8:12). It is so evident that our dear priests, brothers, and sisters, who belong to various Religious Communities, do indeed reflect the Light of Jesus Christ to all those they encounter in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, and beyond. For this year, the **Day of Prayer will be observed next Sunday, February 6**, and every parish is asked to reflect, pray, honor, and promote vocations to the Consecrated Life within the Church. Later in the Spring, when the restrictions due to the pandemic are less burdensome, our Diocese will celebrate a special Mass in our Cathedral to pray for and offer thanks to God for the presence and dedication of all of those consecrated women and men serving in our Diocese (more details will be forthcoming).

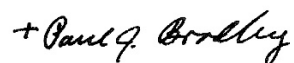
In spite of the current limitations we are experiencing, we are encouraged to pray for vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated Life and to seek every way possible to encourage those whom the Lord has called to seriously consider this invitation to holiness and to bear witness to the Presence of Jesus, the Light of the world. We all have the responsibility to support the vocations of those in Consecrated Life, and to nurture the *light* that the Lord has placed within them for the good of the Church.

As we continue living *with joyful hope* in this “Jubilee Year of the Holy Spirit”, we ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to be joyful missionary disciples of the Lord in all that we do each day, and to foster an “encounter” with God’s love and mercy. May those among us in Consecrated Life continue giving Him the joyful “yes” of their lives and remain always close to His Heart.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Consecrated Life, I thank each of you for responding to your vocation, for your generous missionary heart that brings you here among us, and for the charity and pastoral zeal with which you serve so many. Thank you for being promoters of the “encounter” with the joy and life of Jesus. May the Lord strengthen your Consecration with His love, as you strive to live out your own personal “encounter” with Him. I entrust your lives and your Religious Communities to the prayers and protection of our Immaculate Mother of Mercy. As you pray with her, be confident that you are in her loving and Maternal Hands. May you ever more profoundly listen to and follow her words which she spoke to the servants at the Wedding Feast in Cana about her Son, Jesus, “*Do whatever He tells you*” (*John* 2:5). I assure you that all the Clergy and Faithful of our Diocese will continue to keep you in our prayers.

Asking God’s blessings upon all the Faithful and Clergy as we rejoice in the Gift of Consecrated Life in the Church, and praying for the Holy Spirit’s continued outpouring of His Gifts upon us all, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Paul J. Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley  
Bishop of Kalamazoo