



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE CANONS REGULAR OF THE MOST HOLY SAVIOUR AT THE LATERAN**

Monday, 19 June 2023

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I greet the Abbot General and all of you, wishing you the best for the second centenary of your founding! Your community was born of the merging of two communities: that of the *Canons Regular of the Most Holy Saviour* and the *Canons Regular of the Lateran*. But your origin is far more ancient: it dates back to the fifteenth century and is rooted in the early times of the Church when, through the work of enlightened pastors, it soon began to promote the communal life of clerics. This is a very great grace.

You therefore belong to a centuries-old tradition, inspired by the Christian community of the origins and centred on prayer, communion of life and the community use of goods (cf. *Acts 2:42, 47*), because, as Saint Augustine said, “live together in harmony, being of one mind and heart on the way to God” (*Rule 1.3*). *Prayer, community, common use of goods and spirit of service to the Church*: these four are the charismatic constants of your history, the “four stars” that never wane and that make your apostolate luminous and current.

“Prayer”, because it is the oxygen of the soul. If you do not pray, you will be your own god. All selfishness stems from a lack of prayer. I ask you, please: examine your conscience, each one of you, say how many hours a day you pray. Every one of you. “Community”: what I spoke to you about, being brothers; and I will give you some advice: never speak badly of each other, never! Gossip is a plague. I will say that I will give you, regarding gossip, a text by the Secretary of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide: read it carefully. Gossip is a plague, it destroys communities. No gossip. And then, “common use of goods”: something wise, always. The devil enters through

the pockets! Think of what Jesus says: “No servant can serve two masters; either you serve God” – and here I would expect him to say, or you serve the devil – instead he does not say the devil, but “money”, as if it were worse than the devil. This is curious. The devil always enters via the pockets, always. And the fourth: “spirit of service to the Church”. Not to live for oneself, but to serve, they are the four stars.

Your charism demands that you are at the same time contemplative and active, devoted to prayer and study as well as the ministry, ready to respond to the needs of changing times. You have often lived through change, and even the bicentenary you are celebrating is linked to one of these, to when, in a time of adverse circumstances, you knew how to make courageous choices, transforming a challenge into an opportunity for rebirth.

Now you are asking yourselves how to continue in the renewal of your religious life. I would like to say to you: let yourselves be guided by your four stars. The very name of your Congregation evokes them: *Canons Regular of the Most Holy Saviour at the Lateran*. The fact of being dedicated to the *Saviour* recalls the importance of cultivating, through *prayer*, the centrality of Christ. Then, you have the title of *Canons*: you are well aware that this is not an indication of rank, but rather a sign of belonging to a *community*. You are called canons *regular*, hence linked to a Rule, which outlines fidelity to your consecration according to vows, first and foremost *poverty*. Finally, your name links you to the *Lateran* Basilica: this does not constitute a prestigious embellishment or a memorial to past glories, no; rather, it is an invitation to fidelity to the Church, to be witnessed essentially through *service*.

I know that some of you, young priests from various parts of the world, are having an experience in these months that, through meetings, celebrations and meaningful visits, is intended to help them to establish projects and bonds, as well as to broaden their knowledge. To them, and to all of you, I say: live this occasion as a gift, in mutual listening, recognizing in each person a wealth for others. Tell each other and listen to each other, with sincerity and openness of heart, not remaining inflexible in your own convictions, but moving with the heart, as Saint Augustine suggests: “It is one thing to move with the body, another thing to move with the heart: he migrates with the body who changes his place by a motion of the body; he migrates with the heart who changes his affection by a motion of the heart” (*Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 32). And with the heart in motion, dynamic and open, that welcomes the paths that the Holy Spirit shows. I wish you this with my heart. Keep going forward! I bless you and thank you for coming. And I ask you, please, to pray for me.

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