

### ***Live your Vocation in hope.***

*It is with great joy I take this opportunity of using the Order's Web Page to greet you, brothers and sisters of the Fraternity, in the name of the Prior General and his Council. Using the short article published in the Magazine "Toma y lee", in the first place I wish to encourage you to live your faith in hope and rediscover the the value of your vocation as lay Augustinian Recollects. Secondly I would like to inform you of the trust the General Chapter has placed in the Fraternity and lastly we offer you the support of the General Secretariat for Spirituality. I ask the risen Lord to fill you with his Spirit and grant that you live your vocation in hope.*

### ***The risen Christ fills us with his Spirit.***

Jesus Lord, send down your Holy Spirit on the Church and into our hearts and make us cry, Abba Father! In Christ we are the children of the Father and brothers and sisters in the new family of the children of God (Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 4). Jesus of Nazareth reveals to us an unshakeable love, which gives us life, he forgives us and he trusts us, Jesus invites us to follow Him. This call is understood in faith and love, received as a gift from God, gives meaning and answer throughout our lives. To understand our Christian Life as vocation we receive with gratitude the call of fraternal communion, which is seen in the Trinity and is manifested in the mission of Christ in the life of the Church.

### ***The Church is Communion.***

The doctrine of the Church should be considered as communion and should be remembered in the call of all Christians to holiness; the laity, priests and religious, and what it has contributed to outline the specific vocation of the laity and as a reminder of their prophetic mission. Therefore we should never think of the laity as third class Christians. The laity are not simply spectators or the simple passive receptors of spiritual gifts. In the Church we are the branches that are joined to the vine tree to give fruit, we are members of one body, the mystical body of Christ. We are all fed with the bread of life, the sacrament of love and communion. In this body each one according to the gifts received have their own mission to fulfil, for the good of the whole church and the good of mankind. "In the single unity of Christian life different vocations are like rays of light coming from Christ which radiate onto the face of the Church." (John Paul II, Exhortation apostolic *Vida consagrada* 16).

### ***The vocation of the laity.***

"Each and every one of us work in the one vineyard of the Lord with different and complimentary charisma and missions." (John Paul II, Exhortation apostolic *Los fieles laicos* 55). It's object is to give oneness to our lives for the point of faith, to do that we have identify ourselves with our appropriate vocation. The laity have their own identity, they have the responsibility of taking Christ into structures of both family and society to strengthen the Gospel in the daily life of people. We are all called to live our vocation in common, to grow in charity, to share the gifts we have received, be evangelised and be evangelisers to the best

of our ability. In a globalised world and in a church that appeals for a spirituality of communion, all the baptised each from their own respective vocation have to feel themselves called to unite their strengths in the construction of the kingdom of God and face the challenges of the world. So far so good but we have to keep in mind the present “within the lay state there are many different ‘vocations’ in other words different spiritual and apostolic ways that can affect each lay person. In the domain of one ‘common’ lay vocation grow vocations that can be specific.” (John Paul II, Exhortation apostolic *Los fieles laicos* 56). We know of lay persons who live their vocation belonging or sharing with prayer groups, church movements, charitable and social organisations. These groups or movements can arise and are organised in the context of the parish, from churches, colleges and in normal life. In some groups, movements and even in religious communities the laity are already members and collaborate in the work or even have a shared mission with them.

### ***Sharing the charism from an individual Vocation.***

In general we have shared with the laity and have said there are particular lay vocations. We discover each day more and more the fact that the charism of the founders of religious institutes, having striven for the good of all, place themselves anew at the centre of the Church open to communion and the participation of all the members of the City of God. (Cf. Instrucción *Caminar desde Cristo* 31). The most intense relationship between the religious and the laity, without reducing their own identity, contributes to mutual enrichment and enables a complementary church communion. One vocation in particular is that those lay people moved by the Holy Spirit ask to share the spirituality and mission of an institute or religious order from their own perspective. ‘Owing to new circumstances, many religious institutes have arrived at the conclusion that their particular charism can be shared with the laity. In a special way these organisations can share a special, more intense spirituality. Learning from the more recent experiences of different orders with seculars it might even be said that we have arrived at a new stage in the history of religious life and the laity, rich with hope. (*Vida consagrada* 54; Cf. *Código de Derecho Canónico*, c. 303).

### ***The vocation of the Augustinian Recollect Seculars***

Belonging to a secular fraternity is an authentic vocation in that it calls for a response both in faith and life, to deepen our charism and be leaven of the gospel to the world in the spirit of the beatitudes. (Cf. *Guía para erigir la fraternidad seglar agustino recoleta* 11-36). The vocation of the Augustinian Recollect Seculars asks its members to seek and proclaim God according to the charism of the Order and make an effort in making real, the union of souls and hearts in God, according to the teaching of St Augustine. (Cf. *Rule de vida*, n. 9). The Fraternity of the Augustinian Recollects has its own history. From the middle of the 17th century third order members gathered around several Pories. It must be remembered that at this time in the Far East there was a great flowering of the third order. St Magdalen of Nagasaki is the great and illustrious example of a

Recollect Tertiary. I consider the gift of this vocation not only to be a gift for the person who receives it but for their families, for the fraternity, the religious order and the local church in which it serves. The charism of the Augustinian Recollects in a charism of the Church. The laity who participate are called to live in their natural state; in their family, in society, in their workplace, in meeting with fellow members of the fraternity and according to the possibilities working apostolically and in social works. The members of the fraternity undertake to live their own vocation to holiness *in the light of the spirituality of the Augustinian Recollects* using as a reference *the rule of life*. It would be a nonsense, therefore to be content with a mediocre and superficial life. (Cf. *Guía para erigir la fraternidad* 47-64) We can safely say that the fact of having groups of seculars participating through their vocation and in the correct way the Order's charism, commits not only the laity but also the religious members of the Order. They have to invite people to receive these gifts and encourage them to live them and collaborate in their formation in order they might continue in their vocation. (Cf. Documento *La vida fraterna en comunidad*, 70). We recognise that actions of the spirit can be surprising, breaking ancient moulds and frequently going beyond our human expectations, we religious cannot stand aside. The fact that seculars ask us about Augustinian Recollect spirituality drives religious to know and learn it and to live it coherently. We know that when the charism is lived it is transmitted and spreads spontaneously with great prospects, with boldness and freedom; we can say we believe in its value, we discover its vitality. It is then lived with creative fidelity and gives forth its prophetic and evangelistic dimension.

### ***The General Chapter and the Fraternity***

The General Chapter was celebrated from the 18th of October to the 12th November 2004, it recognised that it is the Holy Spirit who makes some people feel called to share in their secular life the charism of the Order; it has been noticed with great satisfaction the progress of the secular fraternities in the past six years and the interest that has been shown in their formation, and this makes clear that such development flows from an awareness of the charism of the Order as a gift of the Holy Spirit, which itself calls to communion in the Church. (Cf. *Ordenaciones* 8). This Chapter has taken very seriously the role of the secular fraternities even to the point that, in December last year, it entrusted its care to the General Secretariat for Spirituality. The council for the chapter was also entrusted, with the collaboration of the laity, preparation of materials for the different stages of formation, the set-up of an archive of the fraternities and organisation of helpful workshops, both for the spiritual directors and the lay leaders. Lastly the Prior General and his Council have been tasked with the job of encouraging the religious to continue the spiritual development and establish fraternities in communities which do not have them and promote regional, national and even international assemblies. (Cf. *Ordenaciones*, 8)

I consider that it is an absolute goal for the Secretariat for Spirituality to move the Order's lay fraternities which is embodied in the diversity of cultures and in the restless hearts of so many lay brothers and sisters. It is a goal and an opportunity for existing fraternities to live their vocation with renewed hope, to engage in training and in the apostolic work of their own fraternity and from this experience of prayer and fraternal life, encourage others to journey with them. It is both a goal and an opportunity for all Augustinian Recollects and in a special way for the major superiors, local superiors and those who have been named as spiritual directors. It is a goal to know and promote the fraternities and also It is a goal to welcome and accompany those lay people who feel moved by the Holy Spirit to share the spirituality and mission of the Order from their own homes. I would like to conclude with the words from the Chapter directed towards the whole Augustinian Recollect Family in which, from the allegory of the vine in the Gospel of St John (15, 1-11), it calls on religious and lay people to pray that communion becomes a reality; "we wish to have only one soul and one heart directed towards God" (*The Rule*, 2). This is also the will of both the religious and secular Augustinian Recollect Fraternity who believe in the miracle of brotherhood: Stay united in Christ and through Christ in our brothers and sisters. To you, who wish to be experts in communion, in the love of the Lord, we share our dream and, like Augustine, we ask you to pray that this will be implemented (S. 356, 1). We know that while we remain in the Lord and His words abide in us, that whatever we ask he will grant us. (Cf. *Jn* 15, 7)".

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