

LECTIO DIVINA

LITURGICAL YEAR 2013-2014

In FRATERNAL LIFE

let us be a gift of God's providential love
for each other

Sources of reference:

- *Holy Scripture*
- *Encyclical Letter: Deus caritas est*
- *Encyclical Letter: Lumen Fidei*
- *Rule and Constitutions*
- *Document of XIX General Chapter*

*The sisters share the same vocation,
following the example of the community life
realized by Christ and his disciples
and the inspiration of St. Francis. (Cfr. Const. 27)*

Rome 25.08.2013
Feast of St. Louis IX

Dearest Sisters,

as every year I come to you to present the gift of **Lectio Divina**: an appointment already familiar and, I hope, expected by all of you and truly lived in every community. At the beginning of each liturgical year this precious tool for our spiritual journey and of our continuing education wants to remind us of the primacy of God in our life, of the primacy of His Word, as a light to our steps, as “providential bread” for the journey and as the rock on which to build our personal and community project.

This year, as before, the themes of lectio divina follow the indications of the chapter document: *In Fraternal Life let us be a gift of God’s providential love for each other*. We are living in the last events of the Year of Faith opened by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and the year will be closed, according to the Will of God, by Pope Francis. The reflections on faith by the two Popes are given to us in the encyclical letter *Lumen Fidei*; this document and the *Deus Caritas Est* will guide our meetings of Lectio Divina.

Besides the two encyclicals, other reference documents for the Lectio Divina for this year are:

- God’s Word;
- the Rule, the Constitutions and the Directory;
- the section of the Chapter document which concerns Fraternal Life.

The itineraries of Faith and Life are included in each Lectio as means for personal and community evaluation.

Fraternal Life, as we all have experienced, is based on faith and on Love, Love that finds its source in Jesus Crucified and helps us to grow and to share His redemptive love, as we read in Deus Caritas Est: “*Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light—and in the end, the only light—that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working.*” (39)

I give you this reflection as my wish; may every meeting of Lectio Divina be an opportunity to grow in faith, in Love; and may the reflections shared with each other become truly “a gift of God’s providential love for each other” that always is lived out in the community and with the community.

I ask the Virgin Mary to accompany each of our journey of growth and fidelity to our being Franciscan Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and I do so with the prayer to Mary in the same encyclical letter Lumen Fidei:

Mother, help our faith!

Open our ears to hear God’s word and to recognize his voice and call.

Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps...

Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love...

I wish a fruitful journey to each one of you and to every fraternity.

With affection

General Superior



1 - THE CONSECRATED COMMUNITY: A REALITY OF FAITH

By professing the same faith, we stand firm on the same rock, we are transformed by the same Spirit of love, we radiate one light and we have a single insight into reality. (Lumen fidei 47)

From the Gospel according to Mark

Mk 3: 13-19

Jesus went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. He appointed the twelve: Simon, whom he named Peter; James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Constitutions, 25

The Congregation of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred heart is constituted in local communities in order that the sisters accept and live out together the same charism as a significant witness of the presence of the love of God in the world.

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

- Let us accept the **community** as a reality of faith.
(Cfr.Doc. Cap. p. 26).
- We strengthen the **value of responsible fidelity** on the journey of holiness (Doc. Cap. p. 27b).





2 -JESUS CRUCIFIED: THE SOURCE OF LOVE

His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form... It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move. (Deus caritas est 12)

From the Gospel according to John

Jn 19: 28-37

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit. Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for the Sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may (come to) believe. For this happened so that the scripture passage might be fulfilled: “Not a bone of it will be broken.” And again another passage says: “They will look upon him whom they have pierced.”

Constitutions, 4

§ 1. The spirit of the Congregation flows from the contemplation of the mystery of Jesus Christ Crucified.

§ 2. From His Sacred Heart the sisters draw redemptive love, profound benevolence and apostolic zeal for humanity.

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We verify that the spirit of fraternity is lived in conformity with our charismatic identity (Doc. Cap. p.27a)





3 - THE EUCHARIST: SIGN AND INSTRUMENT OF UNITY IN FRATERNITY

Eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. (Deus caritas est 14)

From the Gospel according to Luke

Lk 22: 14- 20

When the hour came, he took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again until there is fulfilment in the kingdom of God."

Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you that from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me."

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you".

Constitutions, 30

- § 1. *The consecrated community, finding its source of fruitfulness in the Mystery of the Eucharist, is daily called to live its paschal mystery.*
- § 2. *The union they live in the Eucharist is revealed in their life in community. To give fitness to the unifying force of this action of grace, the sisters:*
- *help each other in their commitment to personal sanctification;*
 - *offer themselves and all their talents for the growth and renewal of the community;*
 - *accept one another with love and forgive each other reciprocally;*
 - *support each other in their efforts and in their difficulties;*
 - *serve one another willingly and obey each other reciprocally.*

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We nurture fraternal communion in the celebration of the Eucharist.
(Cfr. Doc. Cap. p.26)





4 - TO LOOK WITH THE EYES OF FAITH AND LOVE

Love of neighbour shown... by Jesus... consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know.

This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, even affecting my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend. (cfr. *Deus caritas est.* 18)

From the Gospel according to John

Jn 15: 12-17

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

This I command you: love one another.

Rule, 23

Because God loves us, the brothers and sisters should love each other, for the Lord says, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you”. Let them manifest their love in deeds. Also whenever they meet each other, they should show that they are members of the same family. Let them make known their needs to one another.

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We care for authentic fraternal relationships with feelings and expressions of **benevolence, gentleness, courtesy, respect, amiability and joy.** (Doc. Cap. p.27d)





5 - THROUGH SISTERLY LOVE WE SHARE

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH OTHER HOLINESS

Only my readiness to encounter my neighbour and to show him love makes me sensitive to God as well. Only if I serve my neighbour can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me. (Deus caritas est 18)

From the Gospel according to Luke

Lk 5: 17-26

One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was with him for healing. And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set him in his presence. But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, "As for you, your sins are forgiven."

Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, "What are you thinking in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has

authority on earth to forgive sins” - he said to the man who was paralyzed, - “I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.” He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God.

Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, “We have seen incredible things today.”

Constitutions, 33

The sisters live their community life as a paschal reality of death and resurrection, with an attitude of continual conversion, they make their community a place of silence and of encounter, of forgiveness and of joy, of special concern for the sisters who are weaker and tried by suffering

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We take care of each other and understand the sisters in their moments of crisis, receiving them with charity, in their weaknesses and wounds. (*Doc. Cap. p.27g*)





6 - THE SERVICE, A “TEST” OF SISTERLY LOVE

The Spirit... is that interior power which harmonizes their hearts with Christ's heart and moves them to love their brethren as Christ loved them, when he bent down to wash the feet of the disciples and above all when he gave his life for us. (Deus caritas est 19)

From the Gospel according to John

Jn 13: 3-17

During supper, Jesus, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Master, are you going to wash my feet?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later.” Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.” Jesus said to him, “Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all.”

For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and

reclined at table again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it.

Rule, 25

Therefore, in every kind of Chapter they have let them “seek first the kingdom of God and its justice,” and exhort one another to observe this rule which all have professed more exactly, as well as how they might more faithfully follow in the footprints of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let them neither dominate nor seek power over one another but let them willingly serve and obey each other with that genuine love which comes from each one’s heart

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We live the service and the mutual humble fraternal obedience according to the Franciscan spirit. (Cfr. Doc. Cap. p.26)





7 - FORGIVENESS AS AN ACT OF RECIPROCAL LOVE

Faith likewise offers the possibility of forgiveness, which so often demands time and effort, patience and commitment. Forgiveness is possible once we discover that goodness is always prior to and more powerful than evil. (Lumen fidei 55).

From the Gospel according to Matthew *Mt 5: 22-24, 38-45, 48*

I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, 'you good for nothing,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift...

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'

But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust... So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Rule, 24

If discord caused by word or deed should occur among them, they should immediately and humbly ask forgiveness of one another even before offering their gift of prayer before the Lord.

And if anyone seriously neglects the form of life all profess, the minister, or others who may know of it, are to admonish that person. Those giving the admonition should neither embarrass nor speak evil of the other. but show great kindness. Let all be careful of self righteousness, which causes anger and annoyance because of another's sin. These in oneself or in another hinder living lovingly.

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We live fraternal correction and **forgiveness** as acts of loving each other. (Doc. Cap. p.27f)





8 - UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Love is “divine” because it comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a “we” which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is “all in all”. (Deus caritas est 18)

From the Gospel according to John

Jn 17: 11, 18-23

Jesus said: “Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are...

As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth. “I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me”.

Constitutions, 31

§ 2. *As an International family, they nurture feelings of acceptance and sisters affection towards all. This charity thereby witnesses to the world its Christian unity in diversity.*

Directory, 22

- § 1. Recognizing in each sister the image of Jesus Christ, the sisters' interpersonal relationships are inspired by:
- the desire for peaceful and mutual help;
 - the respect for the dignity of each person;
 - goodwill and understanding of each individual's circumstances;
 - a true sharing of joys and sorrows.
- § 2. They consider the various talents and gifts given by God to each member as the treasure of the community intended for the joys and benefit of the whole religious family.

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We verify that the spirit of fraternity is lived in **unity in diversity**.
(Doc. Cap. p. 27a)





9 - WITNESSES OF THE JOY OF THE RISEN LORD

The apostles...with their own eyes they saw the risen Jesus and they believed; in a word, they were able to peer into the depths of what they were seeing and to confess their faith in the Son of God.

(Lumen fidei 30)

From the Gospel according to Luke

Lk 24:36-41, 44-48

While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” But they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Then he said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed...

He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, “Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things”.

Rule, 29

The brothers and sisters are to love the Lord with their whole heart, their whole soul and mind and with all their strength, and to love their neighbour as themselves.

Let them glorify the Lord in all they do. For He has sent them into the world so that they might give witness by word and work to His voice and to make known to all the Lord alone is God.

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We witness and announce the love of God for humanity, through an active involvement in our community life.

(cfr. Doc. Cap. p. 26)





10 - IN COMMUNION AND MISSION WITH MARY

Mary is a woman who loves... As a believer who in faith thinks with God's thoughts and wills with God's will, she cannot fail to be a woman who loves. (Deus caritas est 41)

From the Gospel according to John

Jn 2: 1-12

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it.

And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from, although the servers who had drawn the water knew, the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

After this, he and his mother, his brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum and stayed there only a few days.

Rule, 17

Let the brothers and the sisters keep the example of the blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, ever before their eyes. Let them do this according to the exhortation of St. Francis who held Holy Mary, Lady and Queen, in highest veneration, since she is the virgin made church. Let them also remember that the immaculate Virgin Mary, whose example they are to follow, called herself the handmaid of the Lord.

Constitutions, 29

As members of an apostolic missionary community, the sisters sustain each other in their commitment to:

- a constant discernment of the will of God;*
- a life of intense worship and prayer;*
- a plan of communion and ministry;*
- an esteem for an effective sharing of all that each one is and possesses.*

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We nurture fraternal communion in our prayer life, in listening to the Word (Cfr. Doc. Cap. p.26)





11 - TOGETHER, FACING THE CHALLENGES OF FAITH

Faith is not a light which scatters all our darkness, but a lamp which guides our steps in the night and suffices for the journey.

(Lumen fidei 57)

From the Gospel according to John

Jn 21: 1-12

After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something."

So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread.

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.”
So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come, have breakfast.”

Constitutions, 68

The community, constantly striving to incarnate the transforming power of the Spirit:

- *is careful to collaborate toward the realization of the directives of the legitimate authority;*
- *makes fraternal union a visible reality;*
- *is open to all who desire to find Christ.*

Directory, 2

Through personal and communal discernment, the sister looks for signs of God’s will. She is ready to participate with humility and sincerity in sisterly dialog and to collaborate in all aspects of community life and apostolic service.

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity following the itineraries of faith and life from the Chapter Document 2011:

We cultivate and favour an open and **sincere listening and dialog** with the sisters and with the animator of the fraternity, in respect of the various roles. (*Doc. cap. p.27e*)





12 - LOVE NEVER ENDS

The history of faith has been from the beginning a history of brotherhood, albeit not without conflict. (Lumen fidei 54)

From the letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 1 Cor. 13: 1-13

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, love is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face.

At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Constitutions, 21

§ 2. Immersed in sentiments of love for the Sacred Heart, she increases her charity and acquires that deep freedom which transforms her life into a source of spiritual and apostolic fruitfulness.

Let us evaluate our journey of fidelity:

The journey of conformation to Christ urges us to assume the sentiments of his Heart, in order to become, in the community and with the community, the expression of His redemptive Love.

(Doc. Cap. p. 25)



Invocation prayers before the Sectio Divina



1. *Holy Father, through Jesus your Son, the Word made flesh for us, send us your Holy Spirit, that our ears may be opened to hear the “letter of love” that you have written to us and enlighten our mind that we may understand it in depth. Make our heart docile that it may receive your will with joy and help us to give witness to it. Amen.*
2. *Lord Jesus, send us the Spirit that we may read your Word free of all prejudice, so that we may meditate your proclamation in its integrity and not selectively, so that we may pray that we may grow in communion with you and with our brothers and sisters, and act with your sentiments and with your mercy. Amen.*
3. *Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the events of your passion and death. Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering.*

May your word guide us so that we may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. Amen

4. *Lord Jesus Christ, today your light shines in us, source of life and joy! Send the Spirit of love and truth, so that we may discover and interpret in the light of the Word, the signs of your divine presence in our world. May we welcome these signs in faith that we may always live in the joy of your presence among us. Amen.*
5. *Come, Holy Spirit, fill our minds with your light so that we can understand the true sense of your Word.
Come, Holy Spirit, enkindle in our hearts the fire of your love to inflame our faith.
Come, Holy Spirit, fill our being with your force to strengthen what is weak in us, in our service to God.
Come Holy Spirit, with the gift of your prudence that we may be able to overcome what is an hindrance in us, to love God and our neighbor.
Amen.*
6. *Spirit of truth, sent by Jesus to guide us to the whole truth, enlighten our minds so that we may understand the Scriptures.
You who overshadowed Mary and made her fruitful ground where the Word of God could germinate, purify our hearts from all obstacles to the Word.
Help us to learn like her to listen with good and pure hearts to the Word that God speaks to us in life and in Scripture, so that we may observe the Word and produce good fruit through our perseverance. Amen.*
7. *Holy Spirit, Spirit of Wisdom, of Science, of Intelligence, of Counsel, fill us with the knowledge of the Word of God, fill us with every kind of spiritual wisdom and intelligence, so as to be able to understand it.*

Under your guidance may we be able to understand the Gospel of this Lectio divina. Holy Spirit, we need you, the only one who continually moulds in us the figure and the form of Jesus. Open our heart and our mind, so that we may be docile to listen to the Word of God. Amen.

8. *Lord, Father of goodness and mercy, You has sent your Son Jesus from heaven to reveal to us the authority and the sweetness of your love. Send us your Holy Spirit; may our hearts not discuss, nor be closed, but in full confidence they can welcome your light and your Fatherly embrace now and forever. Amen.*

9. *Mother, help our faith!*

Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognize his voice and call. Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise.

Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith.

Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature.

Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One.

Remind us that those who believe are never alone.

Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord!



Prayers of thanksgiving.

- 1. Spirit of Love, You who make Yourself present in our encounters, remain with us, stay close to us every day, and as in You everything has its beginning and its end enlighten us always with the fire of Your spirit.*

May the example and intercession of our Seraphic Father St. Francis, and of all our Holy protectors, confirm us in the spirit of fraternity, strengthen us in communion among ourselves and with the Holy Church. Amen.
- 2. Good and merciful Father, we praise you for your love that you have revealed in Christ your Son! May we recognize every day that we are in need of your forgiveness, of your compassion, in need of our sisters' love and understanding.*

May Your Word change our hearts and make us able to follow Jesus, to go out every day together with him to search, with love, for our brothers and sisters. Amen

3. *Lord Jesus, You are the stable rock in which our faith is rooted; you are our love no one can keep us apart: dispel our fears and give us the total trust in your grace, so that every moment of our life, we may be a clear witness and can do everything with your strength. Amen.*
4. *Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also put into practice the Word. Amen.*
5. *Lord God, hear our prayer! Please support us with your grace so that we really can live as children of the light. Give us the strength to leave behind the attitudes of the old person, to be continually renewed in the Spirit, permeated by the thoughts and feelings of Christ. To you, Lord Jesus, we lift the gaze of our hearts to learn how to pray as you were praying unto the Father with filial abandonment and total adherence to his will. Amen.*
6. *Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God, grant that we may do for Your sake alone what we know You want us to do, and always want what pleases You; so that cleansed and enlightened interiorly and fired with the ardour of the Holy Spirit, we may be able to follow in the foot steps of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and so make our way to You, Most High, by Your grace alone, You Who live and reign in perfect Trinity and simple Unity, and are glorified, God all powerful, for ever and ever. Amen.*

7. *Hail, holy Lady, most holy Queen, Mary, Mother of God, every Virgin, chosen by the most holy Father in heaven consecrated by Him, with His most holy beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.*

On you descended and in you still remain all the fullness of grace and every good.

Hail, His Palace. Hail, His Tabernacle.

Hail, His Robe. Hail, His Handmaid.

Hail, His Mother, and hail, all holy virtues, who, by the grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are poured into the hearts of the faithful so that, faithless no longer, they may be made faithful servants of God through you. Amen.

8. *All-powerful, all holy, most high and supreme God, Sovereign Good, all good, every good, You who alone are good, it is to You we must give all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honour, all blessing. To you, we must refer all good always. Amen.*

9. *Thank You Father, for Your loving assistance. Watch over us and accept our commitment to walk in Your ways. Look at our hearts and not at the results, coming from our weakness. Help us to make more clear and luminous our witnessing of your presence among us and in the world Amen*

10. *O Lord, fill our hearts with inner certainty of having been chosen to love, praise and serve you. Let us enjoy your friendship, fill us with your joy and your comfort, help us to overcome moments of difficulty and to get up after falls with confidence. Make us the mirror of your divine beauty. Give us the courage to face the challenges of our time and the grace to bring to all people the kindness and humanity of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

From the message of Pope BENEDICT XVI, 2 February 2013

Dear consecrated brothers and sisters, I address my most cordial greetings with affection to each one of you and to your Institutes.

In the light of Christ, with the many charisms of contemplative and apostolic life, you cooperate in the Church's life and mission in the world.

In this spirit of gratitude and communion I would like to address three invitations to you, so that you may fully enter through that "door of faith" which is always open to us (*Apostolic Letter, Porta Fidei*, n. 1).

I invite you in the first place to nourish a faith that can illuminate your vocation. For this I urge you to treasure, as on an inner pilgrimage, the memory of the "first love" with which the Lord Jesus Christ warmed your hearts, not out of nostalgia but in order to feed that flame. And for this it is necessary to be with him, in the silence of adoration; and thereby reawaken the wish to share - and the joy of sharing - in his life, his decisions, the obedience of faith, the blessedness of the poor and the radical nature of love.

In the second place I invite you to have a faith that can recognize the wisdom of weakness... Precisely in our limitations and weaknesses as human beings we are called to live conformation with Christ ... In a society of efficiency and success, your life, marked by the "humility" and frailty of the lowly, of empathy with those who have no voice, becomes an evangelical sign of contradiction.

Lastly, I invite you to renew the faith that makes you pilgrims bound for the future. May this be the constant yearning of your heart, the fundamental criterion that guides you on your journey.... Clothe yourselves in Jesus Christ and put on the armour of light - as St Paul urged (*cf. Rom 13:11-14*) - keeping awake and watchful.

Dear brothers and sisters, the joy of consecrated life necessarily passes through participation in the cross of Christ. This is how it was for Mary Most Holy. Hers is the suffering of the heart that is one with the Heart of the Son of God, pierced by love. From this wound God's light flows and also from the suffering, sacrifice and self-giving of consecrated people who live through their love for God and for others, that shines the very light that evangelizes nations. I express in a special way to you, consecrated people, that in you the Good News may be lived, witnessed to, and proclaimed and may shine out as a word of truth (*cf. Apostolic Letter Porta Fidei*, n. 6).

From the message of Pope FRANCIS, 6 July 2013

I wanted to say a word to you and the word is “joy”. Wherever there are consecrated people, seminarians, men and women religious, young people, there is joy, there is always joy! It is the joy of freshness, the joy of following Jesus; the joy that the Holy Spirit gives us, not the joy of the world. There is joy! but - where is joy born? ... Joy is born from the gratuitousness of an encounter! In calling you God says to you: “You are important to me, I love you, I am counting on you”. Jesus says this to each one of us! Joy is born from that! The joy of the moment in which Jesus looked at me. Feeling loved by God, feeling that for him we are not numbers but people; and hearing him calling us. To be joyful witnesses of the Gospel it is necessary to be authentic and consistent.

And this is another word that I want to say to you: “authenticity”.

I always say what St Francis of Assisi stated: Christ has sent us to proclaim the Gospel with words too. The sentence goes like this: “Always proclaim the Gospel. And if necessary, with words”. What does this mean? Proclaiming the Gospel with an authentic life, with a consistent life. let us do what St Francis says: preach the Gospel with our example and then with words! However, it is in our life that others must first be able to read the Gospel!

I would like to stress the importance, in this community life, of relations of friendship and brotherhood. But brotherhood with everyone. If I have some problem with a sister or brother, I say so to his or her face or I say it to someone who can help, but I do not tell others in order to “blacken” their name. And gossip is terrible! Underlying gossip is envy, jealousy and ambition. This is important: brotherhood! This brotherly love.

I would like to tell you: come out of yourselves to proclaim the Gospel, but to do this you must come out of yourselves to encounter Jesus. There are two ways out: one towards the encounter with Jesus, towards transcendence; the other towards others in order to proclaim Jesus. These two go hand in hand. Make your contribution to a Church like this: faithful to the path that Jesus wants. Do not learn from us the cult of the “goddess lamentation”. But be positive, cultivate your spiritual life and, at the same time, go out, be capable of meeting people, especially those most despised and underprivileged. Always keep Our Lady with you at home, as did the Apostle John. May she always accompany you and keep you.

