

Vatican preparing documents on prayer, brothers

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Feb. 2, 2010

VATICAN CITY -- Cardinal Franc Rode, prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, told Vatican Radio Feb. 2 that his office was working on two documents: a joint document with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments on the importance of prayer in the life of religious; and a document highlighting the importance of religious brothers in the church.

The church celebrates World Day for Consecrated Life each year on Feb. 2, with is the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple.

"Some people say that today religious men and women pray too little. I don't know if it is true, but I certainly hope not," the cardinal said. "Maybe prayer today is more difficult than in the past, in a time when the rhythm of life was a bit more human and there was not so much stress, not so much noise.

"We must put an accent on the absolute necessity of prayer in the spiritual life of consecrated men and women," he said.

Writing a joint document on prayer was the idea of Cardinal Antonio Canizares Llovera, prefect of the worship congregation, and Cardinal Rode said he agreed to the project because "on one side there is a certain ignorance, a certain lack of liturgical knowledge and formation in young religious; on the other side, there also are liturgical inventions that are not always in good taste and that do not correspond to the desire and will of the church and to the spirit of the liturgy itself."

As for the document on brothers, Cardinal Rode said the numbers speak clearly "and something must be done."

While the numbers of religious in every category have dropped in the last 50 years, the number of religious brothers has decreased most drastically, he said, citing the example of the Christian Brothers who had 16,000 members in 1965 and have fewer than 5,000 today.

"We think one of the reasons for the decline in these vocations is due to a certain lack of attention on the part of the church" to brothers, who are mentioned only in passing in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and Vatican documents published later, he said.

"A lay brother is not -- as one often thinks and most people believe -- someone who was not able to, did not want to or could not, for some reason, become a priest. It is a vocation that has its own reasons and a particular mission in the church," the cardinal said.

Catholics enter religious orders or consecrate themselves as virgins because the love of God is so great that it is worth giving everything for, Pope Benedict XVI said.

Adoring the Eucharist and celebrating evening prayer with religious Feb. 2, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple, the pope told them that they are witnesses for others of the realness of God's love and

mercy.

The pope told the religious that each one of them had drawn near to Christ "as the source of pure and faithful love, a love so great and beautiful that it deserves everything or, rather, more than our all, because an entire life would not be enough to repay that which Christ is and has done for us."

Beyond the thousand things religious do in the church and in the world, he said, "consecrated life is important precisely as a sign of selflessness and love."

Pope Benedict offered special encouragement to religious who feel the weight of never being thanked, those who are aged or infirm and those experiencing difficulties.

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