

Ongoing formation Programme
The Gift of Fidelity,
The Joy of Perseverance.

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Day 1

Input

By Rev. Fr. Benjamin Elias OCD

The meeting began with the welcoming by Fr. Vinod. He invited the brethren and the resource person to the meeting with the hymn to the Holy Spirit. Fr. Benjamin began the talk with the prayer. He read out the bible passage from Rev. 2,1-5.

In the introductory part he coined out

- We need to have a dream
- Where are we standing in our consecrated life?
- We need to keep ourselves with the standards of the institute.
- An unexamined life is not worth living.
- Am I remaining where I suppose to remain?
- We always confront others, instead of confronting others we must confront one self, question one self, and challenge one self.
- John the Baptist recalls Jesus as the Lamb of God. People might have understood this call as a call of curse, for they knew the fate of the Lamb which is offered at the sacrifice. But He was the one who washed away the sins of the world.
- What have I found, what am I seeking, what am I doing, are the questions that we should ask to ourselves.
- When the religious stops asking these questions to oneself, he stops being a religious, on the other hand, when one starts asking the same, he starts being a religious.
- St. Teresa of Avila has suggested that the minimum qualification for a person to enter a convent is to have the common sense. She has a wider sense for the term common sense. The purpose of being a religious itself bring forth from the same. Unfortunately, common sense is not so common today, it has become very uncommon.
- If I know that why I am here, can I continue to be the way I am at present?
- We should consider the example of Jesus Christ. He knew why he was born, and that He has come with a specific mission, and He knew where He was heading to.
- Our religious life is a continuation of the life of Christ, it is a reproduction, and imitation of His life. A religious is a Christ who is alive today. It's a living memorial of Christ's way of living and acting [vita Consacrata].
- How much is Christ present in me?. How much I resemble Christ?.

- How are we going to face the future, in order to attain this renewal, the Vatican II has suggested that, in order to achieve this renewal, one must assess his or her personal life and life in the community. Renewal has only one meaning i.e., to be where one supposed to be. Secondly, one must assess the quality of the service that one offers to the society and to the church at large. One need to ask how much Rosminian is he outside the world. One must leave an imprint as his own.
- *Perfectae Caritatis*, speaks, one should go back to the sources, to the tradition, to the bible and to the magisterium. Christian life which is lived in its totality is known as religious life. We should be the models of Christian community life, so we must return to the sources.
- We must keep in mind the spirit of our father founder. One should be faithful to the charism of the founder because the charism is not an individually inspired one, but it was given, it cannot be changed, we must be faithful to it. *Vita consacrata* 31, says, the founders are specially chosen ones by God to inspire others in a specific way. That's what makes each religious congregation specific. A specific way of following Christ.
- Are we really aware what really specify one as a rosminian?
- We are called to renew ourselves every day and it must be a constant renewal.
- Our constitution helps us to bring forth the real in us. It's a text of formation and not a normative text, ignorance of the constitution is the ignorance of the congregation.
- When one talks about spirituality, one should keep it to a level of maximum because there is a tendency to reduce it gradually, but the opposite should be to the material things, because there is a tendency to increase it gradually.
- Our vocation is a vocation to live a charism. Vocation is a fact. If we have it, we have it. If we have a vocation, we have a vocation to live a specific charism.
- Nobody is necessary in the institute. One's presence is not a generous act to the institute in fact it's the opposite. My religious institute is my altar on which I suppose to offer my sacrifice to God.

When I say that I am not needed to the institute, or I am not necessary to the institute, no religious institute is inevitable in the church. But religious life will not cease to exist. Because it's a way of life.

- What we see in the modern time is that the religious institutes are just surviving, they are not living. We shouldn't be worrying whether we will survive or not. If we think we are relevant in the present world, we should prove that, our religious life has still importance in the fast -changing world. Are we relevant today?. How can we be?.

With these thoughts the preacher left us to meditate, reflect, and contemplate over standards of religious life as Rosminian.

DAY 2

All the brethren came together for the Holy Mass and morning prayer at the chapel. The mass was presided by Fr. Vinod Thazchayil and Fr. Manoj Matthew has given the reflection.

TALK 1

The talk began with the invocation to the Holy Spirit.

- When one starts journey as a seminarian or as a religious he has the vigor to serve God, but as the time passes and when one gets experience in the religious life, he loses that enthusiasm and his spiritual and religious life becomes dry, without much motivation and it gets disoriented.[instead we should have the purity of the intentions]
- Our motivation should be to live out my charism more enthusiastically. If the charism is relevant our institute will continue to exist.
- The charism should be expressed through our community life. Indirectly it tells us to have a Rosminian culture. There should be something that makes us distinct from others. There can be a call within the call, but we are called to follow a specific charism.
- The charism is an experience of the Spirit, transmitted of the disciples. They lived it, deepened it, guarded it, and transmitted it to the next generations, this is also our bounded duty as rosminians too. We need to live, deepen, guard and transmit our charism.
- Charism belongs to the church. It is meant for the church and it is for the strengthening of the church.
- The place where we live is known as ashrams. Shram is the opposite of vishram. Ashram is a place for total striving. it is a place of continual striving after perfection not devil or world or flesh.

- It is a call to reflect upon how much one strives to resemble Jesus in one's life. We are called to work for the vineyard of the lord. We should Rejoice also. But we need to Rejoice in the Lord.
- At times religious life is coined out as a life of imitation of Christ. The term imitazione can be divided into imit and azione. What we need to do is to imitate the actions of Christ. These actions could be prayer, suffering and service. These are the religious actions.
- The religious is a person who professes and practices relationship. Because the very term religious comes from the Latin word religare which means to rebound. The word itself calls us to have this re - bind or re-establish relationship with God and with men.
- How much importance are we giving to our spiritual exercises? At times the religious are the ones who hate the prayers. The monasteries have become the de addiction centers of PRAYER!
- Why do we have these prolonged years of formation? It recalls us to get into certain habits. A habit to have the prayer life, community life and social life. We should have sublime thoughts. Because from the sublime thoughts follow the sublime actions says St. Treasa of Avila. She continues to say to follow the rules so that our payers may be heard. For her the rules are the God's will that are manifested and the constitution is the minimized form of the bible.

TALK 2

- Following the rules is to obeying God and obeying God is to Love God.
- Prayer is an act of love and it is an expression of our Love towards God.
- The rules always demand only minimum. But one should go beyond the minimum, which is the act of charity. To that we are called for.
- When the rich man came to Jesus to ask the way to reach salvation, the reply of Jesus was to follow the commandments. The rich man was a follower of it, then Jesus tells him to renounce everything. The perfection relays on the renouncement. The minimum level of

following Jesus was the obedience to the commandments. But Jesus calls us to not remaining at the minimum level of following Christ but going beyond the minimum i.e., the self-renunciation. For that we have evangelical counsels. They remain counsels i.e., non-obligatory until we make them or profess them as vows. Then the same becomes obligatory. One imposes to oneself 3 more obligations viz., obedience, chastity and poverty.

- When we consider the good of the world it falls under three categories viz., pleasures of flesh, riches [though wealth is good in itself the un-detachment is the problem] and power or authority. We fight all these three obstacles with the three vows. In the Indian context the vows are known as thrikarana pooja on which we offer our body, wealth and will. It calls us to live a different life, in other words to live an unnatural life in relation with Jesus Christ.
- It is a free choice to be obedient, chaste and poor. One must know it's consequences too. Vows are a kind of fasting from the early mentioned three earthly goods. Vows are fasting they are not starving. Starving is a forced act. In starving the will of the one who is in effect is not involved, but in fasting the will of the one who does it is involved.
- It is the ability to say NO that distinguishes man from animal says philosopher Satre.
- One's attitude towards his religious life should be, one needs to be religious not because the institute wants him, rather he must know the need to have the institute in his life.
- One must practice what one professes says St. Treasa of Avila.
- Congregation of the institute of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life has published a document titled as The gift of fidelity the joy of Perseverance. The background of this document was the issue regarding the fast rising drop outs of religious and priests. [crisis in faith, in community life and in prayer are the few reasons that we can see in the document] The reason for the same was coined out as a culture of temporariness[culture of fragmentation]. Many are not ready for a longstanding commitment.
- Many are not ready for a life long commitment. Selective obedience, intermittent dedication, and occasional fidelity are the

symptoms of the former issue. Many are not ready for the total fidelity. In the modern time instead of being witnesses many are trained to be popular, instead of being fruitful many are trained to be successful, instead of being effective many are trained to be efficient.

- In these days our liturgical activities have become performances.
- The appreciation of a value is in itself a value.
- He who flees from prayer, flees from everything that is Good.
- How can we stabilize these issues?
- We need to strengthen the interior and spiritual life. The renewal must begin to take place from oneself.
- Religious life is a communitarian not because they are religious, but they are Christian.
- There is a difference between common life and community life. In a community there can be a good common life, but not the community life. When the sharing takes place at the having level there will be a common life but it becomes communitarian when we have the sharing at the being level [i.e., passage from the co-existence to the pro-existence. i.e., living for the other]. When in the community members are not living for the other the community becomes simply a crowd. We find this in the life of Jesus Himself. He was called Emmanuel i.e., the co-existence of God, later in His life, his Life becomes for the other. So, community life becomes the law for a religious, since the law doesn't accept any exemptions, community life becomes inevitable for a religious.
- You had not only a glorious past but also a great future was the words of John Paul II at the end of THE DOCUMENT OF VITA CONSACRATA.