

## Meeting with the Executives of AMRI 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ  
Dear Consecrated Persons

I warmly welcome you to this Apostolic Nunciature, which is your own home, the home of the Holy Father.

Today is the Feast of St Brigid, the Second Patron of Ireland, a great Saint who knew how to be a relevant prophet in her own time. So it is a very wonderful coincidence to have this meeting today, and also because, tomorrow, we celebrate the Day of Consecrated Life.

My dear Leaders of Missionary Associations and Institutes of Consecrated Life, I have this to tell you: the Holy Father, Pope Francis, in appointing me to be his Representative here, is sending me to discover the best in you, to learn from you. In a nutshell, he would want me to be well acquainted with your religious commitment. He would wish me to understand, appreciate and support your various initiatives aimed at rekindling the confidence of the People of God in their spiritual leaders, especially within the context of the preparations and the aftermath of the World Meeting of Families, and mindful also, of course, of the crisis that has shaken this local Church.

We know that the Irish People are a People of Faith and that faith is still there, however deeply the confidence may have been eroded.

You all know, too, that the Holy Father has great admiration for Consecrated persons in this country and the world over.

As I mentioned already elsewhere, and I do not hesitate to repeat it loudly, I am simply a Messenger, a *nuntius*. I have no pretensions about what it implies. I have come to serve you.

When the Holy Father intervenes, there is a certain mood of warm acclaim and gratitude that cheers the heart. People see in him the champion of their cause. Even those who criticise him respect his humanity and his sincerity. He leaves no one indifferent.

The Church, we all know, is missionary. In fact, every Christian, through Baptism, is sent by God the Father to continue the mission of Christ. However, Consecrated people share this mission in a specific way; consecrated life is a radical and total response, especially in challenging situations.

Today, more than ever, what we need is a radical following of Christ that should lead to collective action for the common good. Consecrated persons have that identity and that mission. God has heard the cry of his People, and by calling you, he is responding to that cry for spiritual assistance and renewal.

Pope John Paul II said that the sense of mission is at the very heart of every form of consecrated life. The very life of consecration with its total and radical consecration to Christ and his Church is itself the primary mission of consecrated life. He further said that there is a prophetic dimension which belongs to the consecrated life as such, results from the radical nature of the following of Christ and of the subsequent dedication to the mission characteristic of the consecrated life. (cfr *Vita Consacrata* 25)

Church history presents many men and women consecrated to God whose friendship with God enabled them to speak in the name of God even to the pastors of the Church. We have people like St. Brigid, St Catherine of Siena and many others. Thus, a certain radicalism goes together with spiritual commitment. In religion, the measure of high performance often lies in the depth of spiritual commitment to concrete existential needs.

We need radical persons, prophets, to shake us out of our comfort zones. However, such prophetic voices have to be exercised with respect, prudence and with good intentions. No one unclothes his dad in the public place, as my people say, in my country; no one reproves his parents in public.

Pope Francis continuously invites Consecrated Persons to “wake up the world” through their prophetic way of following Jesus and witnessing how Jesus lived on this earth. He tells them to resist the temptations of false prophets, as during the time of Elijah, and not to flee like Jonah. We should not seek to abandon the task of being a prophet of God just because there is a crisis, or because it is demanding, wearisome and fruitless.

This prophetic witness requires the constant and passionate search for God’s will, for self-giving, for unfailing communion in the Church, for the practice of spiritual discernment, for deep prayer, and for love of the truth.

It involves announcing the Word of God as well as denouncing all that is contrary to the will of God. (cfr. *Vita Consecrata* 84). You are called to this; you are prepared for it; it is your identity as Consecrated Persons. May the Lord give you the strength you need and may he bless you.

*Jude Thaddeus OKOLO*  
*Apostolic Nuncio*