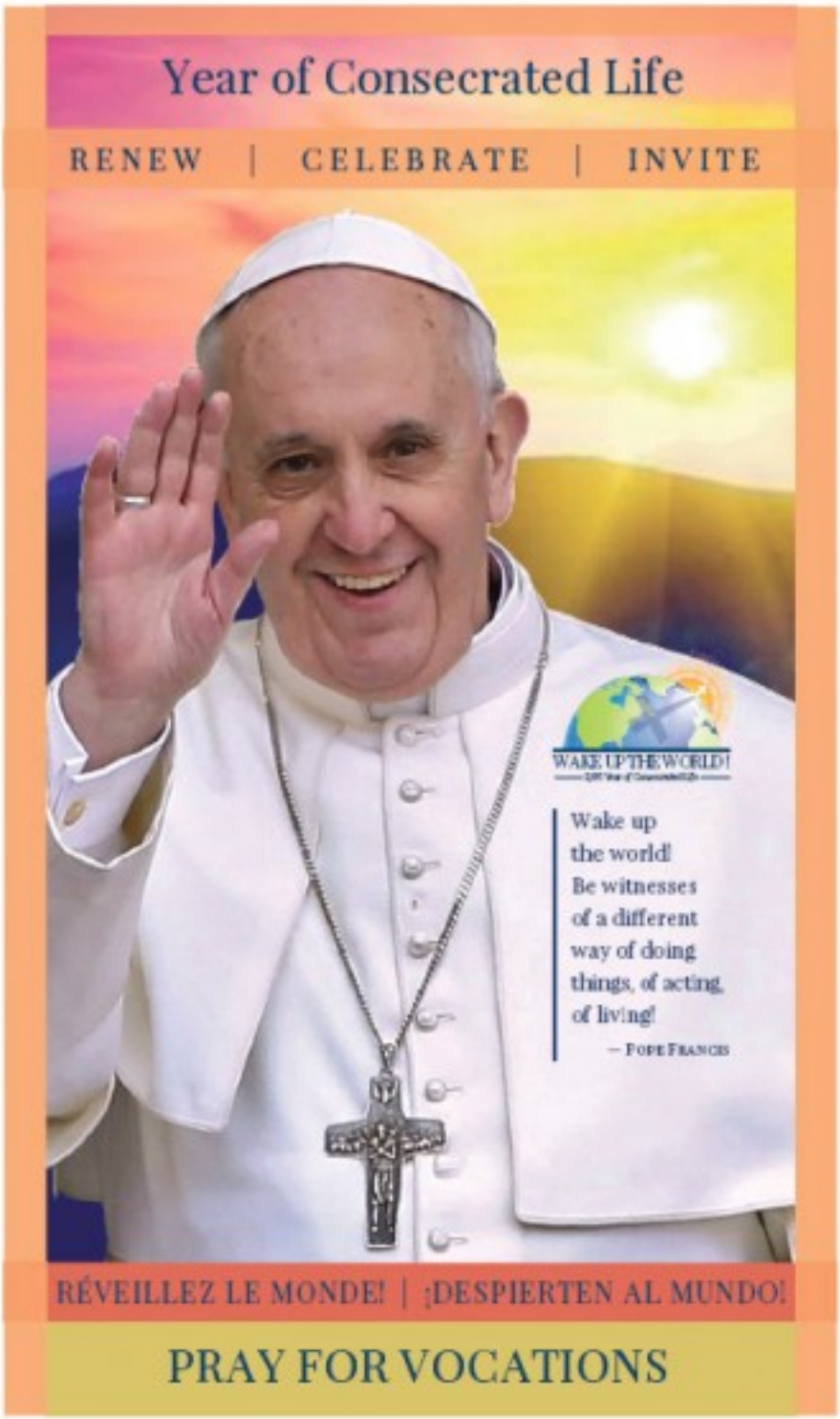


† VOCATION

LORD OF THE HARVEST

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Adapted from the Message on the 51st

VISION VOCATION NETWORK

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 52nd WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR

VOCATIONS

26 APRIL 2015 - FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Theme: Exodus, a fundamental experience of vocation

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Fourth Sunday of Easter offers us the figure of the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep: he calls them, he feeds them and he guides them. For over fifty years the universal Church has celebrated this Sunday as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. In this way she reminds us of our need to pray, as Jesus himself told his disciples, so that “the Lord of the harvest may send out laborers into his harvest” (Lk 10:2). Jesus command came in the context of his sending out missionaries. He called not only the twelve Apostles, but another seventy-two disciples whom he then sent out, two by two, for the mission (cf. Lk 10:1-6). Since the Church “is by her very nature missionary” (Ad Gentes, 2), the Christian vocation is necessarily born of the experience of mission. Hearing and following the voice of Christ the Good Shepherd, means letting ourselves be attracted and guided by him, in consecration to him; it means allowing the Holy Spirit to draw us into this missionary dynamism, awakening within us the desire, the joy and the courage to offer our own lives in the service of the Kingdom of God.

To offer one’s life in mission is possible only if we are able to leave ourselves behind. On this 52nd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, I would like reflect on that particular “exodus” which is the heart of vocation, or better yet, of our response to the vocation God gives us. When we hear the word “exodus”, we immediately think of the origins of the amazing love story between God and his people, a history which passes through the dramatic period of slavery in Egypt, the calling of Moses, the experience of liberation and the journey toward the Promised Land. The Book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible, which recounts these events is a parable of the entire history of salvation, but also of the inner workings of Christian faith. Passing from the slavery of the old Adam to new life in Christ is a event of redemption which takes place through faith (Eph 4:22-24). This passover is a genuine “exodus”; it is the journey of each Christian soul and the entire Church, the decisive turning of our lives towards the Father.

At the root of every Christian vocation we find this basic movement, which is part of the experience of faith. Belief means transcending ourselves, leaving behind our comfort and the inflexibility of our ego in order to center our life in Jesus Christ. It means leaving, like Abraham, our native place and going forward with trust, knowing that God will show us the way to a new

land. This “going forward” is not to be viewed as a sign of contempt for one’s life, one’s feelings, one’s own humanity. On the contrary, flight from this life or from the world. On the contrary, it involves a profound interplay between communion and mission (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 23).

This exodus towards God and others fills our lives with joy and meaning. I wish to state this clearly to the young, whose youth and openness to the future makes them open-hearted and generous. At times uncertainty, worries about the future and the problems they daily encounter can risk paralyzing their youthful enthusiasm and shattering their dreams, to the point where they can think that it is not worth the effort to get involved, that the God of the Christian faith is somehow a limit on their freedom. Dear young friends, never be afraid to go out from yourselves and begin the journey! The Gospel is the message which brings freedom to our lives; it transforms them and makes them all the more beautiful. How wonderful it is to be surprised by God’s call, to embrace his word, and to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, in adoration of the divine mystery and in generous service to our neighbours! Your life will become richer and more joyful each day!

The Virgin Mary, model of every vocation, did not fear to utter her “fiat” in response to the Lord’s call. She is at our side and she guides us. With the generous courage born of faith, Mary sang of the joy of leaving herself behind and entrusting to God the plans she had for her life. Let us turn to her, so that we may be completely open to what God has planned for each one of us, so that we can grow in the desire to go out with tender concern towards others (cf. Lk 1:39). May the Virgin Mary protect and intercede for us all.

From the Vatican, 29 March 2015
Palm Sunday