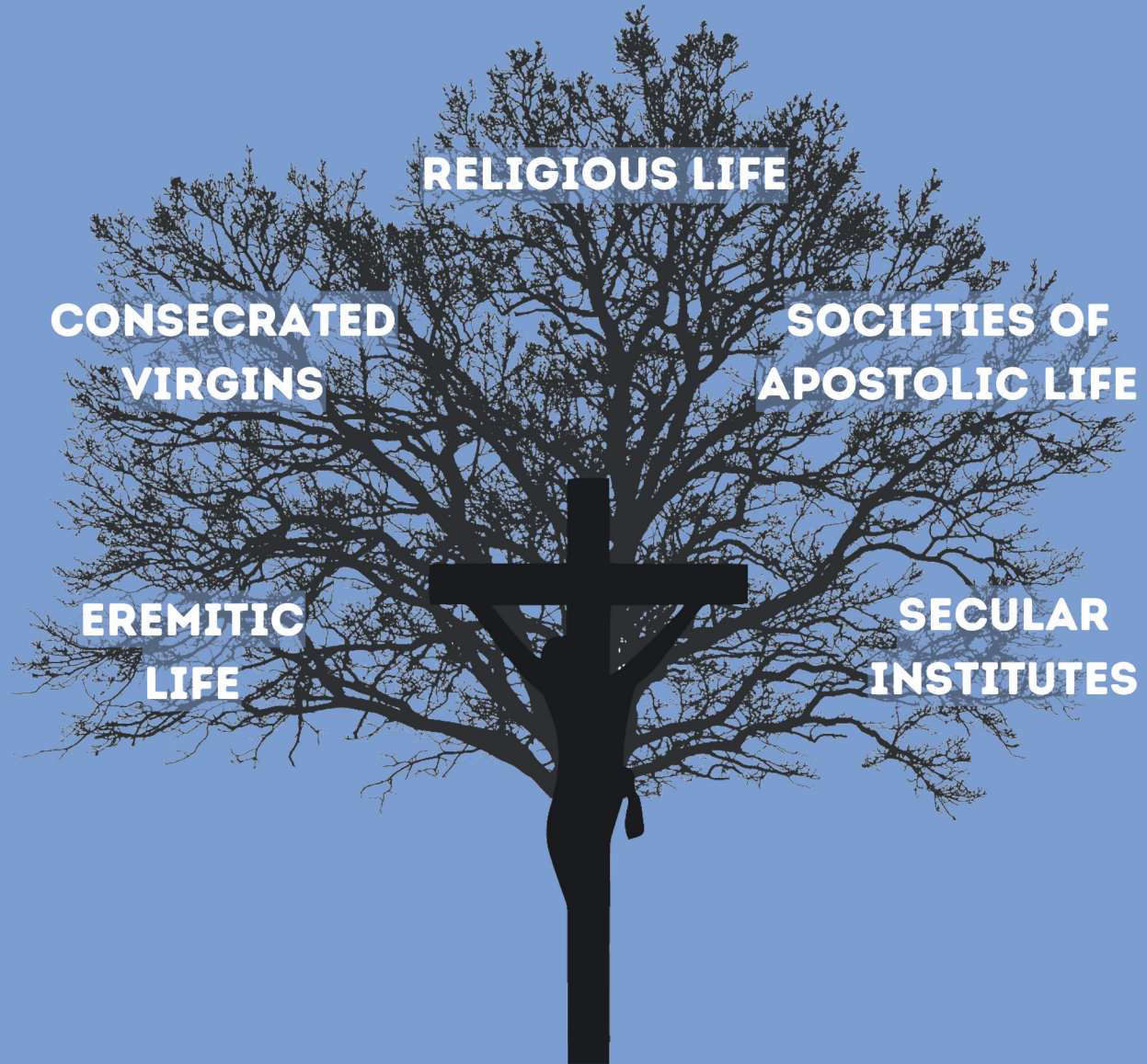


Consecrated Life

One Great Tree, With Many Branches



What is Consecrated Life?

Consecrated life is a gift given by Christ who chooses a person individually to respond to His great love in a special relationship. He asks that person to leave some aspects of the world (such as marriage and following secular goals) to put themselves at the service of their brothers and sisters.

Furthermore, consecrated life is a vocation just as marriage and diocesan priesthood are. Both men and women can choose to consecrate their lives to Christ as a way to seek an intimate relationship with Him. These men and women live the truth that only Christ can satisfy the deepest longings in a person's heart and witness that this union provides a deeper joy than the secular world can give.

What are the different forms of consecrated life in the Catholic Church, and what are the differences?

CONSECRATED VIRGINS

"The order of virgins who, expressing holy resolution of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan Bishop according to the approved liturgical rite, are mystically betrothed to Christ, the Son of God, and are dedicated to the service of the Church." Among other practices, they faithfully pray the Liturgy of the Hours, receive the sacraments regularly, and practice private prayer, keeping the intentions of her bishop and clergy and the needs of her diocese as a special focus of prayer.

EREMITIC LIFE

Hermits and Hermitesses devote their lives to the praise of God and the salvation of the world through a stricter withdrawal from the world, the silence of solitude, and assiduous prayer and penance.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Religious order priests, brothers, monks, sisters, and nuns separate themselves from the world to some degree according to their religious institute's mission and purpose to witness the coming of the Kingdom of God. This radical witness is made through public profession of the evangelical counsels and is a permanent commitment made in a specific religious institute recognized by the Church.

SECULAR INSTITUTES

Consecrated lay men and women, as well as some diocesan priests and sisters, permanently profess the evangelical counsels in a secular institute recognized by the Church. They maintain their secular or lay state by living in the world, often engaging in secular jobs, and living alone or in small groups of fraternal life. They sanctify society from within.

SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

Alongside the different forms of consecrated life are "societies of apostolic life whose members without religious vows pursue the particular apostolic purpose of their society, and lead a life as brothers or sisters in common according to a particular manner of life, strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions. Among these there are societies in which the members embrace the evangelical counsels" according to their constitutions.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, 930



Consecrated life means going to the very root of the love of Jesus Christ with an undivided heart and putting nothing ahead of this love.

Pope Benedict XVI

