

# THE LETTER OF THE WOMEN'S SECULAR INSTITUTE OF THE HEART OF JESUS

June 2019



## Summary

- Oration
- Gospel and Mission
- Liturgical prayer

This letter seeks to nourish our reflection around chapter V of our constitutions: *"Prayer: an encounter"*.

Personal or community prayer is an integral part of our vocation as consecrated people in the heart of the world. It will be good to re-read this chapter of our constitutions.

Before being called "Family Cor Unum", we were known as "Gospel Groups and Mission", so in this letter you will find passages on the gospel meditation taken from the writings of Madeleine Delbrel. Another page reminds us of the importance of liturgical prayer as a prayer of the Church. Prayer is one of the forms of prayer that we privilege in our institute, and the article by Pierre de Clorivière invites us to remain faithful to it in all circumstances.

We are invited to question the place we give today to prayer in our lives.



Pierre de Clorivière's meditation "The trials of Oration"

*"Whatever desire we may have for one's perfection, whatever care we bring to the exercise of meditation, we must not expect to experience constantly the same facility, the same devotion. It will happen sometimes, even to the most fervent, that this holy exercise will be for them without taste, without light, without consolation; that it will seem insipid to them, whether it comes from their natural disposition, whether it be an effect of the malice of the devil, or a test of God. Their imagination can not be fixed for nothing; a thousand thoughts will be presented to their minds, their hearts will fall prey to a thousand desires, temptations will come in crowds to besiege them; but let them know that all this will not diminish before God the price and merit of their prayer; the less pleased they are with themselves, the more the Lord will be pleased with them. It is true that their prayer will not be properly then a meditation; they can not form considerations, reasonings, or affections; it will be a prayer of work and combat; but their constancy to support but their constancy in patiently supporting such a painful situation, without wanting to shorten its duration for a moment, will profit more for their souls than the best meditation. Nor let them*

be afraid of such a trial; it will be proportionate to their strengths and to the graces that the Lord intends for them. Far from being slaughtered, they will rejoice at being in a state where they can testify to God their fidelity in a more perfect way. Without wishing to penetrate the cause of the change which has been made in them, they will take occasion to humble themselves, to resign themselves entirely to the good pleasure of God, to put in Him alone all their confidence, and to implore with more ardor the help of his all-powerful Grace. If they behave in this way, they will know, by their own experience, that these aridities and trials of prayer will be no less useful to them than the enlightenment and consolation they receive. It is a means which God habitually uses to detach the soul itself, to dispose it to receive greater graces, and to make it capable of more perfect communications. Amen.

**Pierre De Clorivière (1735-1820)**



### The Word of God

The word of God is not carried in a briefcase: to the end of the world, it is carried in oneself, one takes it within oneself.

One does not put it in a corner of oneself, in one's memory, as on a cabinet shelf where one would have stored it. We let it go to the bottom of ourselves, until this hinge where everything pivots ourselves.

One can not be a missionary without having in oneself this frank, broad, cordial welcome, to the word of God, to the Gospel.

This word has a living tendency to incarnate itself in us. And when we are inhabited by it, we become fit to be missionaries.

But do not be fooled. Let us know that it is very exacting to receive the message intact. This is why so many of us make adjustments, mutilate or weaken it.

We feel the need to put it in the fashion of the day as if God was not in fashion every day, as if we needed to retouch God.

Whereas the missionary priest is the spokesman of the Word of God, we are missionaries without any priesthood but we are a kind of sacrament. Once we have known the word of God, we have no right

not to receive it. Once we have received it we have no right not to let it incarnate in us, once it is incarnated in us we have no right to keep it for ourselves: we belong to those who are waiting for it.

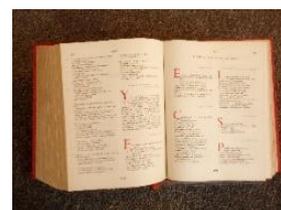
*Excerpt from "missionaries without boats, 1943 p.89-91 from The sanctity of ordinary people, Volume VII of OC, p89-90 New City.*

He who lets in a single word of the Lord and allows it to be fulfilled in his life, knows more about the Gospel than the one whose whole effort will remain abstract meditation or historical consideration.

The Gospel is not made for minds in search of ideas. It is made for disciples who want to obey.

The obedience requested from the disciple of Jesus Christ, kneeling before the word and the example of his master, is not a discursive, reasoning, interpretative obedience. It is a child's obedience, returning to his radical creature ignorance and to his universal blindness as a sinner.

*Excerpt from "Whoever follows me does not walk in darkness" The holiness of ordinary people "Volume VII OC, p.157-158 New city.*



The Gospel is the book of the Life of the Lord.  
It is made to become the book of our life.  
It is not meant to be understood but to be  
approached as a threshold of mystery.  
It is not meant to be read but to be received in us.

Each of its words are spirit and life.  
Agile and free, they only wait for the greed of our  
soul to burst into it.  
Living, they are themselves like the initial leaven  
that will attack the dough and ferment it with a  
new way of life. The words of human books are  
understandable and supportive.

The words of the Gospel are suffered and  
supported.  
We assimilate the words of books.  
The words of the Gospel knead us, modify us,  
assimilate us as it were.  
The words of the Gospel are miraculous. They do  
not transform us because we ask them not to  
transform us. But in each sentence of Jesus, in  
each of his examples, remains the lightning virtue  
that healed, purified, resuscitated.  
On condition of being towards him, like the  
paralytic or the centurion and to act immediately  
in full obedience.



The Gospel of Jesus has passages almost  
completely mysterious. We do not know how to  
pass them in our life.  
But there are others that are limpid.

A candid fidelity to what we understand will lead  
us to understand what is mysterious.  
If we are called to simplify what seems  
complicated to us, we are not, however, ever to  
complicate what is simple.  
When Jesus tells us: "Do not claim what you have  
lent" or "yes, yes, no, no, all the rest is evil" we

are only asked to obey and it is not the reasoning  
that we will help.  
What will help us is to bear, of "guard" in us, in  
the heat of our faith and our hope, the word to  
which we want to obey.



When we hold our Gospel in our hands, we should  
think that in it dwells the Word that wants to  
become flesh in us, seize us, so that with its heart  
grafted on ours, its mind connected to our mind,  
we could start its life in another place, another  
time, another human society.

To approach the Gospel in this way is to give up our  
life to receive a destiny that has no other form than  
Christ.

*From "The Gospel Is The Book Of The Life Of The Lord" 1945-  
1950 Humor In Love "Volume III Of The OC, p.56-58 New City*

## Questions

**(to answer personally or to share in a  
group)**

- What place do I give to prayer in my  
life?
- How much time do I plan for prayer  
every day?
- Do I prefer one particular prayer?  
Which one? Why?
- Which passage of the Bible or Gospel  
particularly speak to me?

## About the Liturgy of the Hours



*Our constitutions specify:* "Ecclesial, our prayer unites us to the life of the Church and invites us to make time for the Liturgy of the Hour." (ISFCJ No. 46, §3)

### Why the Liturgy of the Hours?

Extracts from the Apostolic Constitution promulgating the Divine Office *Laudis Canticum*

As a Christian prayer, it is the prayer of the whole human community that Christ gathers. The aim of the liturgy of the hours is to sanctify the day and the whole human activity.

The liturgy of the Hours, complemented by readings, is first of all a prayer of praise and supplication: it is the prayer of the Church with Christ and addressed to Christ.

This prayer receives its unity from Christ's heart. Indeed our redeemer wanted "that the life he had started in his mortal body by his prayers and his sacrifice has to be continued without any interruption during centuries in his mystical body the Church" Pie XII

This is why the prayer of the Church is at the same time "the prayer of Christ that he addresses to the Father". It is therefore necessary that when we celebrate the Office, we recognize the echo of our voices in Christ and the echo of Christ in us.

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Meditation must find a continual nourishment in the readings, psalms and other parts of the Liturgy of the Hours.

### WHAT ABOUT US?

The recitation of the Office must, as far as possible, be adapted to the necessities of a living and personal prayer (L.C.)

#### What place do we give to the recitation of the office?

- Personal?
- In Group?
- In community?

"I aroused in my village the prayer of Lauds at church, once a week"

"If I do not have the time to pray in the morning, I like to pray the Midday Office at the beginning of

"I start the Office of Compline with the reviewing of my day"

"I like to start the Morning Prayer with the Lauds. If I am particularly moved by a word or a sentence, this sets the tone for my oration"

Testimonies

ISFCJ n°52. Our spiritual companion will help us to find the time, the rhythm and the manner of our prayer, taking into account our temperament as well as the diversity of situations and the calls of the Lord.

On April 4, 1999, the day of the solemnity of Easter, the Secular Women's Institute of the Heart of Jesus was raised to the rank of institute of pontifical right by Pope John Paul II.



**In this year where we celebrate the 20 years of recognition of our institute, we propose to all members around the world to do a novena to give thanks and ask for vocations in our institute.**

**From Thursday 20th to Friday 28th June, the solemnity day of the Heart of Jesus, each one is invited to say the prayer below.**

Lord, we give you thanks for these 20 years that we have lived since this recognition and for the mission that is given to us to witness God 's love for all people in the heart of the world.

We thank you for all those who have engaged in our institute in a desire to live their vocation more intensely by professing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, and we particularly think of those who have died and are already with you.

We pray for those who will make their perpetual profession in our institute this year.

We pray for those on the way.

Lord, make the gifts received from you fruitful. Continue to call women in our Institute for the life and joy of the world.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

Amen