

## Pope praises various lay vocations

By John Thavis  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II praised the sometimes surprising forms of religious life that have emerged in recent years, particularly those with a more "lay" character.

He made the remarks at a general audience Oct. 5, three days after the start of a monthlong Synod of Bishops on the role of men and women religious.

The pope, speaking in a strong voice at a Vatican audience hall, said that while traditional orders continue to attract vocations, there is great interest in the newer forms of consecrated life.

Chief among these are secular institutes, whose members profess pover-

ty, chastity and obedience while living and working in the world, and societies of apostolic life, whose members live in community as brothers or sisters without taking religious vows.

On the other hand, numerous new lay movements have also given birth to groups or communities of consecrated life, he said.

"It is important to recognize here a sign of the charisms which the Holy Spirit brings into the church in forms that are always new and sometimes unforeseeable," the pope said.

He said there may be confusion about the term "lay" when it is used to describe such institutes' character. Members are lay in that they continue to live and work in the world, but they remain different from most lay people

who choose marriage and family life.

At the other end of the spectrum of religious life, the pope cited a rekindling of interest in monastic and canonical communities. Even more radical, he said, is the foundation or revival of hermitages.

"On the surface, some of these forms may seem out of step with the current direction of ecclesial life," he said. But while the church needs consecrated people who work in the world, it has a perhaps greater need for those who witness the presence of God in these more detached ways, he said.

Both these aspects of consecrated life were found in Christ, who brought his message to the world but who sometimes withdrew in prayer and contemplation, he said.

## Synod members examine good vs. bad of poverty

By Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Poverty came under scrutiny at the world Synod of Bishops on consecrated life.

When is poverty a virtue and not something church members should attempt to eliminate? What meaning does the vow of poverty have when religious live a much more economically stable life than their neighbors, asked two synod members.

In places where economic poverty is the norm, "it is difficult for people to believe in and accept the witness of the poverty of consecrated persons," said Bishop Fulgence Rabeony of Toliara, Madagascar.

It is especially difficult, he said, when they see the relative security of religious,

who can buy cars and buildings and "lead a rather easy life compared to the rest of the population."

The religious themselves are uncomfortable with the situation, Bishop Rabeony said.

The church needs to better explain what it means by Gospel poverty, and religious orders must ensure that in forming their members a true spirit of poverty is stressed, he said.

Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said that "the greatest challenge for the church and the most pressing need of the world" is for the witness of evangelical poverty.

To battle poverty in the name of the Gospel, he said, poverty must be embraced.

"The religious search for that which has no price," in a culture where price and value are synonymous, is a witness which calls rich and poor alike to the realization that money and property are not everything, the cardinal said.

The Code of Canon Law's explanation of the vow of poverty says: "The evangelical counsel of poverty in imitation of Christ who, although he was rich became poor for us, entails, besides a life of labor lived in moderation and foreign to earthly riches, a dependence and a limitation in the use and disposition of goods according to the norm of the proper law of each institute."

Down through the centuries, Cardinal Etchegaray told the synod, "the advancement of the Gospel has been realized when the church returned to the poor and renewed its own poverty."

## Sisters in Song release album of Christmas carols, hymns

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Sisters in Song, a choral group made up of 57 sisters in 30 separate communities hailing from 21 states, have released a Christmas album to follow up on the success of their debut.

Two Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester who serve at Nazareth Academy, Diane Branch and Eileen Conheady, performed as members of the choral group.

"Christmas Spirit," which follows the formula that made "Celebrate" popular, was recorded at St. Paul the Apostle Church in Los Angeles and was directed by Frank Brownstead.

The new release features carols, hymns and choral pieces for the Christmas season.

Both albums' proceeds are divided between the two national agencies dedicated to the retirement needs of religious: the Tri-Conference Retirement Office and Support Our Aging Religious.

"Celebrate" sold out of its initial run of 10,000 copies and is now in its third printing.

EDITORS' NOTE: Both albums cost \$9.95 for cassette and \$12.95 for compact disc, plus shipping and handling. "Christmas Spirit" may be ordered by calling 1-800-621-5197. "Celebrate" may be ordered by calling 1-800-548-8749.

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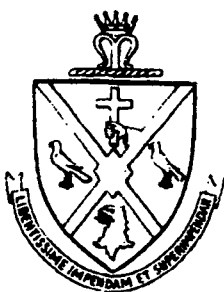


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