

CONGREGATION
FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE
AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE *

Vatican City
28 October, 2019

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Brothers,

During this General Chapter, you wanted to discern the place and role that should be given to the founder of your institute, Fr Marie-Dominique Philippe. You did this with courage and determination, based on the Gospel and the Magisterium of the Church. As you continue along the path of following Christ, this is indeed a necessary step that you must make.

As you requested, I shall recall the essential points I raised during our meeting last October 24th.

1. The founder and identity of the Institute

Fr Marie-Dominique Philippe is the founder of the Religious Institute of the Brothers of Saint John. In that capacity, he passed on to you a charism that was recognised by the Church. Nevertheless, Fr Philippe cannot be a charismatic reference for you, in the sense that a charismatic reference passes on a teaching and a role model for life. Indeed, you are well aware that Fr Philippe cannot represent a role model for life.

Moreover, your work to clarify and acknowledge matters relating to his life must continue. You must also continue an attentive discernment with regards to his philosophical teaching, with seriousness and patience, in the light of the Gospel and the Magisterium.

To a certain extent, you must now therefore distance yourselves from the person of Fr Philippe and avoid things that might be a source of confusion. For example, I would advise you no longer to offer his books for sale in your bookshops nor to display photos of him in public places.

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*Letter translated from French

More profoundly, you must seek to express your charismatic identity better. You should do this by grounding yourselves first and foremost on the Gospel of Saint John, as it is read, meditated upon and prayed by the Church, particularly the Second Vatican Council and the recent Magisterium of the Church.

You must also seek to express better the charism common to the Institutes of the Brothers, of the Contemplative Sisters and of the Apostolic Sisters, while maintaining what is specific to each.

2. Formation of members

You have understood that formation is an absolutely fundamental element of your future. The formation of a Religious cannot be solely, nor even primarily, grounded on philosophy.

Above all, formation ought to be permanent, inasmuch as it is a continual process of conversion and an integration of the very sentiments of Christ. This permanent formation of all the members of the Institute is the fertile ground for initial formation. It must especially take into account human formation, as well as formation in religious life, giving particular attention to the specific characteristics of that form of life.

From this perspective, the idea of affiliation with a Pontifical University is a pledge of openness and genuine search for the Truth.

A further strengthening of permanent formation will help you to discern vocations in a serious and well-founded manner, as well as to accompany professed members. The work you dedicate to the *Ratio Formationis* must take into account all of these elements which I have only briefly mentioned.

You know that you can count on the confidence the Church has in you in the Lord, as well as the availability of the Dicastery to help you as much as possible. Do not hesitate to let those who hold pastoral responsibilities for you know what you need.

Assuring you once again of my confidence and hope for the Brothers and Sisters of Saint John, I wish you, my Brothers, Peace and Goodness.

Faternally,

† José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Archbishop Secretary