

# THE NOTION OF CONSECRATION AND PROFESSION IN THE MONASTIC PROFESSION AND PROFESSION IN ORDERS AND CONGREGATIONS ACCORDING TO CCEO-Part I

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The article explains the concept of consecration, the concept of profession, the consecration and profession in religious institutes and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and Post-Vatican Council documents on religious consecration and profession. Having analysed the root meaning of these key terms she explains how the religious consecration is differentiated from the religious profession and then the notions of consecration and profession in monastic profession and the profession in orders and congregations are compared. The relevance of using the term consecration for the profession in orders and congregations is examined here.

## **Introduction**

Religious life is a form of consecrated life highly esteemed by the Church. Canonically, one enters this life through “consecration” or “profession.” Throughout history, both words have been used to denote this; however, the preferred usage has changed throughout the Church’s history. In the earlier days of the Church, “profession” referred to the entering of religious life in general. “Consecration” customarily indicated a specific type of profession, namely, the rite of profession by which one entered Eastern monastic life. At the Second Vatican Council, the term “consecration” was used more broadly to indicate any entrance into religious life, adding a special meaning to it.

These variations in usage can create ambiguities. In common parlance, “consecration” and “profession” often have the same meaning. However, these terms have significantly different theological and

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canonical connotations. Consequently, their correct usage and understanding requires a prior and more fundamental understanding of religious consecration and profession. The current canonical usage, found in CCEO, uses both terms to denote the commitment that marks one's entrance into religious life, namely, "consecration or monastic profession" and "profession in orders and congregations." In this way, CCEO respects both the traditional usage and the Conciliar teaching.

### 1. The Concept of Consecration

The word *consecration* comes from the Latin word *consecrare* (*cum* + *sacrare*; *cum* = with, and *sacrare* = to dedicate, to make sacred or holy) which means *to make holy with*. The term is rendered in Hebrew by the parent noun *קִדְשׁ* (*qôdesh*), which means apartness, holiness and sacredness.<sup>1</sup> Juridically, consecration is akin to a "transfer."<sup>2</sup> It therefore consists of two distinct ideas: separation and dedication. Firstly, the person, place or thing consecrated is removed, or "transferred," from profane use (*ius humanum*).<sup>3</sup> Secondly, he, she, or it is dedicated to the service and worship of God and therefore introduced to the divine order: "Consecration is the stable and legally valid transit of a person or a thing from a profane order (*ius humanum*) to a sacred order (*ius divinum*) by means of a religious ritual."<sup>4</sup> Whoever or whatever is consecrated belongs completely and exclusively to God and His service.<sup>5</sup>

### 2. The Concept of Profession

The term "profession" is derived from the Latin *profiteri*. The latter, the infinitive form of *profiteor*, signifies an openly and freely made promise. It indicates a spontaneous, uncoerced and fully-

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob Paxy Alunkal, "Biblical Perspectives of Consecrated Life," *Jyotir-dhara*, 9 (2007) 6-24, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Filippo Oppenheim, "Consacrazione," in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, 391-394 (Città del Vaticano: Ente per l'Enciclopedia Cattolica e per il Libro Cattolico, 1950) 391.

<sup>3</sup> Filippo Oppenheim, "Consacrazione," in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, 391.

<sup>4</sup> Filippo Oppenheim, "Consacrazione," in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, 391-394 (Città del Vaticano: Ente per l'Enciclopedia Cattolica e per il Libro Cattolico, 1950) 391.

<sup>5</sup> Jerome Rayappa Anthonappa, *The New Forms of Consecrated Life (Can. 605) with Particular Reference to India*, unpublished PhD diss. (Rome: Urban Pontifical University, 2012) 6.

willed admission, oblation or a public promise.<sup>6</sup> "Profession," therefore, denotes an external act of conviction: it is an open and public declaration of belief or an avowed expression of intent or purpose.<sup>7</sup> Regarding religious life, this expression of intent consists in the act of taking vows by which one gives oneself to God.

### 3. Consecration and Profession in Religious Institutes

Religious consecration/profession is the offering of a person to God.<sup>8</sup> This offering consists in the person's passage from the profane realm to the sacred, that is, in a certain separation from the rest and a dedication to God for divine service.<sup>9</sup> In Christian understanding, one attains the sacred by communion with God.<sup>10</sup> Hence, religious consecration is a particular means of establishing communion between oneself and God. The Council spoke of profession of evangelical counsels as the constitutive element of consecrated life. Canonically speaking, profession of the three public vows is the means of consecration in religious institutes. Religious profession is the external manifestation of the internal *propositum* (determination), by which one openly, publicly, voluntarily and willingly affirms, by words or deeds, that he embraces the religious state or enters a religious institute.<sup>11</sup>

At the root of religious life is consecration. As God Himself takes the initiative for consecration, one can say that it is consecration that ultimately leads to religious profession.<sup>12</sup> In stages, the former came to be fixed in the three vows of the latter, that is, the vows of obedience,

<sup>6</sup> Xaverius Ochoa, "Professio, Consecratio et Vota Religiosa Ante et Post Concilium Vaticanum Secundum," *Commentarium pro Religiosis et Missionariis*, 57 (1976) 193-221, 195.

<sup>7</sup> Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1976), s. v. "profession."

<sup>8</sup> Priamo Etzi, "Il Concetto di 'Consacrazione Religiosa' nel Supremo Magistero dal Concilio Vaticano II all'Esortazione Apostolica Post-Synodale *Vita Consecrata*," *Antoniano*, 72 (1997) 571-602, 577.

<sup>9</sup> Arnaldo Pigna, "La Consacrazione Religiosa (Lineamenta n.6)," *Vita Consecrata*, 30 (1994) 208-226, 212.

<sup>10</sup> Priamo Etzi, "Il Concetto di 'Consacrazione Religiosa'..." *Antoniano*, 72 (1997), 578.

<sup>11</sup> Chas Augustine, *A Commentary on the New Code of Canon Law* (London: B. Herder Book CO, 1929), 252; Xaverius Ochoa, "Professio, Consecratio et Vota Religiosa..." *Commentarium pro Religiosis et Missionariis*, 57 (1976), 195.

<sup>12</sup> Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1986) 88.

chastity and poverty.<sup>13</sup> Religious profession is the final and decisive moment whereby a person gives himself or herself totally to God through the public vows of obedience, chastity and poverty and so assumes the religious state.

#### **4. The Second Vatican Council and Post-Vatican II Teachings on Religious Consecration/Profession**

In attempting to renew religious life, the Second Vatican Council intended for religious to make “*perfectae caritatis*” present in both the Church and the world. To this end, the Council provided a strong doctrinal foundation for subsequent papal and curial documents that have enriched the religious life with their teachings and norms.

##### **4.1. Religious Consecration - Originated from and Effected by God**

According to LG 43, consecrated life is a divine gift to the Church: “The teaching and example of Christ provide the foundation for the evangelical counsels of chaste self-dedication to God, of poverty and of obedience.” *Lumen Gentium* articulates these evangelical counsels as God-given and safeguarded by His grace (LG 43). It can be well interpreted as that the consecration of man, through response to God’s personal call, adheres more closely to God’s initiative. The divine initiation is based on the call of the Father, on the life and teachings of His Son and on the gifts of the Holy Spirit (VC 17, 18, 19).<sup>14</sup> The Council again teaches:

Indeed through Baptism a person dies to sin and is consecrated to God. However, in order that he may be capable of deriving more abundant fruit from this baptismal grace, he intends, by the profession of the evangelical counsels in the Church, to free himself from those obstacles, which might draw him away from the fervour of charity and the perfection of divine worship. By his profession of the evangelical counsels, then, he is more intimately consecrated to divine service. This consecration will be the more perfect, in as much as the indissoluble bond of the union of Christ and His bride, the Church, is represented by firm and more stable bonds (LG 44).

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<sup>13</sup> Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, 106.

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, Post Synodal Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, 25 March 1996, AAS, 88 (1996) 377-486; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost-exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031996\\_vita-consecrata.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost-exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031996_vita-consecrata.html). Here after VC.

The phrase "*et divino obsequio intimius consecrator*," translated as, "is more intimately consecrated to divine service," raised questions about whether the person himself or God was the agent of consecration. Priamo Etzi explains the two distinct positions theologians held. The first position, represented by Andrea Boni, maintained the traditional idea of "the person consecrating himself or herself to God." The second position, represented by Paolo Molinari, affirmed that, according to Vatican II, "God himself effects the consecration."<sup>15</sup> To dispel any ambiguity, the Doctrinal Commission of the Council explained that the Council had deliberately chosen the passive verb form *consecratur*, which it authoritatively interpreted as follows: "*Textus novus est: 'per eadem vincula divino obsequio intimius consecratur,' sub forma passive, subintellegendo 'a Deo.'*"<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the passive form "*consecratur*" highlights the action of God, who takes possession of man and imprints His seal on him.<sup>17</sup>

This interpretation is confirmed in the apostolic exhortation, *Redemptionis Donum*,<sup>18</sup> which states, "you have been consecrated to God... as persons who are 'consecrated:' consecrated to God in Jesus Christ as His exclusive possession" (RD 7). Similar confirmation is found in the document *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life*, which clearly attributes the act of consecration primarily to God: "By insisting on this, the Church places the first emphasis on the initiative of God and on the transforming relation to Him which religious life involves. Consecration is a divine action. God calls a person whom He sets apart for a particular dedication to Himself. At the same time, He offers the grace to respond so that consecration is expressed on the human side by a profound and free self-surrender" (EE 5).

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<sup>15</sup> Priamo Etzi, "Il Concetto di 'Consacrazione Religiosa'..." *Antonianum*, 72 (1997), 571.

<sup>16</sup> *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, vol. III, Pars VIII (Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1976), 131.

<sup>17</sup> Arnaldo Pigna, *La Vita Religiosa: Teologia e Spiritualità* (Roma: Edizioni OCD, 1991), 233.

<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, *Adhortatio Apostolica, Redemptionis Donum*, 25 March 1984, AAS, 76 (1984) 513-546, n.4; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031984\\_redemptionis-donum.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031984_redemptionis-donum.html). Here after RD.

Since God Himself consecrates a religious, he or she cannot consecrate himself or herself to God.<sup>19</sup> God initiates the process when He invites man to follow in the footsteps of His Son and gives the grace to respond to this invitation.<sup>20</sup> Only the intervention of God enables the person to respond. One cannot dedicate himself or herself to God as a member of an institute unless God first calls him or her to do so. Moreover, even when a person responds to God's call with total self-offering, human nature still prevents the person effecting the consecration that he or she is called to. Consequently, when one responds affirmatively to God's invitation to religious life, God consecrates that person to Himself. Therefore, in the event of consecration, the process of divine call and of human response is manifested. Religious consecration, strictly speaking, is the work of God.

Religious consecration results from an encounter that involves election and acceptance, and therefore also involves the freedom and will of God and man.<sup>21</sup> To respond validly to God's call, the person called must have freedom and proper knowledge.<sup>22</sup> God cannot and will not consecrate a person who refuses His call or consents unwillingly.<sup>23</sup> Hence, even though God initiates and effects religious consecration, He does this while respecting human dignity and freedom. Therefore, responding to God's call with a total self-offering is the greatest act of human freedom<sup>24</sup> and implies a mutual belongingness.<sup>25</sup> Consecration can thus be understood as a bilateral agreement between God and man: God gives Himself to man, and man gives himself to God with an

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<sup>19</sup> Jerome Rayappa Anthonappa, *The New Forms of Consecrated Life (Can. 605) with Particular Reference to India*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Jerome Rayappa Anthonappa, *The New Forms of Consecrated Life (Can. 605) with Particular Reference to India*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Jerome Rayappa Anthonappa, *The New Forms of Consecrated Life (Can. 605) with Particular Reference to India*, 14; Silvia Recchi, *Consacrazione Mediante i Consigli Evangelici* (Milano: Editrice Ancora Milano, 1988) 220-221.

<sup>22</sup> Arnaldo Pigna, *La Vita Religiosa: Teologia e Spiritualità*, 233.

<sup>23</sup> Arnaldo Pigna, "La Consacrazione Religiosa (Lineamenta n.6)," *Vita consacrata* 30 (1994), 215.

<sup>24</sup> Yuji Sugawara, *Religious Poverty from Vatican Council II to 1994 Synod of Bishops* (Rome: Gregorian Pontifical University, 1997), 47; Silvia Recchi, *Consacrazione Mediante i Consigli Evangelici*, 221.

<sup>25</sup> Priamo Etzi, "Il Concetto di 'Consacrazione Religiosa'..." *Antonianum*, 72 (1997), 578-579.

irreversible fidelity.<sup>26</sup> Hence, religious consecration establishes a deep and firm mutual bond between God and the consecrated person. Moreover, since one consecrated thereby becomes God's own, the act itself has a transformative effect.<sup>27</sup>

During the codification of CCEO, it was to insist this principle that the PCCICOR Study Group on Monks and other Religious chose the verb *consecratur* in the passive form. In the introductory canon for religious, the passive form, *consecratur* emphasises the consecration effected by God. It highlights the notion of God taking possession of the one who is being consecrated, and is the real Eastern concept of religious consecration.<sup>28</sup>

Consecration, which originates with God, is actualized when man offers himself to God; God consecrates man to Himself. Religious consecration is effected by God and the grace to persevere in religious life is given by God Himself.

#### **4.2. Total Self-Offering to God through the Profession of Vows**

Man's acceptance of God's call makes the process of religious consecration *possible*. This acceptance is a total self-offering, which itself is an integral part of religious consecration.<sup>29</sup> Acknowledging this reality, Vatican II uses the words *devovere* (to dedicate) or *mancipare* (to surrender) to indicate the act with which man dedicates himself and surrenders to God (LG 44). Sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, who inspires and supports the desire for full adherence to God's plan, the person offers himself to God through avowed profession of obedience, chastity and poverty:

By the vows or other sacred bonds assimilated to the vows by their very nature, through which he pledges himself to the practice of the three evangelical counsels, the Christian is totally given in

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<sup>26</sup> Priamo Etzi, "Il Concetto di 'Consacrazione Religiosa'..." *Antonianum*, 72 (1997), 579.

<sup>27</sup> Arnaldo Pigna, "La Consacrazione Religiosa (Lineamenta n.6)," *Vita Consecrata*, 30 (1994), 215.

<sup>28</sup> PCCICOR Prot. 1256/81/3, 6.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur J. Espelage, *Canon Law Digest*, vol. XII (Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1983) 321; Silvia Recchi, *Consacrazione Mediante i Consigli Evangelici*, 220.

possession to God, supremely loved, so as to be destined under a new and special title to the service and honour of God (LG 44).<sup>30</sup>

This above passage describes the very essence of religious profession. It is a total commitment willed by God and accepted by the person called. The latter, wishing to belong entirely and exclusively to God, therefore pledges himself to a form of life which translates God's calling into practice, that is, to a life lived by the evangelical counsels of obedience, chastity and poverty.<sup>31</sup> That life-long obligation is concretely assumed in the act of profession.<sup>32</sup>

Profession is a free response to the call of the Holy Spirit patterned after Christ's own total and irrevocable gift of self (ET 7).<sup>33</sup> The word *totaliter* indicates that those who accept such a life according to the evangelical counsels retain nothing for themselves, but surrender all that they are and all that they have to God.<sup>34</sup> Thus, they are destined under a new and special title for the service of God. This service implies total belongingness to Him in a covenant of mutual love and fidelity (EE 5), one that precisely seals the love of God in a total and exclusive consecration to Him (RD 8). This self-offering and covenantal relationship unites the religious "to the Church and its mystery in a special way" and urges them to work with undivided dedication for the good of the entire Body of the Church (MR 10).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> LG 44; Paul Molinari and Peter Gumpel, *Chapter VI of the Dogmatic Constitution "Lumen Gentium" on Religious Life* (Milano: Editrice Ancora, 1985) 140.

<sup>31</sup> Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, 87.

<sup>32</sup> Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol.1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) 275.

<sup>33</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica Testificatio*, 29 June 1971, AAS, 63 (1971) 497-526; [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_pvi\\_exh\\_19710629\\_evangelica-testificatio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_pvi_exh_19710629_evangelica-testificatio.html). Here after ET.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Molinari and Peter Gumpel, *Chapter VI of the Dogmatic Constitution "Lumen Gentium" on Religious Life*, 144.

<sup>35</sup> Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, Sacred Congregation for Bishops, Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church, *Mutuae Relationes*, 14 May 1978, AAS, 70 (1978) 473-506; [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccscrife/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccscrife\\_doc\\_14051978\\_mutuae-relationes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccscrife/documents/rc_con_ccscrife_doc_14051978_mutuae-relationes_en.html). Here after MR.



The *Relatio Generalis* IV of the Doctrinal Commission pointed out that it is stated deliberately that he "is totally given in possession to God, supremely loved" to emphasize the total, perpetual, and undivided dedication to God that is proper to religious. The *Relatio* also adds that the religious, "on account of the same vows is more intimately consecrated to the service of God."<sup>36</sup>

Under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Gospel, the first anchorites, coenobites and monks longed to give themselves entirely to the Lord. The way of life that corresponded to their longing gradually evolved the three counsels of obedience, chastity and poverty into a threefold bond constitutive of the religious state.<sup>37</sup>

The object of these counsels is man's entire life. Consequently, they have universal significance and scope, and imply a permanent attitude and an unchanging way of life.<sup>38</sup> Each counsel has a point of central importance: for obedience, it is independence; for chastity, marriage; and for poverty, material possessions. That is, the object derives from all the principal spheres of human activity and being.<sup>39</sup> Thus, to guarantee greater dedication to the Lord, profession entails not only the renunciation of highly valued goods (LG 46), but also detachment from the world (PC 5), from oneself, from others and, indeed, from all things.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, these counsels are not a simple renunciation but also a substantial acceptance. Specifically, they are an acceptance of the mystery of Christ lived within the Church (VC 16). Realized through profession, religious vows lead to a total giving of oneself to God, the only being worthy of such a sweeping gift (*Renovationis Causam*<sup>2nd</sup> guiding principle).<sup>41</sup> This gift entails a life-long moral

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<sup>36</sup> "Schema Constitutionis De Ecclesia, Relatio Generalis IV, 172-173" in *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi*, vol. III, Pars I (Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1973) 328; Paul Molinari and Peter Gumpel, *Chapter VI of the Dogmatic Constitution "Lumen Gentium" on Religious Life*, 140.

<sup>37</sup> Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, 106.

<sup>38</sup> Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, 105.

<sup>39</sup> Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, 105.

<sup>40</sup> Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, 99, footnote 11.

<sup>41</sup> Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Instruction on the Renewal of Religious Formation, Renovationis Causam*, 6 January 1969,

obligation to God.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, failing to observe the counsels is a serious offence because it breaks the commitment undertaken before God.<sup>43</sup>

Although religious profession always includes the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty, it nevertheless is not identical with these vows.<sup>44</sup> Ghirlanda points out the three meanings of the expression "religious profession": the practical actualisation of the evangelical counsels, the liturgical act during the Eucharistic celebration in which one assumes the obligation to practice the evangelical counsels, and the official public act which is accepted by the legitimate authority.<sup>45</sup>

By profession of the three vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty, religious free themselves from all that would impede their total self-gift to God. Without such obstructions the religious offer themselves totally to God and thus God's call and man's response freely create a covenantal relationship.

#### **4.3. Role of the Church in the Religious Consecration/Profession**

The religious consecration is completed by the intervention of the Church. In the vivid language of *Lumen Gentium* 45, the Council explains the Church's role in this event:

Besides giving legal sanction to the religious form of life and thus raising it to the dignity of a canonical state, the Church sets it forth liturgically also as a state of consecration to God. She herself, in virtue of her God-given authority, receives the vows of those who profess this form of life, asks aid and grace for them from God in her public prayer, commends them to God and bestows on them a spiritual blessing, associating their offering with the sacrifice of the Eucharist (LG 45).

Here, the Church appears as the spouse of Christ. In virtue of its union with Him, the High Priest and victim for the salvation of the world,

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AAS, 61 (1969) 103-120; <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CICLRNEW.HM>.

<sup>42</sup> A. Boni, "Professione - Questioni Giuridiche," in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, vol. 7, 947-965 (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1983), 960.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Molinari and Peter Gumpel, *Chapter VI of the Dogmatic Constitution "Lumen Gentium" on Religious Life*, 143.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Creusen, *Religious Men and Women in Church Law* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1958) 163.

<sup>45</sup> Gianfranco Ghirlanda, "L'Instrumentum Laboris per il Sinodo sulla Vita Consacrata," *Periodica*, 83 (1994), 448, foot note 11.

the Church receives the total self-offering of some of its members to enable their more intimate union with Christ, obedient, virgin and poor.

By fixing religious profession within a liturgical context, the Church affirms that profession is a state of life consecrated to God. In this context, the Church intervenes to ratify the convergence of divine consecration and personal dedication that takes place. That is, through the ministry of the Church, the personal offering of one who professes the evangelical counsels is ratified in God's name.

The Church ratifies this personal offering in a complex way, one that mediates the mutual rapport between God and the professed. With its God-given authority, the Church verifies the divine calling to consecration that one believes he has received. In so doing, the Church rectifies the person's conscience before he commits to this way of life.<sup>46</sup> When an authentic calling is certain, both the Church and the person can proceed with confidence. Accepting the person's oblation, the Church asks God for the grace necessary for him or her to faithfully live out consecrated life. The Church commends the person to God and bestows a spiritual blessing unites them to Christ.

The spiritual blessing the Church bestows is renewed and perpetuated in the Eucharistic Sacrifice through which God communicates his life to men.<sup>47</sup>

The Church manifests that God consecrates the person during the liturgical setting of profession. This consecration is actualized perfectly in the Eucharist, so the sacrifice is that of Jesus, which concretely and continuously vivifies and expresses the consecration of life.<sup>48</sup>

The Church lays down the liturgical setting for religious profession. One offers oneself to God and assumes the obligation to practice the evangelical counsels in the liturgical celebration. It is the key moment of the encounter between God who consecrates, and one of His sons/daughters who accept this consecration by the radical gift of

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<sup>46</sup> P. R. Regamey, "Consacrazione Religiosa," in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, vol. 2, 1611.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Molinari and Peter Gumpel, *Chapter VI of the Dogmatic Constitution "Lumen Gentium" on Religious Life*, 172; Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, 94.

<sup>48</sup> Marco Said, "La Vita Consacrata Mediante la Professione dei Consigli Evangelici," *Vita Consacrata*, 15 (1979) 27-34, 31.

self.<sup>49</sup> The willingness of God to call and the willingness of the person to offer himself/herself for it, which is realized interiorly, is manifested through the rite of profession.<sup>50</sup> It takes place by rite of monastic consecration in the eastern monasteries, whereas by solemn blessing or rite of consecration or profession in the Latin monasteries as well as the religious orders and congregations.<sup>51</sup> When consecration by profession of the counsels is affirmed as a definitive response to God in a public commitment taken before the Church, it belongs to the life and holiness of the Church (EE 8).

In religious profession, the intervention of the Church by receiving the vows gives it an official character. The professed enter into a state of life, constituted in the Church by means of a non-sacramental consecration.<sup>52</sup> The Church also raises the religious profession to the dignity of a canonical state by its approval (LG 45). The Church, with prudence has regulated the practice of the evangelical counsels through the centuries and the person, with the acquisition of the canonical religious state, acquires all the rights and obligations, and by virtue of his religious profession, promises first place to obedience to the Church.<sup>53</sup> So the religious primarily makes the profession and lives the vows in the Church under its guidance. This discloses the content of religious life, conferring on the religious the title of "public person," that is, one who represents the Church.

Religious profession, which must be received by a legitimate superior in the name of the Church, is a public act. Religious make the profession within the Church, and the Church herself accepts the vows of those who make profession (LG 45).<sup>54</sup> The Church receives this gift

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<sup>49</sup> Lilly Tresa, *Profession in Religious Institutes*, unpublished Licentiate Thesis (Bangalore: Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, 2007) 18.

<sup>50</sup> Arnaldo Pigna, "La Consacrazione Religiosa (Lineamenta n.6)," *Vita Consacrata*, 30 (1994), 214.

<sup>51</sup> Since the institutes of religious order and congregation evolved in the West, consecration is imparted according to the Western tradition of the solemn blessing or rite of consecration while in the Eastern monasteries consecration is imparted by the consecratory rituals which are essentially the Eastern tradition evident in the *Ecclesia Hierarchia* of Pseudo Dionysius and *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas of Aquinas.

<sup>52</sup> Priamo Etzi, "Il Concetto di 'Consacrazione Religiosa' ...," *Antonianum*, 72 (1997), 602.

<sup>53</sup> A. Boni, "Professione - Questioni Giuridiche," in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, vol. 7, 961-962.

<sup>54</sup> Arthur J. Espelage, ed., "Religious Profession," *The Canon Law Digest*, vol. 12, 347.

because it is an ecclesial act, a relationship of love of God lived in the heart of the Church.<sup>55</sup> The state of religious life is an ecclesial state, because it is founded by and united to God in Christ; the consecration of this state is accepted, approved and sanctioned by, in and for the Church<sup>56</sup> and takes place according to its norms. Thus, competent superiors and their delegates who "receive" religious profession actually accept it in the name of the Church. When this reception occurs, the profession becomes public.

*Redemptionis Donum* connects religious profession with incorporation into a specific religious institute. The document describes the religious as one "consecrated to God through the ministry of the Church, and have been at the same time incorporated into your religious family." Because each religious "family" is unique, the manner of profession by which one enters a given institute is determined by the constitutions of the institute (RD 7). Thus, religious profession is usually made according to the formula of vows approved by the Apostolic See for each institute (EE §6).<sup>57</sup>

The uniqueness of each institute is also manifested in its manner of living out consecrated life. Through the Holy Spirit, an institute receives not only its founding gift but also a deepening of the same. Consequently, the Holy Spirit creates in each institute a particular spirituality, life, apostolate and tradition (EE 11).

As noted above, religious profession creates a bond between the religious and his or her institute. Consequently, profession also gives rise to a system of reciprocal rights and obligations between the two entities.<sup>58</sup> By virtue of the vow of obedience taken before the Church, the rule that governs the religious family becomes the norm of life for the one who makes profession.<sup>59</sup> Thus religious profession is the act, which makes the religious in public, by accepting and incorporating him/her into a religious institute.<sup>60</sup> The word "public" indicates the

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<sup>55</sup> Silvia Recchi, *Consacrazione Mediante i Consigli Evangelici*, 69.

<sup>56</sup> Yuji Sugawara, *Religious Poverty from Vatican Council II to 1994 Synod of Bishops*, 43.

<sup>57</sup> However, there are exceptions like monasteries.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Creusen, *Religious Men and Women in Church Law*, 163.

<sup>59</sup> A. Boni, "Professione - Questioni Giuridiche," in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, vol. 7, 962.

<sup>60</sup> Xaverius Ochoa, "Professio, Consecratio et Vota Religiosa..." *Commentarium pro Religiosis et Missionariis*, 57 (1976), 196.

official character of this type of vow, a juridic act that is usually placed only in the context of a religious institute.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to its public character, religious profession also has an ecclesial character. The self-offering of the religious takes place during a liturgical celebration. As liturgical acts are both public and ecclesial, the liturgical aspect of profession manifests its ecclesial roots (PI 54).<sup>62</sup> During this celebration, acting through the legitimate religious superiors, the Church receives the profession, offers it to God and imparts a spiritual blessing on the person consecrated. The person is thereby incorporated into the institute and acquires the canonical status of “religious.”

#### 4.4. Deepening and Fuller Expression of the Baptismal Consecration

Religious consecration is compared with the consecration of baptism. Both are brought about by God. In baptism, which is a sacrament, the consecration takes place *ex opere operato*: God consecrates man through the action of His minister. Contrastingly, in religious profession, God Himself effects the consecration. By His grace, God calls and enables the person to freely dedicate himself or herself to God. When the person accepts this call, God directly consecrates the person to Himself.<sup>63</sup> This consecration, although not a sacrament, is nevertheless a source of grace. As a sacramental (SC 80),<sup>64</sup> consecration offers grace because of the power of the Church’s prayer of petition – *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae*.

While LG 44 says that religious consecration derives more fruit from baptismal consecration, PC 5 explains it more clearly:

“...when they made professions of the evangelical counsels they were responding to a divine call, to the end that, not merely being dead to sin (cf. Rom. 6:11) but renouncing the world also, they might live for God alone. They have dedicated their entire lives to His service. This constitutes a special consecration, which is deeply

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<sup>61</sup> Joseph Creusen, *Religious Men and Women in Church Law*, 163.

<sup>62</sup> Congregation for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Directives of Formation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Potissimum Institutioni*, 2 February 1990, AAS, 82 (1990) 470-532; cf. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccsclife\\_d oc\\_02021990\\_directives-on-formation\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc_con_ccsclife_d oc_02021990_directives-on-formation_en.html). Here after PI.

<sup>63</sup> Jerome Rayappa Anthonappa, *The New Forms of Consecrated Life (Can. 605) with Particular Reference to India*, 14.

<sup>64</sup> The Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December 1963, AAS, 56 (1964) 97-134.

rooted in their baptismal consecration and is a fuller expression of it" (PC 5).

In baptism the person dies to sin. But in religious consecration, one already dead to sin through baptism frees himself from obstacles that might impede the fervour of charity and the perfection of divine worship that comprise "renunciation of the world." In this process, the person gives himself completely to God whom he loves above all things. The religious therefore binds himself to observe the evangelical counsels, shaking off all that could hinder fervent love and perfect worship of God.<sup>65</sup> This commitment demands a total detachment from himself and others. He divests himself of personal interests to make God's interests his own, which in turn allows him to turn toward others with the mind and heart of God.<sup>66</sup> It is the means by which the close union with Christ, already begun in baptism, develops in the gift of a fuller, more explicit and authentic configuration to Him (VC 30). The phrase "fuller expression" is used since it is ordered to bring some of the aspects of the baptismal consecration to its particular fullness and also refers to the specific service that religious consecration fulfils. Upon the sacramental basis of baptism, in which it is rooted, religious profession is a new "burial in the death of Christ." Religious consecration, through its sacramental foundation in holy baptism, constitutes a new life "for God in Jesus Christ" (RD 7). Religious profession creates a new bond between the person and the One and Triune God, in Jesus Christ. This bond develops on the foundation of the original bond that is contained in the sacrament of baptism (RD 7). These, in the words of the Second Vatican Council constitute "deepening and fuller expression of baptismal consecration."

The religious consecration is a special because it is not common to all Christians; privileged as a peculiar gift of God; evangelical in the sense that it follows the gospel more closely.<sup>67</sup> Pope Paul VI used some verbs such as *adiungatur*, *compleat*, to indicate clearly that religious consecration adds to something objectively new to baptismal consecration.<sup>68</sup> At baptism, every Christian receives an ontological

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<sup>65</sup> Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 1, 275.

<sup>66</sup> Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, 89.

<sup>67</sup> Jerome Rayappa Anthonappa, "The New Forms of Consecrated Life (Can. 605) with Particular Reference to India," 16.

<sup>68</sup> Yuji Sugawara, *Religious Poverty from Vatican Council II to 1994 Synod of Bishops*, 47.

consecration. Baptism is not a static human act but a dynamic and continuous divine-human act. The life of the professed is also dynamic, on going, and self-offering; it covers all of one's life to produce more abundant fruit.<sup>69</sup> Thus, religious consecration is a special consecration, the continuation and fuller expression of baptism, which serves its development as something superadded.

St. Thomas of Aquinas said: "we read in the life of the fathers that those who enter religion receive the same grace as the baptized"<sup>70</sup> and suggested that the analogy of the profession with baptism was based on the realization of vowing one's whole life to God. Both baptism and religious profession render the remission of sins. The religious profession is analogical with baptism also due to the effects of radical conversion and the beginning of the new life.

However, unlike baptism, religious consecration is not a sacrament. Consecration of religious does not impart an indelible character to the essence of our being, but rather drives its roots into and builds upon the character received at baptism. As a development or maturation of baptismal consecration, one to which only some of the faithful are called, religious consecration thus is baptism's most precious fruit.<sup>71</sup>

The profession of the evangelical counsels is also a development of the grace of the sacrament of chrismation; however, but it surpasses the ordinary demands of the consecration received in that sacrament. One who professes the evangelical counsels receives a special gift of the Spirit that opens the way to new possibilities for and fruits of holiness and apostolic work (VC 30). For this reason, as both Eastern and Western rites of religious profession and virginal consecration testify, the Church invokes the gift of the Holy Spirit upon those chosen for this life and joins their oblation to the sacrifice of Christ (VC 30).

Thus religious consecration is a singular consecration, one that establishes a special bond between the Triune God and the religious. It deepens baptismal consecration, expresses it more fully, and obliges the one consecrated to radical living.

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<sup>69</sup> Yuji Sugawara, *Religious Poverty from Vatican Council II to 1994 Synod of Bishops*, 48.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Pt. II-II, Q. 189. Art. 3; Fathers of English Dominican Province, trans., *The Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 2, 2008.

<sup>71</sup> Elio Gambari, *Religious Life according to Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law*, 92.