

Daily reflections of consecration (30 days)

To be placed in the Parish Bulletin, on the Parish Website, weekly email, to be read at the daily masses and/or be distributed in form of a brochure.

Day 1 We are about to consecrate ourselves or renew the Consecration (as applicable). It would be worthwhile to make a small reflection; how do you define your life? Some say that life is a roller coaster, a puzzle, a journey, a symphony. What is your vision of life? It's very possible that you base your life on the wrong image. In order to fulfill the purposes God has for you and for each one of us, we will have to question the common wisdom and replace it with biblical approaches of life. Scripture says: "Do not model your behavior on the contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God" (Rom 12,2). Change means, change of course, to correct what's not right, what is susceptible of improvement. If we do it in the affairs of the world, more so we can do it in our spiritual life.

Day 2 What does it mean to "change course" now a days? Here, everyone needs to reflect and do whatever is necessary to achieve the change we speak of, but there are five objectives that we can accomplish and begin to testify that change of course: • We change when we render worship to God, with our love, with our thanksgiving, our praise and with a holier life. • We change when we love our neighbor and we show it to him in as many ways as possible. • We change when we become Christ like. • We change when we make service a way of life and we put our gifts at the service of others. • We change when we witness to others.

Day 3 But what is it to consecrate? What does it really mean? The heart of worship is to give in, surrender. The word "surrender" is unpopular because it generally evokes unpleasant images. Meaning, it is used in a negative context. However, today's culture of competitiveness teaches us that we should never give up, that we shouldn't surrender. We hear everywhere that we must overcome all difficulties. But in the context in which we now find ourselves, in its purest and higher meaning, consecrating is the natural response to the amazing love and mercy of God. We give ourselves to Him, not out of fear or obligation, but out of love "because He loved us first" (1Jn 4, 10). Paul in his letter to the Romans says: "give every part of your bodies to God to be instruments of uprightness" (Rom 6, 13).

Day 4 After writing eleven chapters in the letter to the Romans, explaining the incredible grace of God with us, Paul exhorts us to give our life to God: "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, dedicated and acceptable to God" (Rom 12, 1). This is the real consecration you must offer. Then, the true way to please God occurs when we give ourselves completely to God. Offering ourselves to God thru consecration is the essence of our worship.

Day 5 The act of consecration, of personal surrender, is known by various names: consecration is referred to as saying that Jesus is the Lord of our life, taking the cross, dying to self, placing oneself in the hands of the Holy Spirit, etc. The important thing is that it's done, no matter what it's called. God wants our life: OUR WHOLE LIFE. Ninety-five percent is not enough. There are three obstacles that block our complete surrender to God: fear, pride and confusion. We do not realize how much God loves us, we want to control our own life and we misinterpret what it means to surrender, to consecrate.

Day 6 Personal consecration, the consecration of our family, our city, supposes trust. Then it would be worth asking, can I trust God? Trust is the main ingredient of our surrender to God. You cannot give yourself to Him if you don't trust Him, but you can't

trust Him either until you know Him better. Fear keeps us from surrendering, but "love drives out fear". The more we realize how much God loves us, the easier it is to surrender. How do you know God loves you? He shows you His love in many ways: He tells you He loves you, that He never loses sight of you, that He takes care of you, that He forgives you, that He's always with you, that though you might forsake Him, He will never forsake you...

Day 7 Yesterday we were saying that he, who surrenders, is because he trusts, because he loves. God has loved us so much that in order not to lose us, He gave us His Son Jesus. God's love for us is infinite because knowing that we are sinners, He sent His Son to die for us on the cross.

Day 8 Another obstacle to the consecration and complete surrender of our self and our life to God is our pride. We do not want to admit that we are mere creatures and that we cannot control everything. Much of the stress that's spoken of everywhere is due to the desire for total control. Life is a struggle, but what many people ignore is that our life, like Jacob's is in fact a struggle with God! We want to read the bill of rights to God and tell Him not to meddle in our "light-weight" decisions that He does not approve of like abortion, insecurity, pornography, rampant sexuality, drugs, violence, gay marriage, euthanasia, planet deterioration, etc. We are still confused today, 2000 years after Jesus was present in the world.

Day 9 Let us return to the question, what does it mean to surrender, to consecrate? Surrender to God is not something passive, it's not fatalist, and it's not an excuse. It's not about accepting the current state of things, on the contrary: it's sacrificing our life and suffering to change what needs to be modified. God usually calls consecrated people to fight for Him. Surrender is not for you to repress your personality, rather surrender, the consecration of your being, maximizes your personality. C.S. Lewis pointed out: "The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become - because He made us. He invented us. He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be. It is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own".

Day 10 Authentic consecration and surrender is demonstrated with obedience and trust. Saying YES Lord. Saying no would be a contradiction. We cannot call Jesus "Lord" if we refuse to obey Him. Consecrated people obey their Lord; they obey the Word of God, the Church and his representative the Pope. Even if they think it makes no sense.

Day 11 Another aspect of a completely consecrated life is trust. Abraham followed God's guidance without knowing where it would take him (Gn 12, 1). Mary, the mother of Jesus, awaited the coming of the Messiah without knowing when it would happen (Lk 2, 34). Joseph trusted God's purpose without knowing why circumstances developed as they did (Mt 1, 20-25). They all surrendered to God completely. But then, how can you know you are really surrendering yourself? Completely? When you depend on Him for things to turn out right, instead of manipulating others, imposing your ideas and controlling the situation. One loses the reins and lets God act. Instead of trying harder, we trust more. You also know you have surrendered when you don't react to criticism and rush to defend yourself. A surrendered heart stands out in personal relationships. Once we surrender to God, we no longer disqualify others, we do not demand our rights and we do not seek our own good.

Day 12 The Consecration of ourselves means giving all that we are, all that we have, what we would like to do, our gifts, our goods in all aspects: spiritual, physical and material. For many people, the hardest element to surrender is money. Many have said: "I want to live for God, but He can't meddle with my family, my health, my well-being, my bank account". The well understood consecration means surrendering EVERYTHING. May He dispose of us according to His Will?

Day 13 In the consecration, in the authentic surrender to God, the consecrated says: My God and Father, if this problem, pain, sickness and circumstance are necessary to fulfill your purpose and for your glory in my life or in the life of someone else, do not deliver me from this trance. I believe and trust in You, give me the strength to face whatever comes and do not forsake me. This degree of maturity is not easily attained. In the case of Jesus, the agony in the Garden of the Olives was such that He sweat drops of blood (Lk 22, 44). Surrender involves hard work. In our case it is an intense combat against our egotistic nature and the attacks of the world.

Day 14 What goodness or benefits should be expected of a consecration? The bible couldn't be clearer with respect to the benefits a life wholly surrendered to God brings. First, we experience peace. Stop arguing with God, agree with Him and you'll finally have peace and things will go well. Second, we experience freedom: "you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8, 32). Third, we experience the power of God in our life. Christ can defeat the hardest temptations and the most terrible problems if we give them to Him.

Day 15 Consecration in the context we have been explaining means triumph, victory. When Joshua, the biblical character, was close to the biggest battle of his life, he met with God, prostrated in worship and put himself at his orders, surrendering his plans to Him (Josh 5, 13-15). This surrender allowed him to have a stunning victory. Thus, consecration can be a contradiction for many. The clearest and overwhelming reality tells us that victory comes from surrender. Surrender does not weaken us, on the contrary it strengthens us. When we give ourselves to God there's no reason to fear or surrender to anything else. There's a phrase that says: "Man is never greater than when he's on his knees". Yes, he becomes great in his humility before God.

Day 16 God uses the consecrated people. God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus, not because She was talented or rich or beautiful, but because she was totally and completely consecrated to Him. When the angel explained God's improbable plan to Her, She calmly replied that She was the handmaid of the Lord and that She was willing to accept whatever He wanted (Lk 1, 38). There's nothing more powerful than a consecrated life placed in the hands of God. So, consecrated people, without exception, must submit completely to Him.

Day 17 In our life we all end up surrendering to some-thing or someone. If we do not surrender to God, we will surrender to the opinions or expectations of others, to money, resentment, to fear or to our own pride, our own desires or our ego. God designed us to worship Him; if we do not, we will create other things, which will become idols, to give unto them our life, thus power, pleasure and possessions become the true idols we serve. We are free to choose whom we will surrender to, but we will not be able to rid ourselves of the consequences of such choice. The truth is that if a person does not surrender to Christ, she or he will surrender to chaos. To surrender, to consecrate, it's not the best way to live, it's the ONLY way to live

Day 18 We said before that to consecrate our lives, our families, our situations, is the only way to live. Any other decision leads to frustration, deceit and self-destruction. Surrendering our lives to God is the most reasonable way to serve God and for us to live in peace, trusting that He takes us by the hand. Surrendering our lives to God mustn't be an emotional or insensate impulse, rather an intelligent and rational action, the most responsible and reasonable thing we can do with our life. Your wisest moments will be those where you say YES to God. It may take you many years but in the end, you will discover that the greatest hindrance to God's blessing in your life are not others, but yourself: your own will, your obstinate pride and your personal ambition. You will not be able to fulfill the purposes God has for you, while you continue living focused in your own plans.

Day 19 You must take into account that your consecration and surrender to God also mean that God will work thoroughly with you, this is only the beginning. Give everything unto God: what you regret from your past, your present problems, your ambitions for the future; your fears, your dreams, your weaknesses, your habits, your sorrows, your complexities. Put Christ in the driver's seat of your life and let go of the reins. Do not be afraid; nothing that He has under his control can go adrift. If Christ has dominion, you can face anything. You will be like Paul who said: "there is nothing I cannot do in the One who strengthens me" (Phil 4,13). St. Paul surrendered in his way to Damascus, after a shining light made him fall to the ground (Acts 9, 3-5). To other people God calls their attention in a less drastic manner. Whichever way He might use, consecration is never to be considered a transient event. Paul said "I face death every day" (1Cor 15, 31). We must be clear that the consecration happens in an instant, and the exercise of such consecration happens at every moment for the rest of our lives.

Day 20 The problem with our living sacrifice is that we can choose to leave the altar at any time, that's why it is necessary to consecrate and re-consecrate our life several times a day. Consecration must be done constantly until it becomes a daily habit. Jesus affirmed: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me" (Lk 9, 23). It's good for you to understand that to have a life wholly consecrated; it means it shall be put to the test. Sometimes it will imply to perform inconvenient activities, not at all pleasant, costly or apparently impossible. Many times, it will also involve going against what we wish to do, what we like, what attracts us. That's when you will have to "opt" for Jesus, his teachings, and His precepts.

Day 21 To consecrate means to sign a contract with God. A contract. In our society it is customary to sign contracts. They express what the parties have agreed to and what they are committing themselves to. Consecration is the same. It's agreeing with God to live in his way, doing his Will and accepting his love, his fidelity and tenderness. With consecration the time has come, the time for you to surrender to God, to his grace, his love and wisdom. Let us learn to become friends of God. And we can do so through a constant conversation. It won't be possible to develop a close relationship with God if we only go to the Church once a week. Friendship with God is cultivated when we share with Him all our experiences. God wants to be included in all our activities and in each of our thoughts. It is possible to have a conversation with Him awaiting His answer throughout the day, telling Him what we are doing, our plans, projects, while we are driving our car, walking, working, etc.

Day 22 We were saying that God wants us to be his friends and there is a misconception that spending time with God means being alone with Him. Of course, we need to spend time alone with Him, but that represents only a fraction of the time that we are awake. Everything we do, each and every one of our activities can be time spent with God if we invite Him to accompany us and we are aware of His presence. Hence the simplest tasks become acts of praise and communion with God. Having said this we must understand that "friendship with God" is not about changing what one does, rather changing the attitude with which one does them. What you normally do for yourself, you begin to do it for God; whether it be eating, working, resting, bathing or taking out the garbage.

Day 23 Nowadays we think we have to distance ourselves from our daily routine to worship God, but that's only because we have not yet understood to practice being in His presence all the time. That's God's ideal for us. In Eden, the earthly paradise, worship and consecration to God was not an event one had to attend, it was an uninterrupted attitude: Adam and Eve were in constant communion with God (Gen 2, 18, 25). As God is with us all the time, there's no place where you can be closer to God than where you are right now. The Bible says that He governs: "over all, through all and within all". (Eph 4, 6)

Day 24 At the beginning of this new way to relate to God as a friend, you will need to create special thoughts that remind you and bring to mind the awareness that God is with you and is by your side in this very moment. You can repeat very short prayers like: God is with me. God loves me. I believe in God. God is my friend. Jesus, I give myself to You, etc. Another way to avouch our friendship with God is thinking about His Word during the day. This is called meditation and the Bible repeatedly invites us to meditate on who God is what He has done and said. It is impossible to be friends with God if we do not know Him and we cannot know Him if we do not know His Word. Certainly, we cannot spend 24 hours studying the Bible but we can think of it during the day, recalling verses we've read or memorized and reflect upon them.

Day 25 Many of us think that meditation is a difficult and mysterious ritual practiced by monks or saints. However, meditating is simply thinking with concentration. It is something anyone can learn and use any-where. When we have a problem in our mind, we cannot stop thinking of it. So instead of thinking of the problems you need to link that you are worried about with Bible verses. The more you meditate the Word of God, you will have less to worry about. Job, the saint Job admitted: "I have not neglected the commandment of his lips, in my heart I have cherished the words of his mouth" (Jb 23, 12). King David who was a great friend of God affirmed: "How I love your Law! I ponder it all day long" (Psalm 1 19, 97). God had many friends and with them He shared all his secrets. His thoughts He shared with Abraham, and He did the same thing with Daniel, Paul, the disciples and many more. Let us then remember that the Bible says: "only those who fear Yahweh have his secret and his covenant, for their understanding" (Psalm 25,14).

Day 26 One day God became angry with the people Moses was leading and wanted to withdraw His favor. Moses speaking to Him with the confidence of being his friend said: "How can it be known that I and my people enjoy your favor, if not by your coming with us? Yahweh then said to Moses: Again, I shall do what you have asked, because you enjoy my favor and because I know you by name" (Ex 33, 16-17). It then follows that true friendship is built on the basis of revelations. What could seem daring to you, for God is authenticity. If you want to be friends with God, you must be honest with Him, tell Him what you really feel, not what you think you soul feel or say. But you may have impediments that hinder these conversations from the heart. It is resentment. It is common we blame God for what others have done or, how can I be friends with God if He allowed such and such to happen? We obey God not out of obligation, fear or because we are told to, we do so because we love Him and we trust He knows what is best for us. True friendship is not passive but active. When Jesus asks us to love others, to help the needy, to share our resources, to have a pure life, to be willing to forgive and bring others to Him, love is what compels us to obey Him instantly.

Day 27 We must be clear that the more you are friends with God the more you will care about what He cares about. Your heart will be truly concerned for doing everything that pleases Him. So now we'll begin to recap all the things we've been discussing. What matters most to God? The redemption of His people! He wants to find all His children who are lost! Likewise, if we are truly His friends, we must be preoccupied with all the people around us because they preoccupy God. Intimate friendship with God is not a coincidence. You must have the intention to seek it. Remember to do the consecration and change all the things in your life that keep you from having a friendship with God; it is your decision, no one else's. Don't forget we can be as close to God as we want to be. "The nearer you go to God, the nearer God will come to you" (James 4,8).

Day 28 After everything we have discussed so far let us remember that a people, consecrated to God and His Blessed Mother, must "be very careful about the sort of lives you lead, like intelligent and not like senseless people" (Eph 5,15); "being careful that you do not come to the point of losing the firm ground that you are standing on, carried away by the errors of unprincipled people" (1Pt 3,17).

Day 29 Whenever God calls his friends and entrusts them with a mission: - Love the Lord thy God with all your heart: consecrating yourself to Him. - Love your neighbor as yourself: show them your love through service. - Go and make disciples: Go and share the message of God. - Baptizing them...share your friendship with God and inviting them to consecrate also. - "If you put all this to the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus and show that you have really digested the teaching of the faith and the good doc-trine which you have always followed" (Tm 4, 6).

Day 30 After this month's journey, only one question remains: Am I freely and voluntarily willing to do this consecration to Jesus and Mary? I will be consecrating myself, my family, my job, my efforts, labors, projects, desires, and frustrations; my past, present and future. What I am, what I have, everything I would like to be. I give EVERYTHING to God. ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING. I change and I leave behind everything that is not of God and do whatever it takes so that in my family, my job and where ever I might go I can testify to the presence of Jesus and Mary in my life.