

**VAIHARAI**  
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**Contents**

<b><i>From Editor's Desk</i></b>	i
1. Apostolate of Witnessing and Women Religious a Synoptic Perspective <i>Dr Sophia Paul DM</i>	01
2. Role of the Women Religious in the Evangelizing Mission of the Church <i>Sr Siji Lonan, FDCC</i>	34
3. Religious and the Pastoral Ministry <i>Dr. P. S. Sebastian</i>	67
4. Liturgical Catechesis for Liturgy, in liturgy and from liturgy <i>Dr Joseph Rolington</i>	87
5. Laudato Si' - A Call for 'Ecological Conversion' <i>Dr A. Lawrence</i>	110
6. Book Review	142

# VAIHARAI

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## Consecrated Life - A Constant Activity

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### ***From Editor's Desk***

St Ambrose, while writing to his sister St Marcellina who had received the veil of consecrated virginity, instructs her on her new lifestyle: "Let, then, your work be as it were a honeycomb, for virginity is fit to be compared to bees, so laborious is it, so modest, so continent. The bee feeds on dew, it knows no marriage couch, it makes honey. The virgin's dew is the divine word, for the words of God descend like the dew. The virgin's modesty is unstained nature. The virgin's produce is the fruit of the lips, without bitterness, abounding in sweetness. They work in common, and their fruit is in common" (*Concerning Virginity*, 1.8).

Ambrose's example of honeybee (which are *eusocial* – good social) is very apt for the lifestyle of the consecrated men and women. There are a few important elements to be noted here: community life (honeycomb), being brisk (laborious, no marriage couch), being fed properly (dew / nectar) and outcome of life (honey). In an era, which faces individualistic mentality and attitude as a challenge, the community spirit of bees becomes an effective lesson for all and especially for the consecrated persons. Enthusiastic

participation in community activities, interest in the welfare of community members and collaborating with one another are the witnessing moments in life of the consecrated, because they vow to be together! Being together actively helps not only towards community witness but also towards personal witness. The Second Vatican Council strongly recommends that, "In addition let all, especially superiors, remember that chastity is guarded more securely when *true brotherly love flourishes in the common life of the community*" (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 12). In the context of distraction due to communication media, fostering the art of being together and learning to be a responsible member of a community are imperative. Responsible attitude towards community life will ensure right balance between personal interest and that of the community.

This responsible attitude of communion will surely enable each members to be brisk in the ministry entrusted. One of the ancient guidelines to the community of virgins motivates the consecrated people into the pragmatic side of being consecrated. It advises, "For virgins are a beautiful pattern to believers, and to those who shall believe. The name alone, indeed, *without works*, does not introduce into the kingdom of heaven.... For, if a person be only called a believer in name, whilst he is not such in works, he cannot possibly be a believer.... For, merely because a person is called a virgin, if he be destitute of works excellent and comely, and suitable to virginity, he cannot possibly be

saved. For our Lord called such virginity as that 'foolish,' as He said in the Gospel; and because *it had neither oil nor light*, it was left outside of the kingdom of heaven, and was shut out from the joy of the bridegroom, and was reckoned with His enemies" (Clement of Rome, *First Epistle on Virginity*, 3). The walls of security may endanger someone to enter into the realm of *holy* lethargy! Being brisk is an important aspect of being consecrated to the Lord who was brisk. Incarnation, basically, is self-implication into the life of men and women with the objective of restoring the *imago Dei*. This involvement of Jesus Christ in the day-to-day life of humanity needs to be continued all the more vigorously in our time. The call of Pope Francis to 'wakeup the world' needs consecrated men and women to be brisk like the bees.

The bee knows which the nourishing food is and where it can be found. It nourishes only on that. Ambrose says the nourishing food for the consecrated is the divine word! He compares it to dew, which has rich biblical connotation of giving life and energy (Cf. Gen 27:28; Num 11:9; Deut 33:28; Is 26:19, etc.). This vital food energises the consecrated all through their life. Knowledge of the articles in the constitution, knowledge of charism and patrimony, etc. are important; but at the same time how much importance is given to the Word of God which in fact is the foundation of the constitution, charism and patrimony! Ignorance of the Word of God is the ignorance of the One to

whom one is consecrated (Cf. St Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri xviii*, prol). Let the Word of God be the nourishing food that the consecrated may be empowered by this oil, and that they may radiate the light, which is Jesus Christ. Radiating light is a *constant activity!*

Consecrated life needs to produce honey, the outcome of the ministry. When a consecrated person is enthusiastic in knowing Jesus more through the Word of God, receives the warmth of the community members, is able to render the service with dedication and fidelity. Through such a ministry, the consecrated person becomes in fact *Theophóros* (God-bearer) as St Ignatius of Antioch called himself. Wherever a consecrated person goes and be involved in ministry he/she carries God in him/herself and makes His presence available to all. Today's world longs for this experience of the tangible presence of God amidst the feeling of insecurity, hatred, violence, exploitation, modern slavery, corruption, unhealthy politics, chaos and confusion. The above feeling and the absence of the tangible presence of God through consecrated persons force men and women reject God from being their king and look for another master (Cf. 1 Sam 8:7). The year dedicated to Consecrated Life has been a blessing to rediscover the meaning of being consecrated. If each man and woman in consecrated life make an attempt to make God's presence available to people in their context, to be a *Theophóros*, surely the men and the women of our time will get an opportunity to experience

the mercy of God. This rediscovery of consecrated life will indeed make men and women rediscover themselves in the presence of God.

“Contemplation of creation allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us” (Cf. *Laudato Si'*, 85). A bee has many things to teach us. Let all of us learn from this humble bee whatever is fitting for our life to make it more meaningful, faithful and fruitful.

**Dr T. Xavier Terrence**  
***Editor***