

## **WE ARE MINISTERS OF MERCY AND COMPASSION**

Brothers from various religious communities and societies of apostolic life met from July 20-23, 2018 in Washington, DC for the annual Religious Brothers Conference. From our prayer and discernment, we are compelled to speak.

We are men of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As Brothers of the Church, we seek to live and proclaim the goodness and kindness of God by our lives and service. As Brothers gathered in communities of different nations, ethnicities and languages, we together attempt to live and act with unity within diversity. Today, society in the United States and our Church needs to see and experience the mercy and compassion of God, through the lives of Brothers more than ever. We need to witness that a world living in right relationships is possible. Our ministries as Brothers are an essential element that can heal the woundedness of our world today.<sup>i-ii</sup>

We see and experience in our society acrimonious disagreement, intractable positions, unwelcoming attitudes and policies toward immigrants, the marginalized, persons of color, the unwanted, and the most vulnerable people among us who are forced to live in the peripheries of our world.<sup>iii</sup> We see and experience the divisions within our own Church. We experience often that our people are unwilling to listen, are polarized, quick to judge, categorize, eager to condemn, avoid dialogue, and refuse to encounter those with views, lifestyles, and ethnicities different than their own.

We join our brothers and sisters in leadership in our Church, particularly the bishops and the leadership organizations of religious women and men in condemning and working to eradicate all policies that militate against the scriptural exhortation to welcome and provide for the strangers and the oppressed, where we like Moses before the burning bush, “see the oppression of his people, who hears their cry, feels their anguish and comes down to liberate them.”<sup>iv</sup>

We pledge to actively embrace our responsibility as radical ministers of the Gospel, to be agents of solidarity, of reconciliation and peace, and to extend hope and welcome the most vulnerable in our midst, our brothers and sisters in Christ, to our common home. We, Brothers of the Church, today fully embrace the urgency to be Brothers to every person - all created in the image of God. We claim that which the Church has told us: “*the thread which weaves through the Brother’s life is the experience of being sent as a sign of the maternal tenderness of God and the fraternal love of Christ.*”<sup>v</sup> We will be brother with each other and in our ministries with respect, humility, openness and attentiveness. We will strive to be agents of God by forgiveness, mercy and compassion. May each of us be witnesses and ministers of mercy and compassion. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (2015). *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*: Rome: The Congregation, Par. 30.

<sup>ii</sup> Pope Francis (2015). *Misericordiae Vultus: Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Par. 15

<sup>iii</sup> Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (2015). *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*: Rome: The Congregation, Par. 30

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid, Par. 6

<sup>v</sup> Ibid, Par. 40