

Brothers in Christ, over these past few days in Phoenix, we have gathered under a vital banner: "*One in Christ: Communal Life Today*." We have wrestled with the very real institutional and spiritual challenges facing men's religious life—from structural governance and generational diversity to the critical, painful work of safeguarding and accountability.

As major superiors, it is easy to arrive at the end of an assembly carrying a heavy briefcase of action items, strategic plans, and perhaps a bit of weariness. But the Liturgy of the Word today prevents us from treating our leadership as mere corporate management. Instead, the scriptures anchor us back into the radical, mystical nature of our communal call. They ask us a defining question as we prepare to return to our provinces, monasteries, and societies: *Are we leading our brothers to a sterile, bureaucratic desert, or are we leading them to the mountain of divine encounter?*

In our first reading, we find Israel arriving at the desert of Sinai. They pitch camp directly in front of the mountain. God gives Moses a striking command: "*Go to the people and have them sanctify themselves today and tomorrow... Be ready for the third day.*"

Notice that before God descends in the dense cloud, the *community* must prepare together. Encountering the living God is not a solitary luxury for Moses alone; it requires a communal readiness.

As major superiors, this is our primary burden of leadership. Our task is not just to keep the lights on or balance the budget. Our highest calling is to help our brothers "sanctify themselves"—to cultivate a communal environment where the divine presence can break through the noise of institutional survival. We must help our

communities pitch their tents in front of the mountain of God, refusing to let the heavy fog of administrative fatigue obscure the transcendent glory of our charisms.

How do we sustain this environment when the realities of aging communities, declining numbers, or cultural shifts press in on us? We find our posture in the Responsorial Psalm from the Book of Daniel.

We sing: *"Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory... praiseworthy and exalted above all forever."*

Remember the context of this text: this hymn of praise was sung by three young men thrown into the heart of a fiery furnace. Their world was burning around them, their freedom was stripped away, yet their response was unceasing benediction.

Brothers, our leadership must be rooted in this same Eucharistic stance. When the furnaces of modern ministry, administrative anxieties, and personnel challenges heat up, our communities must still echo with praise. If we, as leaders, lose our capacity to praise God on the throne of His Kingdom, our brothers will lose their joy. Communal life is enlivened not when we find the perfect structural solutions, but when we collectively re-center our lives on the eternal goodness of the Triune God.

This brings us to the warning and the promise of the Gospel. The disciples ask Jesus why He speaks in parables, and His response cuts to the heart of religious leadership: *"To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given."*

Jesus warns of those who look but do not see, who hear but do not listen because their hearts have grown dull.

The greatest danger facing a major superior—and the men under our care—is not a lack of resources or a shortage of vocations. The greatest danger is the dull heart. It is the calloused spirit that goes through the motions of religious life on autopilot. When communal prayer becomes a chore, when fraternity becomes merely cohabitation, and when ministry becomes just a job, our spiritual senses are numbed. We look at the signs of the times but fail to see God moving. We hear the cries of our brothers and the people of God, but we do not truly listen.

But Jesus turns to us today and says: "Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear."

By virtue of our vows and our shared life, we have been given the eyes of faith to see the Kingdom breaking through. When a community lives out genuine, reconciled, and joyful fraternity, it becomes a living parable to the world. In a fractured society, a healthy religious community is a radical counter-cultural sign—proof that people of different backgrounds, ages, and perspectives can indeed be "One in Christ."

Brothers, as we close this 2026 CMSM Assembly and pack our bags for home, let us leave the desert of our anxieties behind.

Do not allow your heart, or the hearts of your brothers, to grow dull. Go back as stewards of a living encounter with Christ. Call your men back to the mountain. Lead them in praise, even from the midst of the modern furnaces we face. Cultivate fertile soil in your local houses so that the seed of the Word can take deep root and yield a rich harvest.

May our communities become vibrant spaces of true spiritual sight and hearing, so that the world may look upon our shared life and know that Jesus Christ is Lord.
Amen.