

I am excited to have the opportunity to share some thoughts on the theme of Hope in Consecrated Life through the lens of Fratelli Tutti.

In the first chapter of the encyclical, Pope Francis describes dark clouds over our world that hinder the development of a universal fraternity of Sisters and Brothers.

We have known all too well how difficult it has been recently to have hope amid the weariness in our world, and especially our nation. Yet, despite these dark clouds, these difficult times, which cannot be ignored, Pope Francis invites us to a renewed hope, a hope that “speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart.”

A hope that is bold and courageous. It is a hope that is deeply rooted, not only in the individual members’ hearts, but in the heart of our religious communities.

Tell the story of our founders and foundresses, or those first Brothers or Sisters who took the risk to venture into a new place or undertake a new ministry.

They had hope, a hope that speaks of a thirst as Pope Francis says, a thirst for living the Gospel and meeting a need. They established relationships, built community, and celebrated the interwoven, interconnected, and interdependent relationships. Their hope was bold. It looked beyond inconveniences and roadblocks that were placed before them.

Is it possible for us to have this same type of hope? I say yes. And I think the witness to this hope is perhaps even more important today.

Hope calls us to something bigger than ourselves.

Hope calls us to rediscover the heart of our religious profession; it calls us to continually look for ways to reconnect our individual hearts with the heart of our congregation – the charism, and paying attention to how the gift of our charism can be lived today.

I recently heard a question that I think can help us figure this out: Where is the cry of those in need so strong that I must respond with my life? To answer this question we must use the Gospel as the guide for living radically, the radical living that is being as faithful as we can to the calling of our founders – in my case, Francis, Clare, and the first Brothers who arrived in Brooklyn from Ireland to educate immigrants, even though the response to the calling of our founders might look different today.

There is still hope and we cannot lose the thirst for that hope, a hope that is bold enough to say, yes, our lives as consecrated women and men are relevant and needed in our world; a hope that is willing to listen to and respond to the loud cry of those in need; a hope that embraces the present with a passion to bring about a future that is filled with abundant hope. This hope is not naïve, frivolous, or immature – but rather it is a hope that we have because we know that the kingdom of God is here in our midst.

Perhaps it is now time to have the courageous hope to do what needs to be done – and not just talk about it. We must bring hope; we must be hope bearers against all odds, to be the voice and

action of hope instead of hate, division, or despair. I believe this hope that we bear is in the courageous living of our Charisms.