**Difference between Optimism and Hope**

Bishop José Rodríguez Carballo, secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, was invited to the 26th General Assembly of the Spanish Conference of Major Superiors of women and men Religious (CONFER).

What follows is a transcription of a fragment of Bishop Carballo’s answer to the question:

*In the current context of our Church, which are the keys to living in hope and where do you discover signs of hope in Consecrated life?*

**Bishop Carballo:**

I would start by making a distinction between optimism and hope.

If you ask me: “José, are you optimistic about the future of Consecrated life?”

I would say to you immediately: “No. And it does not worry me”.

And if you ask me: “are you optimistic about the future of the Church?”

I would say the same to you: “No. And it does not worry me”.

Instead, if you ask me: “Do you have hope in the future of consecrated life and of the Church?

I would immediately say: “Yes”.

For me there is a great difference between optimism and hope.

Optimism is based on “our *chariots* and *horses*” —by referring to a biblical text (1): those are our apostolic works, our numbers, the average age, our titles.

(…)

And then, well, then… reasons for optimism…

I say often that our chariots have rusty axles and roll

I often say that our *chariots* have rusty axles and roll with difficulty, especially when there is a lot of mud.

I come from a village and I know how hard it was for the loaded *chariots* to travel through those “carreiras” (streets)— as we call them in Galicia.

And *¡our horses! well, also by age and other ailments, do not run much.*

¿Optimism?

I am not optimistic about the future of the Church and of consecrated life.

But as far as I know ─and I've read the Bible once─ it is not a Christian virtue. It is a human virtue and that’s good.

Instead, hope is what measures the disciple of Jesus.

And a man, a woman, who has no hope, cannot call himself, herself a disciple of Jesus.

Hope ─ contrary to optimism, which, as I said, arises from our *chariots and horses*─ is based ***on faith*** in that one "for whom nothing is impossible" (2), as Luke says.

And if nothing is impossible to him, then “there is nothing I cannot do in the One who strengthens me."(3) ─as Paul says.

“for power is at full stretch ***in weakness***. so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (4)

I think it is important to remember it.

The crisis of hope goes hand in hand with the crisis of faith.

Do we want to know *“how is our faith”*?

The thermometer is the hope.

And her, I would ask you to remember what Pope Benedict XVI told us on 2 February 2013, a few days before he resigned from the See of Peter.

“Do not join the ranks of the prophets of doom who proclaim the end or meaninglessness of the consecrated life in the Church in our day.”

(…)

So, what I would ask of the consecrated people is *less tears for a past that will not return, and more hope.*

(…)

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(1) Cf. Ps 20 (19): 8

*“Some trust in chariots or horses, but we in the name of the Lord.*

(2) Lk. 1:37

(3) Phil 4:13

(4) 2Cor 12:9

**XXVI Asamblea General de la CONFER - Diálogo con Monseñor José Rodríguez Carballo.** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1t7VDygyADE>