

ONE BODY (Eph 4,4)

UN SOLO CORPO (Ef 4,4)

UN SEUL CORPS (Eph 4,4)

UN SOLO CUERPO (Eph 4,4)

JEDNA WSPÓLNOTA (Ef 4,4)

UM SÓ CORPO (Ef 4,4)

EIN LEIB (Eph 4,4)



C.Ss.R

PIRITUALITY

2000



CLEMENS MARIA HOFBAUER

ONE BODY

Saint Clement, Marian Apostle

Introduction

The General Government has proclaimed 2020 - 2021 as a jubilee year in honour of the Congregation's "second founder," Saint Clement Maria Hofbauer. Jubilee years evoke a lot of emotions – for the Congregation, they indicate how she has grown over the years, and emotionally surge in us, as current Redemptorists, the ways our lives identify with our spiritual foundations. In this reflection, I intend to zoom in and focus on the Eucharistic-Marian devotions of Saint Clement. I will present how a Redemptorist, brother, priest, and lay associate, with the same attitudes and as a witness to the Redeemer, can draw energy, courage, hope, and Redemption from these devotions. The fruit of these devotions is for all those to whom we are sent to minister and for ourselves.

The four characteristics of a good prayer are that it be sincere (Psalm 17:1-2), humble (Luke 18:9-14), confident, and persevering (Luke 18: 1-8). This is also true for any disciple who follows a good master. The disciple should be sincere, humble, confident, and persevering. A close look at the life of Saint Clement Mary Hofbauer, reveals a heart and soul that seeks the will of God in humility, sincerity, confidence, and with a true spirit of perseverance in pursuit of doing God's will. During Clément's era, the world was never at rest, and it was never in peace. But despite the endless challenges and difficulties that St. Clement endured during his lifetime as a "*genuine disciple of Saint Alphonsus*," *he followed Christ the Redeemer with a heart filled with joy, denying himself and always ready to undertake what was demanding [...]* (Constitutions 20). Whenever one door closed, Clement Hofbauer would pass beyond its boundaries or would chisel his way through the high walls blocking his way to bring plentiful Redemption to the people. Writing to his companions in Warsaw, he says: "*if you could see how we eagerly studied the maps of North America, you would think we had taken leave of our senses.*" Such was the indomitable passion for this Redemptorist to reach out to the end of the Earth.

Saint Clement - the Eucharistic-Marian apostle

St Clement was unrelenting in pursuing souls cut off from the life of grace, especially those who most abandoned and facing imminent death. He did not wait for a peaceful political environment to preach the Gospel. He instead converted a difficult and hostile time into becoming a fertile ground for preaching the Gospel. One tool used by the Saint was his closeness to the Blessed Sacrament and Eucharistic celebrations. To illustrate, during his time in Warsaw, he introduced what he called Perpetual Missions. The perpetual missions were Eucharistic centers with five sermons preached

every day, accompanied by three high-masses. The afternoons of some days were devoted to the Way of the Cross, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. These Missions changed the city of Warsaw. Saint Benno's Church became a spiritual oasis, and a fountain of hope for those without hope, the poor, the abandoned, and the persecuted. The political instability was cause for people to flock to the doors of the Redemptorist Church in order to participate in the "breaking of the Body and sharing the Chalice of the Blood of Christ." Some came to accompany the Redemptorist Saint in the adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and some came for confessions and spiritual nourishment. Saint Clement established St. Benno's Church as the beloved and faithful witness of Christ's Church. The Church was crowded during midweek and overcrowded on weekends.

It is said that one day a nun entered the Church where Clement worked as a pastor of souls and found Father Hofbauer kneeling before the altar. Unobserved by the devout lover of Christ in the Eucharist, the nun saw his cheeks wet with tears as he pleaded for the conversion of some sinner outside the fold; *"Lord, give me this soul, for if Thou refuse, I shall go to Thy Mother!"* For Clement, the son, Jesus Christ, and the Mother, Mary, were not superfluous devotional figures; instead, they were real beings – in the sense of faith. Hence his great passionate love of the Son and Mother was a moment of real encounter, an encounter of the Saviour and Redeemer. *I shall go to Thy Mother, Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ, who was for Clement today's Mother of Perpetual Help.* By his 'fruits,' we know of his solid prayer life, a man who, while at home was on his knees, and while in the apostolic field, was an energetic apostle.

Redemptorist – Today

Today, the Redemptorist family of humble beginnings has become so numerous that it is present in more than eighty-five countries. In many of these countries, there is manifest political instability – for example, with an uncontrolled eruption of terrorist groups that seed hatred between religious groups and tribes. Some of these countries face an economic crisis, where state leaders and those in positions of authority amass wealth for themselves and forget the poor and the abandoned. The gap between those with and without is widening each day (*Pastoral letter from the Bishops of Zimbabwe, January 2019*). Some countries are torn apart because of the continuous search of their members for better lives and fleeing from life-threatening wars and economic hardships (*Christus Vivit*). Many more of these countries are experiencing a scarcity of vocations to maintain the continuation of the Mission.

Clement indeed lived two centuries before us, but certainly, his and our social, political, and economic situations have remained the same. The atrocities of our times mentioned above were present, if not worse than the time of Saint Clement. No time is perfect for making a difference, for bringing the Good News to the poor and abandoned. Eternal truths know no space and time. Like Saint Clement, we need to transform our desperate times into times of hope. We do this by not abandoning the real Master of the Mission – Christ the Redeemer, always awaiting us in the Eucharist. Clement prayed before the Eucharist:

O Divine Mediator, look upon those zealous souls who raise their hearts to You and pray without ceasing for the maintenance of that most precious gift of yours, the True Faith. Preserve us in your holy faith, for if we are rich with this precious gift, we shall gladly endure every sorrow, and nothing shall ever be able to change our happiness. Without this great treasure of faith, our unhappiness would be unspeakable and without limit.

Some time ago, while conversing with a brother from the Redemptorist Conference of Africa, he explained that he is from a country where the political situation is very fluid, and the economy is terrible. There are power cuts for twenty hours, and there is no running water for the people in the location where they live. The country has no rule of law. The higher one is in the political ranking,

the freer the individual. The number of working doctors is frequently reduced, and hospitals are often closed.

For this reason, the poor continue to die without medical help. Schools are closed because the government cannot afford to pay salaries for teachers. We thus denied children of the poor the right to education, resulting sadly to child prostitution. It is one of those depressing situations that when you listen, you cannot imagine the existence or presence of life in that country. I asked the brother, "how then are you surviving amid all this hopelessness?" He responded, "Our hope is the poor people who find hope in us, each time we celebrate Mass for them, each time we preach the patient love of God for humanity. Our hope is that we are not alone. Our Mother Mary always provides that which we need in ministry". The confrere's response echoes the identity of a Redemptorist, that of being witnesses to a wounded world.

Like Clement, these Redemptorists build bridges and chisel their way through the obstacles out of love for the Mission. There is no room for despondence, no reason to be idle, no reason to quit. There is always a way around every obstacle and through every one of today's challenges. Saint Clement left us a spiritual heritage of witnessing Christ in the Eucharist in and out of season.

Above all, Saint Clement reminds us that the Mission is for Jesus Christ through us, in the spirit and charism of the Congregation. Jesus Christ is the foundation, and we are merely builders. We walk by faith. All depends on God. In his own words, Saint Clement prayed, "*may our faith awake as the sun rises, and never set till all has been accomplished.*" Perhaps no picture better describes this attitude of Clement than the painting of him knocking on the door of the tabernacle in a moment of great need, a great sign of trust in Jesus in the Eucharist.

Reflection Questions

1. How have you made the Eucharist a living witness in your life, in your Community as Redemptorists today?
2. As a Redemptorist, what is your attitude towards the challenges you cannot control? (Personally, or as a Community)
3. Do you have time for devotion to the Eucharist and Our Mother of Perpetual Help in your Community and as an individual?

Prayer

Gracious God, you are a God of care and compassion for humanity.

You filled Saint Clement Mary Hofbauer with extraordinary zeal for the well-being of people, especially those who are poor, troubled, or abandoned, both physically and in spirit.

In Saint Clement, you revealed the richness of your loving-kindness and mercy.

Through his intercession and as he nobly taught us, help us to remain faithful to the Catholic Church by carrying out our Mission in the Congregation.

Help us to walk in the way that Saint Clement indicated to us by his own life. Hear and answer us, Lord, God, through Christ, our Redeemer.

Amen!



ONE BODY is a monthly prayer text proposed by the Center for Redemptorist Spirituality.

This text was written by Gideon Sidinga, CSsR

For more information: **Piotr Chyla** CSsR (Director of the Center for Spirituality - fr.chyla@gmail.com).