



CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS

Superior Generalis

Our Mother of Perpetual Help – 150 Years of Grace

“Make her known to the world!”

March 15, 2014

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Dear Confreres, Sisters, associates and friends,

Grace and peace to you from Rome and from the Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help! As we celebrate the Season of Lent, may her perpetual help accompany and assist you on your journey of conversion and renewal.

April 26, 2016 will mark the **150th Anniversary of the restoration to public devotion of the original Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help** in the Church of St. Alphonsus in Rome.

For 300 years, the Icon was venerated on this site, in the Church of St. Matthew. In 1798, as a result of war and persecution in Rome, the Church of St. Matthew was severely damaged and subsequently levelled. The Icon was taken by the Augustinians to their monastery chapel at St. Mary in Posterula. However, on April 26, 1866, the Icon was again restored to public veneration in St. Alphonsus Church. Pope Pius IX entrusted her to Fr. Nicholas Mauron, Superior General of the Redemptorists, with these words: **“Make her known to the world”**. Redemptorist missionaries have certainly taken these words of the Holy Father to heart, and Our Mother of Perpetual Help is now one of the best-known and best-loved images of Mary worldwide.

The General Government believes that it is important to mark this anniversary throughout the Congregation, and indeed, throughout the world. For this reason, we will declare 2016 as a Year of Jubilee in honour of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. Although the official declaration will be published later, in order to prepare for this jubilee year I have appointed a Central Commission to begin planning. In April, 2014, they will present their initial plans to the General Council. They are proposing a three year process: 2015 as a special year of preparation, 2016 as a year of Jubilee and Celebration, and 2017 as a year to further develop our call to make her known.

The following are the members of the Central Commission:

- Fr. Juventius Andrade, General Consultor and President of the Commission
- Fr. Serafino Fiore, Centre for Redemptorist Spirituality
- Fr. Brendan Kelly, Office of the Secretary General
- Fr. Marek Kotynski, Warsaw Province, Europe
- Fr. Phil Dabney, Baltimore Province, North America
- Fr. Dirson Ferreira Gonçalves, Campo Grande Province, Latin America and Caribbean
- Fr. Joseph Echano, Manila Vice-province, Asia-Oceania
- Fr. Patrice Nyanda, Afrique de l’Ouest Vice-province, Africa and Madagascar

After the meeting of the General Council in April, the Central Commission will offer some concrete proposals to the whole Congregation.

Several Provincials have told me that they have already begun to plan for the 2016 Jubilee Year. Some have named a Provincial Commission. Others have begun concrete projects and planning. I wholeheartedly encourage these initiatives, as well as initiatives such as the Congress on Our Mother of Perpetual Help which will be held in May, 2014 in Campo Grande. It will be important to also develop and coordinate plans and projects in each Conference.

The Central Commission has asked me to request that every (V) Province, Region and Mission name a **contact person for their Units**. Such a contact person will be an important point of reference for distributing material, coordinating plans and projects, and ensuring that the Jubilee Year is truly a Congregation-wide event. Within the next few weeks, the representatives from each Conference on the Central Commission will be contacting the (V) Provincial, Regional and Mission Superiors of each Unit in their respective Conferences to ask for the name of a contact person. Please cooperate with them.

I also invite any of our Sister Congregations to participate in this jubilee. If you would like to name a contact person from your Congregation, please send their names, email addresses and language of communication to me, and I will pass these on to the Central Commission.

As we prepare for this Jubilee, I invite you to prayerfully ponder Constitution 32: "Let [Redemptorist Missionaries] take the Blessed Virgin Mary as their model and helper. For she went on her pilgrim way in faith, and embraced with her whole heart the saving will of God. She dedicated herself completely as the handmaid of the Lord to the person of her Son and to his work, and thus she served the mystery of redemption. Indeed she still serves it, as the perpetual help of God's people in Christ. Therefore, let them relate to her as a mother with all the love and veneration they owe her as sons."

I believe that this Jubilee Year is a special moment of grace for us and for all God's people. As Pope Francis writes in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Mary is the Mother of Evangelization (284), entrusted with a "special saving mission" (285) as "the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us" (286). She is our Perpetual Help.

Together, let us prepare for this Jubilee Year with hope and enthusiasm. We will celebrate it with joy and apostolic zeal. Then, with new energy, we will continue to make her known with love and missionary dynamism.

May St. Alphonsus, together with all our Redemptorist saints and beati, inspire us in the mission of evangelization so that together with Mary, we may preach the Gospel ever anew.

Your brother in the Redeemer,

Michael Brehl, C.S.R.

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Superior General

