



CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS

Superior Generalis

Dear Confreres, Sisters and Brothers,

Once again, I greet you from Rome and the Church of St. Alphonsus. Thank you for your greetings, and most especially for your prayers.

Each day, we come before the Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help to pray for all of you – for the whole Redemptorist Family and for the whole world. We pray for those suffering from Covid-19, and for those who are caring for them. We pray for the poor and the abandoned, and for those who are hungry and lost. We pray for so many of you reaching out to them with a message of hope through social ministries, with welcome, food and shelter. We pray for the army of health care workers and volunteers of every nation and religion who are serving those in need. And we pray for the healing of our world which is wounded and in pain.

Tomorrow is Palm Sunday. After forty days of Lent, we come once again to Holy Week.

Perhaps some of you are wondering: “How can we celebrate Holy Week this year? In the midst of this historic pandemic which is ravaging our people, our nations, our world: how can we celebrate?”

Our Churches are closed and locked. We cannot gather with the faithful to celebrate this holiest of weeks. Processions are cancelled. No way of the Cross. No concerts or sunrise celebrations on Easter morning.

In many places, we cannot even leave our houses. Many of us are separated from family, friends, even confreres. Some are isolated, completely alone. For us who are religious and priests, how can we celebrate when we cannot even bring the sacraments to hungry souls?

Certainly, this year Holy Week will be different than any other Holy Week we can remember. How can our experience this year open a door for us to enter more fully into the mystery of Christ’s loneliness and suffering and death? Perhaps this year offers us an opportunity to be more completely united to Christ in his passion and death, so that we can also share the new life of resurrection united to him.

Sisters and Brothers, we begin our Holy Week pilgrimage together. We do not walk alone, no matter how alone we might feel at times. We walk together in hope and in sorrow, in communion of prayer and solidarity in mission. Much more than this, on our Holy Week

pilgrimage, the Redeemer walks beside us. Sometimes we recognize him: in the heroic actions of so many, or in the suffering of loved ones. Many times we fail to see him clearly. The dark obscures our vision. But make no mistake, he is there! Right beside us. This Holy Week. Today.

This year, we celebrate Holy Week, wherever we are and however we can. Find some time each day for silence and for prayer – like Jesus with the disciples at the Last Supper and in the Garden of Gethsemane. Reach out to someone each day with a helping hand or a listening ear – maybe someone right there in your community needs an encouraging word. Support a volunteer or a health care worker, people like Veronica and Simon of Cyrene, who wipe away tears and carry others’ burdens. Stand with the world’s suffering poor, like Mary and John stood at the foot of the Cross. Mourn with the bereaved and grieving, like the women at the Tomb.

The world needs our witness of hope. And we need to live this Holy Week with Jesus. We need to touch the world’s wounds today so that we can recognize the Risen One, our Redeemer, and cry out with Thomas on Easter Sunday: “My Lord and my God”.

Fr. Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.

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