



CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS

Superior Generalis

Rome, May 30, 2020
Vigil of Pentecost

Dear Confreres, Sisters Lay Missionaries and Associates,

On Sunday, we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the followers of Jesus. After witnessing his Ascension, “The Twelve” returned to Jerusalem, and gathered together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with the other disciples, both men and women. They devoted themselves to prayer and to the community. They waited with expectant hope, remembering the promise of Jesus:

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8).

For St. Alphonsus, these nine days between the Ascension and Pentecost are the origin and the most important of all Novenas, because this first Novena was celebrated by Mary and the Apostles in constant prayer and in expectant hope. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit transformed this small group of fearful disciples into an ever-growing band of bold and courageous evangelizers.

Perhaps this year, we can identify with Mary and the Apostles more personally and concretely than usual. Like them, many of us have spent Lent and Easter in quarantine, gathered in small groups together with Mary, in prayer, and service and expectant hope. The pandemic of the Coronavirus has imposed restrictions on our movement and our ministry unlike any we have ever experienced before. But these restrictions have not ‘contained’ our mission! Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we have engaged in creative and exciting initiatives implementing all the means at our disposal: television and radio, social media and email, internet and videoconferences. Many of us also wrote old-fashioned letters and made more frequent phone calls to others who might be isolated.

Our communities, our lay collaborators and our families were not spared the impact of this pandemic. As far as I know right now, 10 confreres died from Covid-19. At least 20 more confreres are infected, though many have made a full recovery. I have received reports of some Lay Missionaries, Associates, and many family members who have died or are recovering from Covid-19. This contagion is worldwide. Although many provincials have asked me not to identify their Units or people who have died or are infected, I can say that this contagion has spread world-wide and affected our Redemptorist Family in many countries and different continents.

And this contagion and pandemic is not over! Although restrictions are easing in many countries, in others they are just beginning to experience the impact of this pandemic. We continue to deepen our solidarity with all the victims, their communities and their families. May we grow in solidarity with the whole wounded world!

Pope Francis reminds us that this contagion of infection with the Coronavirus can lead to a contagion of fear, of isolation, of 'self-protection'. He calls us to welcome instead the 'contagion' of the Holy Spirit – a contagion of prayer and service, of solidarity and welcome. I think that St. Alphonsus and St. Clement would echo that call.

This Pentecost, gathered in prayer with Mary and the Apostles, together with St. Alphonsus and St. Clement and with all our saints, blessed, martyrs and holy men and women, may the Holy Spirit give us the grace to be prophetic and authentic Witnesses of the Redeemer: in solidarity for mission in our wounded world!

In Christ our Redeemer,

Michael Brehl, C.S.S.R.

Fr. Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.,
Superior General

