**RESILIENCE IN CONSECRATED LIFE**

***"GET UP, TAKE UP YOUR BED AND WALK..."*** (Mc 2, 9)

After years of work in formation and tasks of government of the Congregation, with an experience of Consecrated Life behind me, I can consciously affirm that, although I feel very happy, sometimes it is difficult, and one suffers internally and externally for being faithful to the call of Jesus Christ. Nothing different from what Jesus Christ himself lived and experienced in His journey through this world, but He paid with his life and suffered much to achieve our Redemption. A gift and a grace that leads us to reach the full happiness to which we aspire. For this reason, I feel great admiration for those holy people, full of Faith and Hope, who have known how to run this race of life, in a discreet, dedicated, and faith-filled way, being able, with God's grace and the strength of the Spirit, to overcome so many trials and difficulties, offering their lives totally for love of others and in fidelity, until the end.

**1.- Resilience**

By resilience, I mean, not in a scientific way but rather on an experiential level, the personal attitude of overcoming and not letting oneself be overwhelmed by life's difficult and complicated moments. For this, we count on the help of our faith, prayer, personal and community accompaniment, as well as an attitude of hope and healthy self-esteem. In the same way, it helps to live the problems, difficulties, crises, and moments of darkness by following the example of the life, passion, and death of Jesus Christ in which, without ceasing to suffer, he tried to put his concern, care and attention on others, especially those who suffered with him.

In this way, both the person and the community manage to get up, start over, move on, 're-construct'. And all this to continue to be able to renew ourselves and to love again, to give ourselves and to develop our mission. This will produce a return to our feet, but at that moment, with more strength and conviction since we all learn from our falls to achieve new experience and maturity and thus face new challenges. Resilience, as I understand it, is a song to life, to our vocation, in short, to the risen Jesus, where there is no room for negativism, pessimism, abandonment, resignation, etc.

**2.- A reality**

Many of us today live in a society and culture of leisure, of pleasure, of hiding pain, suffering, of all that is a deprivation of the most important thing: Life, Faith, Hope and which is our fundamental option, our vocation as Redemptorist Missionaries. It is evident that all this has a serious influence on the personality of so many confreres in formation and many others who are already living their Consecration to God.

Of course, we all want to be happy, to live a full life that fills us interiorly, and we have the freedom to make various choices in life, to make mistakes, to correct errors, all to live our life to the full.

But it's been many years that I have personally seen so many Redemptorist confreres, priests, or religious of other Congregations, abandon their option of a life consecrated to God after hard crises in their lives. Many times I wonder why some of these people have reached such a point of disappointment and discouragement that by the time they open their hearts to a person who might be able to help them in the first instances of that situation, it is too late. Everything is ended by abandoning the hitherto fundamental option in their lives. I have the impression that, in some cases, they have not been able to face up to and put in place the right means to deal with, accompany, and overcome these crucial moments in their lives. It is sad for everyone the arrival at the decision where the only possible way out has been to leave the consecrated life, the priesthood, after a long and painful internal and sometimes also external struggles. We all know confreres who go from one place to another, from one community to another, from one assignment to another. They take a long time or never get to face their situation with sincerity and depth. Confreres who frequently change community or missionary projects without ever feeling at peace with themselves, with others, and with their situation.

On the other hand, we also all have seen the experience of religious men and women, priests, married couples, separated and divorced people, single people, etc., capable of overcoming very difficult situations, both on a personal and community or family level. People who have been able, despite the suffering, the difficulty, the apparent meaninglessness of life, the dark night, to remain faithful in their choice of life and to go forward with courage and determination. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, says Brian Kolodiejchuk, spent practically the last 50 years of her life in this situation, who would have guessed seeing her give herself to others!

Thus, those who have struggled and suffered to find their true place in life could be said to be 'resilient' people, capable of fighting and facing life's difficulties with a spirit of sacrifice, knowing how to take advantage of what might initially be considered negative, without the latter being able to discourage or destroy them.

**3.- Need for Faith and Hope in Jesus Christ**

As a religious and a priest, I feel that there is nothing more beautiful than the deep, joyful, and lively testimony of those who, besides overcoming a whole life of difficulties, are an example of resilient people in their life option, faith, and consecration. Faithful and firm in faith, giving witness to the Redeemer according to the charism of the Congregation and always with joy and hope. Normal people, like each one of us, who do not appear in the news of the newspapers or on television, do not receive medals and decorations while being happy in a life not exempt from limitations and challenges. Holy people who will not one day be on the altars of our churches, the "saints next door" that Pope Francis says in *Gaudete et Exsultate,* but who are examples to us all.

Pope Francis, without expressly mentioning the word resilience, constantly invites us to see all these complicated and difficult moments of our lives, lived from the Gospel, not as problems but as opportunities "When everything seems paralyzed and stagnant, when personal problems disturb us, social unrest does not find its proper answers, it is not good to give up" (*Christus Vivit,* n. 141). Opportunities to purify our deepest convictions, our Faith, and the value of a life that needs to be lived and worked on to live it intensely according to the Gospel.

Promise and Hope are fundamental to people's lives and even more so for Christians. In them, he maintained the hope, the strength, and the desire to go forward for the people of Israel and for each one of us.

We could say that in successive stages of our life, we have the possibility of taking a step, even a leap, from living a situation of 'consumers of religion' to being true followers of Jesus of Nazareth. A transition that implies leaving a materialistic, positivistic life to face the utopia of a dream in the style of our founder St. Alphonsus and so many Redemptorist missionary confreres who have given their lives for the mission and the Gospel, incarnating themselves in the reality where they live.

In the end, the experience of love for God in others and oneself, lived from an incarnated human reality, can be the primary source of authentic Hope, fulfilment, and improvement. Hope is seen as the one who feels expected by another or the Other, has a revaluing effect, gives confidence and motivation to live and struggle in life.

Like St. Paul, we can say and 'experience': "...when I feel weak, that is when I am strongest..." (2 Cor 12:10). How many times do we experience that, in our daily efforts, even in moments of weakness, we are support, help, and example for others? It is in such a way that, from there, in the personal encounter of going out of ourselves to meet the brother or sister who is suffering, the mystery of the presence of Jesus Christ is produced, where we help and are helped. It is not a matter of feeling sorry for ourselves in our experiences of weakness and suffering; this can deepen the problem.

Here we could add what it means to understand that our life is great because it is imbued with God's presence, grace, and gift. That the Mission is that of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, where we are mediators, useless servants, but where we feel full, happy, and fulfilled for having been chosen and, despite our limitations, we are apostles of the proclamation of the Good News to so many people and, at times, in such complicated situations.

**Is it possible to form and grow in resilience?**

On a technical level, this type of formation is not yet accessible in all parts of the Congregation. Nevertheless, many of us grow and are formed as resilient people in the same school of living and learning from lived experiences.

It is important to remain in a critical position in life with a set of values to choose from and fight for at every moment. Added to this is that one must remain in a deep position of responsibility in faith, action, and thought. The important thing is to be constant and make fundamental choices that guide our steps. We usually learn, grow, and mature very slowly, sometimes from our own experiences of falling and rising again. So many times, we repeat the same attitudes and behaviors, so we can always be creative and move forward in our reflection and ability to move forward in life.

On the other hand, it will be positive to cultivate optimism, good humor, build stories, and tales of hope. The resilient person is characterized by being a person with the capacity to solve problems for which a certain degree of effort, creativity, illusion, imagination is often needed, and to think that from every experience, situation, and relationship something can be learned and a positive lesson can be drawn. This will lead us to a greater acceptance of ourselves and others in all that is good and positive. It will help us to grow in self-esteem, in confidence to accept ourselves as we are with our values and aspects to improve. We can say that even this natural acceptance will enable us to 'laugh' at ourselves when we are wrong. Accepting others and accepting ourselves as limited people, the Perfect is only God, the thrice Holy; the rest of us are imperfect and limited. The one who thinks that he knows everything, that he has an answer to everything, that he has nothing to learn from others, and that has nothing to interchange is the most limited of all.

**5.- The companion in the resilient process**

There is no better companion than the Holy Spirit, who guides and accompanies us every day of our lives. If we allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit, in seeking and trying to live God's Will every day, He will lead us and guide us better than anyone else to reach that grace.

Sometimes I feel that we do not allow ourselves to be accompanied and guided properly. I even perceive that so many times, we consider ourselves so self-sufficient that we consciously or unconsciously think we can solve everything. And it is precisely in those moments when we most need a companion, a person who knows how to put a name to things, to guide us in the dark and to see the light at the end of the tunnel. It is enough, at certain moments, to bring out the ideas, thoughts, feelings and to try to articulate them verbally with a trusted person, a confrere, an expert who can help us. This very fact of verbalizing what we are living and experiencing helps us and allows the beginning of a solution.

Therefore, while it is very important to be humble and ask for help, mainly specialized, I also understand that we are the primary agents with our effort, intelligence, perseverance, and faith to grow and mature in a resilient way.

There is nothing better than someone who is well prepared professionally. Still, it is always very practical the experience of someone who has gone through these situations and shares and helps from his own experience. However, as in the relationship between promoter and trainer, here too, we all go through our process and journey, each at his or her level, but we must all be open and receptive to what life has to offer. Just as we can help others, others help us in many ways. In this situation of resilience, it is from one's own experience of overcoming difficulties in the spirit of wanting to grow, mature, and come out of it that we can best guide, help, and accompany others.

A work of personal self-knowledge in sincerity and truth is basic. To elaborate on a realistic Life Project, some "non-negotiable" to which the person in crisis clings and where God does not abandon him to come out stronger and more mature.

**6.- The process of resilience is the crucible of our vocation and mission.**

**St. Clement, an example of a person, a Christian, a resilient missionary**

We are Christians, Catholics, religious, missionaries, people of Faith, and Hope. I understand that the first thing when humanly we cannot, we do not know, we do not have the strength, etc.; should be the fidelity to God, despite not wanting anything, of not seeing, of not feeling the presence of God. The response to the vocation received is personal. Yes, lived in community, in church, but it is I who must respond, not others, for me. In this way, following Jesus Christ and the Gospel will be our fundamental reference.

The example of the saints, of our fathers, of the formators, of so many confreres who have struggled in life and remained faithful to the end, must be a mirror in which to look at ourselves.

In the personality of St. Clement, from a very young age, in the family home, we can find a very determined boy with clear ideas and very definite convictions, where there was no lack of difficulties, struggles, and so much patience. After a search that lasted several years, all this was strengthened by his faith in Jesus Christ and his commitment as a Redemptorist Missionary. Thus, even though many times in his life, he finds himself "scourged" by contrary winds, he remains steadfast, and little by little, he comes out on top. We could say that he is a 'proactive' person, a person who takes charge of his own life and continues to move forward despite all the 'sorrows'. He wrote to Fr. Pedro Pablo Blasucci in 1801: "Remember, most revered fathers and brothers, that we are here under the yoke of non-Catholic governments and we groan very earnestly in an oppressed Church" (Volume 4 Redemptorist Spirituality, p. 211). One sees in St. Clement a person who is optimistic, enthusiastic, full of faith, passion for Jesus Christ, and the Gospel. One could say of him today that he was a 'resilient' person capable of overcoming and remaking himself despite the many difficulties he encountered in life. He can overcome and starting over in one place and another, in one circumstance and another..., always and despite the difficulties, with great enthusiasm, faith and conviction.

That is why our personality traits, our beliefs, and our life choices are decisive when it comes to facing life's crises and difficult moments. Our faith and our freedom will always allow us to guide and overcome the various situations as we see fit.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

There is a lot of bibliography, in different languages, on this topic, both in the digital version and in written publications. It is easy to read, study, and know more about this topic and its various dimensions: spiritual, psychological, anthropological, etc.

**WAY OF WORKING**

**At the community level**

1. It is possible to have a community meeting on: How did our saints, blessed, martyrs, confreres, relatives, friends, know how to be faithful to the point of giving their lives for the Abundant Redemption despite so many adverse moments in life and mission? In other words, resilient examples, and models for us Redemptorists and personally.
2. We all know that as Redemptorists, we carry out our missionary activity in a communitarian way, mission, and fraternal life in function of the Mission. In every local community and every pastoral team, there are complicated, difficult moments. So how are we able to overcome, to grow, to mature from these intense moments?
3. In a group or community: Even if the circumstances facilitate it, community prayers, moments of sharing, etc., can also be held. We can help each other with our testimonies, examples, and testimonies of others, etc.

**On a personal level**

1. Write your personal story of Salvation and look at how you have lived through those difficult moments in your life. What have you done in the face of them? What helped you to stay faithful? All of this can be discussed with your formator, companion, or confessor.
2. Draw up a list of "non-negotiables", a shortlist that you and only you decide at the level of the spiritual dimension, the fraternal dimension, and community life, the missionary dimension, etc., that you would not like to lose, nor abandon despite the good or difficult moments that you have to go through in life.