

REDEMPTORIST FORMATION

VOLUME 4

**CONGREGATION
OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER**

JUAN MANUEL LASSO DE LA VEGA, C.Ss.R.

Superior General from 1985 to 1997

COMMUNICANDA AND DOCUMENTS

**General Secretariat for Redemptorist Formation
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Superior General de 1985 a 1997.

Communicanda y Documentos

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PRESENTATION

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Lay Missionaries and Associates,

Greetings to you as together we proclaim the Gospel ever anew and give our lives for Plentiful Redemption! Among you, I would like to greet especially the candidates, postulants, novices, temporarily professed and their Formators! It is our hope that this fourth volume from the General Secretariat for Formation will be especially useful to you, as well as for the ongoing formation of the whole Redemptorist Family.

This fourth volume on Redemptorist Formation is published as the Congregation is carefully evaluating its fidelity to the Charism and the ‘signs of the times’ today. I hope that this volume will help us discern how God is calling us to ever greater fidelity to our Missionary vocation. The present process of restructuring and renewal is not something recent or new to our Congregation. Perhaps this publication will help us to enter more deeply into the process in continuity with our tradition.

In the decade after the Second Vatican Council (1965 – 1973), the Congregation began an intense period of renewal and restructuring. This renewal centred on our Constitutions and Statutes. Fr. Tarcisio Amaral, Superior General, was instrumental in animating this work, which was at the heart of the General Chapters of 1967, 1969 and 1973.

During the Generalate of Fr. Joseph Pfab, this initial work continued during the years from 1973 – 1982, with systematic study, revision of texts, and the presentation of the new Constitutions to the Holy See for definitive approval. This process of renewal and restructuring is presented in detail and studied in the important work of Fr. Santino Raponi, *The Charism of the Redemptorists in the Church—A Commentary on the Constitutions*, which is an essential companion for Redemptorist Formation, especially in this age of restructuring and renewal.

Aware that the further reflection, writings and Communicanda from subsequent Superiors General and Councils were not widely available, the General Secretariat for Formation, decided to begin the process of publishing the most important communications in volumes especially suitable for Formators and those in Initial Formation, as well as permanent formation programs. They are now ready to present to the Congregation the Communicanda and other documents from Fr. Juan Lasso de la Vega y Miranda (Superior General from 1985 – 1997).

As Superior General, Fr. Lasso was especially concerned with animating Redemptorist Missionaries, and all members of the Redemptorist family, to live in the Spirit of the new Constitutions by renewing our *Vita Apostolica* – our Apostolic Life. His Communicanda treat Evangelization and Mission, Community and Government, Solidarity and Co-responsibility, Collaboration with Laity and Integral Growth. He also focuses our attention time and again on the ‘origins’ and ‘sources’ of our Institute – especially directing us to rediscover St. Alphonsus and our History. His particular concern for Formation is reflected in his final letter in this volume, *To Formators* (1996).

The challenging call to Evangelize and be Evangelized by the Poor (XX General Chapter, 1985) continues to resonate in each Redemptorist heart today (See especially 1986: Com. 2, Com. 4). He reminds us that *The Redemptorist Apostolic Community: Itself a Prophetic and Liberating Proclamation of the Gospel* is an essential dimension of our missionary vocation (Com. 11, 1989). Fr. Lasso's Communicanda on *Collaboration between the Redemptorist Community and the Laity* (Com. 4, 1995) is as relevant today as it was 20 years ago.

Throughout these Communicanda and other documents run some common threads which have helped us weave our common Redemptorist identity as “one Missionary Body” (Cons. 2): Youth Ministry, Lay Collaboration in partnership, solidarity with the poor, the importance of Apostolic Community, the joy of the missionary vocation.

I urge each Redemptorist Missionary and member of the Redemptorist Family to read and study these documents once again. I especially urge each Formator to incorporate the careful study of Communicanda in the program and process of formation so that every candidate, postulant, novice and temporarily professed will interiorize them at the appropriate time in their years of initial formation.

We present this volume to you with a spirit of gratitude to God for the gift of Fr. Juan Lasso de la Vega y Miranda to the Congregation at the critical period in our history when we began to appropriate the renewed Constitutions as our way of living the *Vita Apostolica*. The General Government is also grateful to the careful and painstaking work of the General Secretariat for Formation in making this volume available.

May the Redeemer continue to accompany us in the process of restructuring and renewal as we continue to proclaim the Gospel ever anew!

Your brother in the Redeemer,

Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.
Superior General
Rome, May 21, 2016

Juan Manuel Lasso de la Vega y Miranda

Biography

The “Boletín de la Provincia Española” December 1985 offers some of the following information.

Juan Manuel Lasso de la Vega was born in Madrid on July 25, 1936 when the Civil war began in Spain (1936-1939). He entered the Redemptorist Minor Seminary in El Espino in 1949, was professed in Nava del Rey on August 15, 1955. He did his studies in Philosophy and Theology at the Redemptorist Major Seminary in Valladolid where he was ordained priest on September 8th 1961. In September of 1962 he began studies in Canon Law at the University of Salamanca. While studying he continued to be involved in pastoral ministry. He received his Licentiate in Law in 1964 and immediately was named prefect of Philosophy students of the Redemptorist Province of Madrid. The Catholic Church then was fully imbued in the air of the Second Vatican Council during the Pontificates of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI.

In 1968 he was transferred to Rome to pursue studies in Moral Theology at the Academia Alfonsiana. He returned to the community at Granada, recently converted into the Studentate. In 1971 he was transferred to the new foundation at Félix Boix in Madrid where he was named Superior and Parish Priest. In 1972 he was elected Provincial Vicar.

In 1973 Fr. Lasso was designated Vocal to the XVIII Redemptorist General Chapter at which he was elected Consultor General. The XIX General Chapter of 1979 again confirmed him as Consultor General and Vicar General; Formation in the Congregation was one of his responsibilities. He is the first Spanish Redemptorist to take the reins at

the Alfonsian Academy, on being elected Superior General on November 8th 1985 at the XX General Chapter on the fourth ballot.

During the Sexennium 1985-1991, the General Consultors accompanying him as Superior General were: Michael Kratz, Kevin Dowling, Luis Hechanova, José Ulysses da Silva, Joseph Georg Robert Fenili and Giuseppe Zirilli. In 1991 the Congregation held the XXI General Chapter in Brazil; the first to be held outside of Italy. Fr. Lasso was reelected Superior General on the first ballot with 90 of the 101 votes cast. The General Consultors during that Sexennium were: George Darlix, Joseph Tobin, Noel Londoño, Luis Hechanova, Michael Kratz and Stanislaw Wróbel.

It was thought that on leaving the office of Superior General, Fr. Lasso would go into retirement; he didn't. He returned to the ministry of Initial Formation as Novice Master, and later, as Prefect of Students. He has also been engaged in visiting the sick, preaching retreats and exchanging experiences both within and outside the Congregation. He was named president for the Commission for Restructuring in the Congregation which was tasked to present proposals to the XXIV General Chapter of 2009. On this theme, he had already contributed an abundance of ideas. During the first Sexennium of the experience of the Redemptorist Conference Structure, he also collaborated as Vocal for the Province of Madrid.

Fr. Juan Manuel is well known throughout the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. He loves the Congregation and the Congregation loves him. He now lives in the community at Granada. His joyful temperament, spontaneous communication style, his interest in the confreres and his spirit of service are part of the chain of virtues and qualities he has shared with all and these qualities are reflected in his *Communicanda*.

INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICANDA FROM FR. LASSO AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

The General Secretariat for Formation is pleased to offer you this new number in the collection “REDEMPTORIST FORMATION” volume No. 4, containing the Communicanda and other documents during the generalate of Fr. Juan Manuel Lasso de la Vega y Miranda from 1985 – 1997. This volume will also be available on the website of the General Secretariat for Formation.

As we all know, the term “Communicanda” has not had a specific meaning in our tradition and therefore many different types of documents have been issued under this title.

The Secretariat has decided to compile into one volume, all the communications officially termed Communicanda, and other historical documents of interest to Redemptorist Formation of that period. Evidently, there are other official documents from this period not included in this volume.

First, there are the *Communicanda* from Superior General Fr. Juan Manuel Lasso de la Vega y Miranda and the members of his Council during the sexennium 1985-1991, a total of twelve documents, and four documents from the sexennium 1991-1997.

Following are other official documents written during the same period: the two letters of Pope Saint John Paul II on the occasion of the bicentenary of the birth of Saint Alphonsus in 1996. Also included is the Final Document of the XXI General Chapter celebrated in Itaici in 1991 since it was not included in any of the official Communicanda, and as with all final documents from our General Chapters, it has a decisive influence on the Communicanda to the Congregation during the sexennium after the General Chapter. Finally, there is the letter of Fr. General Lasso to the Formators and Formandi of the Congregation.

We hope the contents of this volume will be useful to Formators and Formandi and also to the entire Congregation.

Members of the General Secretariat for Formation

General Consultors:

Brother Jeffrey Rolle (Region of the English Speaking Caribbean)

Fr. Cecilio Alberto Eseverri Laspalas (Province of Madrid)

Executive Secretary:

Fr. Luis Alberto Roballo Lozano (Province of Bogotá)

Members of the Secretariat:

Fr. Arnaud-Guy Agbossaga (Vice Province West Africa)
Coordinator of the Conference of Redemptorists of Africa and Madagascar

Fr. Marlos Aurelio Da Silva (Province of Sao Paulo)

Fr. Sahaya Arockiasamy (Province of Bangalore)

Fr. John Fahey-Guerra (Province of Denver)

Fr. Charles Duval (Province of Sainte-Anne de Beaupré)

Fr. Jacek Zdralek (Province of Warsaw) Coordinator of the
Conference of Redemptorists of Europe

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 1

Rome, 1 December 1985
Communicanda N. 1
Gen.411/85

To all the Redemptorists, novices and postulants of the
Congregation

Dear Confreres,

My first letter will reach you for the season of the Nativity of Jesus, a time of light and of hope in the world which recalls for us the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. On those who lived in a land of shadows a light has shone" (Isaiah 9,1). My first wish is that the Paschal light of the Risen Christ would brighten your lives and your communities; may that light disperse any dark clouds that may prevent us from becoming Redeemers and Redemptorists in our world, and from preparing the way for his return. Christmas is not only the memorial of the first coming of the Lord; it is above all the joyful celebration of his presence now and the pledge of his return. Christ is born every day.

This is my Christmas good wish, and it is also my first greeting as Superior General to you and the greeting of the new General Council. In this way we express our very great thanks for the manifestations of solidarity and of spiritual support through assurances of prayers and of collaboration which you have sent to

Rome on the occasion of our election. Our hope, at the start of this sexennium of service to the Congregation, is Christ who is coming to you and is each one of you, the 6,400 Redemptorists: let us together try to build the Kingdom of Christ, a kingdom of love, of fraternity, of peace, of reconciliation and of justice.

Our cordial greetings reach out also to all who belong to the greater Redemptorist family: to our Redemptoristine sisters of the contemplative life, who by their life put the breath and the strength of the Spirit into our apostolic life, to all those religious who are linked in different ways to our Institute, to our relatives, oblates and friends spread throughout the world, and to all those lay people who carry out their apostolic mission in the Church in association with us. It is our wish and prayer that the light which is dawning would cause you to become a light to this world which is still in the grip of darkness.

I. The General Chapter

One of the aims of the Congregation and of the Chapter itself was that our Chapter of this year should be eminently pastoral; pastoral in the interest of the apostolic life of the Congregation, and, obviously, pastoral in the interest of the world to which we are sent as Redemptorists.

In the Chapter we learnt better how to listen to one another, to dialogue calmly about the state of our Institute throughout the world, to become sensitive to the problems of the Church and of society so as to be able to give a redemptoristic response to them, and to make joint decisions. And we learnt as well how to pray together better. For we Redemptorists from the five continents united together in the one outpouring of prayer which involved us in receiving into our lives the life and the word of Jesus. It was indeed a Pastoral Chapter.

Your own Capitulars will have told you how we lived and performed during those 5 weeks. The General Council will do that also later on. I want to emphasize here only a few points which I consider important:

a. The pastoral theme for this sexennium:

The formulation of this theme approved by the Chapter was: *“The General Chapter wants to continue the theme of the pastoral priorities decided on by the Chapter of 1979. Now we want to put the emphasis on the explicit, prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Gospel to the poor, allowing ourselves to be called by the poor (evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari) in line with the charism of our Congregation expressed in Constitutions 1,3,4,5 and in Statutes 09 and 021”*.

I am inviting you to commence now, from this moment, to reflect on this apostolic programme for the Congregation, in your community meetings, Chapters and (Vice)Provincial Assemblies. The implications of this programme for our apostolate, community life and the formation of our young members, will come to you in the final document of the Chapter which -by decision of the General Chapter itself- has to be reorganized as regards its form by the General Council. This pastoral programme should, from now on, be very much present in your prayers; the Spirit of Christ will give us the strength to be always faithful to our charism and to be enterprising and creative in our apostolic life. The poor, their distress and their problems have a claim to be more present in our life. With them we want the Redemption of Christ to be plentiful and abundant for all those who follow Him, for all those who in a secularized world no longer follow Him and for all those who are looking to Him for integrated development and for liberation from sin and from all the consequences of the sin of the human race.

b. Spirit of fraternity

There was, in the replies to the questionnaire in preparation for the Chapter, an insistent call for a Chapter that would be a time of fraternity, brotherhood and of community prayer. This would impel us to live our vocation together with greater faith, with more joy and with more love for our community. In the name of all the Capitulars I can tell you that we attained that goal. In spite of the differences of language, culture, traditions etc., the Chapter, from the first day on, was always improving the climate of mutual acceptance, of reciprocal interest in, and welcome for, one another, and of the genuine fraternal spirit. This is always a manifestation of the presence of Christ among us.

This fact confirmed us more in what our Constitution n. 22 asks of us: *“The whole purpose of community life is to have members, like the Apostles, in a spirit of genuine brotherly union, combine their prayers and deliberations, their labours and sufferings, their successes and failures, and their material goods as well, for the service of the gospel”*.

May our General Chapter and the Nativity of 1985 help you all to improve resolutely your fraternal unity, in terms of friendship, of dialogue and of perseverance in that prayer which makes our communities to be a witness to the world of the living presence of the Risen Christ.

2. The new Council

On the morning of 13 November the elections ended with the formation of the new General Council. Later we shall send you a fuller presentation of each one of us. Now I am sending you just their names and a few of their activities:

Fr. Michael Kratz, Consultor and Vicar General. Born on 4 April 1936 in Cologne (Germany). Since 1978 he has been Provincial Superior of our Province of Cologne.

Fr. Giuseppe Zirilli, Consultor General. Born on 18 June 1924 in Milazzo (Messina). He was Provincial of our Province of Rome for 11 years.

Fr. Robert Fenili, Consultor General. Born on 26 November 1936 in Denver (USA). Until 1985 he was Rector and President of our Philosophy Centre (Holy Redeemer College), in Waterford (Province of St. Louis).

Fr. Luis G. Hechanova, Consultor General. Born on 24 January 1940 in Iloilo City (Philippines). He has been Vice-Provincial of Cebu from 1978 to the present.

Fr. José Ulysses da Silva, Consultor General. Born on 11 November 1943 in Cachoeira Paulista (Brazil). In 1984 he completed 5 years as Provincial of São Paulo: since then he has been a missionary.

Fr. Kevin Dowling, Consultor General. Born on 14 February 1944 in Pretoria (South Africa). He has been Viceprovincial of Pretoria since 1975.

On 10 January next the General Council will begin some days of study and planning for the sexennium. In an earlier meeting held during the Chapter there was evidence of our total availability for the service of the Congregation in the new responsibilities entrusted to us by the confreres. To be able to give this service efficiently we need some more collaborators; these we shall request of some Provinces, relying on their understanding and their collaboration.

3. The outgoing Council

On the 8 November, to the loud and emotional applause of the Chapter, Very Rev. Fr. Joseph G. Pfab ended his service to the Congregation as Superior General for the past 12 years and as Consultor and Procurator General during the preceding 6 years. For his life, for his competence and dedication, for his work which knew no rest, for the hope for the future of our Institute which he left us as a heritage, for his unceasing prayer, - for all of these all Redemptorists throughout the world bless the Lord who sent him to us. To him we say simply, but very sincerely: Thank you, Father.

In the days that followed, Fathers John Ruef, Frank da Costa, Ignaz Dekkers, James McGrath and Gaspar de Almeida ended their service also as General Consultors. Fr. da Costa after 18 years as Consultor, 16 of which were spent as General Bursar also; Fr. Ruef after 12 years as Consultor and General Procurator; Father Dekkers after 6 years as Vicar General and 6 more as Consultor; Frs. James McGrath and Gaspar de Almeida after 6 years as Consultors.

Their countenances and their spirit of service are well known throughout the Congregation through their pastoral visits. Each one of them also directed various Secretariates and Commissions which helped greatly to give permanent animation at the General level. To them also “Thanks” and may their lives continue to give enrichment to all; their service to the Congregation has not ended, it has only changed. May it be as effective and generous as heretofore.

4. Bicentenary of the death of St. Alphonsus

The year 1987 will be an important year for all Redemptorists and for the Church; it is the anniversary of the death of our Founder and a new stimulus to our fidelity to him, to the Church and to

the world. This celebration will require of us an extraordinary preparation at General level, Regional level and in every one of our (Vice-)Provinces and Regions.

The General Council would like to know of the steps you take and will offer you, at the proper time, information about the organization of the bicentennial from Rome. Straightaway I ask St. Alphonsus to help us, during that year and always, to put into practice the ideals which he entrusted to the Congregation, and I pray that the celebration of the bicentenary of his death might be the best apostolic service that the Redemptorists could do for the people of our time.

I would like to end this my first letter to the Congregation with the text of our Constitution n. 20: “Strong in faith, rejoicing in hope, burning with charity, on fire with zeal, humble of heart and persevering in prayer, Redemptorists as apostolic men and genuine disciples of St. Alphonsus, follow Christ the Redeemer with hearts full of joy; denying themselves and always ready to undertake what is demanding and challenging, they share in the mystery of Christ and proclaim it in Gospel simplicity of life and language, that they may bring to people plentiful Redemption in Christ”.

To bring to people the plentiful Redemption of Christ requires of us, among other dispositions, a joyful hope, constant prayer and a readiness for all that is arduous; in this way we will be able to participate in, and proclaim with dignity the mystery of Christ. We expect of all of you these dispositions which, by means of your Religious Profession, you have consecrated to Christ the Redeemer.

And we expect them, with special emphasis, from our young professed, our students, novices, postulants, and from our juvenile groups who are looking for their apostolic identity in the Church.

From the rest of you we look for a great love, extending to risk, to creativity and to radical action, in your following of Christ and in your service of men.

Christmas urges us to think, principally, of those who have nothing and nobody in their life, and to share with them the joy of the Birth of Jesus. May the Mother of Jesus, Mother of Perpetual Help, aid us in our great task of being Redemptorists.

Once more, may I send each one of you, your families and your friends, my best Christmas wishes:

Your devoted confrere in JMJA,

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 2

Rome, 25 January 1986
Communicanda N. 2
Gen.21/86

To all the Redemptorist Confreres

**THE FINAL DOCUMENT
OF THE XX GENERAL CHAPTER**

Dear Confreres,

After Christmas the General Council began its work of planning for the next sexennium.

The General Chapter entrusted to us the task of definitively sub-editing the FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE XX GENERAL CHAPTER while safeguarding the substance of the document as approved by the Chapter itself.

That has been our first work and we now present it to you in the name of the General Chapter.

In this definitive sub-editing we have followed these criteria:

1. We have included in the document the text of Postulations accepted by the Chapter; the text of these was indicated by their number only and not by citing the entire text in the final vote of approval of the document.

2. We have suppressed some repetitions.

3. We decided to divide the practical INSTRUCTIONS in two INSTRUCTIONS having direct reference to the major theme, chosen by the Chapter, and GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS. This was to ensure that the theme proposed by the Chapter would not be put in the shade by other resolutions, which, important though they are for the life of the Congregation, are not directly concerned with the major theme.

4. We decided to add an Appendix containing other decisions taken by the Chapter, but not included in the final document. The confreres are thereby kept informed of matters affecting the life of the Congregation.

5. The General Council furthermore asks all the Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Regions to begin a process of reflection on, and, application of, the major theme of the sexennium. It asks that they reflect on and eventually apply the general Instructions also.

6. On the basis of decisions made by the General Chapter, the General Council must promote throughout the whole Congregation a theological study in depth of the major theme. It is our intention to offer you subsequently, a deeper reflection on it; these reflections and practical ways of applying the theme will reach you later. In the meantime we are glad that you have this final document on hand to interest you and stimulate you to reflection on it at different levels.

This process of reflection and participation on the part of the confreres should enable them to arrive at practical and effective decisions which would bring into their life and apostolate the ideal the Congregation has set itself for the next six years.

In the name of the General Council I send you all best wishes and pray that Christ the Redeemer and Saint Alphonsus may be your guide in this exercise of apostolic fidelity and creativity.

Yours fraternally in J.M.J.A.

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE XXth GENERAL CHAPTER

1. As Redemptorists we have a common history of 250 years. Exactly two centuries ago after the General Chapter of Scifelli and the sending of St. Clement M. Hofbauer north of the Alps, we have celebrated our XXth General Chapter in Rome.

I. INTRODUCTION

2. The General Chapter is obliged to take care of the apostolic life of the Institute and to propose to the Congregation the guidelines needed to enable it to renew itself in ever increasing fidelity.

That is why the XIXth General Chapter of 1979 took the following decision: all the (Vice)Provinces should choose their pastoral priorities. Arising out of this the major theme for the sexennium 1979-1985 was: **The explicit proclamation of the Gospel.**

At the end of this past sexennium we made an evaluation. We were unanimous that the experience had been a good one. The choice of pastoral priorities and the insistence on the major theme promoted missionary dynamism and helped the confreres find, once more, in a better way, their identity as Redemptorists. This process of renewal developed in the Congregation the sense of its being a living unit in a decentralized structure.

That is why we want to continue this method and why we are taking the following decision:

II. THE MAJOR THEME

3. The General Chapter of 1985 wants to continue the theme of the pastoral priorities decided on by the Chapter of 1979. Now we want to put the emphasis on the explicit, prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Gospel to the poor, allowing ourselves to be called by the poor (***Evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari***), in accordance with the charism of our Congregation expressed in Constitutions 1,3,4,5 and in Statutes 09 and 021.

4. This, the theme chosen, requires some explanations and contains a number of implications.

The new theme is meant to prolong and continue the one from the preceding sexennium. If the Chapter of 1979 put the emphasis on the proclamation, especially the explicit proclamation, of the Gospel (EVANGELIZARE), this time we put the emphasis on our altogether special attention to the poor (PAUPERIBUS).

5. We consider the following to be key words of this theme

1. Explicit, prophetic and liberating evangelization: In this way the theme of the preceding sexennium is particularised and deepened.

2. The poor who are to be evangelized

The poor are not abstract ideas and theories, but individual persons with human faces. Our Constitutions state some criteria for identifying those privileged to have evangelization according to the charism of our Congregation directed to them (Const.3,4,5): they are, first, the most abandoned spiritually, and among these especially the poor, the people who are deprived of their fundamental rights and who live in material misery.

3. The dimension of the words: To be called by the poor

The poor challenge us to make ourselves poor and free for the Kingdom of God. Our option for the poor unceasingly calls us to a community conversion.

III. INSTRUCTIONS

A. Instructions concerning the Major Theme

6. Our option for the most abandoned, especially the poor, necessarily has implications for our apostolic activities, community life, formation and government.

7. In the context of the new major theme the Chapter singles out the following points which at present seem to us of capital importance: knowledge of the people of our time, the inculturation of the Gospel, Justice and Peace, our collaboration with the laity, the pastoral care of the young, ecumenism and dialogue with other religions.

8. The Chapter asks the General Governemnt to promote the theme of the sexennium 1985-1991 in the whole Congregation, by requiring that every Province, Vice-province and Region carry out a process of reflection and of implementation, and by promoting the theological study in depth of the said theme.

9. The Chapter invites all the (Vice)Provinces to ask themselves the following questions and to draw conclusions from them:

Where, right now, in our territories are the most abandoned about whom our Constitutions speak ?

Taking our major theme as a basis, to what situations of poverty and of oppression do we want to direct our particular attention ?

What are we doing to enable the laity to participate in the apostolate ?

Are we sufficiently in favour of basic Ecclesial communities or other similar groups which serve to promote the laity?

In our (Vice)Province is pastoral care of the young and with the young a strong point in our missionary programme ?

Does our style of life indicate our solidarity with the poor to whom we preach the Gospel?

10. The confreres should apply this theme of the Chapter in the heart of their own community, first, by the acceptance of the other confreres with their temperament, their faults, their poverties and their qualities.

11. A **style of life** in keeping with our common commitment to the poor is asked of all the confreres.

12. Our community life should be nourished by the **Word of God** and by **personal and community prayer** in a way that fits in with the situation of our people.

13. Very particularly the Chapter asks **that the formation of the students be connected with the pastoral priorities** of the respective Provinces, Vice-provinces and Regions, both with reference to the study of the theological and human sciences and with reference to the pastoral activities the students undertake. Besides, the Chapter asks those in charge to organize a style of life

and **a formation for our students which take account of our option for the poor** and which do not isolate them from the life and the problems of the poor.

14. The Chapter urges the whole Congregation to show more clearly and more courageously our **fraternal solidarity** with those who may be suffering the consequences of the evangelical logic that impels them to stand up against the injustices consequent on the abuses of power, for the defence of the poorest and the most oppressed, and in defence of the faith and of loyalty to the Church. For us, this holds for those who are involved in a manner that has the approval of their Province or Vice-province.

15. The Chapter asks that the General Commission “Justice and Peace” be strengthened:

y by providing it with an Executive Secretary who will act even in the absence from Rome of the General Council member in charge of this Commission.

y by including other confreres from different regions either as members or as consultants of the Commission.

16. The Chapter further asks that this Commission be more active and that it urge each Region to have a Commission “Justice and Peace”. These Commissions should be in communication with the corresponding Commissions of the Church, and the studies and the documentation of each Regional Commission could be made available to the entire Region by means of the General Commission.

17. The Chapter asks the General Government to see to it that Meetings be held in the 5 Regions of our Congregation before the end of 1988. In these Regional Meetings each (Vice)Province will give a report on:

- y the implementation of the missionary priorities,
- y the quality of our response to urgent pastoral needs,
- y the areas where there is collaboration and mutual effort between the (Vice)Provinces.

B. General Instructions

Apostolate and community life

18. The General Government should, by its actions, visits and letters encourage whatever could help integrate the apostolic activities of the community life into a single reality which our Constitutions call the apostolic life.

19. The Chapter gives a mandate to the General Secretariate of Pastoral Ministry to find means of facilitating a pooling of our missionary experiences.

20. The Chapter invites all the confreres to pay particular attention to whatever could promote a renewal of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

21. The Commission for the Brothers which was already in existence is to be reconstituted in accordance with the following norms:

1. Scope

a. To promote a better understanding of the role and the identity of the Brother in the Congregation.

b. To disseminate throughout the Congregation information on successful models of the Brother's life now being lived, in the apostolate, community life, witness, spirituality, vocation recruitment, formation - initial and continuing etc.

c. To encourage and develop studies on the Brother's vocation under different aspects: theological, sociological, spiritual, pastoral etc.

d. To help the Provinces and Viceprovinces which ask for it to develop and to implement their programmes for the Brothers.

2. Composition

There will be Brothers also on this Commission.

Formation

22. In order that our mission in the Church might be effective and continuous in the name of the Lord who sends us, we need **to review the elements of; and the methods of, our apostolate for the young and of our apostolate for vocations.** *“The vitality with which the Congregation pursues its apostolic mission depends on the number and the quality of its vocations”* (Const.79).

We must also examine the content and the thrust of our **continuing formation**. Because formation is fundamental for our Congregation. Without it there can be no truly pastoral ministry in the modern world.

23. Accordingly the Chapter asks that in the course of the next sexennium special stress should be placed on **the apostolate for the young and on the apostolate for vocations**, both at the level of General Government and at the level of the individual (Vice) Provinces, Regions and communities:

24.1. There should be a greater outlay of effort in the apostolate of the young, especially in our parishes (through apostolic groups of young people), and on missions.

25.2. The (Vice)Provincial Chapters should work out a practical plan for the guidance of those in charge of vocations and for the individual communities.

26.3. In the (Vice)Provinces there should be some communities which are open to and welcoming towards young men who are in search of their vocation and who could have an experience of our life.

27.4. Those in charge of vocations should have specialized training in the apostolate of the young.

First Formation

28. The Chapter asks that in every period of formation (pre-novitiate, novitiate, philosophy and theology) there be **a progressive and coherent study in depth of the history, the charism and the spirituality of the Congregation**. For this it is necessary:

1. To prepare confreres in the individual (Vice)Provinces who can be resource people for this Redemptorist dimension of formation.

To develop the work of the Historical Institute and of the Commission “de Spiritu C.Ss.R.”, by having a sufficient number

of confreres for research, for readying material for the purposes of teaching, and for continuing the development of courses on Alphonsianism and on our Constitutions.

29. The scientific formation of the students is of the greatest importance. Where this formation is provided outside our own Seminaries or Studendates, the (Vice)Provincial governments should see to it that the formation corresponds to the needs of our apostolate. This concern can be exercised in various practical ways:

- y by sharing in the direction of the theological Faculty;
- y by teaching in that faculty;
- y by supplying, by means of supplementary courses, for whatever is not taught, or taught only insufficiently;
- y as a last resort: by withdrawing our Students.

30. The General Secretariate of Formation should, after consulting the Secretariates of Formation of the (Vice)Provinces, address the question of holding supplementary courses on matters relating to the Redemptorist charism (e.g. on questions of dogmatic and moral theology, such as aspects of Mariology, pastoral aspects of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the homily, Canon Law for Religious etc.). Where possible and helpful, the General Secretariate should be available to assist the (Vice)Provinces in carrying out a curriculum of this type and in obtaining truly qualified experts. Where we no longer have our own seminaries, a course of this nature should be organized in the manner of a tertianship or apprenticeship.

31. The Chapter asks that those in charge of formation should have, in addition to an adequate experience of the missionary activity of the Congregation, an ongoing global formation in the sciences of education, of theology, of the religious life and of the Redemptorist dimension. And they are asked to take part in the courses on our Constitutions and Statutes, our Spirituality and our history.

32. During the coming sexennium the General Government should give special attention to permanent formation for community life, by setting up regional courses on Redemptorist spirituality, on the Constitutions and on pastoral activity arising out of the theme of the Chapter.

33. During the coming sexennium courses on the Constitutions and Statutes should be promoted by the General Council and by (Vice)Provincial Councils, in Rome, or in different Regions of the C.Ss.R., or in the individual (Vice)Provinces.

34. The General Government, acting through the General Secretariate of Formation, should coordinate the work of a team of Redemptorist experts who would offer courses of 3-4 weeks on the pastoral ministry and on spirituality to the (Vice)Provinces in accordance with their needs.

35. The General Government should invite the Institutes of History and of Spirituality to prepare courses and material as a help to formation personnel should they need to give the supplementary courses referred to above.

36. The Congregation undertakes to support and promote the Alphonsian Academy (Stat. 023), in keeping with the recommendations of the Capitular Commission.

An international Board of Trustees for the Alphonsian Academy will be established (cf. Decree n. 1)

All other proposals of groups and of individuals will be channelled directly to the Board of Trustees of the Alphonsian Academy and to the General Government.

The Chapter recommends to the Alphonsian Academy:

- y to intensify its presence in the Regions and the Provinces by means of short courses and other extension activities of the Academy.
- y to have exchanges with other similar Centres of the Congregation.

Government

37. The Chapter asks that the General Government facilitate the holding of Regional Meetings of (Vice)Provincial and Regional Superiors at set times. At these there should be a presence of the General Government - if possible of the Superior General.

38. It also asks the General Government to encourage the formation of superiors in the (Vice)Provinces, such as by means of meetings and work-shops.

39. The Chapter asks the General Government to set up an Office of Communications for both printed and audiovisual means of communication. The person in charge should not be a member of the General Council, but a Council member should be appointed to act in liaison. Confreres from different Regions who are experts in this field could be consultants.

40. The General Government should form a Commission to work on all the Postulations which have reference to the Directory of Chapters and the Directory of Superiors, to collect the experiences people have had of these documents so far, including the experience of the Chapter, and to prepare a revised D.C. and a revised D.S. for presentation to the next General Chapter.

41. Each (Vice)Province is asked to set up a **Central Fund**. This sum should **be administered** by the (Vice)Provincial Bursar, under the supervision of the Ordinary Council and of the Secretariate for Finance.

The (Vice)Provincial Chapter should decide how this fund is to be set up, due regard being had for the rights of each local community.

42. **The General Chapter.** The preparatory Commission for the General Chapter should get experts or facilitators to help in the preparation for, and the carrying through of, the Chapter. This would benefit the functioning of the Moderators of the Chapter. The General Chapter should be celebrated, if possible, outside of Rome.

43. **Use of the living languages.** In all communications of the General Government the living languages (English, French, Spanish etc.) should be used.

44. **The Cause of P. Donders.** The General Government should use all the necessary means in its power to initiate and/or promote the process of Bl. Bonders' canonization (bearing in mind that 1987 is the 100th anniversary of his death).

APPENDIX

(This Appendix contains other decisions taken by the XXth General Chapter not included in the Final Document)

1. Postulations accepted by the General Chapter and not included in the Final Document:

A. Situation of the Congregation in Africa:

- y The (Vice)Provinces wish to be considered as a single region by itself from a pastoral point of view (but not juridically).
- y The (Vice)Provinces want a greater presence of the Congregation in Africa, preferably in the Viceprovinces already founded.
- y The (Vice)Provinces ask for greater economic solidarity within the Congregation for the benefit of Africa.

B. Redemptorist dimension in Formation:

We ask that the General Government seek out ways of ensuring that the undergraduate studies of our Students be programmed in a Redemptorist setting.

C. The competence of the General Consultors in what has to do with the Alphonsian Academy:

Where the Statutes of the Alphonsian Academy speak of the Superior General, this is to be understood as meaning the Superior General “with the General Council”: this is to be determined by the Institute’s own law as meaning either that the council be consulted or that it give its consent according to the case. Also the term Moderator General should be understood as the Superior General in the sense meant in C.Ss.R. legislation, that is with the General Council, which must either be consulted, or give its consent according to the case.

D. Representation of the Viceprovinces in the General Chapter:

In the Directory of Chapters the phrase “*which has at least 20 professed members*” in n. 64 b. is now suppressed.

E. Representation of the Brothers in the General Chapter:

It was proposed that the Brothers may have up to 5 representatives at the General Chapter, and that the General Government study the possibility of having a Brother from each of the precapitular Regional Meetings at the Chapter.

F. Postulations regarding the Historical Institute, the Archives, the Alphonsian places, the Museum of the Congregation:

That the General Council handle them.

2. Propositions approved by the General Chapter dealing with the General Secretariate for Economic matters:

Proposition 1. “The composition and duties of the Finance Secretariate should be clarified and perhaps extended to be of more assistance to the General Econome and General Council. We suggest that it meet at least twice a year. One of its duties should be to give advice on the budget”.

Proposition 2. “More importance needs to be placed on the role of an auditor who makes a detailed inspection of the books and produces a written report. These reports should be part of the documentation made available to the Chapter”.

Proposition 3. “a clearer policy is needed regarding requests for financial assistance between Provinces, (Vice)Provinces, and Missions. Aware of the complexity of this problem and the differing approaches of many units of the Congregation, we suggest that the General Government, with the Finance Secretariate, set up guidelines to be followed, preserving the legitimate independence of those requesting and those giving. Provinces and Viceprovinces should be consulted on this process of setting up the guidelines.

Proposition 4. “There should be an assistant General Econome who has full knowledge of the workings of the General Econome’s office, even if this assistant be not assigned full time to this work, nor be residing in Rome. He should have status recognized by the General Council enabling him to act as substitute General Econome in case of emergency”.

Proposition 5. “The General Council should make available to those Units of the Congregation which so request, an annual report of the finances of the General Government, at least in summary form, showing the main categories of income and expense, the financial status, and a report on the activity and status of the Solidarity Funds”.

Proposition 6. “The system of ordinary contributions from the Provinces to the General Government should be revised. At present we do not know the basis for the contributions asked. We understand that beginnings have been made and we encourage the General Government to continue this study and come up with a more just and equitable system. This will be facilitated by the greater openness shown in suggestion 5 above”.

Finally, **the Constitutions and Statutes** have been approved, with some changes, in keeping with Communicanda 80. You will get another communication on this point when the Constitutions will have been approved by the Holy See.

The Directory of Chapters and the Directory of Superiors have been approved for this sexennium.

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 3

Rome, March 30, 1986
Communicanda N. 3
Gen. 120/86

To: Provincial Superiors, Vice-Provincial Superiors, and Regional Superiors

**CONVOCATION OF PROVINCIAL
VICE-PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL
SUPERIORS ON THE OCCASION OF
THE BICENTENARY
OF THE DEATH OF ST. ALPHONSUS - 1987**

Dear Confreres,

On this Sunday of the Resurrection, the General Council sends you Easter greetings. Easter is the feast of the Redemption and of the triumph of love. When we Redemptorists celebrate Easter we are celebrating our own Redemptorist vocation; our mission to ensure more and more effectively that the abundant Redemption of Christ might reach all and especially the poor. On this day, we rejoice in our missionary vocation and we exchange the wish and prayer that the light of the Resurrection would show us the way to live and to exercise our apostolate.

By this letter, I, in the name of the General Council, convoked a meeting of all the Provincial, Vice-Provincial and Regional Superiors for the occasion of the Bicentenary of the Death of St. Alphonsus. The General Council, in its desire that the celebration of the Bicentenary of our founder would be particularly pastoral in character, wants this pastorally oriented meeting of the Major and Regional Superiors to be one of the most important events of our celebrations.

I. Objectives

a. To celebrate the Bicentenary.

b. To comply with the wish of the last General Chapter which asked the General Government to hold meetings of (Vice)Provincial Superiors at, regular intervals (cf. Final Document, n. 37).

c. To make use of this meeting to promote the permanent, formation of Superiors (cf. Final Document, n. 38), especially now that we are at the beginning of a new triennium (1987-1990).

2. Programme

The General Council will prepare a definitive agenda through the offices of the General Secretariat of Formation. At the moment, we propose these themes:

a. Redemptorist Spirituality: there will be a few days of reflection and prayer guided by the Commission on Redemptorist Spirituality.

b. Leadership: the leadership of Superiors during the coming triennium (leadership in general, in relation to the theme of the sexennium, etc.)

c. Unity in the Congregation: collaboration between Provinces, mutual cooperation between the General Council and the (Vice) Provinces and Regions.

3. Organization

a. There will be two meetings:

- the first from August 31 to September 12, 1987) will be for English and German speaking units.

- the second from November 1 to November 13, 1987 will be for Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese speaking units.

- in an appendix you will find the list of units for each meeting.

b. Both meetings will be held at Colle di Sant'Alfonso (Naples), the studenstate of the Naples Province.

c. A visit to places connected with St. Alphonsus will form part of the programme, and will be of a prayerful and reflective character.

4. Supervision

Fr. Kevin Dowling, General Consultor and President of the General Secretariate of Formation, will be in charge of both meetings. Any suggestions you might have about particulars of organization or about the content of the agenda should be sent to him. We ask you to hold the elections of (Vice-)Provincial and Regional Superiors: as far as possible, before these meetings.

Your suggestions should reach Rome before October 1, 1986.

We invite you, dear confreres, to cooperate with the General Council so as to insure that our meetings of the coming year and the general celebration of the Bicentenary of St. Alphonsus may help the Congregation grow in its fidelity to the charism it has received from the Church.

In the name of the General Council, I send you and all the confreres of your (Vice-) Provinces and Regions my best wishes.

Yours fraternally in the Redeemer,

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 4

Rome, March 30, 1986
Communicanda N. 4
Gen. 121/86

**EVANGELIZARE PAUPERIBUS
ET A PAUPERIBUS EVANGELIZARI**

**Reflections on the Major Theme
by the General Government**

To the Redemptorist Fathers, Brothers, Students and Novices

Dear Confreres,

During the last several weeks the General Government began a process of reflection on the Major Theme of the 1985 General Chapter. Even though our thoughts are still imperfect, we would like to present these to all of you and to invite you to share in this process of reflection.

1. THE WORD OF GOD

We began our process by reflecting on the text in St. Luke's Gospel which is cited in Constitution 1:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people"(Lk 4, 18-19).

Redemptorists should follow the example of Jesus. That is why it is important to pay attention to the preaching of Jesus about the poor.

Another important text for us was Luke's account of the beatitudes:

"Jesus looked at his disciples and said:

Happy are you poor, the Kingdom of God is yours.

Happy are you who are hungry now; you will be filled.

Happy are you who weep now; you will laugh.

Happy are you when people hate you, reject you, insult you, and say that you are evil, all because of the Son of Man. Be glad when that happens and dance for joy, because a great reward is kept for you in heaven. For their ancestors did the very same things to the prophets.

But how terrible for you who are rich now; you have had your easy life.

How terrible for you who are full now; you will go hungry.

How terrible for you who laugh now; you will mourn and weep.

How terrible when all men speak well of you; their ancestors said the very same things about the false prophets.”(Lk 6, 20-26)

We would not like to comment on these texts, but we invite you to pray and meditate on them and on other similar texts of the Gospel.

2. THE BACKGROUND TO THE CHOICE OF THE THEME

2.1 The giving of a new form to the Constitutions and Statutes 1963-1979

During Vatican II and the years following it, much energy was spent by the Congregation in the composition of the new Constitutions and Statutes. This meant that the Confreres were very much taken up with particular problems and structures. For this reason, perhaps, not enough thought was given to determining the people to whom our apostolate should be directed. In any case the General Chapters grappled less with the task of defining the people to whom our preaching should be directed than with explicit evangelization (Const. 7-10) and with the community dimension of our life and work (Const. 21-22).

This was given expression in the catch-all inventory of: “The People to be Evangelized” in Statutes 09-015, and in a certain manner also in the very wide inventory of: “Forms of missionary work” in Statutes 016-024.

2.2 The determining of pastoral priorities and drawing up of (V)Provincial Statutes in the (V)Provinces 1979-1985.

After the Constitutions and Statutes were dealt with by the General Chapter of 1979, the Provinces were obliged to come to terms with their own structures and organization in order to draw up the Provincial Statutes. At the same time they were obliged to produce their program of pastoral priorities which the General Chapter mandated. Both of these operations called for intensive self-examination in the Provinces. To that extent these deliberations in the Provinces were a continuation of the preceding General Chapter.

The planning of priorities brought with it a new factor: namely, the discussion of those to whom our apostolate should be directed and of the forms of our evangelization that could not be carried on in the wide-open and uncompromising manner in which they received expression in the said General Statutes. In the Provinces it became necessary to arrive at decisions for or against particular forms of pastoral practice.

It would be interesting to know now what basic reasons played a decisive role in the determining of priorities. It could be asked whether in some cases the capabilities of the available personnel, the traditions and experiences of the (V)Province, the existing activities, the location of houses, the requirements of the confreres and the special interests of the local Church counted for so much that the discussion about the people to whom our apostolate should be directed was only touched on in passing.

2.3 Involvement with the poor in practice

In some parts of the Congregation a direct and practical Involvement of the confreres in situations of physical poverty, of oppression, of injustice and of exploitation is taking place. For these confreres the question of those for whom they should work appears to be answered unequivocally, and the forms their evangelization ought to take are determined for them by this. These men are increasingly asking questions of the other parts of the Congregation: how are you adhering to the “Evangelizare Pauperibus”? This question was taken up expressly by the General Chapter of 1985.

2.4 Conclusions

When all these things are taken together it becomes clear that with the introduction of the Major Theme for 1985-1991 we have begun to focus more precisely on a fundamental matter which has been somewhat neglected in the reflection of our Congregation. A community which has set itself the goal of evangelizing the poor cannot for long avoid the question: Who then are meant by these poor? Therefore, our involvement with the Major Theme will lead us into a fundamental debate about our understanding of ourselves.

3. POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES AND FEARS RELATING TO THE THEME

3.1 The life of our Congregation is not so much justified by the observance of rules, as by our missionary dynamism which leads us to a continuous and creative search for the redemption of human “beings. The Theme of the Chapter should promote this dynamism.

But sometimes this dynamism is hindered or even blocked by our fear of change; this could also happen to the Theme of the Chapter.

It could be said that there is a natural tendency in the great and older religious institutes towards order and stability, which offers a certain physical, psychological and spiritual security to the members. It is understandable that there could be a fear of all this being destroyed through change. Consequently there is a danger that we could consider ourselves as converted and saved and so escape the necessity of conversion and change.

3.2 Another difficulty in the continuing process of renewal could be our pastoral activism. Indeed, too much work can prevent us feeling any need for reflection and prayer about what we are really involved in and what is asked of us by the Congregation today. Perhaps there is a fear of facing the fundamental questions concerning the validity of what we are doing.

3.3 It could be further argued that the Theme does not touch our (V)Province because a lack of vocations prevents us having any hope in our future. But a reflection on the Theme could perhaps be a moment of grace for us, a time to renew our belief in a future given by the lord.

3.4 Because the Theme focuses on the poor and on poverty, some obstacles could arise relating to our personal and community life-style. These obstacles are rather dangerous because in general they remain hidden, and are not faced. A particular reflection especially on this point could lead us to personal and community conversion.

4. OUR REFLECTION ON THE THEME AS A PROCESS OF CONTINUING PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY CONVERSION

4.1 Any reflection upon a theme which is central to our life and work will lead us to the realization that we are reflecting upon our understanding of ourselves as a Congregation, and indeed our personal and community awareness of the meaning of our call today. It is not always easy to accept the consequences and implications of such a profound and challenging reflection. At times we may be acutely aware of all the obstacles in the way of implementing what we feel called to live out. We may also be fearful as to where such reflection will lead us.

4.2 However, while not underestimating the difficulties, we need also in the midst of such reflection to listen to the call of God or, to use a phrase of St. Alphonsus, to obey the will of God. The Spirit will be present in our midst, and will accompany us when we strive to be singleminded in our search for what we believe God is asking of our Congregation today. This invitation of God is simply that we be open to the challenge of personal and community conversion contained in our Theme.

4.3 Our Constitutions continually call us to a conversion of attitudes, way of life, and response in our apostolic ministry:

y if our apostolates are to be distinguished more by their “missionary dynamism than by any particular forms of activity”, we will need to constantly confront the quality and sensitivity of our service and ministry among the poor and neglected of God’s people (Const. 14).

y a continual conversion of heart, especially in relation to the question of poverty, will be required of us if we are to be truly “free and unimpeded” in the options we make concerning the people among whom we will work, and the ways of fulfilling our mission (Const. 15);

y conversion is not only something personal, but is something the community itself must aim at as it strives for “constant interior renewal” in order to be more faithful to its apostolic calling (Const. 40; 41.1).

4.4 The conversion of heart to which we are called by our Constitutions is surely essential if we wish to approach the Theme of the Chapter with the mind of Christ. Only then can we be more sensitive to the issues we need to face; the positive and negative forces present in our different situations; and the inspiration of the Spirit as we try to translate the Theme of the Chapter into the concrete reality of our life and apostolic ministry.

5. THE POOR IN THE REDEMPTORIST TRADITION

5.1 Alphonsus de Liguori wrote to Pope Benedict XIV:

“Inasmuch as the priest Alphonsus de Liguori, as a member of the Congregation of the Apostolic Missions established in the Cathedral at Naples, spent many years on the holy missions and observed the abandoned state of the poor people, especially in country districts, in the vast territories of the kingdom, he, in 1732, organized the aforesaid priests, his companions, into a group under the direction of the now deceased Mons. Falcoia, Bishop of Castellamare. Their purpose was to help the poor rural people who were the most deprived of spiritual

care by means of missions, Instructions and other exercises. Often these poor country people are without a priest to administer the sacraments and preach the word of God to them, so much so that through lack of priests many of them die without knowing even the truths necessary for the Faith; for there are only few priests who dedicate themselves to the task of taking care of these country people.”(Supplex Libellus of 30/3/1748, Lettere di S. Alfonso, Roma 1887, I, 149-151)

5.2 In the Congregation there is no uniform tradition regarding those to whom our pastoral activity should be directed. The poor to whom the Gospel is to be preached is variously understood in different situations.

Nevertheless some particular features, common to the whole Congregation, emerge:

- y We have a tradition of preference for the “little ones”. In our case, relationship with the so called upper-class of educated, wealthy and influential people have not, apart from exceptions, been particularly cultivated.
- y In this connection there is the decided simplicity and popular pitch of our preaching. This was something promoted by St. Alphonsus at the start and safeguarded all through our tradition. This simplicity extends from the style of preaching to the exercises of piety and popular religiosity.
- y It is furthermore our tradition to go to people and not wait for them to come to us. Hence no place is too large or too small for us to evangelize. The grounds for this characterization are provided “by the old formula of “the most abandoned souls in country places” and “by the

system of itinerant preaching. This characteristic shows up also in our readiness to take over difficult mission districts.

More recently, we have begun to see a growing thrust in certain regions towards the socially poor and marginalized.

6. THE SPECIAL MISSION OF THE CONGREGATION IN THE CHURCH TODAY

As Redemptorists we share the mandate given to the whole Church, “*which, since it is the universal sacrament of salvation, is missionary of its very nature*” (Const. 1).

Within this mission of the whole Church the Congregation has its particular mission which is expressed under three different aspects:

- y evangelization in the strict sense: the explicit, prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Gospel;
- y the preference for situations where there is pastoral need;
- y and within this a special preference for the poor, the deprived and the oppressed.

These three aspects taken together are “*the very reason why the Congregation exists In the Church, and are the badge of its fidelity to the vocation it has received*” (Const. 5)

6.1 The explicit proclamation of the Gospel

“Indeed Redemptorists have as their special mission in the

Church the explicit proclamation of the Word of God to bring about fundamental conversion” (Const. 10).

The General Chapter of 1979 focused on this aspect and gave it as a Major Theme to the Congregation for the sexennium 1979-1985: *“The explicit proclamation, especially in the extraordinary forms, of the Word of God.”* (Comm. 41/1979)

Connected to this Major Theme was the special mandate given to the Congregation to draw up the plan of pastoral priorities.

6.2 The preference for situations where there is pastoral need

The Redemptorists concentrate their activities on *“the pressing pastoral needs of the most abandoned”* (Const. 1); the Congregation is sent to *“people more in need of spiritual help”* (Const. 4). *“The members of the Congregation must be tireless in seeking out people who are more deprived of spiritual help”* (St. 09).

“The most abandoned, to whom in particular the Congregation is sent, are

- y those for whom the Church has not yet been able to provide sufficient means of salvation,*
- y those who have never heard the Church’s message, or at least do not receive it as the ‘Good News,’*
- y and finally those who suffer harm because of division in the Church.”* (Const. 3)

6.3 The poor

“Among (these) groups of people more in need of spiritual help, they will give special attention to the poor, the deprived and the oppressed.” (Const. 4)

Within the pressing pastoral needs of the most abandoned the Congregation directs its activities especially to the poor (cf. Const. 1). So the preference for situations where there is pastoral need is specified further by “*the choice in favor of the poor*” (Const. 5), “*the powerless and the oppressed*” (St. 09).

7. THE MANDATE GIVEN BY THE XX GENERAL CHAPTER 1985

“The General Chapter of 1985 wants to continue the Theme of the pastoral priorities decided on by the Chapter of 1979. Now we want to put the emphasis on the explicit, prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Gospel to the poor, allowing ourselves to be called by the poor (***EVANGELIZARE PAUPERIBUS ET A PAUPERIBUS EVANGELIZARI***), in accordance with the charism of our Congregation expressed in Constitutions 1, 3, 4, 5 and in Statutes 09 and 021.”

This new theme is meant to prolong and to continue the one from the preceding sexennium. The Chapter of 1979 put the emphasis on the proclamation, especially the explicit proclamation, of the Gospel (***EVANGELIZARE***). Now we put the emphasis on our special attention to the poor (***PAUPERIBUS***).

The central question to be faced now by every unit of the Congregation is: who are these “poor” mentioned in the text?

7.1 Situations of poverty and oppression

The Chapter placed before our Congregation the question: *“Taking our Major Theme as a basis, to what situations of poverty and of oppression do we want to direct our particular attention?”* (DF 09)

The confreres live and work in different countries, and in different social, political and ecclesial conditions, and therefore our experiences of poverty and oppression will differ. Nevertheless each one of us is called to be keenly sensitive to the situation of the people and the society in which we live, and to discover the conditions of poverty and oppression which call for our response.

This sensitivity is highlighted in St. 044: *“Therefore, since the members belong to an Institute devoted to the Evangelization of the poor, they must be keenly sensitive to the poverty of the world and to the grave social problems afflicting practically all peoples. Poverty of every kind, whether it be material, moral or spiritual, must challenge their apostolic zeal. The legitimate aspirations of the poor will be their aspirations.”*

This challenges us to deepen our awareness of the reality which exists in our midst. This confrontation with reality has a spiritual meaning because God speaks to us through it. Therefore we must *“be open to the world in such a way that, through contact with people we may learn to understand the signs of the times and of places, and adapt ourselves more fittingly to the demands of evangelization”* (Const. 43).

Or, as Const. 19 expresses it: *“In a spirit of brotherly concern they should try to understand people’s anxious questionings and try to discover in these how God is truly revealing Himself and making His plan known.”*

7.2 “The poor are individual persons with human faces” (DF 05)

Considering situations of poverty could remain rather abstract unless we make this human and personal by actually meeting the poor as fellow human beings as we are invited to do by the Final Document.

An example of this approach could be the following text of Puebla:

“This situation of pervasive extreme poverty takes on very concrete faces in real life. In these faces we ought to recognize the suffering features of Christ the Lord who questions and challenges us. They include:

- y the faces of young children, struck down by poverty before they are born, their chance for self-development blocked by irreparable mental and physical deficiencies; and of the vagrant children
- y in our cities who are so often exploited, products of poverty and the moral disorganization of the family;
- y the faces of young people, who are disoriented because they cannot find their place in society, and who are frustrated, particularly in marginal rural and urban areas, by the lack of opportunity to obtain training and work;
- y the faces of the peasants; as a social group, they live in exile almost everywhere on our continent, deprived of land, caught in a situation of internal and external dependence, and subjected to systems of commercialization that exploit them;

- y the faces of laborers, who frequently are ill-paid and who have difficulty in organizing themselves and defending their rights;
- y the faces of the underemployed and the unemployed, who are dismissed because of the harsh exigencies of economic crises, and often because of development-models that subject workers and their families to cold economic calculations;
- y the faces of marginalized and overcrowded urban dwellers, whose lack of material goods is matched by the ostentatious display of wealth by other segments of society;
- y the faces of old people, who are growing more numerous every day, and who are frequently marginalized in a progress-oriented society that totally disregards people not engaged in production.” (31-40)

If we look at our reality in this way we will meet these faces wherever we live; our search will not end in discussion but in discovering “*the most abandoned, especially the poor*” (Const. 1).

8. CALLED AND CHALLENGED BY THE POOR

For many of us the first part of the Chapter Theme, i.e. focusing on the poor as the preferred people we are to evangelize, is challenge enough. The second part expressed by the Latin phrase: **EVANGELIZARI A PAUPERIBUS** and translated as “*called and challenged by the poor*”, goes further still.

8.1 Missionary Dialogue

At a first level, it implies that we view evangelization as a two-way process, “a missionary dialogue” (Const. 19) in which both parties are mutually enriched. This is now a generally accepted norm in the work of evangelization, especially in the field of culture and pastoral psychology. Indeed, most of us have experienced being enriched in our various types of pastoral work by the people we serve and work with.

But what about the poor (in the sense understood here)? In what way do they evangelize us? How do they call and challenge us? And what has been the effect on us in making a response?

8.2 Effects of Dialogue

It has happened in certain parts of the world that the poor, the deprived and oppressed have turned to priests and religious, among them our own confreres, for moral support in their struggle for economic betterment, social justice, or even liberation from political oppression and tyranny. In the process of responding to this call, our confreres have found themselves challenged in many ways.

Some have found the theology they had learned to be inadequate, including their knowledge of Scripture. Many pastoral approaches could no longer be maintained, such as remaining neutral in the face of social conflict. Manifestations of popular religiosity they were inclined to scoff at turned out to have immense social value and depth of faith.

Certain attitudes like the quest for security, whether personal or institutional, have had to change in the face of the freedom-to-risk shown by the poor in their struggle for justice.

Some have been led to discover dimensions of human life to which they had not given enough recognition in the past, like the role of structures in conditioning the attitudes, values, and behavior of people in society, including their global dimensions.

It has also happened in certain countries that “*the cry of the poor*” has led religious communities to a profound re-thinking of the forms and structures of their religious life. In some instances, it has led them to re-discover the original charism of their founder and to a greater fidelity to this charism in their choice of pastoral priorities and in the forms of their religious life, resulting even in an increase of vocations. Some of our own confreres have experienced this in certain countries.

8.3 Theology of “the poor”

These and similar experiences have provoked theological discussions on “*the mystery of the poor as agents of salvation*”. Some of these are only “musings” and “*elements*” of a theology and spirituality that are still in process of maturation.

An example, perhaps, is the theology of liberation which could have arisen only from the double experience of poverty and oppression on the one hand, and the experience of faith in the Lord of History on the other.

Thus, while church people today debate “certain elements” of this theology, its basic validity as a theology is no longer in question, as Pope John Paul II has recently affirmed. It is a theology born in the Third World setting which has spawned ramifications in other countries, including those of the First World.

8.4 Our own dialogue with the poor

Our Constitutions and Statutes urge us to “*be tireless in seeking out people who are more deprived of spiritual help, especially the poor, the powerless and the oppressed*”, since “*Redemptorists can never be deaf to the cry of the poor and the oppressed*” (St. 09).

Perhaps the answer to the questions we have posed here can only come from actual experience of working among these people. So we turn to the confreres who have such experiences to share their reflections on how they have found themselves called, challenged and enriched by the poor. We have no doubts that what they have to offer will be more profound than the initial thoughts we have expressed here.

9. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

9.1 Sensitivity and awareness

“*Therefore, since the members belong to an Institute devoted to the evangelization of the poor, they must be keenly sensitive to the poverty of the world and to the grave social problems afflicting practically all peoples*”(St. 044).

The consideration of the Major Theme should lead us to global awareness as well as to a more profound consciousness of our own particular situation. Because we are a worldwide Congregation, so also must our concerns be.

Therefore we should ask ourselves:

- y “What do we know about the different situations of poverty and oppression in the different parts of our world? Are we truly interested in this issue, and how do we acquire information about such situations?
- y Who and what is influencing our political or ecclesial opinion on political issues, and the situation of the Church in different countries?
- y What do we know about our Redemptorist confreres subjected to conditions of poverty and oppression, or even persecution?
- y How do we show our fraternal solidarity with them?

9.2 Poverty and apostolic zeal

“Redemptorists can never be deaf to the cry of the poor and the oppressed, but have the duty to search for ways of helping them” (St. 09).

“Poverty of every kind, whether it be material, moral or spiritual, must challenge their apostolic zeal” (St. 044).

In addition to the global awareness mentioned above, we should have a special sensitivity towards the poverty of those among whom we live and work. As Redemptorists we don’t have to wait for the poor to come to us; our traditional charism challenges us to meet the poor and to concentrate our apostolic zeal on their special needs.

- y Who are the people in our area who live in material, moral or spiritual poverty? Do we recognize them? Do we meet them?
- y What inhuman and oppressing structures or systems exist in our country? Do we meet the people subjected to them?
- y Who are the abandoned and neglected by the local Church in our country?
- y What place do these poor have in our pastoral priorities?
- y What place do they have in our prayer-life, and in the content of our preaching?

9.3 Community life and solidarity with the poor

“The common life of the members must be truly adapted to the mentality of each region and give effective witness to poverty and solidarity with the poor”(St. 046.2).

Our life-style in community must correspond with the situation of the people among whom we live and work; this calls also for inculturation. Our option for the poor asks, in addition, for simplicity in lifestyle which will make authentic our evangelization among the poor.

- y Does our style of life indicate our solidarity with the poor to whom we preach the Gospel?
- y Are our communities open and responsive to the people to whom we are committed?

- y Do we see any possibility of sharing the actual destitution and insecurity of the poor in lowly conditions, as proposed in St. 045?
- y How do we deal with money (collecting, investing, and spending)?
- y How do we practice solidarity with the poor within our Congregation?

9.4 Formation and our option for the poor

“Very particularly the Chapter asks that the formation of the students be connected to the pastoral priorities....Besides, the Chapter asks those in charge to organize a style of life and a formation for our students which take account of our option for the poor and which do not isolate them from the life and the problems of the poor” (DF 13).

In addition to first formation we must direct our ongoing formation to the deepening of a spirituality which takes account of our option for the poor.

- y What influence do the poor have on our programs of theological, spiritual and human formation?
- y Is there a relationship between these programs and the pastoral priorities?
- y What provision is made in ongoing formation programs for developing a consciousness of our commitment to the poor?

10. CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the end of this presentation we would like to place these reflections before you and to ask you to continue this process in your communities, chapters and (Vice)Provincial Governments.

We realize that further studies must be made on the Issues which are contained In the Theme, e.g. the biblical meaning of the “poor”, the “poor” in our Redemptorist history, the analysis of poverty and oppression In the different situations of the world, the theological significance of *Evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari* etc.

We are convinced that there are specialists in the Congregation all over the world who could contribute to a study in depth of these main issues in the Theme. We would appreciate the special contribution they can make.

Because this is a process in which the whole Congregation is involved, we would like to receive your response to our first reflections which have been offered in this Communicanda.

With fraternal greetings in the name of the General Council,

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 5

Rome, April 15, 1986
Communicanda N. 5
Gen. 122/86

**GUIDELINES FOR BUSINESS
WITH THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

Please follow these guidelines for written business with the General Government. This will aid quick and accurate treatment of the matter.

1. When treating a subject previously handled by the General Government, cite the file number given it by the General Government.
2. Treat each subject on a separate page. Never write on the back of a page.
3. Always use standard size paper (A4; 21 x 29,7 cmts.; 8½ x 11 ins.)
4. Use a typewriter or printer with black print.

5. At top of each page indicate: date, location, name of (Vice-) Province or Region, and its official abbreviation. Then give a short indication of the topic; e.g., RE: Dispensation of Father John JOHNS.

6. In referring to a person, use his full name without abbreviations, indicating given and family names. Print family name entirely in capital letters. (e.g., John James JOHNS; or Pablo GARCÍA DE LA VEGA; or NGUYEN VAN Alfredus.) Use the order and spelling as in the vernacular. If the language does not use indo-european characters, please transliterate the name. Also please indicate whether the person is a priest, deacon, brother or clerical student.

7. Each subject should conclude with the signature of the person submitting it. Under the signature should be typed the person's complete name (given and family) and his office in the Congregation.

8. If business from a Vice-Province or Region requires approval of the Province, a copy should be sent immediately to the Province, since the General Government will not act until notice is received of the action of the Province.

9. Official business for the General Government should be addressed:

LETTERS AND MAIL:
Gubernium Generale, C.Ss.R.
C.P. 2458
I-00100 ROMA
Italia

TELEGRAMS:
REDSUPGEN
I-00185 ROMA,
Italia

The postal zone number for letters and mail (I-00100) is different from that for telegrams (I-00185).

The General Government always welcomes news; but please put it on a separate sheet from official business.

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 6

Rome, May 5, 1986
Communicanda N. 6
Gen. 177/86

Editor's Note: The Communicanda N. 6 was published on two different dates, with a similar text and slightly different text. They contain the same number and registration code. For this reason we publish both versions together.

To Provincial Superiors, Vice-Provincial Superiors, and
Regional Superiors,

Dear Father Superior:

The 1985 General Chapter asked for guidelines for a clearer policy regarding requests for financial assistance between Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Regions. (Cf. Final Document, Appendix 2.3)

There has been a set of guidelines in force since December, 1973 (Gen. 396/73). Recently the General Secretariat for Financial Matters examined these norms and offered recommendations to the General Government for revisions. On the basis of these suggestions, the General Council revised the Guidelines, and with this Communicanda, publishes these norms for consultation with the Units of the Congregation prior to their final approval.

We ask that all observations on these norms be present in Rome no later than July 1, 1986.

I thank you for your help in providing assistance to those parts of the Congregation which suffer from the lack of sufficient financial resources for their life and apostolate. The General Council hopes that these norms will be followed carefully by those Units needing help, so that the Congregation's funds will be distributed to the best advantage of those in need. May God bless this effort to share with one another the gifts the Lord has provided.

Sincerely in the Redeemer,

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

GUIDELINES FOR DISTRIBUTING FINANCIAL AID

The General Government is aware of the many needs of the Congregation in its developing areas.

At the same time it should be remembered that the Solidarity Funds of the General Government are limited.

Under these circumstances, the following process has been established so that the needs of the units of the Congregation where there is new development may be brought to the attention of the Provinces.

Before they request financial assistance, Vice-Provinces and Regions, as well as Mother Provinces should seriously consider how much of the needed funds can be obtained from their own resources. Solidarity Funds should be used only for the more urgent cases.

No request will be considered unless approved in advance by the Mother Province.

1. Aid from the Solidarity Funds is not meant to be used as a source of regular funding. Therefore a request must be made each time for every project.

2. Requests for aid must clearly indicate:

a. Whether the request is for a loan or a grant. If a loan is sought, state how and when it is to be paid back.

b. the purpose of the project with details of estimated costs.

c. how this project fits into the (Vice)Provincial priorities.

d. the amount of financing the (Vice)Province will provide from its own resources.

e. a detailed list “of other donors from whom aid for this project has been sought and the amount of money requested from them.

f. whether in the last two years financial aid has been received from any source for this or for any other extraordinary project; list the projects, sources and amounts.

3. The General Government will consider requests twice a year: March 15 and October 15.

4. On completion of the project a report must be submitted to the General Government. This report should include:

- y total cost of the project;
- y sources and amounts of financing;
- y disposition of surplus funds, if any.

5. An annual summary report on amounts received and distributed through this process will be sent to all (Vice)Provinces of the Congregation.

This Solidarity Fund has been established as the ordinary means for one (Vice-)Province to help, in a fraternal fashion, to meet the needs of any other (Vice)Province.

A (Vice)Province is free to request funding directly from any other (Vice)Province; however, a donor (Vice)Province should feel free to ignore such direct requests, and insist that its shared funds be distributed through the Solidarity Funds using the above process

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 6 (bis)

Rome, August 24, 1986
Communicanda N. 6 (bis)
Gen. 177/86

**THE DEFINITIVE TEXT: GUIDELINES
FOR DISTRIBUTING FINANCIAL AID**

To the Provincial Superiors, Viceprovincial Superiors, and Regional Superiors

Dear Father Superior:

On May 5, 1986, the General Council sent you the first draft of “Guidelines for Distributing Financial Aid”. This was done as mandated by the Twentieth General Chapter which sought clearer guidelines for the policy. These guidelines were to take account of suggestions from the General Secretariat for Financial Matters.

Helped by the observations made by some of the Superiors, we now publish the definitive text of these guidelines.

These norms refer only to the aid which the Provinces, Viceprovinces and Regions request of the General Council. Requests made directly by one (Vice)Province to another are not considered by this document. Regarding this other point, the

General Secretariat for Financial Matters can give the General Council some guidelines for publication later.

Our Solidarity Fund both signifies and seeks to be a sharing of goods among the units of our Congregation. It ought to be interpreted in the light of the theme set by the Twentieth General Chapter for this sexennium: real and effective union with those who are the poorest in the Congregation and who need our generous collaboration. This collaboration may be for the formation of their young men as well as for other pastoral projects and economic problems which can be present in Redemptorist communities.

We hope that these units, for their part, follow these norms so that the goods of the Congregation can be distributed to those who truly are the most needy.

Once more I thank you for your economic support of this assistance fund, which permits us to solve many of the problems touching the lives and apostolate of our confreres.

I fraternally greet you in the name of the General Council.

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

GUIDELINES FOR DISTIBUTING FINANCIAL AID

(Revision of DS. n. 191, 1984 edition)

1. The General Government is aware of the many needs of the Congregation in its developing areas. At the same time it should be remembered that the Solidarity Funds of the General Government are limited.

2. Under these circumstances, the following process has been established so that the needs of the units of the Congregation where there is new development may be brought to the attention of the Provinces.

3. Before they request financial assistance, Vice-Provinces and Regions, as well as Mother Provinces, should seriously consider how much of the needed funds can be obtained from their own resources. Solidarity Funds should be used only for the more urgent cases.

4. No request will be considered unless approved in advance by the Mother Province.

1. Aid from the Solidarity Funds is not meant to be used as a source of regular funding. Therefore a request must be made each time for every project.

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a. Whether the request is for a loan or a grant. If a loan is sought, state how and when it is to be paid back.

b. The purpose of the project with details of estimated costs.

c. How this project fits into the (Vice)Provincial priorities.

d. The amount of financing the (Vice)Province will provide from its own resources.

e. A detailed list of other donors from whom aid for this project has been sought and the amount of money requested from them.

f. Whether in the last two years financial aid has been received from any source for this or for any other extraordinary project; list the projects, sources and amounts.

3. The General Government will consider requests twice a year: March 15 and October 15.

However, in cases where an emergency has occurred, action may be taken immediately when brought to the attention of the General Government.

4. On completion of the project a report must be submitted to the General Government. This report should include:

- a. total cost of the project;
- b. sources and amounts of financing;
- c. disposition of surplus funds, if any.

5. An annual summary report of amounts received and distributed through this process will be sent to all (Vice)Provinces of the Congregation.

This Solidarity Fund has been established as the ordinary means for one (Vice)Province to help, in a fraternal fashion, to meet the needs of any other (Vice)Province. A (Vice)Province is free to request funding directly from any other (Vice)Province; however, a donor (Vice)Province should feel free to ignore such direct requests, and insist that its shared funds be distributed through the Solidarity Funds using the above process.

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

(The official text of these guidelines is the English text).

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 7

Rome, June 20, 1986
Communicanda N. 7
Gen. 186/86

CONGRESS OF REDEMPTORIST HISTORIANS

**On the occasion of the Bicentenary
of the death of St. Alphonsus.**

To the Provincial, Viceprovincial and Regional Superiors

Dear confreres,

On the occasion of the Bicentenary of the death of St. Alphonsus, the General Council wants to organize a Congress of Redemptorist Historians. This decision was taken after consultation with the Historical Institute, Rome, and was influenced by the emphasis put on the study of the history of the Congregation during the General Chapter of 1985.

1. General Purpose of the Congress:

01. Discussion of the present state of historical studies on the Congregation:

- y sharing of views on a possible orientation of such studies in the future;
- y coordination of initiatives at General and local level;
- y definitive proposals for a systematic coordination of the historical investigation of areas of Redemptorist interest: critical edition of the works of St. Alphonsus including his letters, Annals of the Congregation (General and according to Provinces), biographies etc.
- y suggestions regarding a possible orientation of the SPICILEGIUM HISTORICUM review, of the BIBLIOTHECA HISTORICA and of other possible publications.

02. Planning of a HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION:

The General Council has entrusted to Padre Francesco Chiovaro the task of directing this project so necessary at present at a meeting held in Rome, 1-4 May, the Director of this planned History of the Congregation, in association with the Historical Institute, prepared a provisional outline, included here with in the Appendix. We ask the confreres who will attend this Congress to study this outline so that they may be in a position to help determine the definitive plan.

2. Participants in this Congress

The invitation to participate in this Congress is given to the confreres who have an academic diploma in Historical Science (from an Ecclesiastical or Civil University) and who have kept up their scientific interest in this field. There is an invitation also to those who though they may have no academic degree have in fact specialized in history. However, those who participate should, besides, be able to continue to devote themselves in the future to this work of historical investigation as a significant part of their normal

activity. They should also be able to take up a future assignment connected with the History of the Congregation or of the (Vice) Provinces.

3. Organization of the Congress

The Congress will be held in Rome from 23 to 30 April 1987. The Historical Institute will take care of the details of organization. It will help the organizers if the names of participants and also any suggestions are sent before 1 December 1986. All such data should be addressed to Fr. Carl Hoegerl, Historical Institute.

We have in mind a Congress which would benefit the Congregation in this area of vital importance for our life. Knowledge of our history is necessary for all of us and principally for our young men in formation. I ask you, dear Father (Vice) Provincial, with this service in mind, to see if there are in your (Vice) Province confreres who are qualified to contribute to this Congress and, after the Congress, to our historical studies.

I avail of the occasion to thank Fr. Chiovaro for accepting the task of directing this projected History of the Congregation. I thank also the members of the Historical Institute for all they have done already and for what they are continuing to do for the scientific investigation of our history.

Faternally in Christ,

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega C.Ss.R.,
Superior General

CONCLUSIONS FOR THE HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION

CONTENTS:

- I. Manual or Scientific History
- II. Cut-off date of the History
- III. Determining Periods
- IV. Geographical Divisions
- V. Matters to be included

I. MANUAL OR SCIENTIFIC HISTORY

It was agreed that a scientific history of the Congregation should be attempted.

Reasons:

- a. A manual could be envisaged only as a product of an already existing scientific history; such a history we do not have as yet.
- b. The lack of works scientifically documented is particularly noticeable for the 19th century, a period of decisive importance, in view of the structural, geographical and numerical development of the Congregation at that time.
- c. Only when we have a history based on strictly historical methods will it be possible to identify the specific category of religious grouping to which we belong.

d. We have available a good fund of documents (published or unpublished) to justify undertaking a scientific history of the Institute; particularly the General and the Provincial archives contain a mass of documents never used to good historical purpose so far.

e. In a period of great changes such as we are going through at present, there is a danger that we may lose forever an oral tradition and a way of living that can still be recorded from real life, something that would be practically impossible to gather in to a manual.

II. CUT-OFF DATE OF THE HISTORY

Our principal preoccupation derives to produce a scientific history of the Congregation: how far can we go on the basis of having that would eventually be complete?

As for “Our Sources”, it should be noted that the inventory of the documents of the AGR end with 1909. The documents from 1909 to 1954 are put in order but lack an inventory. From 1954 onwards the C.Ss.R. documents belong to the current archives and hence are not open to historical researchers.

On the other hand, however, it should be noted that our contemporary history could be written, though it would be incomplete. Indeed that is the period in which our confreres would have the keenest interest. Different dates were suggested: 1909 - end of the Generalate of Raus, 1914 - first World War, 1947 - end of the Generalate of Murray, 1963-65 - Vatican Council II, 1967/69 - XVIIth General Chapter.

Finally all agreed in considering the General Chapter 1967/69 a decisive turning point in our history. It was fixed as the cut-off date. The “Introductions” to the contemporary periods will stress the limitations on documents and the provisional nature of the conclusions reached.

III. PERIODS

Within the time-span from 1732 to 1967/69 the most important intermediate dates remain to be fixed: 1785- departure of St. Clement for Vienna. 1787 - the death of St. Alphonsus, 1793 - end of the first division, 1820 - Vicariate of Fr. Passerat, 1841 - first division of the Congregation into Provinces.

1855 - end of the Transalpine Vicariate, 1869 - end of the independent regime assigned to Fr. Berruti, 1894 - end of the Generalate of Fr. Mauron, 1921- General Chapter to make adaptations in keeping with the new Code of Canon Law...

In connection with periodisation certain points should be stressed: the relative character of every demarcation of periods; the scientific value of any demarcation is limited (because of confining the field of research); and it puts limits on pedagogic exposition. Finally the following demarcation of periods was accepted:

Period I	1732 - 1793
Period II	1793 - 1855
Period III	1855 - 1894
Period IV	1894 - 1947
Period V	1947 - 1967/69

IV. GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS

Two mistakes should be avoided:

a) writing a history of the Congregation as viewed only from the centre;

b) conceiving the history just as a loosely connected history of the single Provinces. In terms of the division of periods adopted these extremes could be avoided by following this regionalizing sequence:

Period I. The Congregation in Italy.

Period II. The Congregation in
Italy – Transalpine Vicariate.

Period III. The three Italian Provinces
(Roman, Neapolitan, Sicilian).

The three Transalpine Provinces (Franco-Swiss, Austrian, Belgian) and their extensions (the seven Provinces formed between 1850 and 1894).

Period IV. The great cultural areas:
Europe, N. America, Latin America,
Asia-Oceania.

Period V. To the preceding cultural areas add Africa.

V. MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED

We give a list exemplifying the kind of material that could be included in a history of the Congregation. The particular subject matter to be emphasized in each individual period can be determined by the authors in collaboration with the Director.

A. Structures of the Community:

1. General Chapters (their legislative function: Rules and Constitutions).
2. The place of the Superior General and his Council.
3. Government at the provincial and local level.
4. Poverty and community life. Financing.
5. The foundation of the General House in Rome.

B. The day to day life:

1. A day in the life of the Redemptorist community: time-table, meals, dress, times of prayer and of work, retreats and penances, domestic meetings, care of the sick, death.
2. Quarters: buildings and places of cult, residences and furnishings.
3. Feastdays: day of weekly rest, special feastdays, way of celebrating them.
4. Manner of living while away from the community: travel, missions, times of persecution.

C. Formation:

1. Recruiting of candidates.
2. The novitiate.
3. Organization and thrust of studies (manuals, exams....).
4. Emergence of missionary schools (Juvenates) and their organization.
5. The second novitiate.
6. After the teaching of St. Alphonsus.
7. The “Collegio Maggiore”.
8. Our Libraries.

D. The activities of the Congregation:

1. Missions to the people and Spiritual Exercises.
2. Parishes and involvement in education for those unconnected with the C.Ss.R.
3. The work of Redemptorists in the devotional movements of the XVIII-XX centuries: Mother of Perpetual Help, Holy family, Eucharistic Heart, Reparation before the Blessed Sacrament...
4. Sanctuaries: Aparecida, Ste. Anne, Materdomini, Baclaran, Buga...

5. Chaplaincies to soldiers and to the sick.
6. Social apostolate.
7. Literature: scholarly works, publishing houses, periodicals...

E. Models of behavior:

1. Idealization of the Redemptorist image in the texts of Rules and in spiritual writings.
2. The received types: the Missionary, the Confessor, the Professor, the Brother, the man broken in health...
3. The model figures in our own hagiographic literature: Sarnelli, Cafaro, Sportelli, Bro. Gaudiello, Dom. Blasucci, S. Gerard, St. Clement...
4. Importance of Fr. Desurmont.

F. Redemptorist Spirituality:

After the initial period, has a Redemptorist spirituality distinct from Alphonsian spirituality emerged?

G. Influence of the Congregation in the founding of other missionary Institutes in the 19th century:

1. Oblates of Mary Immaculate.
2. Salesians.
3. Bufalini.
4. Sacred Hearts of Secondigliano (Naples)
5. Oblates of the Virgin Mary (Pio Bruno Lanteri)
6. Brothers of Mercy (B. Peter Friethofer).
7. The Disciples of the Lord (China)...

H. The Redemptorist and the Congregation of Sisters in the XIX and XX centuries.

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 8

Rome, August 15, 1986
Communicanda N. 8
Gen. 194/86

**APPROVAL OF MODIFICATION
IN THE CONSTITUTIONS AND STATUTES**

To the Redemptorist Fathers, Brothers, Students and Novices

Dear Confreres,

Introduction

1. On February 2, 1982 the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes approved the text of our Constitutions. Afterwards the General Council, in virtue of special faculties granted by the said Congregation, introduced some changes in order to adapt the Constitutions and Statutes to the new Code of Canon Law (cf. Communicanda n° 80). These changes were submitted to the General Chapter of 1985 and approved with some modifications. The Constitutions affected by these changes were presented on February 28, 1986, to the Congregation for Religious, which gave its approval on July 23, 1986.

2. While presenting the modified Constitutions and General statutes to you now, the General Council offers you these reflections.

3. It is clear that the Constitutions are an official document of the Congregation, but it is also clear that they are something more than a document. The Constitutions are a way to personal conversion, a personal conversion to the wellsprings that inspired the Congregation, namely, the Gospel and the charism of our Congregation.

4. In the Constitutions we find our particular way of living the Gospel by participating in the mission of Christ the Redeemer of the human race. They describe our style of following Christ and our style of ministry in the Church, - above all our ministry to the most abandoned and the very poor. We have made a pact to serve, to give over our life to Christ the Redeemer and to our least brothers and sisters. That is the mystery of our life, a mystery on which light is thrown only by the mystery of Christ who is at the heart of our apostolic community and of our personal life (cf. Const. 23). The Constitutions show us how Christ can be really present in our fraternal communities and how the Redemptorist can be a true apostle in our society by faithfully living up to the charism of our Congregation in the Church of today.

1. The unity of the apostolic life:

1.1 To ensure that our response to the charism of the Congregation is effective, the Constitutions seek to unify all the elements and dimensions of our life in a perfect apostolic, spiritual and human equilibrium. No dichotomy between our consecrated being and our pastoral activities is possible. The mission of Christ,

at once the Life and the Word who came to serve, qualifies our Redemptorist life as an “apostolic life”. This concept combines both our life specially consecrated to God as well as our pastoral activities or service to the community (cf. Const. 1). The Redemptorist is thus transformed into a living presence of Christ and carries on His redemptive mission in the world (cf. Const. 23).

1.2 Our missionary work combined with our life of continual prayer and with the witness of our community life and religious consecration fits us and empowers us to respond adequately to the needs of the Church and of contemporary people whose world is beset by religious indifference and by human poverty, violence and injustice.

2. Our attitude towards the Constitutions:

2.1 The Constitutions contain a word of God which shows us what we are and what our Redemptorist mission is. But if we are to find this word we must come to the Constitutions with the attitude of one honestly in search of it. God admits to an encounter with himself only those who seek him with a sincere heart: his light shines only on those who in the midst of their darkness are seeking him. Similarly he alone can discover in the Constitutions a statement of the Law of Christ who sees in them the guide that leads us to Christ himself, the only one who teaches the way to the Father.

2.2 It is only by adopting the approach of, a religious who is searching that we will find in our Constitutions the particular norm of the Congregation for living the life of the Spirit in the Church of our times. It follows then that contemplation and prayer, both at the personal and at the community level, should have a special place in our study of, and in our living by, the Constitutions. Without this attitude and without this profoundly religious approach

the Constitutions will be seen as a merely juridic text. Hence the insistence of the Constitutions on the absolute necessity of prayer:

“Let the members ever take to themselves the exhortation of Christ the Redeemer: ‘They ought always to pray and not lose heart’ (Lk 18,1). Let them imitate the disciples of the first community in the Church: ‘They devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers, ‘(Acts 2, 42)’ all these with one accord devote themselves to prayer together with Mary the Mother of Jesus. (Acts 1,14). Indeed they will make every effort to have St. Alphonsus’ spirit of prayer in their own lives” (Const. 26).

2.3 The Constitutions indicate for us the periods of personal and of community prayer we ought to have in our life. But these Constitutions should be seen also as a guidebook of prayer. We should make use of the Constitutions to re-live the encounter with God that brought our vocation, the dialogue between God and each one of us, and the experience of God’s grace which called us and gave us our mission. To read the Constitutions and pray them should revive in us a sense of our vocation and of the alliance with God involved in that vocation. In this way we welcome the gift of God and remain faithful to our charism and to our mission in the Church.

3. Structures

3.1 The Constitutions articulate the ideal of our charism. They also formulate new structures to embody that ideal in a way adapted to our time. These structures are not meant to stifle life but to help it grow along the lines we ourselves chose on the day of our religious profession.

3.2 All our structures are geared to the formation of the interior man and to facilitate our journey in fidelity towards that ideal. This journey we make in the company of our confreres, and together with them we become transformed into a sacrament of Christ the Redeemer. It is a journey that should not admit of delays or stops. The Constitutions are an authentic guide on how we are to respond to our vocation, because we do not make a once-for-all response to our vocation, but respond to it continually throughout our whole life.

The present text formally proposed to the Congregation by the Church is a practical norm for living which each one of us must take up, interiorize and put into practice. This we should do with an ongoing radicalism and updating if we want to be true to our apostolic vocation and our Redemptorist mission.

4. Study of the Constitutions:

4.1 The General Council invites you to make a profound personal and community study of our Constitutions and General statutes. Already many communities, Regions, Viceprovinces and Provinces have organized courses on the Constitutions. The Commission for Redemptorist Spirituality offers its collaboration in the matter of organizing these Courses.

4.2 It is evident that a new text of the Constitutions does not, of itself, guarantee an authentic renewal of the Institute. It remains for us to press on with the process of assimilating them and identifying our personal and community life with them.

4.3 And to get to know the Constitutions well it is not enough to read them, or to study them in a purely theoretic way (historically, theologically or juridically). In virtue of our religious profession,

the Constitutions become an essential factor in the spiritual and apostolic experience of our Congregation and in the total formation of its professed.

4.4 This study must take account of a complex dynamic involving personal and community prayer, fraternal dialogue and shared life, and personal and group reflection. It should form part of our continuing formation and of our periodic revision of life at the community level, as the Constitutions themselves propose (cf. Stat. 038). While we study them we should consider ourselves as being called and sought after by God: he is inviting us to share the lived experience of following Christ in a radical way in our religious family. Consequently, the study of the Constitutions is an indispensable requisite for the growth, renewal and conversion which should be a feature of our life every single day (cf. Const. 41).

In 1987-1988 we will celebrate the second centenary of the death of St. Alphonsus. May our holy Founder constantly help us to grow in our fidelity to the charism of his Congregation.

Cordial good wishes to you all from the General Council.

Fraternally in JMJA

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

NB. In the following pages are included the documents received from the Holy See, as facsimile copies, and that were included in the Communicanda N. 8).



CONGREGATIO
PRO RELIGIOSIS
ET INSTITUTIS SAECULARIBUS

Prot. n. R. 57-1/86

DECRETUM

Capitulum Generale Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris, quod anno 1985 celebratum est, Constitutiones Instituti, secundum adhortationem Concilii Vaticani II (PC nn. 2, 3, 4) renovatas et a Sancta Sede anno 1982 approbatas, ad novum Codicem Iuris canonici rite pleneque accommodavit. Qua in occasione aptationes a Consilio Generali, secundum decreta Congregationis pro Religiosis et Institutis saecularibus diei 2 Februarii 1984, ad tempus peractas, idem Capitulum recognovit supplevitque.

Moderator Generalis Instituti has immutationes Sanctae Sedis approbandas subiecit.

Congregatio pro Religiosis et Institutis saecularibus, accommodationes propositas attente examinavit et vi praesentis Decreti, paucis cum mutationibus quae in folio adnexo exhibentur, approbat et confirmat, servatis de iure servandis.

Contrariis quibuslibet non obstantibus.

Datum Romae, die 23 Iulii 1986.

+ *Vincenzo Jorgolo*
secc.

Jean Lopez
subscr.



CONGREGATIO
PRO RELIGIOSIS
ET INSTITUTIS SAECULARIBUS

Prot. n. R. 57-1/86

ADDENDA

Mutationibus in Constitutiones Congregationis

Sanctissimi Redemptoris

- cc. n. 70: Ad melius esse, post "Supremi Moderatoris" (5a linea), addatur "et quantum fieri potest, forma etiam iure civili valida" (cfr. can. 668,4).
- cc. n. 86: eodem modo (2a linea) addi deberet: "sedes in aliqua Congregationis domo per decretum scripto datum erigere" (cfr. can. 647 § 1).
- cc. n. 86-e) (3a linea) melius mutaretur: "non tamen ultra sexennium nisi exceptionaliter" (cfr. can. 655 et 657 § 2).

Romae, die 23 Iulii 1986.

+ R. P. Jago
mer.

Editor's Note: In the following 10 pages you'll find the facsimilie copies of the official texts of the revised and approved Constitutions and Statutes, in latin, the original language. The translations to the different languages are widely available.

COMMUNICANDA 8: PARS III

CONSTITUTIONES CONGREGATIONIS SANCTISSIMI REDEMPTORIS

a Consilio generali

recognitae, approbatae et promulgatae

virtute decretorum Congregationis

pro Religiosis et Institutis Saecularibus

die 2 Februarii 1984 daturum,

a Capitulo generali XX

iterum recognitae, approbatae et promulgatae

et die 23 Julii 1986

ab eadem Congregatione approbatae et confirmatae

Atque STATUTA GENERALIA CONGREGATIONIS

a Consilio Generali et a Capitulo Generali XX

recognita, approbata et promulgata.

CONSTITUTIONES

70. Ad exercitium paupertatis promovendum permittitur sodalibus ut bonis patrimonialibus acquisitis vel acquirendis renuntient. Renuntiatio vero bonis, si peragatur, ne fiat nisi a sodalibus maturioris aetatis, de consensu supremi Moderatoris, et quantum fieri potest forma jure civili valida. Attendant sodales et superiores ne ista renuntiatio fiat neglectis principiis prudentiae et aequitatis.

Documentum legitimum conficiatur ad incommoda vitanda.

85. Sodales progressive secundum gradus Congregationi incorporantur. Iam inde ab initio in spiritu consiliorum evangelicorum vivant. Cum vero sufficienter maturi et firmi erunt in hac evangelica vivendi ratione, per vincula votorum castitatis, paupertatis et oboedientiae se Missioni Christi Redemptoris in Congregatione perfectius dedicant.

86. 19. Gubernii generalis est de novitiatu constituendo decernere novitiatusque sedes in aliqua Congregationis, domo per decretum scripto datum erigere, novitiatus rationem definire, et alia ad normam iuris universalis et Statutorum generalium determinare.

29. Novitiatus eo tendit ut candidati profundius perpendant an reapse a Deo vocati sint ad Christum sequendum per professionem religiosam in vita apostolica Congregationis.

Candidati nostrum vivendi modum experiantur, historiam et vitam Congregationis discant eiusque spiritu mente et corde informentur, atque ipsorum propositum et idoneitas, comprobetur.

a. Novitiatus, ut validus sit, duodecim menses in probata domo peragendos complecti debet.

Ad novitiorum vero institutionem perficiendam, praeter tempus de quo supra, Statuta generalia unum vel plura exercitationis apostolicae tempora extra novitiatus communitatem peragenda statuere possunt.

Novitiatus ultra biennium ne extendatur.

b. Ad novitiorum Magistrum, sub auctoritate Superioris (vice-) provincialis, novitiatus regimen spectat. Ad disciplinam vero universae domus quod attinet, Magister, perinde ac novitii, superiori est obnoxius.

c. Admittere candidatos ad novitiatum et ad professionem sive temporariam sive perpetuam competit Superiori maiori, de consensu sui Consilii, ad normam Statutorum generalium.

d. Exacto novitiatu, si idoneus iudicetur, novitius ad professionem temporariam admittatur, secus dimittatur, vel, si dubium supersit de eius idoneitate, potest tempus probationis prorogari ad normam Statutorum generalium, non tamen ultra sex menses.

e. Professio temporaria post novitiatum emittenda, spatium trium annorum complecti debet, et prorogari potest, non tamen ultra sexennium nisi exceptionaliter.

f. Professio emittenda vel renovanda est secundum formulam approbatam (cf. Appendicem).

100. Capitula et superiores potestatem per ministerium Ecclesiae receptam habent, ad communitates et sodales regendos ad normam iuris universalis et proprii; et quoniam Congregatio est clericalis et iuris pontificii, possident insuper potestatem

regiminis seu iurisdictionis, tam pro foro interno quam pro foro externo. Praeterea Congregatio est etiam exempta. (Cf. Can. 618 et 596, § 2)

Superiores autem hanc potestatem in spiritu collegiali exercent una cum consiliariis, qui participationem sodalium in regimine repraesentant.

114. a. Ut quis Superior generalis eligi possit, debet esse sacerdos perpetuo professus; saltem per septem annos post professionem perpetuam in Congregatione vixerit et triginta et quinque suae aetatis annos compleverit.

b. Superior generalis, qui supremus Moderator Congregationis et Consilii generalis praeses, munus primum recipit curandi ut missio ab Ecclesia Congregationi concredita in actum deducatur, ideoque promovendi vitam Congregationis apostolicam secundum Constitutiones et Statuta, decreta et "orientationes" Capituli generalis.

c. Propterea, sive per se sive per alium, (Vice-) provincias visitet ad animandam et coordinandam missionem Congregationis quoad omnes suos aspectus.

124. Superior provincialis:

a. Una cum Consiliariis provincialibus, qui responsables sunt in provinciae rebus gerendis, Gubernium provinciale constituit, quod est organum permanens directionis et executionis, quodque rationem reddere debet Capitulo provinciali de munere commisso.

b. Ad normam Statutorum generalium designatur. Ut quis tamen ad munus Superioris provincialis designari valeat, debet esse sacerdos perpetuo professus; saltem per quinque annos post professionem perpetuam in Congregatione vixerit et annos saltem triginta expleverit.

128. Superior provincialis, Vicarius eius et Consiliarii provinciales ad tempus in Statutis generalibus determinatum designentur.

138. a. Superior communitalis debet esse sacerdos professus a votis perpetuis et ad normam Statutorum generalium designatur.

b. Superiores communitalium ad tempus in Statutis generalibus determinatum designentur.

DECRETUM DE PAUPERTATE

Decretum Pii X "Ut tollatur"

52. disponere non posse sive per actum inter vivos, sive mortis causa, de propriis bonis, nisi in favorem coniunctorum usque ad octavum gradum inclusive sive consanguinitatis sive affinitatis, non tamen spiritualis, vel in favorem Congregationis, vel ad Missas pro seipsis vel pro coniunctis, vel etiam, cum licentia tamen Superioris generalis vel provincialis, ad determinatum opus in favorem tertii;

APPENDIX. FORMULAE PROFESSIONIS

(I. --Formula promissionis: Abroqatur.)

STATUTA GENERALIA

069. Possunt novitii, praeter duodecim menses novitiatus ad normam iuris peractos, ad complendam institutionem, unum vel plura temporis spatia actuositati formativae, cum indole Congregationis congruenti, tribuenda extra novitiatus communitatem peragere, prout iudicio novitiorum Magistri et de consensu Superioris (vice-) provincialis, auditis suis Consiliariis, formationi utilia visa fuerint.
071. Vox "professio", nisi aliter expresse dicatur, sensu generali accipienda est. Includit vota temporaria et perpetua.
072. Vota temporaria fiunt saltem ad annum.
073. Superior generalis, consentientibus Consiliariis, pro unoquoque casu, statuit tempus et modum probationis quae professioni perpetuae religiosi ad nostram Congregationem transeuntis praemittenda est, servato can. 684 § 2.
074. Superior (vice-) provincialis, de consensu sui Consilii, pro unoquoque casu, statuit tempus inter novitiatum et emissionem votorum perpetuorum, servato iure universali (Cf. C. 86, 2º, e.).
094. a. Superiores tueantur iura sodalium suae potestati et curae commissorum. Cum omni pariter caritate, prudentia et fortitudine, confratres de defectibus moneant, praesertim si damnum vel fastidium communitati inferant et apostolicae actioni noceant.
- b. Statuta (vice-) provincialia decernere debent quot tempus sodales superioris munere sine intermissione fungi possunt.

c. Superior generalis non versetur in regiminis officiiis ultra duo sexennia.

095. a. Nisi iure particulari vel mandato superioris competentis aliter cautum sit, superior officio potitur, ubi primum, forma legitima, in munus immissus sit.

b. Hic superior, legitime muneris possessionem capit cum, ipso per se vel per procuratorem praesente, legitur coram communitate quacumque (vice-) provinciae, si de Superiore (vice-) provinciali agitur; aut coram propria communitate, si de Superiore locali, documentum quo constet ipsum nominatum vel electum et, si indigeat, confirmatum esse ad tale munus.

Statuta (vice-) provincialia huic ritui essentiali alias solemnitates addere possunt, firma obligatione emittendi personaliter professionem fidei ad normam iuris.

c. Si quis tamen superior, tempore transacto, ad idem munus nominetur vel eligatur, non requiritur nova captio possessionis.

d. Superiores in munere manent donec successores munus assumant.

Ante immissionem in munus, nominatus vel electus superior ne se immisceat, quovis sub titulo, in gubernationem.

e. Novo superiore in munus immisso, munera a superiore praecedenti dependentia, sine declaratione cessant.

f. Capta muneris possessione, quivis superior memor sit moris antiqui in Congregatione, peragendi, tempore opportuno, exercitia spiritualia.

g. In sua quisque domo Superiores communitatum commorentur, nec ab eadem diutius discedant, nisi de licentia Superioris (vice-) provincialis.

0108. a. Si de consensu agitur, non sufficit ut superior sententiam consiliariorum seorsim exquirat, sed ad valide agendum oportet ut eos convocet, et eorum qui sunt praesentes habeat suffragiorum partem absolute maiorem; ipse autem suffragium non fert, nec dirimere potest paritatem.

b. Si de consilio agitur, superior consiliarios convocet, nisi Statuta (vice-) provincialia aliud decernant: eosque, ad valide agendum, audiat.

0109. Si superior una cum consiliariis collegialiter ad normam iuris procedat, tunc si vota paria sint, quaestio novo scrutinio submittenda est. Paritate manente, superior suo voto paritatem dirimere potest.

0112. In diversis Congregationis partibus adsint oeconomi, a respectivis Superioribus maioribus, et etiam in quantum fieri potest, a Superioribus localibus distincti, debita formatione instructi, qui, iuxta legitima auctoritatis mandata, bona Congregationis sibi concredita administrent. Ipsis autem tamquam oeconomis, ius disponendi de bonis non competit.

0153. Statuta (vice-) provincialia modum conferendi munus Superioris (vice-) provincialis eiusque Vicarii, ac modum substituendi eorum Vicarium, si a munere cesset, decernere debent.

a. Superior provincialis eiusque Vicarius, ac Superior viceprovincialis designati, indigent confirmatione Gubernii generalis.

b. Superior vero viceprovincialis a Gubernio generali ne confirmetur nisi prius approbatus fuerit a Consilio provinciali extraordinario.

c. Vicarius autem viceprovincialis indiget tantum confirmatione Consilii provincialis extraordinarii.

d. Superior (vice-) provincialis eiusque Vicarius ad triennium designentur, salvo praescripto iuris orientalis. Expleto triennio, ad idem tempus denuo designari possunt.

0158. a. (Vice-) provinciae Consilium extraordinarium constituent ad maiora negotia tractanda.

b. Statuta (vice-) provincialia modum designandi Consiliarios sive ordinarios sive extraordinarios decernere debent.

c. Consiliarii (vice-) provinciales ad triennium designentur, salvo praescripto iuris orientalis.

Expleto triennio, ad idem tempus denuo designari possunt.

0178. a. Statuta (vice-) provincialia decernere debent congruum tempus post professionem perpetuam requisitum, ut quis Superior localis designari possit.

b. Superiores communitatum ad triennium designentur, salvo praescripto iuris orientalis. Expleto triennio, ad idem tempus denuo designari possunt.

Si quis tamen Superior ad tertium triennium in eadem domo constituendus sit, requiritur confirmatio Gubernii generalis.

c. In omni communitate Superior Vicarium habeat, ad normam Statutorum (vice-) provincialium designatum.

0193. a. Capituli (vice-) provincialis est, attento valore pecuniae relativo, statuere limites intra quos singuli superiores, servatis dispositionibus Sanctae Sedis, cum vel sine suis consiliariis, pecuniam erogare, alienationes peragere et debita contrahere queant.

Summi autem limites intra quos id facere possunt superiores, cum vel sine suis consiliariis, indigent approbatione Gubernii generalis.

b. Nomine alienationis hic intelligitur omnis translatio dominii bonorum quae ex legitima assignatione patrimonium stabile personae iuridicae constituit; omneque negotium quo condicio patrimonialis eiusdem personae peior fieri potest, v.gr. aeris alieni contractio, locatio, et omnis dispositio de patrimonio stabili quae non sit mere administrativa.

c. Capituli (vice-) provincialis quoque est determinare actus qui finem et modum ordinariae administrationis excedant, atque ea statuere quae ad valide ponendum actum extraordinariae administrationis necessaria sunt.

0211. Superior maior, de consensu sui consilii atque iusta de causa, sodali concedere potest, ut ipse extra domum Instituti degere possit, non tamen ultra annum, nisi causa infirmitatis curandae, ratione studiorum aut apostolatus exercendi nomine Instituti. Sodalis huiusmodi sub cura suorum superiorum manet; caret tamen voce activa et passiva, nisi absens sit ratione studii, valetudinis vel apostolatus Instituti.

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 9

Rome, October 1, 1986
Communicanda N. 9
Gen. 327/86

**THE CO-RESPONSIBILITY
OF THE CONFRERES
IN THE DESIGNATION OF SUPERIORS**

To all the Redemptorist confreres

Dear Confreres,

The election of Superiors throughout the Congregation is due in 1987. During that year the Major Superiors, the local Superiors, those in charge of Formation, and many other confreres (those assigned to Secretariats etc.) will be appointed. To these appointees will be entrusted, during the next triennium, the service of directing and leading our Provinces, Vice-Provinces, Regions and communities.

We realize that the occasion for electing Superiors is a time when the exercise of personal co-responsibility comes strongly into play (cf. Const. 92). That is why the General Council thinks it is now opportune to share with you its views on what is expected of every Redemptorist Superior at this precise time in the life of the

Congregation and of the Church. Our reflections aim at portraying the mission of the Superior and his style of directing and leading the (Vice)Provincial, regional and local community, according to the ideal set out in the Constitutions.

1. THE MISSION OF THE SUPERIOR

Const. 126 says of the (Vice)Provincial Superior:

“Let the Provincial Superior exercise his office as a pastor, leader and coordinator of all the communities and members of his province, He should make himself completely available to them, while encouraging them to live worthily the vocation to which they are called, and to confidently undertake and carry through their apostolic enterprises”.

Const. 139 says of the local Superior:

“The Superior of a community must first of all be a spiritual pastor and then a rector and administrator. His chief duty is to serve the community, so that it may be formed and grow in Christ and that all, with united effort, may devote themselves to the work of evangelization. He must likewise look upon himself as being co-responsible, by reason of his office, for the welfare of the whole province”.

Some expressions in these two Constitutions help us to understand the mission of the Superior of today:

1. The service of leadership (‘animation’),
2. A spiritual pastor of the community,
3. Dedication to our work of evangelization.

1.1 The service of leadership

The office of Superior is just one among many other services which are necessary for the life of every (Vice)Province or community. And, in the Christian community every form of service should take its inspiration from the person of Christ who “came not to be served but to serve”.

The first service of the Superior is that of searching and discerning, together indeed with his confreres, what is the will of God as regards the members of the community (cf. Const. 73).

This service can be termed “leadership”, “direction”, and “authority”. The important thing is that this service should always find its inspiration in Christ, and manifest the love which Christ has for us (cf. Const. 72). The most important element in a good “servant” is the love he has for the confreres by his acceptance of each one as he is and by loving him as God loves him. This love of God bears its fruits and has its manifestations in everyday life.

The range of the Superior’s service is very wide and covers all the dimensions and needs – human, social, spiritual, religious and apostolic – of our Redemptorist life.

It is not for the Superior to dominate or to impose himself but to serve, guide, give orientation, invite, stimulate, lead and confirm (cf. Pastoral Guide for Superiors n. 11). The Superior serves the community by ensuring that it be – and that it wants to be – in “continual progress through constant interior renewal” (cf. Const. 40).

1.2 Spiritual Pastor of the Community

A pastor is one who helps the Christian community incessantly to be “Church”, that is to say, to be more and more a community in Christ. That is also the central point that gives meaning to the

office of Superior at every level In the Congregation: to bring our communities to grow in Christ and become a really living cell of the Church (cf. Pastoral Guide for Superiors n. 8 ff). The mission of the “spiritual pastor” is all the more necessary nowadays, especially where the influence of a secularized world is felt also within our religious life. “Activism” is a characteristic of our age and it leads at times to frustration, to loss of heart, to pessimism in regard to the future. It can cause an absence of reflection in planning our life and our work in the way that would be a genuine response to what the Church and the world expects of us today.

- y The spiritual pastor seeks to establish more firmly in the community the unity of our apostolic life by rejecting any form of dualism between our identity as religious and our role as workers in pastoral fields.
- y The spiritual pastor makes every effort to transform his community into a genuine “fraternity” where each confrere can develop his human, Christian and religious maturity, and grow in the total giving of his life to Christ and the brethren. His aim is to form a fraternal communion where mutual respect and acceptance obtains, in spite of natural differences of temperament, of ideology and of age. He envisages a community where the person of each confrere, leaving behind the negative attitudes and disillusionments of the past, contributes to the growth of the whole community (cf. Const. 36).
- y The spiritual pastor never relaxes his efforts to help the community move forward in the way of faith and prayer. The primitive Christian community is said to have “persevered in prayer with one heart together with... Mary the Mother of Jesus” (Acts 1,14; cf. Const. 26). Personal and community prayer is an expression of our common faith and an inescapable requirement of our apostolic life.

Our community of faith has its foundation above all in the Eucharist “the summit and source of our apostolic life” (cf. Const. 29). The Superior should see to it that the community celebrates the Eucharist regularly as a community.

The prayer of the community should be living and committed. The Superior should put forward, and also elicit, such initiatives in regard to prayer as are conducive to living our encounter with God in joy, to nurturing a vigilant hope, and to stimulating our involvement with the world, especially with the poor and the insignificant people of this world.

The Superior should see to it that every confrere, in organizing his life, should have the time required for personal prayer: “In addition to the celebration of the liturgy and the Hours, the members have the right and duty to devote at least one hour every day to prayer. This prayer can be made either in private or in common” (cf. Const. 30).

In his role as spiritual pastor the Superior should be above all a man of prayer in continual contact with God. He can thus create around him a tranquil atmosphere of prayer, and can, by the example of his life and by fraternal words, inspire the confreres to be faithful to the times of prayer decided on by the community.

y The Superior is concerned also that the community should know, study and live the Constitutions. These are our guide to personal and community conversion and they particularize our participation in the mystery of Christ, Redeemer of mankind. Each (Vice)Province and also each community should organize study courses on the Constitutions interspersed with moments of prayer inspired by them.

- y The Superior as pastor of the community should make provision for the continuing formation of the confreres (cf. Const. 82, 90). This formation extends to several areas: human and spiritual renewal, theological and pastoral renewal, etc. The Superior should organize meetings for study and theological reflection in his (Vice)Province, or in his community. Included among other matters of study should be community examination of the most important documents of the Provincial Council, of the General Council and of the Church.
- y The spiritual pastor of the community should be a man “rejoicing in hope” (cf. Const. 20) who can radiate hope, especially in trying times, and can communicate it to confreres who live in difficult situations, Hope goes hand in hand with involvement. Because Christ was involved with us and because we are involved with him and with our brothers, we have the right to live in hope.

1.3 Dedication to our work of Evangelization

The Constitutions, taken in their entirety, help us to define our charism in the Church and our missionary task.

- y The Superior should above all know thoroughly our apostolic mission as Redemptorists and continually defend it. We are called “to follow the example of Jesus Christ the Redeemer by preaching the word of God to the poor... (cf. Const. 1). This is the way the Congregation participates in the mission of the Church.
- y The Superior is responsible for the renewal of the Institute, a task which should be continually in process. In this process it may be necessary to face up to situations which are not in keeping with our Redemptorist character. Such

situations can arise from changes that are not justifiable, as well as from resistance – both passive and active – to changes that are required.

y The Congregation is going through a process of revision in regard to its pastoral priorities. The MAJOR THEME of this sexennium aims at continuing on the lines of the theme chosen for the sexennium following the Chapter of 1979. “The General Chapter of 1985 wants to continue the theme of the pastoral priorities decided on by the Chapter of 1979. Now we want to put the emphasis on the explicit prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Gospel to the poor, allowing ourselves to be called by the poor (*Evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari*), in accordance with the charism of our Congregation expressed in Constitutions 1, 3, 4, 5 and in Statutes 09 and 021” (Final Document of the XX General Chapter, n. 03).

This theme contains some new elements which should be the subject of reflection, of prayer, and of decisions in each (Vice) Province and community: prophetic and liberating preaching: the poor: allowing ourselves to be called by them. In this process of revision the Superiors are called to stimulate the Province and the communities to dialogue, to community reflection and to decision making. At the end of the process we should be able to say that our life has changed and that we are more faithful than formerly to our charism. This process has to do not only with our activities but also with our life as a Redemptorist community. We cannot promote a dualism that sets a certain opposition between what we do and what we are: “The confreres should apply this theme of the Chapter in the heart of their own community...”, “a style of life in keeping with our common commitment to the poor is asked of all the confreres” (Final Document, nn. 10 and 11; cf. nn. 3, 6, 10, 12, 13).

- y The Superior of today should have a lively awareness of the signs of the times; these are manifestations of the action of the Spirit in the world, and we should be able to distinguish them from those signs that are manifestations of the sin of humankind. Knowledge of the realities that surround us, and a community discernment illumined by faith and the word of God are indispensable requisites for an understanding of the signs of our time.
- y The Superior insists on the community aspect of our missionary activity: to live in community and to undertake our apostolate as a community team is an essential law of our life as Redemptorists (cf. Const. 21).
- y In the Final Document of the XX General Chapter attention is drawn to two pastoral areas that should be the concern of the Congregation, and both Superiors and confreres should place special emphasis on them during these years: namely, the involvement of the laity with us in our apostolates, and the promotion of our apostolate of vocations as an integral part of a dedicated pastoral apostolate with young people (cf. Final Document, nn. 09 and 22-27). The General Council cherishes the hope that in these two areas practical decisions and effective programming will be implemented in the coming years.

2. MANNER OF DIRECTING AND LEADING THE COMMUNITY

In the Constitutions we find certain general principles which should give its character to the organization of the community by suffusing the style of government with human and apostolic warmth. These principles are:

- y the co-responsibility of all the confreres and of all the communities (cf. Const. 92);
- y decentralization together with communion (cf. Const. 93);
- y the subsidiarity that serves to promote personal and community responsibility (cf. Const. 94);
- y solidarity with a view to genuine cooperation (cf. Const. 95);
- y the adaptation of structures to the various needs of the apostolate (cf. Const. 96).

From these principles should flow a complex of governing values which characterize the manner of giving leadership to the life of one's (Vice)Province or community in our times. To direct his community in this style, the Superior:

- y encourages the development of the personality of each confrere by favoring whatever involves personal responsibility and community co-responsibility;
- y tries to become acquainted with each confrere and with his possibilities and his limitations so that he may be in a position to require of that confrere what he can realistically achieve (cf. St. 049);
- y create a climate where personal relationships can be real and profound;
- y promote unity among the confreres without prejudice to legitimate pluralism;
- y attach great importance to fraternal dialogue by creating the space, as it were, where each one can express himself freely. Dialogue, that is, between individuals and between groups; dialogue that should never have to be cut short

even when disagreements are great; dialogue that should issue in results, for the dialogue that never ends in decisions is frustrating for the confreres;

- y the Superior too should make decisions at the opportune time. He wins the confidence of the confreres if he is glad to learn of indications and is always open to suggestions, but finally is able to make his own decisions;
- y the Superior demands an active and responsible obedience and fidelity to the decisions made (cf. Const. 75);
- y the Superior “shall protect the rights of the members who are entrusted to their authority and their care. In the same way, with all charity, prudence and fortitude, they shall draw the attention of the confreres to their defects, especially if they cause harm or are a source of annoyance to the community and are injurious to apostolic activity” (Stat. 094).
- y the Provincial Superior should visit the communities frequently, and take part in the life of the confreres. That helps him to get to know his (Vice)Province and to facilitate continuing dialogue with the confreres (cf. St. 0155);
- y the Superiors, true to the principle of solidarity, should consider themselves responsible for the whole Congregation. Thus they actuate a helpful cooperation both with the General Council, among the communities of the Province itself and with the other Provinces of the Institute. The Congregation is a “missionary body” (cf. Const. 2) which requires a great measure of availability and collaboration at a general level, and at inter-provincial and provincial level, in order to develop its apostolic enterprises and to extend its presence to other countries where people in poverty and in spiritual abandonment are calling out for our ministry.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we want to stress again the spirit of “collegiality” which should always activate every Superior in his undertakings and decision making. This spirit of collegiality is very strongly emphasized in our Constitutions and it extends beyond the mere obligation to consult the community or the Councilors in the cases prescribed. Collegiality includes good cooperation, a fraternal spirit in the process of arriving at decisions, esteem, trust, and communication with the members of the community. Reciprocal trust is the fountain-head of the well-being of a community, of familial intimacy, and of the undertaking of new apostolic initiatives. The spirit of collegiality, based on this mutual trust, is what guarantees the harmony which is indispensable in the community life of every day.

These are some reflections of the General Council which we offer to you all, and especially to the Superiors to be designated for the next triennium. We hope that the service of leadership and direction in this sense may effectively contribute to the continuing conversion and growth of our Congregation.

These reflections, hopefully, should influence the voting and the elections which are to take place in the (Vice)Provinces and communities. May God grant that such confreres may be designated as can give a genuine lead to the life of the Congregation in our world.

In the name of the General Council I salute you fraternally in Christ the Redeemer.

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

(The official text of this *Communicanda* is the Spanish text).

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 10

Rome, July 1, 1987
Communicanda N. 10
Gen. 250/87

SAINT ALPHONSUS – MISSIONARY TO THE POOR

**A Reflection on the Two Hundredth Anniversary
of His Death**

To the Redemptorist Fathers, Brothers, Students and Novices

Dear Confreres,

“Accertato Alfonso della volontà di Dio, si animò e prese coraggio; e facendo a Gesù Cristo un sacrificio totale della Città di Napoli, si offerse menar i suoi giorni dentro proquoi, e tuguri, e morire in quelli attorneato da’ Villani e da’ Pastori”.

(“Sure that it was God’s will, Alphonsus found courage and started to act; and making the total sacrifice of the city of Naples to Jesus Christ, he offered to live the rest of his days in sheepfolds and hovels, and to die among shepherds and country folk”).

A.M. Tannoia, *Della Vita ed Istituto del Ven. S. di D. Alfonso M. Liguori*, I, 66.

1. These words of Tannoia offer the context of the reflection which the General Council offers to the members of the Congregation on the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Death of St. Alphonsus. During this Bicentennial, we think it is proper to take a look at St. Alphonsus in order to ask a particular question: Does his life help us to enter into the central theme of our last General Chapter: *evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari*?

2. In looking at Alphonsus, we must not try to make him say things he did not say. His era of history did not have the same questions or understandings of the world that is ours today. All we can do is examine his life and personality, and try to discern the attitudes that speak to our theme. In doing this, we will find that, as our Father and Founder, Alphonsus succeeded in unifying both his love for Christ the Redeemer and his love for the poor. And this appreciation will be a help to us who celebrate two hundred years of our heritage received from the first Redemptorist.

CONVERSION AND THE WILL OF GOD

3. Alphonsus' journey toward evangelizing the poor can be studied in the light of his concern for "distacco" (detachment) in order to follow the will of God. This Alphonsian detachment is an attitude which expresses his personal experience of "exodus" and of conversion. And this conversion involved a total focusing of his life toward a new goal which was never to be set aside.

4. Alphonsus' detachment was the consequence of his desire to discover the call of his Heavenly Father. Alphonsus was not a man with a fixed idea or an ideological fantasy. He had to seek the will of God through the very contradictory signs of his time. Events, persons, sufferings, successes, dreams, inspirations – all of them together did not suffice to make his way clear. Therefore,

Alphonsus' discernment had to be made in intimate dialogue with the Lord. He will become the Master of Prayer because he sensed the vital need of it. He carried all these confusing signs before the Lord and they were transformed through a dialogue of faith into the decisions which changed the history of Alphonsus' life and that of our own.

5. From the point of view of our theme, Alphonsus' conversion is highlighted in three important moments. First, there is Alphonsus' abandonment of the law courts which should not be taken simply as a gesture caused by bitterness over a defeat or by crushed ambition. Is it not true, rather, that in this moment he received from God an insight which brought about a disenchantment with his entire world, a disillusionment with a society which promised justice but which would permit injustice to triumph in its very courts of law. While we cannot expect of Alphonsus a critical analysis of society, we can certainly discover in his spirit of detachment a critical sensitivity which shaped his understanding of the social world in which he lived. He perceived an injustice and corruption which went beyond a lost legal case and which penetrated the customs, the norms and the values of the dominant society of his day: "Mondo, ti ho conosciuto" ("O world, I have understood you")

6. The second great moment of conversion came as Alphonsus cared for the sick in the Hospital of the Incurables, that intense moment when he heard the words: "Lascia il mondo, e datti a me" ("Leave the world and give yourself to me"). These words made him rush to the shrine of Mary at whose feet he laid his sword. In this profound gesture, he set aside his whole world and all it stood for. It was a moment of opening his heart to wherever the Lord would lead him.

7 His detachment would then carry him toward another world: the world of the spiritually abandoned, abandoned because they were marginalized and counted for nothing in the society in which he had lived. We cannot expect to find in Alphonsus the same understanding of poverty or of an option for the poor which the Church has in our day. There is no doubt, however, that he made a real “option for the poor” in his life.

8 It was to this third moment of his conversion that the Lord led Alphonsus, as he went one day to the hills above Scala for a rest. Here he discovered another world, until then little recognized by him. And it was in this world that Alphonsus found the people to whom he was called to live and announce the Gospel with all his strength: those who were spiritually abandoned because they were poor. They were to become the preoccupation of his life.

9. We can now see the thrust of Alphonsian detachment. It was part of his exodus-conversion from one world to a life-giving commitment to another world. It moved him from a disenchantment and total renunciation of one type of society to the acceptance of another as the place where he was to encounter Christ the Redeemer.

FOLLOW THE REDEEMER

10. Alphonsus found that the will of God for him was personalized in Jesus Christ. Jesus was the incarnate will of the Father, a will of saving love. Christ will be the center of the spirituality of Alphonsus. Every moment of the life of Jesus will be for him an amazing manifestation of the saving love of God. Crib, Cross, Eucharist: these are the symbols making visible the paschal force of the Incarnation, Death-Resurrection, and Sacrament at work in the depths of the life of Alphonsus. Christ is not just a model

for Alphonsus; there is rather a profound rapport of love between the two of them, that is akin to a sacramental identification. The missionary power of Alphonsus grew from that of Christ. As Christ's loving union with his Father broke out in his desire to proclaim this love to all, so Alphonsus' loving union with Jesus made him want all others to love Him too.

11. Alphonsus came to discover how Christ was to become incarnate for him in the world of the abandoned poor. Alphonsus saw himself called, not to see Christ in the poor, but rather to identify himself with the Redeemer who became poor that we might become rich. Alphonsus' choice in favor of the abandoned poor flowed from his identification with Jesus Christ, not from an ideological commitment to a social class.

12. For Alphonsus, Mary always stood out as the ultimate model of this "Christification" which he sought. She was the symbol of the merciful love of Christ for all, especially for the most abandoned. And she more than anyone else could awaken in others a response to this love.

EVANGELIZARE PAUPERIBUS

13. When Alphonsus discovered those to whom he was called, all his efforts and all his talents came to be placed at the service of a single objective: these abandoned poor. Alphonsus the writer and musician will compose simple meditations and sing popular songs; Alphonsus the theologian will devise the "vita devota" and will teach confessors to bring mercy, not judgment to the abandoned; Alphonsus the preacher will invent a simple style of preaching and the mission renewal; Alphonsus the bishop will feed the hungry during time of famine. Everything in him was to be united in order to "evangelizare pauperibus", to bring the Gospel to the abandoned poor.

14. In Alphonsus the preferential option for the poor was one which did not exclude. He did not refuse to frequently offer his ministry to all classes: the clergy, to nuns, and even to the nobility and well-to-do. Indeed, he always tried to be available for these others. But it was only for the sake of those who were abandoned because they were poor that he will become Alphonsus the Founder. Precisely for them he will begin his greatest labor: he will develop an apostolic community, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

15. This community was to bring to these poor folk Alphonsus' kind of explicit, prophetic, and liberating proclamation of the Gospel. This was to be a proclamation which leads to conversion because it is full of mercy and hope. Alphonsus never limited himself to the denouncement of sin, but offered a plan for a new life. He was never satisfied to provoke only an immediate response; he sought to articulate a new and deeply Christian life. And although he was not as conscious of social justice as we are today, can it be denied that he did extraordinary work to establish this Christian life on the fundamental dignity of the human personality of even the poorest and simplest? This inalienable dignity of the human person, which comes before any natural or conventional difference among human beings, shines strongly in the moral theology of Alphonsus, where the sanctity of the conscience of each person has an indisputable primacy over every law. Is it not precisely this affirmation of each person's personal dignity before God which is the first act of justice owed to everyone, and which is the basis of our equality and indeed of every other demand of social justice?

A PAUPERIBUS EVANGELIZARI

16. The second part of the theme for this sexennium comes from experiences and thoughts of our contemporary times. But in Alphonsus' life there are some hints which indicate that he found that the poor had a Gospel message for himself and his companions. It is in this sense that we can understand his demand that Redemptorists must live among those to whom they are sent. He saw only ruin for the Congregation if it would move away from the poor to return to the courts and palaces of the city, which for him were the symbols of a society he had rejected. They were powerful symbols which affected one's interior dispositions. Away from the poor the Congregation would lose its mission because it would lose its sensitivity to those to whom it was called. These people would teach the members what salvation means for a Redemptorist.

17. Alphonsus did not attempt a life of "solidarity with the poor" as this is understood today. But on this point three things seem clear from Alphonsus practice. First, as a rich man, most of whose first companions were from the upper strata of Neapolitan society, he demanded of himself and of them a change of life-style which was truly significant. This was seen by him, not from the point of view of identity with the poor, but with the poor Redeemer: the one who left everything divine to be one of us. In order to find him, one must become poor.

18. Second, Alphonsus always sought a direct and personal contact with the poor. The poor were not just received, but rather were sought out with apostolic zeal in order to find the most abandoned. Alphonsus took the initiative to begin an apostolic Congregation so he could reach these abandoned poor. His was a pastoral attitude of doing and not just of reacting.

19. Third, Alphonsus did not choose a life of impoverishment; his practical bent united with his detachment to see that material goods were used so that confreres could effectively reach out to the spiritual abandonment of the poor. The goods of the community were to enable it to be available to the abandoned poor to whom it was called. They were not to be a means of separating the community from these people.

THE APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

20. These aspects of Alphonsus' life signify more than a mere personal devotion; they are signs of an authentic spiritual dynamic which he has left to his Congregation as its inheritance.

21. To follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the Word of God to the poor" (Constitution 1). To follow the Redeemer and to live for the poor always constituted for Alphonsus a single reality which flowed directly from his living experience. And it constitutes the single purpose of his Congregation.

22. Alphonsus quickly realized that the path to identification with the Redeemer was not an individualistic adventure. For him, the founding of the Congregation did not simply mean the creation of a team for pastoral work. Rather it was to produce an apostolic community which in its being and its acting would be a continuation of the saving presence of the Redeemer. The apostolic community, not just the individual Redemptorist, was to be the visible sign of the Redeemer. The community was to strive to create a climate of mutual respect, support and sanctification within itself. In this way, the community itself becomes a living model of the Lord's kingdom of justice and peace. As such, it can preach with power and conviction to those abandoned poor to whom it is sent.

CONCLUSION

23. This is our Saint Alphonsus, sketched in a small portrait with only a few of his features. This picture seems sufficient, however, to give us some clues about what our attitude should be regarding the central theme of the General Chapter: “*Evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari*”. Without a doubt, our Alphonsian heritage should lead us to accept this theme as a genuine product of his charism.

24. The General Council offers these thoughts to all our confreres and communities on the occasion of the Bicentennial of the Death of our Founder, St. Alphonsus. We hope that they are suited to this important moment in our history.

Faternally yours in J.M.J.A.

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 11

Rome, December 25, 1988
Communicanda N. 11
Gen. 476/88

**THE REDEMPTORIST APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY:
ITSELF A PROPHETIC AND LIBERATING
PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL**

To all Redemptorist Confreres

Dear Confreres,

I. THE PURPOSE OF THIS COMMUNICANDA

1. When we speak about “proclamation of the Gospel” we usually tend to think of preaching and other apostolic activities. We have a tradition in which pastoral work was given an absolute priority. This apostolic work has been mainly understood as sacramental ministry, preaching and catechesis. Everything had to be placed at the service of this work. Therefore, even our religious community was viewed only in terms of the needs of the apostolate.

Over the past few years, however, we have been discovering more and more that our community life is an evangelical witness in itself, and as such is a vital part of our mission of evangelization.

Our Constitutions put great emphasis on community life: living in community is one of the essential values of our Congregation, as is explicit proclamation and the option for the poor. “*The essential law of life for the members is this; that they live in community and carry out their apostolic work through community.*” (cf. Const. 21)

2. We often speak of a dichotomy between our “religious life” and our “apostolate”, a dichotomy we are warned against in the very first constitution: “The Redemptorist Congregation truly follows the example of Christ in the apostolic life, which comprises at one and the same time a life especially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work.” One reason we feel this dichotomy is that we overlook one point of our missionary preaching: “The object of their whole missionary activity is to raise up and develop communities that will walk worthily in the vocation to which they are called and to exercise the priestly, prophetic and royal offices with which God has endowed them” (Const. 12). If we are to proclaim this message to the abandoned poor, must it not first be lived at home?

3. Our Congregation’s last general chapter, in setting out the major theme for this sexennium, pointed out those to whom we are called (“*evangelizare pauperibus*”), and added an important qualification: “*a pauperibus evangelizari*”. We think that both parts of this theme have a direct bearing not only on our pastoral work but also on our life as an apostolic community. It calls us to examine again the very foundations of our community life, to assess the gospel quality of our dealings with one another as brothers, and to consider the testimony which our apostolic community can offer to our modern society, (cf. FD. 09, 10, 11, 12)

4. It is in order to promote this process in our Congregation that we are writing this letter. In these reflections, we do not wish to embark on a treatise of all the dimensions of our apostolic community. These we readily find in our Constitutions, especially in Chapter II. What we want to do is to reflect on our living and working together as an apostolic community precisely in the light of the major theme of the last general chapter: *evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari*.

Therefore, we invite all of you, our confreres, to join us in making a serious reflection on our apostolic community so we can continue to make progress toward our Congregation's renewal.

II. THE ACTUAL SITUATION IN OUR CONGREGATION

5. Thanks be to God, our communities show great strengths and achievements. We should not complain too hastily about our communities, for while they are not perfect, we find great merit in them.

The Secretariat of Community Life has done some research into the state of community life in the Congregation. In spite of having many different cultures, we find that we share many similar experiences as Redemptorists.

y Our apostolic mission in the Church is understood more and more as a task which the confreres are to fulfill by working together as a community. The efforts which have been made to set up pastoral priorities are evidence of this.

- y The vast majority of our communities are known for their friendliness and hospitality. There is a simplicity and informality in our dealings with each other which lowers false barriers. We find ourselves generous at helping one another in our work and obligations.
- y We see ever greater openness to welcome into our houses those who are associated with us in pastoral work as well as those who are discerning their vocations.
- y After the crises of the past, there is now a common effort in most units to discover new forms of community life.

6. However, we also have the impression that some confreres do not believe in the possibility of living the ideal of community life. They may have experienced problems in their relationships with confreres in the past which have made it difficult for them to live and work with others as a community. After a few experiences like this, some may decide that it is just not worth the trouble to try and work together, and instead they try to find what they can do by themselves.

The primary community for some confreres, therefore, may not be their own community as such. Instead, they look for friends or groups to help them carry or accept the difficulties they find in community, or to find meaning and happiness in what they are doing.

7. A problem for confreres in some communities is the lack of a true experience of affectivity. Some have kept to the old ideal of a common life based for the most part on rule and discipline, without a real concern for fraternal communion. There are also some communities which have dropped all the structures of the community life of the past, but have not succeeded in introducing

any new structures. This has brought about a sense of emptiness or feelings of frustration.

Some communities, therefore, are discovering more and more the need to develop a true affective life in relationships within community, and with other people.

8. We are, therefore, still on the way; we are still searching for new forms of community life: forms adapted to different cultures, traditions, different kinds of communities.

We are facing the very same challenges in the community of the General Council, viz. how to develop our community life in a continuous process of experience, discernment and conversion. As with all our communities, we as a General Council have to search for, and continually renew, the way we witness to and live the gospel values of community in our mission in the Congregation.

III. THE FOUNDATIONS OF APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

9. Whenever our Constitutions speak of “apostolic community” they are referring to the very first apostolic community of Jesus and his apostles: “The whole purpose of community Life is to have the members, like the apostles (cf. Mk 3:14; Acts 2:42-45; 4:32), in a spirit of genuine brotherly union combine their prayers and deliberations, their labors and sufferings, their successes and failures, and their material goods as well, for the service of the Gospel” (Const. 22).

10. Therefore, we need to first look at this primitive apostolic community:

“He now went up into the hills and summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be with him and he would send them out to preach.” (Mk 3:13-14)

There are three essential elements in the life of this apostolic community:

- y to be called by Jesus;
- y to be with Jesus;
- y to be sent out by Jesus.

11. We didn’t come together as a community by our own choice, for reasons of pastoral efficiency, or for psychological support. Rather, we believe we have been called by the Lord to be with him. This call is what constitutes us as a community, not the bonds of blood, friendship, ideology or nationality. His call enables us to be a continuation of the apostolic community, to “become signs and witnesses before people of the power of his resurrection, proclaiming the new and eternal life” (Const. 51).

12. The initiative of Jesus, who called the apostles to be with him, and to be sent out, not only created this particular community but also a new quality of relationship among those who belonged to that community:

“I do not call you servants any longer, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my father...” (Jn 15:15-16)

This experience of community (of friendship) with Jesus enables the apostles to listen to, and to understand, the message of the Kingdom of God lived out and proclaimed by Jesus:

“The knowledge about the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them... As for you, how fortunate you are: Your eyes see and your ears hear.” (Mt 13:11-16)

13. Their relationship with Jesus reveals also a new relationship between the apostles and God, and with each other:

y They learn to call God “Father”: “One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he had finished, one of his disciples said to him: ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples/ Jesus said to them: ‘When you pray, say this: Father...’” (Lk 11:1-2)

y Because there is only one father, they cannot be anything else except brothers to each other: “You must not be called teacher because you are all brothers of one another and you have only one teacher. And you must not call anyone here on earth father because you have only the one father in heaven.” (Mt 23:8-9)

14. Therefore, this community lives according to new laws, quite different from the laws of this world:

“Jesus called them all together to him and said: ‘You know that the men who are considered rulers of the heathen have power over them, and the leaders have complete authority. This, however, is not the way it is among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest; and if one of you wants to be first, he must be the slave of all’” (Mk 10:42-44).

15. Through this new kind of living together the Kingdom of God is already present in this world. And the brotherly unity of this community is the witness which enables the people to believe in this Kingdom: "I pray that they all may be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me" (Jn 17:21).

16. This new style of human community has to be kept alive and witnessed to in this world by those who believe in Jesus Christ, viz. the entire Church and each Christian community within this Church.

The special task of religious is to be a prophetic sign of the viability and validity of the Kingdom within the Church and among the people. And this witness precedes any kind of explicit preaching. The experience of plentiful redemption, of being loved by the Father, should be realized, first of all, in the religious community itself. Without this personal experience it would be rather difficult (or even impossible) to preach this love outside.

"All Redemptorists must be humble and courageous servants among the people of the Gospel of Christ, The Redeemer and Lord, who is the head and model of the new humanity. This message has for its special object plentiful redemption; it proclaims the love of God the Father 'who first loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins' (1Jn 4:10) and through the Holy Spirit gives life to all who believe in him." (Const. 6)

17. The reality of religious consecration has an evangelical force in itself, when It confronts others outside our community, for it is meant to challenge the ideals of the world's society. Where the world's society shows itself individualistic and accumulative of goods, the Redemptorist apostolic community counteracts this by

community participation and by sharing of all goods in common. Where the world's society shows itself as domineering and violating human dignity, the testimony of the Redemptorist apostolic community is in its unconditional respect for all confreres as equals and brothers.

18. Our Constitutions talk rather often about witness: We are witnesses of the Good News of the grace of God: as such we "proclaim before everything else the very high destiny of the individual and of the whole human being." (Const. 7)

"According to the situations in which they find themselves, they will eagerly try to discover what they should do or say: whether to proclaim Christ explicitly, or confine themselves to the silent witness of brotherly presence." (Const. 8)

"...the missionaries, with patience and prudence, but at the same time with great confidence, must give witness to the charity of Christ and do all in their power to make themselves neighbors to everybody. This charity will show itself in prayer, genuine service to others and in witness of life, whatever form it may take." (Const. 9)

"Witness of life and charity opens the way to the testimony of the word..." (Const. 10)

19. This witness of life and charity is possible for everybody in our Congregation. It is because of this, our Constitutions say, that all Redemptorists are truly missionaries "whether they are engaged in different activities of the apostolic ministry or hindered from working at all..." (Const. 55) "Through this total dedication to the mission of Christ, the members share the self-renunciation of their crucified Lord the virginal freedom of his heart and his wholehearted offering of himself for the life of the world. They

must, therefore, become signs and witnesses before people of the power of his resurrection, proclaiming the new and eternal life.” (Const. 51)

20. Therefore, the Redemptorist apostolic community, by which we live and work together, is itself part of the very content of our prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Word of God to the abandoned, and especially the poor. Our apostolic community is the fact which gives testimony to the truth of our proclamation; it is indeed the basic means we have to fulfill our duty “of showing solidarity with the poor by promoting their fundamental rights to justice and freedom (Const. 5) for by forming communities which properly respect the rights and freedom of confreres we give substance to our preaching of justice and peace.

IV. HOW TO LIVE THIS PROPHETIC AND LIBERATING WITNESS

IV.1 “Build up Genuine Brotherhood” (Const. 36)

IV.1.1 Before All Else, an Attitude of Fraternity

21. In order that our apostolic community may witness to this Gospel vision, and before we begin to think of any particular structure or type of organization, we must build community on the foundation of Christian fraternity, that is, it must be grounded in that attitude of mutual sharing which Jesus left us by his word and example: “This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12). This ideal of fraternal love given us by Jesus, when united to our own Redemptorist spirituality, takes on the quality of being a continuation of the presence of the Most Holy Redeemer for the wellbeing of others (Const. 1).

22. Our vows lay the foundation for this attitude of mutual brotherhood:

Obedience, which rejects every form of domination of one another, which disposes us to serve freely (Mk 10:42-45), and which accepts individual loss to insure the common good.

Chastity, which renounces the right to a narrowly limited world of affection in order to open oneself to bring love to many in response to the experience of feeling oneself loved by the Lord. A properly cared for life of chastity develops in us attitudes of welcoming others, of listening, of sincerity without judgment or condemnation, of drawing close to others without possessing them, and finally of profound friendship.

Poverty, which enables us “to live in the spirit that permeated the community of apostolic times. In this way they become the sign of that fraternal life of Christ’s disciples” (Const. 62).

23. It is by developing this profound Christian friendship within our communities that we make our first and fundamental step in proclaiming a liberating gospel of peace and justice^ We must speak out of the experience and with the support of a true Christian community if we can have any hope of converting others to those social attitudes by which justice and peace become possible in our modern world.

24. A key word which describes this attitude of brotherhood is “sharing”, as we find in our Constitutions:

“Community does not truly exist when members merely live together; it requires as well genuine sharing on the human and spiritual level”(Const. 21).

“The whole purpose of community life is to have the members, like the apostles (cf. Mk 3:14; Acts 2:42-45; 4:32) in a spirit of genuine brotherly union combine their prayers and deliberations, their labors and sufferings, their successes and failures, and their material goods as well, for the service of the Gospel”(Const. 22).

25. A fundamental (indispensable) condition for brotherhood friendship and sharing is the acknowledgement and high esteem we should have for each one’s person, with his values and qualities (cf. Const. 36). “Each in his own way plays his part in living the life and carrying out the mission to which they have dedicated themselves” (Const. 35). Only the acceptance of the confreres as they are opens the way to sharing, brotherhood and even friendship, and gives the members the opportunities “to make their own decisions, in order to promote real development of maturity and responsibility (Const. 36).

IV.12 Practical Means for Developing this Christian Sharing

All Members are Equal

26. The first consequence of being an apostolic community is that there is “only one father and you all are brothers, (cf. Mt 23:8-9) Our Constitutions state this clearly: in community all the members are of themselves equal” (Const. 35).

Certainly there are different tasks and services to be performed in our Redemptorist communities. But these do not change the essential quality of being “brothers” to each other. When one looks at the history and tradition of our Congregation, we are convinced that we Redemptorists need a fundamental conversion in this matter.

On this point, it is important to pay attention to the manner in which our apostolic community offers a place to those who are not called to the office of presbyter, or who cannot exercise it actively: Brothers, confreres of advanced age, sick confreres and the newly professed. It is essential, if we are to have a true apostolic community, that our treatment of these confreres shows our belief that all are equal as Redemptorists and all are missionaries (Const. 55).

27. The Redemptorist community recognizes the missionary being of every confrere and confides to him the responsibility of a specific mission, whether it be of explicit preaching, of lay ministry or of familial service to the community. In the case of the brothers, we must confess that we still find in the Congregation some communities which treat them, not as confreres, but as servants. Because a person has not been called to preach explicitly or to lead liturgical celebrations does not mean he has any less right to community participation. The discernment of the role of our brothers and their preparation so that they can assume the responsibilities of their mission, both personal and pastoral, is a right of be respected and planned. The community should provide the possibility for pastoral missionary work for our brothers who have the ability, preparing them and confiding to them the responsibility of such pastoral ministries which do not require sacramental ordination.

28. The respect, the welcome and the care which we offer to confreres of advanced age and to sick confreres is an actual testimony of brotherly love in the face of a society which is accustomed to marginalize the aged and infirm from normal life. Since the

number of confreres of advanced age is growing in many (Vice) Provinces, it is important that each (Vice)Province decides the best way it can provide properly for these confreres. On the one hand, it must see that the physical and psychological needs of these men are provided for, and that they are not just left to themselves. On the other hand, small communities with apostolic commitments cannot be expected to provide adequate care for several sick or aged confreres. Each (Vice)Province must face this issue with a kind of planning that both educates confreres to deal with the unavoidable limitations of growing old or sickly, and that also provides for the foreseeable needs of these men.

29. Newly professed confreres who are still in first formation must also be treated with respect. They must be allowed to share in the reality of the (Vice)Province's apostolic and community life in the manner established by the program for their training. On the part of these new confreres, an attitude of Christian brotherhood requires that they have a respectful and open attitude to learn from the experience of the older confreres, as well as to avoid the presumptiveness which comes from their lack of personal experience and persevering effort. On the part of the community, there must be a willingness to teach by example, to allow for new developments of prayer and participation and to give the necessary freedom for new efforts and initiatives. The young confreres who begin to integrate themselves into our work cannot be seen as mere substitutes or continuators who have only to repeat that which has always been done. Pastoral and community renewal is impossible without the blending of the experience of those who are older and the creativity and energy of those who are young. If we want a Congregation ever renewed, we need to encourage in all the confreres openness before new pastoral needs and new methods of evangelization.

To be together

30. A community of fraternal sharing requires that there be time for us to be together. Each local community should look for opportune and natural times when at least the majority of the community can be together. These should occur with regularity, each day in houses where the community lives together, each week or month in communities where confreres must live apart. Meal times are a natural moment for fraternal sharing; a meal in common is the most natural sign of friendship: those who share their bread share their fundamental means of survival. Each community should make great effort to see that it regularly shares a meal together. Some natural times of recreation together are also essential, whether these be on a daily basis or on special feasts through such means as a “gaudeamus”, a time out of the house together, etc.

31. A second step, one of great importance, is regular community meetings. Here we do not mean meetings to decide practical matters or schedules, budget, etc. which every community must have. Of more importance for our theme are meetings in which there is a sharing of attitudes, of theological perspectives, of worries or anxieties, etc. Many provinces have developed simple programs for review of life meetings to be held every three or four months. These are centered on the reading of Scripture and of our Constitutions, with time given for personal thought and prayer and then a sharing of reflections. It is in these moments that we glimpse the interior lives of one another by which we can come to see those sensitivities, needs, joys and pains which provide the basis for a brotherly understanding and empathy with each other. Here we begin to break down those obstacles which prevent us from insight into the weak human reality of each other where we can begin to offer the support we need for our lives.

32. Finally, we cannot overlook the ultimate foundation for achieving this Christian fraternity: desire and prayer for conversion. We must beg the Lord for the gift to sense the basic equality of all the confreres and to develop a true will to realize together our missionary project. The reality of Christian community requires the grace of conversion, of humility, of a thirst for justice. Thus it demands a new understanding of, and commitment to, common prayer.

33. An inescapable task for all Christian communities, such as ours, which wants to live the Gospel fraternally is the appropriation of the Word of God in common. A community which cannot pray together cannot be a community of Christian fraternity. Sharing the Word of God ought to illumine the events of the community and of the people we serve in a way which brings concrete attitudes of commitment to justice and peace. Proper use of the times of community prayer can provide this possibility. Each community should have regular celebrations of the Eucharist and/or Liturgy of the Hours in a way which, by means of a homily or a sharing of reflections, allows the group to see its center and inspiration in the Gospel of Jesus. Common prayer of petition which is aware of our evangelical mission believes “if two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven” (Mt 18:19). Therefore, whether at home or during the time of missionary work, coming together for prayer is the guarantee that we believe in the Gospel nature of our community.

IV.2 “Live a life that is poor in spirit and fact.” (Const. 68)

34. The evangelical witness of our community life and “missionary charity requires of the members that they live a life that is really poor and adapted to the condition of the poor they are

evangelizing. By doing so, they show solidarity with the poor and become a sign of hope for them” (Const. 65).

35. The present scandal of the ever increasing accumulation of wealth on the one hand, and of impoverishment of two-thirds of humanity on the other, even after two thousand years of the preaching of the Good News of Jesus, ought to move us to a forceful review of our consecration to poverty. We ought to recognize that religious poverty itself has been badly wounded by secularism and consumerism, which not only separates our level of common life from the majority of humanity but even renders us incapable of being sensitive to social injustice.

36. Without a doubt, allowing ourselves to be called by the poor (*apauperibus evangelizari*) means to make ourselves aware as a community of the situation of social injustice in the world and to testify to the possibility of living a different way. And for this reason, there is need of grace and of decision to change improper choices and attitudes in order to regain credibility for the proposals of Jesus.

37. Many dimensions of the experience and message of St. Alphonsus regarding the consecration to poverty of Redemptorists must be recaptured with great seriousness, if we wish to respond positively to the community implications of our major theme. The following four aspects strike us as the most important:

IV21 Sharing of Goods

38. Whatever theories of poverty we hold, the fact is that the practice of poverty in our Redemptorist communities has always centered on “leading a common life”, that is, on sharing our goods (cf. Const. 64). We believe that this daily sharing with all

its implications may be the only face of poverty which it is now morally possible for us to show in order to give meaning to this vow for ourselves and for others. The ability of a community to share its goods in a manner by which all may receive what is necessary, by which no one feels forced to look for gifts from outside the community, by which no one seeks to have what is better than the other person's, and by which all are willing to contribute all their earnings and work can be nothing but a sign of hope to a world. "The voluntary pooling of all goods in common leads in a wonderful way to the desire for fellowship and sharing with those in lowly circumstances, especially the poor. For poverty implies mutual sharing, after the example of Christ who gave all things to us" (St. 044).

39. Our sharing of goods within our community and within our Congregation gives witness to an alternative form of society to those of the capitalist and socialist worlds. Our putting all of our goods and earnings together for the common good and for the sake of our apostolate brings about a truly effective distributive justice.

40. Sharing our goods with those outside our community is also an obligation of ours. It means we avoid economic enrichment at an institutional level and so testify to a concrete solidarity with the great majority of the human race who lack economic riches. If an attitude of private personal property is inadmissible within our Congregation, private community property ought also to always be an object of review. In the face of the unmet fundamental needs of so many poor, perhaps some of our plans for houses, cars, furnishings, etc. become sinfully extravagant. We believe that our prudent financial planning ought to take care of the present generation without creating a dangerous richness for the next one.

IV22 Detachment

41. The spirit of sharing outlined above is not possible without the fundamental attitude of detachment which was a hallmark of Alphonsus' spirituality. Detachment brings with it a spiritual distancing, and sometimes even a geographical distancing, from the type of materialistic and consumeristic society in which we find ourselves: to be in the world but without belonging to the evils of its system (Jn 17:14-15). If the desire to always possess more and the attachment to material goods (which are indeed "signs of our time") enter into our communities, our personal lives, our community lives, and our (Vice)Provincial lives will end up placing "having" over "being" and transform us into agents of present injustice. It seems important that we in our communities investigate such issues as: the monetary reserves we build up for the future; the personal use of funds and gifts; the level of comfort or "image" given by our choice of cars, recreations, etc; the length and frequency of vacations; etc. There are no easy answers to these touchy issues; nor is there fast agreement or consensus. Such decisions can only be reached by a deep desire for conversion to the Lord "who, being rich, became poor for our sakes, that by his poverty we might become rich" (2Cor 8:9). This sense of detachment is an important sign our fraternal community can give to our age and to a world which does not wish to share but only to protect what it has.

IV23 Austerity

42. Our sharing in common will only be strong if each one seeks to limit his desires and avoids the creation of "false needs" which makes what is merely useful become "indispensable" and that which is really superfluous become "necessary". Austerity means being satisfied with what is necessary for our lives: sufficient food, decent dwellings, adequate health, initial and continuing formation, the

instruments needed for our pastoral work and suitable means for repose and relaxation. The avoidance of accumulating superfluous goods, or more importantly, of creating artificial needs depends on a social sensibility rooted in the gospels. It is a community response to the call of Christ to see his presence in the poor who surround us and in the urgent material needs of so many others. We cannot justify the spending on superfluous goods for ourselves, for our houses, for our provinces, that which can pay what is necessary for the survival of other human beings. “Since the members belong to an Institute devoted to the evangelization of the poor, they must be keenly sensitive to the poverty of the world and to the grave social problems afflicting practically all peoples (St. 044).

IV24 Our Houses

43. The plans for future foundations should recapture seriously the practice of St. Alphonsus regarding the location of our houses, that is, that they are found in the midst of those whom we are destined to serve in order to be always available to them. It is a fact brought to light by social research that the social place where one lives conditions one’s awareness and attitudes. It therefore conditions our community life. We were founded to evangelize especially the poor; we should therefore live where they are found. One of the great scandals of the Congregation is how many (Vice)Provinces cling to foundations under the misguided ideal that because the Congregation has once established a foundation it must make it a priority to maintain an apostolic work in that location. Clinging to foundations which have lost most of their reason for Redemptorist presence and can be adequately served by someone else contradicts one of the most basic characteristics of Redemptorist detachment: “They will cheerfully accept any conditions that may require their moving from place to place and, in a spirit of self-denial, live the freedom of which the Gospel speaks (Const. 67). In many cases,

such clinging prevents the initiation of works that might better serve the abandoned, and especially the poor.

IV.3 The Open Community

44. To evangelize the poor and be evangelized by the poor means that we as a community have to be close to the people. This has been a strong tradition from the very foundation of our Congregation, and we find it stressed again in our Constitutions.

“In order that the missionary work may develop and be really successful, adequate knowledge and practical familiarity with conditions in the world are essential... For this reason the members of the Congregation confidently engage in missionary dialogue with the world. In a spirit of brotherly concern they should try to understand people’s anxious questionings and try to discover how God is truly revealing himself and making his plan known” (Const. 19).

The community “must be open to the world in such a way that, through contact with people, it may learn to understand the signs of the times and of places, and adapt itself more fittingly to the demands of evangelization” (Const. 43).

45. One of the great traditions in our Congregation at its inception was the so-called “continuous mission” begun by St. Alphonsus himself. A part of this mission involved praying with the people: Twice a day, the community made its meditation together with the people in our churches, as well as a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. This tradition was lost when we moved into our house chapels for community prayer.

Prayer manifests our faith and, in reality, becomes preaching

when we do it together with the people. The invitation and the accessibility by which people can participate in our common prayer life is an aspect of alphonsonian spirituality which it is worth the trouble to recover.

46. The last General Chapter strongly emphasized our collaboration with the laity. We should not restrict this just to collaboration in the apostolate: if our essential law of life is that we live in community and carry out our apostolic work through community (cf. Const. 21), this implies that we should include our lay collaborators in some way in our community life. Understanding lay collaboration in this way could give new life to our rather sterile concept of oblates.

We would like to encourage the provinces which have begun new forms of association with the laity, and lay associate programs, to continue this effort and to share their experiences with others.

47. Our communities have a special mission to young people. Many young people are searching for some experience of welcome, community and sharing in which they can discover meaning and direction for their life. Our communities could provide that place.

In their message to the Redemptorists, after the Pagani meeting, the young people said: "One gift which needs to be strengthened is to keep alive the possibility for young people to encounter Christ. For this to happen it is necessary that you open your houses as places of welcome and prayer to lay people, and especially to young people, who are the new poor in the world... Do not be afraid of sharing with us the spirituality of Alphonsus and the circumstances of his life."

48. “The members can, in certain cases, be called upon, with the consent of the community, to share the actual destitution and insecurity of the poor in lowly conditions.” (St. 045). Every Redemptorist community should be close to the people, but not every community can be inserted in the sense of this Statute.

In some provinces, especially in the Third World, some communities are following the recommendations of this statute and are living as “inserted communities”, that is, as communities which adopt the life-style of the poor in whose midst they live, and work with them in their search for liberation. We hold these communities and confreres in high esteem.

Life in these inserted communities, however, can be rather difficult, and sometimes it places great psychological pressure on the confreres. They need, therefore, the full support of their Province. Besides this, the Provincial Government should also insure that these confreres have the space and the time to live as a true Redemptorist community in order to avoid the risk of burnout.

49. Many provinces are experiencing difficulties in understanding and putting into practice especially the second part of the Major Theme: “to be evangelized by the poor”.

One way of discovering its meaning could be to open our houses more to the people, to listen to them, to share faith, prayer, discernment and work with them in a manner which does not destroy suitable privacy for confreres.

We are convinced that a conversion in the way we experience and live community, as well as in our personal life, could come about through this more open attitude in our community life.

V. CONCLUSION

50. At the end of our first Communicanda on the Major Theme we offered you some questions for reflection. Among these were questions on “Community life and solidarity with the poor” (cf. Communicanda 4, n. 9.3).

We would like to refer you to these again:

“The common life of the members must be truly adapted to the mentality of each region and give effective witness to poverty and solidarity with the poor.”(St. 046.2)

Our life-style in community must correspond with the situation of the people among whom we live and work; this calls also for inculturation. Our option for the poor asks, in addition, for simplicity in lifestyle which will make authentic our evangelization among the poor.

- y Does our style of life indicate our solidarity with the poor to whom we preach the Gospel?
- y Are our communities open and responsive to the people to whom we are committed?
- y Do we see any possibility of sharing the actual destitution and insecurity of the poor in lowly conditions, as proposed in St. 045?
- y How do we deal with money (collecting, investing and spending)?
- y How do we practice solidarity with the poor within our Congregation?

51. So many people in the world are alone, alienated and lacking in hope. They are looking for some alternative to their daily experience in the society in which they live. People need to hear and experience Good News that is plentiful redemption and liberation. We try to live this alternative in our communities as a prophetic and liberating proclamation of this Good News.

But “when the opportune time comes (cf. Col 4:9), and the Lord opens the door to them for the preaching of the word, the members are always ready to give witness to the hope that is in them (cf. 1Pt 3:15)”.

Our explicit preaching of the word, therefore, brings to completion the witness of our brotherly presence by preaching the mystery of Christ with confidence and constancy, (cf. Const. 10).

Fraternally yours in the Redeemer

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

APOSTOLIC LETTER
SPIRITUS DOMINI
JOHN PAUL II
Supreme Pontiff

FOR THE BICENTENARY
OF THE DEATH OF
ST ALPHONSUS DE' LIGUORI

To our beloved son Juan M. Lasso de la Vega y Miranda
Superior General of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer

1. “*The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken*” (Lk 4:18; cf. Is 61:1). The biblical text which Jesus, the adorable Son sent by the Father, applied to himself at the beginning of his messianic mission and which, as the antiphon of the Mass, opens the liturgy on the feast of St Alphonsus M. Liguori, resounds in a particularly solemn way on the day when we celebrate the birth into heaven of this most zealous bishop, Doctor of the Church and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

It is with great joy today that I address you and all the sons of St Alphonsus who are sharing with the members of the whole Church in the living memory of a saint who was a master of wisdom for

his time, and who continues to enlighten the path of the people of God with the example of his life and teaching, as a light reflecting Christ, the light of the nations.

2. Let us briefly recall his life. Alphonsus was born at Marianella, Naples, on 27 September, 1696. As the heir in a family of the nobility he received a complete and thorough education in the humanities and law. It was an education which, during his adolescence and youth, was complemented by a careful and fervent Christian practice: deep Eucharistic and Marian piety, visits to the sick and those in prison, a sensitivity towards the poor, a strong commitment to the lay apostolate.

After a brilliant career in the court of Naples, he renounced the world in order to consecrate himself to God alone. On 21 December, 1726, at the age of 30, he was ordained a priest for the diocese of Naples. He immediately gave himself to an intense apostolate in the “poorer areas of Naples”, and also put great effort into the “evening chapels” which became a school for social and moral re-education. Besides his ministry in the city he also engaged in preaching in the outlying districts of the Kingdom as a member of the “Apostolic Missions” in the diocese of Naples. This experience brought him into contact with a different world, culturally and spiritually impoverished, and led him to the decisive choice of “the most abandoned souls in the countryside and rural villages”. It was for the evangelization of the poor that he founded a Missionary Institute at Scala (Salerno) on 9 November 1732: the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. It was an institute characterized especially by an itinerant preaching of missions to the people, spiritual exercises and catechetical instruction. For thirty years (1732-1762) this missionary apostolate, which he held close to his heart, took, Alphonsus in many different directions, deepening in him the choice of the poor and the humble.

3. In 1762, at the age of 66, he was appointed Bishop of S. Agata dei Goti, and he brought to this new pastoral calling a level of active involvement which was almost unbelievable, both in terms of direct, ministry and in the apostolate of writing.

Exhausted by a painful and deforming type of arthritis, he left the diocese in 1775 and returned to a house of his Institute at Pagani (Salerno). He remained there, accepting much physical and spiritual suffering in union with the will of God, until his death on 1 August, 1787, at the age of 91.

This long life was filled with uninterrupted work: the work of a missionary, bishop, theologian and spiritual writer, founder and superior of a Congregation.

4. Such a brief chronological description of his life cannot be divorced from the recollection of his numerous activities because only in this way is it possible to understand what the person of Alphonsus meant for his time.

In order to respond to the needs of the People of God, he quickly added the support of the apostolate of writing to that of the word and pastoral action. Here one is dealing with two indivisible aspects of his life and work which complete one another, bringing to the literary output of the Saint an unmistakable pastoral spirit. The commitment of the writer, in fact, stems from this preaching and brings him back to it in the continual concern he had for the salvation of souls.

Beginning with *The Eternal Truths* and *Spiritual Songs*, his literary work enjoyed an extraordinary growth which reached its peak in the years of his episcopacy. The total output contains at least 111 titles and covers three great areas: morals, faith and spiritual life.

5. *Alphonsus was responsible for the renewal of moral theology*; through contact with the people he encountered in the confessional, especially during his missionary preaching, he gradually and with much hard work brought about a change in his mentality, progressively achieving a correct balance between rigorism and liberty.

On the subject of too great a rigorism often practised in the Sacrament of Penance, which he called “a ministry of grace and forgiveness”, he used to repeat: “Just as laxity in the hearing of confessions leads to the ruin of souls, so also does rigorism do great harm to them. I disapprove of certain kinds of rigorism which are not in accordance with sound learning, and which bring destruction and not edification. Charity and gentleness are needed with sinners: this was a characteristic of Jesus Christ. And if we want to bring souls to God and save them we must imitate, not Jansenius, but Jesus Christ who is the example of all missionaries”¹.

And we find these memorable words, among others, in his most important moral writings: “...it is certain, or must be considered certain, that it is not necessary to impose anything on people under pain of grave sin unless the reason is evident... Considering the fragility of the present human condition, it is not always true that the narrowest way is the safest way to direct souls; we see that the Church forbids both excessive liberty and excessive rigour”².

The *Praxis Confessarii*, *Homo Apostolicus*, and his principal work, the *Theologia Moralis*, made him the master of Catholic moral teaching.

In the area of *theological controversy* he worked against the then emerging movements: the Enlightenment, which was undermining the foundations of the Christian faith; Jansenism, which promoted

a doctrine of grace which, instead of building trust and encouraging people towards hope, brought them to despair or, by contrast, to indifference; Febronianism which, as a result of political Jansenism and jurisdictionalism, limited the authority of the Roman Pontiff in favour of princes and of nationalistic Churches. In the *strictly dogmatic* field, Alphonsus developed a doctrine of grace based on prayer which, as he hoped, restored to souls a lively spirit of trust and hope in salvation. Among other things he wrote: “God does not refuse anyone the grace of prayer through which one can obtain the help to overcome every concupiscence and every temptation. And I declare and repeat, and will always repeat as long as I live, that all our welfare is to be found in prayer”. It is here that we find the famous axiom: “The one who prays will be saved, the one who does not pray will be lost”.³

8. The architecture of Alphonsian spirituality can be reduced to prayer and grace. Prayer for Alphonsus was not simply a pious exercise. It is a radical requirement linked to the dynamic of salvation itself. No one can overlook in his description of prayer the importance it plays in the practice of Christian life as the “great means of salvation”.

On a par with the moral and dogmatic works, or better still, in an even deeper way, the *spiritual writings* of Alphonsus grew out of the apostolate and supplemented it.

9. His spiritual works are known to everyone. We recall the more important ones, in their historical order: *The Glories of Mary*; *The Preparation for Death*; *The Great Means of Prayer*; *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ*; *The Visits to the Most Holy Sacrament and to Most Holy Mary*; *The Way to Converse Continually and Familiarly with God*; and above all, *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, his ascetical masterpiece and compendium of his thought.

10. One can summarize the characteristics of his spiritual writing by saying: it is a *popular spirituality*. Everyone is called to holiness, each according to his or her state of life. Holiness and perfection consist essentially in the love of God which finds its highest ideal in union with the will of God. God is not an abstract deity, but the Father of all: the God of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ.

The Christological dimension is an essential aspect of the spirituality of Alphonsus with the Incarnation, the Passion and the Eucharist being the greatest signs of divine love. Therefore, the second reading of the Liturgy of the Hours (for his feast) is suitably taken from the first chapter of *The Practice of the Love Of Jesus Christ*.⁴

11. Alphonsus attached supreme importance to the sacramental life, especially the Eucharist and Eucharistic adoration whose most typical expression is to be found in the Visits.

Devotion to Mary occupies a totally unique place for him in the economy of salvation: Mary is the Mediatrix of grace and Companion in redemption; for this reason she is Mother, Advocate and Queen. In fact, Alphonsus did everything under her protection from the beginning of his life until his death.

12. The reputation of Alphonsus, which was very considerable during his life, and increased in an extraordinary way after his death, has remained unchanged in the past two centuries. It is here that we find the reasons why, after the canonization which was decreed by my predecessor Pope Gregory XVI on 26 May, 1839, numerous letters began to arrive at the Holy See requesting that the title of Doctor of the Church should be conferred on the Saint. This was granted by Pope Pius IX on 23 March 1871. In the Apostolic Letter *Qui Ecclesiae Suae* of 7 July 1871, this same Pope, commenting on the title of Doctor of the Church given to the Saint, wrote: "One can in fact assert that there has not been one error even in our times which Alphonsus, at least in great measure, did not fight against".⁵

13. The successive Popes have always recognized the reputation of this great man, and have recalled and maintained it even to our own day.

Pope Pius XII of blessed memory who, on 26 April 1950, conferred on Alphonsus the new title of “*Heavenly Patron of all Confessors and Moralists*”,⁶ also asserted on 7 April 1953: “The treasures of real piety were spread through the writings of this Saint of missionary zeal, of pastoral charity, of burning Eucharistic piety, of tender devotion to Mary; and the light of his mind and the feelings of his heart, both of which were nourished by a heavenly wisdom, and which are the substance of life and of piety for souls, can easily be assimilated by all and are a gentle invitation to spiritual meditation, easily moving them to the raising of the heart to God”.⁷

14. The following assertion of Pope John XXIII deserves to be remembered: “Oh, Saint Alphonsus! What glory and what an object of study for the clergy of Italy! We have been familiar with his life and his works ever since the first years of our priestly formation”.⁸ From the evidence in the history of the Church and in popular piety, it is clear that the message of Alphonsus is still of value today. And the Church puts him before you again today, and before the beloved sons who are members of the Congregation, and all Christian people, as a model to be lovingly imitated.

15. Saint Alphonsus was *a close friend of the people*, the little people, the people of the poor sections of the main city of the Kingdom of Naples, a friend of the workers and, above all, of the people of the countryside. This feeling for people characterized the whole life of the Saint, as missionary founder, bishop and writer.

16. As missionary, he went in search of “the most abandoned souls of the countryside and the rural villages”, going to the people with the most suitable and effective preaching. He renewed the

ministry of preaching both with regard to method and content, linking it with an oratorical style which was simple and direct. He spoke to the simple in such a way that everyone could understand.

17. As *founder*, he wanted a group which, following his example, would make a radical option in favour of the most lowly and would always live near to them.

As bishop, his house was open to all, but the greatest circle of his clients were the humble and the simple. He also prompted social and economic initiatives for his people.

18. As writer, he focused always and only on what would be of benefit to the people. His works, including his moral theology, were inspired by the people. Our predecessor, John Paul I, while Patriarch of Venice, wrote in this way: “Alphonsus is a theologian for the practical problems which need to be solved quickly, following his own living experience. If he sees that charity needs to be rekindled in the hearts of the people, he writes ascetical works. If he wants to deepen the faith and hope of the people, he writes works of dogmatic and moral theology”.⁹

19. The popularity which the Saint has long enjoyed can be ascribed to his desire for brevity, clarity, simplicity, optimism and friendliness which, in the end, came down to gentleness. At the root of this love for people is his concern regarding salvation: to save himself and to save others, a salvation that was aimed at perfection, at holiness. The frame of reference of his pastoral activity did not exclude anyone: he wrote for everyone. He urged pastors of the People of God, in particular bishops, priests and religious, to spare nothing in giving themselves to the people entrusted to them in their varying needs.

20. The message of Alphonsus, even when he was innovative and above all then, derives from the centuries-old consciousness of the Church. He had, as few others did, the *sensus ecclesiae*, a criterion that remained with him in his theological research and pastoral practice in such a way that he became, in a certain sense, the voice of the Church. It is not surprising that the Saint had a very special veneration for the Supreme Pontiff, and he defended his supremacy and infallibility in difficult times. On the more personal level also, he revealed this devotion in every trial.

21. If as a saint, bishop and doctor, Saint Alphonsus belongs to the whole Church; as founder he represents *the essential point of reference for his Congregation*.

22. On this point, I would like to recall in particular, three aspects of his life which specially call you to imitate him. *Closeness to the people*: The search for “the salvation of souls” which was the intuition of the founder, must be followed with great fidelity by the Congregation throughout the world according to the particular exigencies of time and place. In this search preference is to be given to the humble and the simple, who are also in general the poorest.

23. Therefore, in the present and coming years, the Congregation must retain this commitment and give it priority in all its undertakings. I noted also that your General Chapter of 1985 committed itself in a praiseworthy way to the “mission to the nations”, especially in Asia and Africa. This commitment reflects the original intention of your founder.

24. *Popular missions*: These have been developed as a stable and solid form of pastoral activity in the Congregation. They have always revealed your closeness to the people. The missions, on which Saint Alphonsus left such an indelible mark and which I

myself recommended in various documents, must take on among you a new vigour for the good of the whole Church.¹⁰ In missionary preaching, as in every other form of your apostolic work, you should have a particular concern for those aspects which have always constituted what is peculiar to the sons of Saint Alphonsus: the *eternal truths* must be announced with the pastoral sensitivity required for today; the merciful love of God, “*Rich in Mercy*”; plentiful redemption realized in Christ, “*Redeemer of the People*”; the maternal intercession of Mary, “*Mother of the Redeemer*”, Advocate and Mediatrix: the necessity of prayer for salvation.

25. The *study and teaching of moral theology*: The importance of moral theology, above all today, is well known to everyone. The Second Vatican Council opportunely recommended: “Special care should be given to the perfecting of moral theology. Its scientific presentation should draw more fully on the teaching of holy Scripture and should throw light on the exalted vocation of the faithful in Christ and their obligation to bring forth fruit in charity for the life of the world”.¹¹ In fact, “the good of the person lies *in being in the Truth and in doing the Truth*. This essential bond of Truth-Good-Liberty is largely lost in contemporary culture, and therefore today it is one of the proper tasks of the mission of Church for the salvation of the world to lead people back to seeing this union”.¹² The bicentenary of Alphonsus comes as a suitable occasion to dedicate ourselves anew to this task of study, in which we seek to possess, in the changed culture of our society, the great *human balance* and *high sense of the faith* which Saint Alphonsus possessed throughout his whole life as a scholar and a pastor. This Apostolic See, for its part, will not omit to make its contribution to this effort by treating the issues of the foundations of moral theology more fully and more deeply in a document, shortly to be released.

26. Certainly, modern life presents new problems, which are often not easy to resolve. But always to be kept in mind in the direction of souls and in the ministry of teaching is that the indispensable criterion to which we must always turn is the Word of God authentically interpreted by the Magisterium of the Church. You must always be guided by a pastoral kindness according to the wise advice of Pope Paul VI. “Not to diminish the saving teaching of Christ is the preeminent form of charity for souls. But it must always be accompanied by the patience and goodness of which the Redeemer himself gave us the example in all his dealings with people”.¹³

27. The Apostolic Letter which I send you today on the bicentenary of the death of Saint Alphonsus, expresses my convictions and feelings about a Saint who was a master of wisdom and a father of the faith.

28. Turning to the sons of Alphonsus spread throughout the world whom you worthily represent, I would like to give you the advice such a father would give his heritage, the Congregation he founded. It is the advice which Saint Alphonsus expressed in his life, in his pastoral work and in his writings: he urges faithfulness to Christ and to his Gospel; faithfulness to the Church and her mission in the world, faithfulness to the people of our time; and faithfulness to the charism of your Institute.

29. You should never be deflected from this Alphonsian path in your life and ministry. You should always be men who follow the footsteps of the divine Redeemer, whose title and name you bear, according to the purpose of your Institute as it is given in the words of your Saint: “to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor, as he declared of himself: ‘he sent me to preach the Good News to the poor’”.¹⁴

30. During its long journey of 255 years, your Congregation has produced saints worthy of being remembered: the lay member St Gerard Majella (1726-1755); St Clement M. Hofbauer (1751-1820), the bicentenary of whose arrival in Poland occurs this year and which I have had occasion to remember by sharing in the celebrations at Warsaw (10-17 May 1987) by means of a letter; St John Nepomucene Neumann (1811-1860); and Blessed Peter Donders (1809-1987), whose name I added to list of the blessed.

31. The example of Saint Alphonsus and of these great sons of his, recognized for their sanctity by the Church, should inspire in all of you a desire for the way of holiness.

32. I am happy to have participated in the celebrations of the Church and of your Institute through this Apostolic Letter, and I sincerely impart to you, to all the sons of Alphonsus, to the Redemptoristine nuns and to the whole Alphonsian family, a special Apostolic Blessing, as a pledge of heavenly grace.

Given at the Vatican, this first day of August, 1987, in the ninth year of my Pontificate.

JOANNES PAULUS PP. II

NOTES

1 A.M. Tannoia, *Della vita ed Istituto del venerabile servo di Dio Alfonso Maria Liguori, Vescovo de S. Agata de' Goti e Fondatore della Congregazione de' Preti Missionari del SS. Redentore*, III. Napoli 1800, p. 88; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 151, 191-192.

2 St Alphonsus Liguori, *Theologia moralis*, ed. L. Gaudé, II, Romae, 1907, p. 53. It is also important to note what the Holy Doctor added: “when some action should be condemned as mortal (sin) or not, and wrote: if, in the case, there is not the explicit authority of Holy Scripture, or of a canon, or of a decision of the Church, or if there is not evident reason, this (action) cannot be called such except with the greatest risk”.

3 St Alphonsus Liguori, *Del gran mezzo della preghiera e opuscoli affini* (Opere asectiche, II), Roma 1962, p. 171.

4 St Alphonsus Liguori, *Pratica de amar Gesù Cristo e opuscoli sull'amore divino* (Opere ascetiche, II), Roma 1933, pp. 1-4.

5 *Pius IX, Acta*, V (1869-1871), 337.

6 Cf. *Apos. Lett. Consueverunt Omni Tempore*: AAS 42 (1950), pp. 595-597.

7 Pius XII, *Lettera Autografa*, for the new edition of the works of St Alphonsus: *Spicilegium Historicum Congregationis SSmi. Redemptoris*, I (1953). n. 1-2, p. 247.

8 A.G. Roncalli, *Il giornale dell'anima*, Roma 1964, p. 462.

9 A. Luciani, *S. Alfonso cent'anni fa era proclamato Dottore della Chiesa*. (Letter to the presbyterate of Venice for Thursday, 1972), Venezia 1972, p. 41.

10 Cf. Apost. Exhort. *Catechesi Tradendae* (16 October 1979), n. 47: AAS 71 (1979), p. 1315; *Discorso al Consiglio Generale dei Padri Redentoristi* (6 December 1979), n. 2: Insegnamenti II-2 (1979), p. 1327; Discorso ai partecipanti al I Convegno nazionale sulle Missioni al Popolo (6 February 1981): Insegnamenti IV-1 (1981), pp. 233-237; Apost. Exhort. *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (2 December 1984), n. 26: AAS 77 (1985), p. 247.

11 Second Vatican Council, Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 16.

12 John Paul II, *Discorso ad alcuni docenti di Teologia morale*: AAS 78 (1986), 1099. The words of Paul VI to the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Redemptorists on 22 September, 1967, remain pertinent: cf. AAS 59 (1967), 960-963.

13 Paul VI, Encycl Letter *Humanae Vitae*, 29: AAS 60 (1968), 501.

14 *Constitutiones et statuta Congregationis SS. Redemptoris*, Romae 1986, Const. 1, p. 21.

15 John Paul II, *Epistula supremo Moderatori Varsaviensis Provinciae missa*, 14 May 1987.

CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS

XXI GENERAL CHAPTER

Itaici (Brazil) 1991

FINAL DOCUMENT

General Curia C.Ss.R.
Rome, November 25, 1991

Dear confreres,

We are very happy to present to you the Final Document of the XXI General Chapter. The Chapter entrusted to us its final form and publication. In fulfilling this mandate, we have begun our work as the new General Council.

This document is the result of a long process, spanning the last two years. All of us have shared in its preparation, since the document is the fruit of a dialogue which began at the level of the individual communities, and continued throughout the preChapter meetings, and over the month of the General Chapter at Itaici.

We would like to underscore some salient points of the document.

1. The final document gives us a more developed vision of our mission as Redemptorists. The themes of the two prior chapters are recalled, so that the process of our renewal may successfully continue. The General Chapter has highlighted the “interconnection between the task of our inculturated evangelization, our community life and our spirituality.” A serious, in-depth study of this text will undoubtedly bring greater personal and communal authenticity in our apostolic life.

2. It proposes a program which should direct our reflection and decisions for the next sexennium. While capturing our ideals as an apostolic community dedicated to the service of the urgent pastoral needs of today’s world, it also wishes to promote throughout the Congregation a greater desire for fidelity to our mission as Redemptorists.

3. The document intends to create a greater unity in our Congregation, that is, a certain harmony in our personal and communal lives which is itself a proclamation of the Gospel. Our work and our community life are both presented as prophetic signs of the evangelization of the poor in the spirit of our fundamental charism. We also strive for unity among all the (Vice)Provinces, which each face different pastoral urgencies, and must each seek unique responses in fidelity to our mission of evangelization.

4. The Chapter gives us greater confidence and certainty regarding our initiatives of the last few years, especially in relation to the evangelization of the poor. The document asks us to leave behind our fears and false security, so that our future steps may be

more daring. It opens for us new horizons where we may attain a new level of conversion and renewal.

5. The document does not focus simply on the life and activity of Redemptorists. In speaking of collaboration with the laity and of youth ministry, it wishes to invite both laity and youth to take part in our life and apostolate. We are convinced that our charism is vital in the Church. We want to share our charism with those who in different ways feel attracted to it.

The General Council asks that all the Units of the Congregation begin a process of reflection and application of the contents of this document. Later on, we will send you our own reflections on this matter. This dialogue will continue through all our visitations of the next six years.

We greet you as brothers, and we place ourselves totally at your disposal. May we work together for authentic growth in our Institute. We hope that Christ the Redeemer may help you to carry his redeeming love to the world with much vigor and hope. Let us leave behind any diffidence which would delay the coming of the Kingdom, as we enthusiastically follow in the footsteps of our holy Founder, Saint Alphonsus.

In the name of the General Council,

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

XXI GENERAL CHAPTER

Itaici (Brazil) 1991

FINAL DOCUMENT

1. PREAMBLE

1. The XXI General Chapter of the C.Ss.R. assembled in Itaici, Brazil, from August 15th until September 15th 1991. In a spirit of faith and dialogue we sought to discern the voice of God challenging us through the signs of the times in our world and Church.

2. The work of the Chapter began in the Regional meetings, reports of which had been collected in the document Reports of the Regional Meetings, June 1st 1991. It is important that the Reports of these Regional meetings be kept in mind to understand the final decisions of the Chapter.

3. The major concern of the Chapter is to foster the good of the whole Congregation. The Chapter seeks to promote what is essential for our apostolic life while positively acknowledging the diversity and plurality of human and ecclesial situations in the various regions.

2. REFLECTING ON OUR PRESENT REALITY

4. - We are conscious that we live in a world beset by problems.

Within nations and between nations, the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer. In many parts of the world, there are explosive situations arising from such causes as famine, migration and social injustice. In the spread of AIDS we have a health crisis that is threatening to sweep across the world.

On the other hand, there are signs of hope, such as movements which promote human rights, among them the rights of women, children and the aged. There is a growing awareness of the need to make a wiser use of the resources of nature.

Each one of our countries and continents has its own problems and its own opportunities. These are ours as well.

It is of great significance that our General Chapter has been held in a country of the Third World and on a continent which will soon celebrate five hundred years of evangelization.

5. Assembled in Chapter we are grateful for the witness of the apostolic communities of Redemptorists throughout the world. We recall the words of the apostle Paul: We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers (1 Thess. 1,2).

6. We have lived during these weeks of Chapter the hopes and anxieties of our Redemptorist family. We sensed, with gratitude, that Redemptorists throughout the world are growing in confidence that our charism can still be a gift among God's people. In particular, we have sensed the unifying spirit and apostolic direction that the last sexennial theme has given to the Congregation, even in the midst of our struggle to understand its deeper theological and pastoral meaning.

The fraternal spirit among the capitulars mirrored for us the

desire expressed throughout the Congregation to live our apostolic lives more deeply. A special and moving testimony of that fact was the presence among us at the Chapter of our confreres from Eastern Europe. We regretted, however, the absence of our confreres from the Province of Viet-Nam.

7. Much has been accomplished during the last six years. The wish to be close to the people, meeting their urgent pastoral needs especially by working in community and choosing apostolic priorities in favour of the most abandoned, is evident throughout the Congregation. The efforts of our Brothers to redefine their role have greatly helped us to become more aware of the religious dimension of our Redemptorist vocation. We acknowledge with gratitude our collaboration with the variety of vocations with which God blesses the Church; the growing commitment to fostering the missionary vocation of the laity and to become involved in youth ministry are practical evidence of this.

8. However, we are not without anxieties about the present reality within the Congregation. The quality and expression of our missionary evangelization is often inadequate in the face of the challenges of contemporary society and culture. There is, at times, a passive acceptance of dead traditions, a resistance to change, and an unwillingness to take new risks: such attitudes lessen the apostolic boldness which should characterize the Redemptorist apostolic community (Const. 13, 15). The decline in numbers and the lack of vocations in several units is also a concern for the Chapter. Further, our testimony to an honest and fraternal community life is often weak, as is our spiritual life centered on Jesus Christ in his mission.

9. The Chapter acknowledges that there is presently a marked gap in understanding and appreciation between Regions, especially when their respective concrete situations are discussed. Some

Regions, for example, find it difficult to understand the motivation and consequences of the option for the poor, while other Regions can hardly understand and feel what it is like to continue to believe in the Gospel in a secularized world. For this reason there is a tendency for one Region to judge another without sufficient understanding. During the next sexennium, therefore, we must strive to overcome this lack of understanding by listening to each other and exchanging experiences. The General Government could encourage this exchange so that we will be able to support each other in our common mission.

10. Sharing our hopes and anxieties has led us to the conviction that the main directions taken in the last sexennium have been lifegiving for our Redemptorist family. We wish to nourish the seeds of hope already present, and to give some directives and orientations that will encourage us to face up to the problems that we see among us.

3. THEME OF THE SEXENNIUM

11. Grateful for the progress made in the last sexennium, and acknowledging the areas of concern in our present reality, we state:

The XXI General Chapter (1991) wishes to continue the theme of the 1985 General Chapter which stated: The General Chapter of 1985 wants to continue the theme of the Pastoral Priorities decided on by the chapter of 1979. Now we want to put the emphasis on the explicit, prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Gospel to the poor, allowing ourselves to be called by the poor (evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari), in accordance with the charism of our Congregation expressed in Constitutions 1, 3, 4, 5 and in Statutes 09 and 021.

We ask the Congregation to continue this theme by deepening our apostolic community life as a prophetic force for new ways of incarnated mission; to achieve this we see the need to emphasize the coherence between our inculturated evangelization, our community life and our spirituality.

12. In accord with the theme of the sexennium, the Chapter asks to underscore the interconnection between the task of evangelization, community life and the spirituality proper to the Congregation; as well as the need to incarnate this three-fold dimension of our life in historical forms which express the option of the Congregation for the most abandoned and especially the poor.

About these three aspects, we present the following orientations, recommendations and decisions:

4. INCULTURATED EVANGELIZATION

13 The *raison d'être* of the Redemptorist is the missionary proclamation of the Gospel. To that end we form an apostolic community, the place of religious experience, fraternity and apostolic mission.

In order to make our mission present (incarnate) in history, we need to submit it continually to a process of inculturation, one of the components of the great mystery of the incarnation (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 53).

In agreement with the theme of the sexennium, inculturation (contextualization) has for us a special shade of meaning: we are called to read the Gospel here and now from the perspective of the abandoned, especially the poor.

There are many demands involved in inculturated evangelization. The Chapter would like to highlight the following:

14 The Congregation is spread over an immense geographic area embracing many and greatly varied cultures. This fact signifies a richness, but at the same time a challenge. It obliges us to deepen the unity present in our charism, enriching it with this multiplicity of cultures in which the Redemptorists live and work. We ask the General Government to pursue this unifying factor of our evangelical dynamism, while respecting legitimate pluralism in pastoral methods.

15 Opportunities should be offered to missionaries sent to other countries to learn thoroughly and deeply the culture of the country to which they are sent. The missionary on his part has to undertake the process of kenosis in the Pauline sense of being all things to all persons, incarnating himself in his adopted country. This is also true for one's own country, especially where there is a plurality of cultures.

In this way, Redemptorist evangelization will favor the emergence of particular forms of understanding and living the Gospel, which respond to the different peoples and situations of today's world.

16 The contemporary Redemptorist should announce the Gospel according to the cultural categories of the modern world. This requires a serious and continuous study of preaching methods as well as of the content of preaching. The Chapter recommends to the different units of the Congregation a special theological and cultural preparation for the confreres, especially for those who are dedicated to the explicit proclamation of the Gospel.

17 Inculturated evangelization, besides harvesting and bringing to maturity the seeds of the Gospel in each culture, brings the person within his/her own culture face to face with the person

of the risen Christ Jesus. This encounter provokes both personal and structural changes and leads to a denunciation of all distortions of the authentic ideal of human life (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 19-20). It is in this sense that it is necessary to have a preaching of the Gospel of the culture and not just within the culture.

18 We Redemptorists, as prophets of integral salvation, feel ourselves moved in a special way by the powerful cultural and social movements of our time; for example, the struggle for human rights, respect for creation, the ever deepening division between North and South, the equality of women, secularization, etc.

19 The Gospel response to these challenges obliges us to support:

- y a culture of life in opposition to the many threats of death;
- y a culture of freedom in opposition to the abuses of power and the many temptations to give up;
- y a culture of justice in opposition to the egoism of nations, groups and persons;
- y a culture of solidarity in opposition to the lack of social responsibility and to monopolistic interests which threaten the common good.

20 Opting for inculturated evangelization also makes clear the direction for our moral theological reflection, since Christian discernment of culture is in great part the task of such reflection. Moreover, this reflection constitutes part of our Alphonsian and Redemptorist tradition.

The Chapter supports the moral-theological, pastoral and spiritual work of Redemptorists in deepening the moral theology of pastoral compassion just as John Paul II noted regarding the theology and pastoral practice of St. Alphonsus (Letter *Spiritus Domini*, 1 August 1987).

The Chapter recommends the study of moral theology, and looks for as many Redemptorists as possible to do higher studies in Moral Theology. At the same time it asks that the General Government continues to support the existing centers of moral theology.

Decision:

21. Besides the recommendations made above, the Chapter makes the following decision in order to implement inculturated evangelization during the next sexennium:

- y That the Secretariat for Apostolic Life, both at the general level as well as the (Vice)Provincial level, take as a main topic of study for the next sexennium inculturated evangelization.

5. THE REDEMPTORIST COMMUNITY

22. The Chapter reaffirms the relevance of what our Constitutions offer about community life. We recommend a more profound study and a more consistent assimilation of these Constitutions in order to integrate what is said in Chapter 2 (The Apostolic Community) within the principal goal of the Congregation presented in Chapter 1 (*The Missionary Work of the Congregation*).

Without intending to repeat what the Constitutions already state, the Chapter wishes to underscore some important points about community life in so far as the theme of the sexennium demands.

23. The Redemptorist community should constitute the first sign of us as preachers of the Gospel. It is not only the place from which we are sent but, more importantly, it is also an efficacious presence of the Reign of God in the midst of men and women, our brothers and sisters, who in their own way reveal for us the face of God.

24. The community cannot be evangelizing if at the same time it does not allow itself to be evangelized. The Redemptorist community must let itself be evangelized:

- y from outside itself: that is, by those to whom we are sent, especially the poor;
- y from within itself: the confreres are evangelizers of one another and are evangelized by one another.

The Chapter recommends that our communities seek suitable forms and structures for sharing our faith, our joys and our concerns which are involved in the activity of preaching the Gospel (pastoral planning and evaluation), as well as our deeper human experiences (cf. Const. 21).

25. The Redemptorist community is a fraternity in which all are of equal dignity and should sense themselves to be so. The presence of the Brothers reminds us all of the basic identity we have through baptismal consecration and religious profession. Within diversity our ministries and services complement one another.

This fundamental fraternity must have an effect on the way that vocational ministry, formation, the common life, preaching and government are organized.

26. The Redemptorist community should be identifiable by the following traits:

- y respect and promotion of the dignity and the rights of each confrere;
- y attention and special care of the aged, the sick, the weak in the community;
- y a style of life marked by simplicity, closeness, solidarity, welcoming hospitality, participation, thankfulness: these are qualities which we frequently find being cultivated by the men and women to whom we are sent in a special way;
- y a sense in our daily lives that it is God who calls us together and it is the Spirit of Christ who unites us and leads us on to an ever deeper communion.

27. The choice in favor of the abandoned, especially the poor, demands of us an incarnation or inculturation into geographical regions, social circumstances, cultural realms and church situations which are consistent with the special thrust of our call.

We recommend that the Units of the Congregation continue a discernment of priorities in the face of the urgent pastoral needs and about the place in and from which our communities are present and live.

28. The Chapter urges our confreres, local communities, and (Vice)Provinces to seek new models of community. This search must be done with creative fidelity: fidelity to the genuine Redemptorist tradition and a spirit of openness to the signs of the times. We come to know these signs by means of reading the new socio-cultural

situations in the light of the Gospel and by means of community discernment.

We affirm the importance of our communities being open and welcoming, offering themselves above all as a place of cooperation and dialogue among the different vocations which God wishes for his Church in the same service of preaching the Gospel. This openness has to respect the community's own way of life. Communicanda 11 of the last General Government offers valuable material for this discernment.

29. The Redemptorist community adopts many and varied forms in accord with the socio-cultural pluralism in which the Congregation lives.

All these forms have in common two characteristics which belong to the Redemptorist tradition:

- y closeness to the people, a trait which has characterized our Congregation from the beginning;
- y the power of the community witness as a sign of the presence of the Kingdom.

Among the valid forms of Redemptorist community the Chapter recognizes the form of insertion. In it can be realized the spirit expressed by the theme of the sexennium.

30. Our community life, if it wishes to be faithful to the spirit of our Constitutions and to incarnate itself in present-day situations, cannot give way to the temptation of returning to the formalism of former structures (authoritarianism, uniformity, external regulation, etc.) which would be counterproductive.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to continue to seek at the level of the (Vice)Provinces structural models which are suited to an apostolic life in community. These models must take into account the socio-cultural conditions and the behavioural norms which govern the life of a group.

The Chapter underlines the importance of the role of the Superior as a spiritual pastor (Const. 139) and as the leader of community life, while respecting the co-responsibility of all the confreres.

31. If the Redemptorist community is truly incarnated, it constitutes a prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Good News (Communicanda 11, n. 51).

Many people, above all the young, expect from us this sign of hope which will buoy up their own longing for communion.

For them and for all of society the Redemptorist community should be a sign and a call, insofar as it presents itself as an alternative to the mechanisms of having and of power (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nn. 36-37) which work against the Christian ideal of reconciliation of humanity and of all creation in Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5, 18-20).

Decisions:

32. a. That the Secretariats for Community Life, both at the general as well as at the level of the different units, prepare suitable materials to study the Redemptorist community in the light of the sexennial theme and to facilitate the exchange of experiences about new forms of community life.

b. The Chapter urges the General Government to have, as part

of the General Curia, a brother as the Chairman of the Permanent Commission for the Brothers.

c. That the Superior General, in the name of the Capitulars, bring our concerns regarding the Brothers' vocation to the attention of the Union of Superiors General (USG), in the hope that united efforts with other congregations would be more effective in bringing about a general renewal of the Brother's vocation in clerical congregations.

d. That titles which seem to exclude Brothers from the Congregation should be dropped in favour of more inclusive terms like Redemptorists, Redemptorist Community, or Redemptorist Missionaries. The reason for this is to highlight that which unites us - our religious consecration.

6. REDEMPTORIST SPIRITUALITY

33 Our spirituality is the soul of our apostolic community and is closely bound to our task of evangelization.

In the whole Congregation there is an increase in the appreciation of the ideal presented in our Constitutions. Nevertheless, in the face of this ideal, the Chapter finds a kind of vacuum in the spiritual life of our communities, above all in what concerns spiritual practices. When we abandoned practices considered unauthentic or unsuited to the present day, there did not arise new ones capable of filling the vacuum produced.

34 The Chapter strongly recommends to the whole Congregation that it continue and increase the effort to present and live a genuine Redemptorist spirituality.

To do this it is necessary:

a. to continue to subject to a criticism any Jansenistic tendencies, individualistic directions, formalistic practices, devotions with little theological content;

b. to be attentive to and to assimilate the results of studies concerning authentic Redemptorist spirituality, which will give a growing strength to our identity;

c. to make an effort to find new forms which shape our spirituality, in accord with the social and ecclesial reality of each unit, thus giving a religious community expression to our apostolic life.

35 The Chapter notes the danger in the Congregation of a dualism between apostolate and spirituality. This dichotomy leads either to an activism with little spiritual depth or to a spiritualism with little missionary force, two equally unacceptable attitudes.

There is a consistency to our lives to the extent that the apostolate grows out of our personal and communal living of our religious profession; on the other hand, the manner of living the evangelical counsels is realized in the very task of evangelization. The Chapter asks of the Congregation a special effort to integrate our faith and life more deeply in our personal and communal experience.

36 The center of Redemptorist spirituality is Christ the Redeemer, as he reveals himself above all in the mysteries of his Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection which we celebrate in the Eucharist. These lead the Redemptorists to be his living memorial and to continue his mission in the world. This profoundly Christocentric spirituality impels us to rediscover the heritage of

St. Alphonsus in his exodus towards the poor. The Redemptorist follows Christ the Redeemer and pursues his liberating action.

37. Mary is the first disciple of the Redeemer, whom she accepted as the Word of God; she guides us on the journey of our identification with Him. In her is found the most perfect image of liberation and liberating activity (*Redemptoris Mater*, n. 37)

38. Our spirituality draws strength from the fount of the Word of God, especially the Gospels. For the Redemptorist the Bible is his first and decisive spiritual reading book.

39. According to St. Alphonsus, Christian perfection and spirituality consist in the practice of charity. For the Redemptorist this charity, in order to be salvific, must take on the flesh and blood in historical situations and must commit itself to the cause of the human person. It is above all a committed charity.

Our commitment to the human person arises from our union with God; our God-centered existence leads to an effective service of our brothers and sisters. This is the basic content of apostolic charity, the principle which unifies our lives.

40. This commitment to the person must not be so exaggerated and exclusive that it makes us forget and disregard the care of the rest of nature. Therefore the way we live our Redemptorist spirituality today must include an effective appreciation and care for ecology, something so dear to, and necessary for, the most abandoned, especially the poor.

41. The Chapter asks of the Congregation a special effort of creativity in order that our spiritual life may truly be the soul of our communities.

We Redemptorists must respond to the challenge of today's culture:

- a. by being men of prayer and also sharing our prayer with the Christian people by means of well directed popular religiosity;
- b. by giving biblical force and theological depth to our forms of spirituality;
- c. by allowing ourselves to learn from new generations and being sensitive to the message of today's spiritual movements;
- d. by living our religious experience in an ecumenical context;
- e. by opening ourselves to what is valid in non-christian spiritual traditions;
- f. by searching out, in conformity with our tradition and style of life, simple forms and familiar ways in which we can pray and can teach others to pray.

Decisions:

42 a. To create an Institute of Redemptorist Spirituality in connection with the Institute of Permanent Formation.

b. That the General Government organize, by means of its respective secretariats and commissions, courses or workshops on Redemptorist spirituality at the regional or international level.

c. That the General Government support and distribute writings on Redemptorist spirituality and make known the positive experiences of prayer discovered in different units.

d. That the General Government consider the possibility of taking up anew the critical edition of the works of St. Alphonsus.

e. That the (Vice)Provincial governments promote the reading of the writings of St. Alphonsus, both in private and in our communities.

f. That our formation personnel give special attention to Redemptorist spirituality and that they themselves receive an adequate formation in it.

g. That our houses of prayer and our retreat houses be places in which one can come into contact with Redemptorist spirituality.

h. That all the confreres who are sent to Rome for specialized studies and who live at Casa Sant'Alfonso take an extracurricular course on the history of the Congregation and Redemptorist spirituality, organized by the Institute for Spirituality (cf. St. 083).

7. FORMATION

7.1 Vocation Ministry

43. The deepening of our apostolic life and the personal witness of each Redemptorist are essential preconditions of a convincing vocation ministry.

With this in mind, the Chapter affirms the urgency of a Redemptorist vocation ministry which is well organized, has sufficient resources and capable personnel, and is sensitive to the values of the youth of a given region.

We insist that vocation ministry be a priority in all the units of the Congregation and that all of the confreres be involved in it (Const. 79).

44. Vocation ministry is strengthened by interprovincial and regional collaboration, by the help of lay persons (youth, married couples, other adults), and in cooperation with other religious and dioceses. It will also gain strength if it is connected to a youth ministry and to a Secretariat of Formation.

45. The recommendations of the XX General Chapter continue to serve as an inspiration (Final Document, nn. 22 to 27).

7.2 The Steps of First Formation

46. The Chapter recalls that each (Vice)Province or group of units, following the Ratio formationis of the Congregation, should formulate its own Ratio, specifying in concrete terms the steps of formation. This Ratio should serve as a basis not only for the work of formation itself, but also as a means of periodic evaluations done by the formation personnel and the (Vice)Provincial government.

47. The Chapter asks that the General Government work out a Ratio on the formation and the mission of the Redemptorist Brother, taking as its basic orientation the Declaration of the Brothers presented to the General Chapter of 1991.

48. During first formation the greatest attention must be given to the experience of a spiritual life, a communal life and a solid formation at the human, academic and practical pastoral levels. At each respective step, the young person should prepare himself for the commitments demanded by apostolic life. At the same time the program is enriched by formation according to the values proper to our charism and with an openness to the world in which young

persons live. And all of this is understood and lived in the context of our charism and the pastoral priorities of the (Vice)Province.

49. In formation communities, the spiritual life must be the force which animates the studies and the works, as well as the community and pastoral life (cf. *Guidelines for Formation in Religious Institutes*, n. 28).

50. The Chapter urges the preparation of formation personnel and notes the need that formation be the fruit of teamwork.

We ask that formators pay great attention to the theme of the sexennium and dedicate themselves to its implications for formation, according to the needs and priorities of each unit.

51. Interprovincial and interregional collaboration strengthens the unity and enlarges the horizon for formation. We must also think of the need some units have for formation personnel to begin a formation program.

7.3 Permanent Formation

52. In the spirit of St. Alphonsus, formation has to continue and be adapted to all the phases of life. The content of this formation has to include the main areas of theology, of pastoral methods, of spirituality, and of community leadership, while placing special emphasis on the subjects of moral theology, the history of the Congregation and Redemptorist spirituality.

The general chapter recommends:

53.a. that the General Secretariat of Formation, in collaboration with the Commission on Redemptorist Spirituality, offer renewal courses in theology, spirituality, pastoral methods, and community leadership, emphasizing what is characteristic of our Redemptorist identity (see the recommendations of the XX General Chapter, Final Document, nn. 32 to 35).

b. that the governments of the various units encourage the confreres to participate in renewal programs organized both by the local church or the Conference of Religious as well as by the units themselves.

c. Let there continue the interprovincial meetings and congresses for continuing formation, and where possible, regionalize this service.

d. That the General government see that all the units be notified of the publications of confreres through summaries or other suitable means.

e. In the same way, let the General Government support inter-(Vice)Provincial meetings and seminars on moral theology, as part of our continuing formation, to bring the light of the Gospel to the concrete moral problems found in the places where we work.

f. We ask that the recommendations of the XX General Chapter about the Alphonsian Academy be put into practice: to intensify its presence in the (Vice)Provinces and regions, by means of short courses and other extension activities (Final Document, n. 36).

Decision:

54. That the General Government plan for permanent formation in the Congregation by means of a Center of Redemptorist Permanent Formation, with a full time chairman who is not a General Consultor. Its objective is to program and co-ordinate initiatives of permanent formation at the international level which treat our own spirituality, community life and missionary pastoral work.

8. YOUTH MINISTRY

55. The interest in youth ministry in the Congregation and especially in some regions is a reason for hope. Through the activities of confreres, of communities and of the respective secretariats, there are many young people who share in our spirituality, in our pastoral work and even in our community life. In this way they acquire greater awareness of the Church and strengthen their Christian social commitment.

56. The Chapter wishes to encourage decisively this orientation by the following recommendations:

a. Youth ministry must be considered as *one of the priorities in the planning of each (Vice)Province and region*, since youth must be included among the most abandoned.

b. Though it should help each person to find his/her own Christian vocation, youth ministry should have its unique identity without being confused with vocation ministry. However, vocation ministry is greatly strengthened by a well organized youth ministry.

c. In accord with the theme of the sexennium, those who are responsible for youth ministry should have a special sensitivity towards the young people who live in marginalized situations, whether social or ecclesial.

d. We ask the communities to try to open themselves to young people, according to the culture of each country.

e. We recommend that there be in each (Vice)Province or region at least one house especially dedicated to welcoming young people so they can share in our life and in our apostolate, thus forming a welcoming community.

f. Youth ministry should look for continuity with the pastoral work for couples, the married and the family as well as with other pastoral activities directed toward adults.

g. The General Government should continue its service of encouraging and promoting youth ministry and should study an adequate way to regionalize this service.

9. COLLABORATION WITH LAITY ON A BASIS OF PARTNERSHIP

57. The Chapter affirms and is encouraged by the developments already happening in many units of the Congregation in the area of collaboration between Redemptorists and laity. We wish to support the continuation of this in these units, as well as encouraging its initiation where it has not as yet begun.

58. Such collaboration should include the following general orientations:

a. Our collaboration with the lay people must be based on equal partnership.

b. The laity, as baptized members of the Church, should be encouraged to express their ministry in accordance with the charisms proper to them as lay people.

c. The diversity of regions in which Redemptorists work should be reflected in a plurality of forms of collaboration with laity.

d. The orientations of and the tensions within the local Church should be taken into account in the forms of collaboration with laity.

e. The dialogue with lay people, which is necessary before any collaboration, should be a sincere effort to listen to their aspirations and needs.

f. The collaboration with laity in particular units should be in line with the pastoral priorities of the unit.

In the light of these orientations, the Chapter makes the following recommendations:

59. a. That the General Government encourage collaboration between laity and Redemptorists, and that the General Secretariat for the Apostolic Life should propose guidelines for such collaboration which the units could adapt to their particular circumstances.

b. That the different units of the Congregation share their experiences in the area of lay collaboration, so that we can learn from each other and begin to evaluate the results of our experiences thus far.

c. That all lay collaborators be given the opportunity for their proper formation, and that a corresponding formation be afforded Redemptorists to assist them in their collaboration with laity.

d. That the forms of lay collaboration adopted should be sensitive to the nuances of the local culture, and be in keeping with the norms of Redemptorist community life as expressed in Constitutions 44 and 45.

Decisions:

60. a. The General Chapter establishes in the Congregation the category of Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer as an active co-worker and participant in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist Congregation. The General Government should prepare general norms which will would apply to all units of the Congregation.

b. The General Chapter inspires our communities to open themselves up to the laity, so that they may have a greater share in our experiences of life, work and spirituality.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANDATES TO THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT

10.1 Africa

61. In view of the importance given by the General Chapter of 1985 to the presence of Redemptorists in Africa, and in view of the

need to intensify this presence, this General Chapter renews that appeal to the Congregation as a pastoral priority during the next sexennium, especially regarding the places where Redemptorists are already present.

10.2 Restructuring of the units of the Congregation

62. The General Government is instructed to begin a process of restructuring of the units of the Congregation. This should focus on two principal points:

a. to help units that have fallen below the personnel requirements of General Statute 088, as well as groups of units that are showing serious signs of decline in personnel;

b. to stimulate renewed pastoral initiatives not easily managed by single units alone.

10.3 Regional meetings

63. The General Chapter asks the General Government to hold meetings of major or regional superiors at the midpoint of the sexennium, according to regional or language groups, in order to review the state of the Congregation and offer counsel on matters of importance.

10.4 Representation at the General Chapter

64. The General Chapter asks the General Council to study the issue of representation of units at the General Chapter, and to prepare a small number of models of representation to be submitted to the judgement of the regional meetings. After this consultation, and if the General Council considers it opportune,

the General Council is delegated by this Chapter to revise the law in this matter and, by decree, to make it operative for the election and composition of the XXII General Chapter of 1997. This decree could be modified by that same Chapter.

10.5 Recommendations on Financial Matters:

65. In view of the large operating deficit:

We agree with the recommendation of the Secretariat for Finances that the contributions of the units be raised. We see this as necessary, but only if simultaneously there is an effort to raise income and/or reduce expenses.

Therefore:

We encourage the General Government, along with the House Council of Sant'Alfonso, the General Econome, and the Secretariat for Finances, to work on better and more frequent communication and to better clarify the administration and division of responsibilities needed to operate Sant'Alfonso. Some issues that should be considered: payment for extraordinary meetings, costs of guests, costs of air travel, costs of health care, costs of students, maintenance of house.

66. We recommend that the General Econome settle immediately the outstanding accounts with each unit, establish regular billing procedures, and ensure good communication with the units. We recommend that the Secretariat for Finances determine the proper time of the year for the (Vice)Provinces to pay the annual contribution.

67. We recommend that the General Government ensure continued adequate staffing of the office of the General Econome with sufficient personnel so that there not be too great a burden on any one person. We repeat the recommendation of the last Chapter that an assistant Econome be trained in all the workings of the office of the General Econome.

68. To avoid any conflict of interest, we recommend that the internal auditor not be part of the Secretariat for Financial Matters, but be a completely disinterested party. General Statute 0133 is amended to read as follows: The General Council shall elect someone to act as auditor of the finances of the general financial office. It will be his duty... (continue as presently written).

69. We recommend that the General Econome seek professional advice about better ways of handling the confusing and complicated process of dealing with different currencies, and how to account for the different rates of exchange.

70. We recommend that the Secretariat for Finances go ahead speedily with the project of drawing up a written investment policy.

71. We recommend that advice be sought from competent advisors on the ethical and justice issues of our investments, in addition to the financial considerations.

72. Some Provinces have agreed to make contributions over three years to the renovation project of the General House in Rome. We recommend that a full accounting of the receipts, expenses and the progress be sent regularly to those Provinces.

73. We recommend that the General Government annually inform the Provinces about the developments of the solidarity fund. In addition, we recommend that the General Government follow the development of the several partnerships between units, so they can monitor the flow of contributions and prevent duplication of aid.

74. We recommend that the Secretariat for Finances periodically review the policy of having a ceiling of \$US 6,500,000 for the Solidarity Reserve, taking into account the effect of inflation and other economic factors.

CONCLUSION

75. At the end of this XXI General Chapter we thank God through Christ the Redeemer that we find pastoral charity alive and growing in the Congregation.

76. Within the limits of our fragility, we can state that with the strength of the Spirit we will accomplish the desires which St. Alphonsus expressed in his life, in his pastoral activity and in his writings: fidelity to Christ and to his Gospel, fidelity to the Church and to its mission in the world, fidelity to men and women and to our time, fidelity to the charism of our Institute (Letter *Spiritus Domini*, 1 August 1987).

77. In considering the mission which our Congregation possesses and accomplishes in the Church, the members of the Chapter recall with much gratitude the Redemptoristine sisters, who accompany us spiritually in our commitment to the most abandoned. We also thank the missionary sisters of different

institutes who are part of the Alphonsian family; with great dedication they actively and effectively participate in the fulfillment of the Redemptorist charism.

78. All throughout this General Chapter, we were deeply conscious of and ever sensitive to the urgent cry of the most abandoned, especially the poor, for total liberation in Christ. We felt challenged and inspired by their presence among us in this way. And we give thanks to them for this presence, even as we hope that our faithful implementation of what is contained in this final document will indeed help to respond to their deepest hopes and aspirations for a more human and dignified life.

79. During the Chapter we had the experience of our internationality and of a Chapter held in Latin America practically on the 500th anniversary of America's first evangelization. Thus we are even more aware of the demands for a new evangelization: a challenge for the whole Church and one which we joyfully accept.

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 1

Rome, August 1, 1992
Communicanda N. 1
0000 0230/92

**VITALITY AND ESSENTIAL GROWTH
IN OUR “APOSTOLIC LIFE”**

Dear confreres,

During the past few months, the members of the General Council have spent time together reflecting on certain subjects proposed in the Final Document of the General Chapter. As we send you the fruit of these reflections we take the opportunity of sending you also our good wishes, and expressing the hope that the Final Document and our Communicanda may provide subjects for reflection in your communities.

0. Introduction

Every General Chapter is concerned about the growth of our apostolic life, the strengthening of the links which bind us together, and our adaptation to the life of the Church and the world of today

(Const. 107). The XX General Chapter of 1991, held at Itaici, in Brazil, has sent us a clear message in this sense for the coming six years. This message is rooted in:

The actual world in which Redemptorists live. We cannot escape the fact that we are affected by the problems of the world: the tension between nations and even within the same countries, the lack of true democracy, the ever growing gap between rich and poor, famines, forced migration, social injustice, the status of women, health problems, the specter of AIDS, xenophobia and the destruction of the environment. But we also share the hopes of the world when human rights are more respected, and when the weaker members, children, the aged, and the unemployed find their place in society. When liberty and democracy flourish, “when love and fidelity meet, justice and peace will embrace” (Ps 85/11).

The life of the Church to which we belong. The Church is indeed the universal sacrament of Redemption, on its pilgrim way to the Kingdom of God. While we participate in its mission at the universal and local level, we also share, on the one hand, in its prophetic and inspiring witness, and on the other hand, in its weaknesses, and uncertainties. We are constantly challenged to find concrete forms which will contribute, in a specific way, to the life of the Church in difficult times, and in particular situations. However, we shall only enrich the life of the Church in so far as we remain faithful to the charism of Saint Alphonsus, and to the heritage of the whole Congregation. This will provide us with sources of creativity.

Life in the Congregation, in our communities, in our vice-provinces and provinces. Our lives are made up of light and shade. We go forward sometimes; we also fall back. Weariness and discouragement, as well as new ventures in hope, form part of our existence, as they do of the lives of men and women we know. We

breathe the same air as our contemporaries. We are also affected by the general atmosphere which marks the end of this 20th. century. We are as well, in a sense, prisoners of our past, heirs to a tradition with all its richness and also its burdens. We have also the joy of sharing the challenges and hopes of this great missionary family of 6000 confreres, representing nearly 60 nations, and present in 68 countries of the world.

In this context the General Council would like to offer some reflections to each confrere, to each community, and to each province. It takes as its starting point what seems to be the core of the Final Document of the General Chapter. It is only meant to be a cursory glance and not an analysis of all the points of the Document.

- y First of all we want to stress again the theme chosen for this sexennium (1).
- y Then we would like to clarify the desire and need we have of a greater interior spirit and unity in our “life like that of the apostles” (2).
- y We want to show as well how our mission to the abandoned, especially the poor, gives this sense of unity to our life, incarnates it in concrete forms and enables us to live the reality of inculturation (3)

1. THE THEME of the sexennium (the consistency between the themes of the last three Chapters).

11. This XX General Chapter is not in any way a halt on our forward march together. Indeed it particularly stressed the idea of continuity – “we have sensed the unifying spirit and apostolic direction that the last sexennium has given to the Congregation” (FD, No.6). It has helped us to be more faithful to our vocation, and to make progress together. The evaluation which was carried out in our (Vice)Provinces, and in our regions, enabled the Capitulars to discern how positive was our choice of pastoral priorities. The poor are the privileged ones to hear the Good News from us, and they also participate in our own conversion. The Chapter, however, also recognized that all was not well in our manner of living. The Final Document in N°. 8 calls attention to this quite clearly. We are therefore strongly exhorted to continue reflecting together, and to be faithful to the undertakings in which we have become involved during the last sexennium. More discernment and thinking in depth, will enable us to take another step forward in order to face the challenges of today.

12. It seems to us important to indicate clearly what is the central point of the Final Document, the beacon, as it were, which lights up the whole text. It was the wish of the Capitulars to stress particularly what is stated in nn. 11 and 12. “We want to put the emphasis on the explicit, prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Gospel to the poor, allowing ourselves to be called by the poor (*evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari*).” In order that this theme may become incarnate in our personal life, and in our community life, we call for a continual effort to “deepen” our understanding of it. We wish also to stress the consistency, the real bond and close link between the task of evangelization, community life, and the spirituality proper to the Congregation. This desire to give unity to our whole Redemptorist life must find expression in concrete forms which clearly show the option of the Congregation for the most abandoned and especially the poor.

13 In this way the Chapter wished to make clear once again our place in the mission of the Church. This is our charism as it is succinctly defined in Constitution No. 5: "Preference for situations where there is pastoral need, that is, for evangelization in the strict sense, together with the choice in favor of the poor, is the very reason why the Congregation exists in the Church, and is the badge of its fidelity to the vocation it has received. Indeed the Congregation's mandate to evangelize the poor is directed to the liberation and salvation of the whole human person. The members have the duty of preaching the Gospel explicitly, and of showing solidarity with the poor by promoting their fundamental rights to justice and freedom. It is along these lines that the Chapter requests us to go forward. When we are asked by someone, a young person perhaps, "Who are you Redemptorists?", we must be in a credible position to present this text as our identity card, and it must make us easily recognized. This is indeed our *raison d'être*, the badge which identifies us. It is this which specially proclaims the message of *Copiosa Redemptio*, abundance of redemption....

14 As Redemptorists and missionaries of the Gospel to the abandoned, especially the poor, the theme so often taken up by Pope John Paul II, in his discourses in all the continents, calls for our attention. It is this "new evangelization". He continually stresses the need for a new type of evangelization which will meet the profound changes taking place in the world in which we live. Even St. Clement in his day, already spoke of "proclaiming the Gospel in a new way". Our mission, today as yesterday, is therefore to respond to the needs of mankind. "In a spirit of brotherly concern they should try to understand people's anxious questionings and try to discover in these how God is truly revealing himself and making his plan known" (Const. 19). Where do we find these "anxious questionings" today? Is it not often among the young, in the poor populations of great secularized cities, as well as among those living in rural areas? They are coming from all those who are abandoned,

and have need to hear this proclamation of the Gospel which leads them to the living Jesus. “And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed?” (Rom 10.14). Let us then proclaim the Good News and give our contemporaries a real thirst for God.

15. We live in an age of communication. Our world tends to become a global village where news instantly becomes known. At the same time, however, we are aware of the great gap between rich and poor. We rub shoulders with those who are lonely, and with those who try to forget their despair in a sort of artificial paradise. Our mission, therefore, is all the more urgent to be the apostles of the Good News, that which Jesus brought to all mankind, so that their desire of total fulfillment might be realized. Let us proclaim once again that the God of the Christians is a God who is close to his people. He has come among us and for our sake. He is a God of love who first loved us – “this is what love is: it is not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven” (1 Jn 4.10). In season and out of season, let us proclaim again and again that the God of Jesus is a good and merciful God: “the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes” (2 Cor 1.3). He is a God who challenges each one of us to act responsibly in our allotted task: “Our love should not be just words and talk: it must be true love, which shows itself in action” (1 Jn 3.18). The God of Jesus is the God of communication: Father, Son and Spirit. Each one can contact him in prayer, and in solidarity with others: “Let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 Jn 4 7-8).

16. This proclamation of the Good News to the poor is our following of Christ, which is shown by a life lived close to, and in solidarity with, the poor. It is a love shared with them, giving them a new found dignity which liberates them. We wish to be part of this life of the Church for “the Church all over the world wishes to be the Church of the poor... She wishes to draw out all the

truth contained in the Beatitudes of Christ... The young Churches, which for the most part are to be found among peoples suffering from widespread poverty, often give voice to this concern as an integral part of their mission” (*Redemptoris Missio*, No. 60).

The Redemptorists, especially those who live in the Third World, are there to remind us unceasingly of this urgency, of the need for this fundamental consistency in our lives. They provide a stimulus for us, as do the words of Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Missio*: “In fidelity to the spirit of the Beatitudes, the Church is called to be on the side of those who are poor and oppressed in any way. I therefore exhort the disciples of Christ and all Christian communities – from families to dioceses, from parishes to religious institutes – to carry out a sincere review of their lives regarding their solidarity with the poor” (RM, No. 60).

17. Our solidarity with the most abandoned, especially the poor, brings us close to the Jesus of the Beatitudes. It is then that we understand that the poor are not merely people to whom we announce the Gospel. They are the living sign of Christ Himself today. In Jesus, God appeared in the likeness of a poor man. He is, from the moment of his birth, among outcasts, among those who have no place in society. “Jesus, who rich as he was, made himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of his poverty” (2 Cor 8.9.). (Read the commentary of St. Alphonsus, in his Christmas Novena, Discourse VIII) The poor are those who are not loved, but whom we must love and evangelize. This call to evangelize must not be regarded as a glorification of misery, which we must always fight against. Neither is the poor man called to become rich, but he is called to become “other”, to be converted. The Gospel as such does not envisage a society of contentment, people who take complacency in their own self sufficiency. It does wish us to look forward in joyful hope and to be free to attain what is essential.

18. Let us recall especially those three capital encounters in the life of St. Alphonsus, which completely changed him, and set him on the road to becoming an apostle. The first was at the age of 19 in the Hospital of the Incurables, then at 32 it was with the lazzaroni of the “evening chapels”, and finally at the age of 35 he came in contact with the shepherds of Scala.

Following in the steps of St. Alphonsus, our option for the poor, for those who are neglected and abandoned by the Church also implies encounters. It means being available, calling into question many of our too fixed ideas. It denotes solidarity, conversion, an exodus, a going forth on mission.

19. We know of course that the poor are not perfect, especially if we are in close touch with them. Nevertheless we are often surprised to discover what Gospel values they have. We note their generosity, their readiness to share the little they possess, how joyful they can be in spite of the hard conditions of their life, how tenaciously they cling to hope when others would have long abandoned it, and how they can radiate confidence... We are evangelized by those values in their life, and in this way the poor invite us to change our attitude. This privileged link with them is thus capable of changing our viewpoint, our heart, our manner of speaking and living. For example, their life will force us to reflect on our over anxious search for security, our too close adherence to structures, and our fear of any risk... “Evangelizare pauperibus et a pauperibus evangelizari.” The poor bring us face to face with Christ in our own lives (Mat 25.31).

This is true not only on the personal level, but on the level of community as well. “The community cannot be evangelizing if at the same time it does not allow itself to be evangelized – from outside itself: that is by those to whom we are sent, especially the poor” (FD, No. 24). With them we read the Word of God and together we are impelled to go forward in the footsteps of Jesus.

2. Our “Apostolic Life”: unity and coherence

21. Our Congregation “follows the example of Christ in the apostolic life, which comprises at one and the same time a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work” (Const. 1). In this way “all Redemptorists urged on by the apostolic spirit, and imbued with the zeal of their founder, continue the tradition developed by their confreres in the past, and are ever attentive to the signs of the times. Sent as helpers, companions and ministers of Jesus Christ, in the great work of redemption to preach the word of salvation to the poor, they build up an apostolic community, specially dedicated to the Lord” (Const. 2).

These two Constitutions at the very beginning of our Rule support and enrich our theme for the sexennium. Their aim is to make us concentrate our efforts on developing a greater Interior spirit and unity in our apostolic life. The second part of No. 11 in the Final Document expresses this clearly: “We ask the Congregation to continue this theme by deepening our apostolic community life as a prophetic force for new ways of incarnated mission; to achieve this we see the need to emphasize the coherence between our inculturated evangelization, our community life and our spirituality”.

22. Today much more than in the past we are conscious of the necessity of consistency between what we are and what we do between our life “dedicated to God” and our “missionary work”, between our own personal spiritual experience and the need to share it with others. In order that it may not appear as a fantasy of our imagination, it must become concrete by sharing it with the rest of the apostolic community. Even here it may be said that “no man is an island”. In fact the call to evangelize which each one of us has heard is first experienced and shared with companions in a community, with brothers whom we have not chosen, but who like ourselves have been chosen by God. And this life lived

together, like that of the Apostles, is a force, Indeed a prophetic force, which is greater than the sum of the individuals concerned. It gives dynamism to a love which makes it reach out beyond the community in which one lives.

This living together enables us to live this experience of God (FD, No. 13) not as a theoretical desire, but as a concrete reality of our daily life. Each member of the community is called to be evangelized by his own companions, and to be himself a stimulating influence. “The confreres are «evangelizers» of one another and are evangelized by one another” (FD, No. 24).

23. Let us never forget that this community life is centered on Christ, the Redeemer (FD, No.8). In this way it will become an efficacious presence of the Reign of God in the midst of our contemporaries (FD, No. 23). Our creative spirit will enable us to seek and find “suitable forms and structures for sharing our faith, our joys and our concerns in the activity of preaching the Gospel” (FD, No. 24). In imitation of the Apostles and as disciples of St. Alphonsus, the apostle of prayer, we will pay greater attention to the urgent appeal of the Constitutions Nos. 26 to 33 on the community of prayer in order to combat this “vacuum” referred to in No.33 of the Final Document. In order to follow Christ, the Redeemer, and to pursue his liberating action, we are to meditate especially on the mysteries of his Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection which we celebrate in the Eucharist (FD, No.36). In this way “by being men of prayer, and also sharing our prayer with the Christian people by means of well directed popular piety” (FD, No. 41a) we will go forward together on our pilgrim way of faith.

24. This mutual conversion in the community, carried out in a thoughtful spirit of fraternal charity, is already, in itself, a form of preaching. It is a concrete expression of witness, and is evidence of a genuine consistency between what we really are at heart, and what we say, and how we treat others, especially the poor. The Final

Document in No. 23 puts it this way. Community life should constitute “the first sign of us as preachers of the Gospel”. It is “the efficacious presence of the Reign of God in the midst of men and women, our brothers and sisters, who in their own way reveal for us the face of God”. This community life for the sake of the Gospel makes us sense “in our daily lives that it is God who calls us together and it is the Spirit of Christ who unites us and leads us to an ever deeper communion” (FD, No. 26). In its closeness to people each Redemptorist community desires to be a powerful “witness as a sign of the presence of the Kingdom” (FD, No. 29)

25. We are, of course, aware of the difficulties faced by certain countries in recent years. For example the local Church has not always invited our cooperation in setting up a proper mission community. This has led to the break up of some of our communities. Individuals have sometimes gone their own way to work in a diocese. Others have devoted themselves to projects for the poor, but without the support and collaboration of the local community. Others have adopted the values of the society in which they live, seeking personal fulfillment, and their apostolate is exercised according to this criterion, forgetting the “essential law of life” of which Const. 21 speaks. In other countries where there was no religious liberty, confreres, often at great personal risk, have ministered to people at the request of a bishop, who lacked sufficient personnel. Then finally, by degrees, one naturally develops another way of life, not necessarily closely linked to the local community. And as the years pass the idea of a shared common life begins to fade. Our special charism as Redemptorists, our spirit of prayer, of fraternal charity, our apostolic work, and the sharing of material resources have less meaning. In the end what remains are memories of past links with the community, which are not nourished by present contacts. In saying all this we are not passing judgment. We are simply stating a fact of life in the Congregation today. For this reason it would be

a good thing for each province and vice-province to remind itself that “the Redemptorist community should constitute the first sign of us as preachers of the Gospel” (FD, No.23).

26. However in the past few years a great effort has been made nearly everywhere in the Congregation to appreciate the unity that must mark our life. Today as in the time of our founder, St. Alphonsus, we need to fight against the danger of dualism (cf. S. Alfonso, *Avisi sulla vocazione religiosa*, Consid. XIII). “There is a consistency to our lives to the extent that the apostolate grows out of our personal and communal living of our religious profession, on the other hand, the manner of living the evangelical counsels is realized in the very task of evangelization” (FD, 35). Community life helps us, in a very real way, to avoid this dualism between the apostolate and spirituality.

27. Everywhere, we have to constantly re-examine our priorities, by analyzing the pastoral urgencies of the country or region in which we live. In order to do this we must choose the places best suited to our charism. We are invited especially to be creative in seeking “new models of community” (FD, No. 28). And it is our community life itself which will enable us through reflection and prayer to discern the places and the particular groups of people to whom we should direct our ministry. However, there are two signposts to help us in this discernment – closeness to people, – and the power of the community witness itself (FD, No. 29).

28. This research together is always made with a view to “the liberating and prophetic proclamation of the Good News”, A missionary Institute within the local Church should always give impetus to a missionary dynamism; it should be something of a vanguard. Thus our joyful proclamation, truly incarnate and prayerful, will be a sign of hope for the young who long for a life

of communion, and who search for another alternative to the philosophy of “having” and of “power” (FD, No. 31).

3. This unified apostolic life must be inculturated

31. Redemptorists bear the stamp of the various cultures from which they come. But it is where they labor that they must live and announce the Good News of Christ. For this reason the General Chapter gives us this pressing and insistent exhortation that “in order to make our mission present (incarnate) in history we need to submit it continually to a process of inculturation, one of the components of the great mystery of the incarnation” (FD, No. 13.).

32. Inculturation is indeed rooted in the Incarnation of the Word of God. “Because it has been complete and real in flesh and blood the Incarnation of the Son of God has been a cultural incarnation” (John Paul II in 1982). We note that the first Gospel preaching was adapted to the cultures of the time. The evangelists are men clearly marked by the style of life of their respective communities. Even in the infant Church this problem cropped up... Every people, every language of the world, is called to confess and express in its own idiom (Acts 2.8) the Gospel of salvation. “As she carries out missionary activity among the nations, the Church encounters different cultures and becomes involved in the process of inculturation. The need for such involvement has marked the Church’s pilgrimage throughout her history, but today it is particularly urgent” (MR, 52).

33. This inculturation is a movement in depth which requires time and is not simple adaptation. It seems important to make a clear distinction between two complimentary realities, which may be expressed in two different terms – “Acculturation” and “Inculturation”. “Acculturation” may be explained as the acquisition

of languages, knowledge of customs and adaptation to the way of life of a people. This is often very difficult for the missionary who has to go to another country and live in a milieu very different from his own. However, acculturation is indispensable in our time, with ever increasing contacts between different continents, and diverse cultures. Inculturation, however, is completely different.

34. Inculturation is the incarnation of the Christian life and message in a concrete culture. While expressing itself by means of the elements of a culture, the Gospel transforms it and recreates it. This term includes the idea of mutual growth and enrichment of persons and groups, through the encounter of the Gospel with another social milieu. This inculturation, as we understand it, does not regard the culture of the past as something sacred. Rather it is a search for the seeds of the Word, germination, and the fertilization, in the present, of a people in all its dimensions, including political and social, with all its tensions, conflicts and confrontations. In other words the culture of a people is something living. Therefore our evangelization wishes to engage in this living process, which enables a people to recognize its past in a more open and dynamic modern form. Gospel and culture meet, confront each other, and test each other like gold and fire in the crucible of the furnace. Inculturation introduces Christ into the very heart of the life of a culture, and raises this life up to Christ. In this way from individual cultural traditions will spring forth new expressions of life, of celebration and of Christian thought. As a result the Church will emerge transformed and enriched.

35. This encounter of the Gospel with a culture enriches the universal Church, for the Christian message finds another expression in new forms. And the central role in this process of inculturation does not devolve simply on the missionary, but engages the entire local Church. It is a question of the inculturation

of the Church, and so the efforts of the entire community are necessary. This integration of the local Church with the culture of its people is a force which inspires and renews this culture, while enriching the universal Church at the same time. The biblical image underlying this process is not that of the graft, but that of the seed. The Christian message grows from the heart of a culture, signifying at the same time its death and resurrection. This process of inculturation is just as vital for older Churches, confronted in a special way with the modern world and secularization, as it is for younger Churches living in more “religious” surroundings.

36 As Redemptorists, spread throughout the world, we live in cultures that have been influenced by religious traditions other than Christian, for example Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism... We must be tuned in, as it were, to those communities of believers in order to recognize “whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all men” (MR, 55). Christians living in countries, where these religions flourish, have to breathe an atmosphere very different and far removed from Christianity. We think it important to enter into dialogue with those of other faiths, especially about the meaning of life.

We can ourselves be enriched by this dialogue, purified by it, and indeed it can call us to an interior conversion. It is in this sense that No. 41e of the Final Document invites us “to open ourselves to what is valid in non-Christian spiritual traditions”. This dialogue can help us to overcome real difficulties, misunderstandings and sometimes persecutions. All over the Congregation there is need for a great effort in this direction, because apart from some exceptions, little has been done in this field. A great task awaits us in Asia, in Africa and in other continents, because today there is such mobility of peoples and races.

37. We must therefore search together, and with others, to find ways and means of bringing this inculturation concretely into our work of evangelizing, into our community life and into our spirituality, while expressing the option of the Congregation for the most abandoned, especially the poor. Our experience of sharing in small groups, and in basic popular communities, will certainly help us (MR, No. 51). Our search at the level of the local Church should include lay people, priests and religious, for “we are even more aware of the demands for a new evangelization, which is a challenge for the whole Church” (FD, No. 79). To achieve this inculturation in our evangelizing work, many interesting research projects exist in our respective Churches. We are earnestly invited to get to know them, to participate in them, and to join in this research according to our charism.

38. As regards our community life the Chapter tells us that “it is necessary to continue to seek... structural models which are suited to an apostolic life in community” (FD, No.30) in order “to find new forms... giving a religious community expression to our apostolic life” (FD, No 34). Wherever we live, let us participate in this search with other missionary Institutes who are close to us. The Chapter gives us certain guide-lines when it makes clear that “the choice in favor of the abandoned, especially the poor, demands of us an incarnation or inculturation into geographical regions, social circumstances, cultural realms and church situations which are consistent with the special thrust of our call” (FD, No. 27). It is an appeal to Provincial Chapters to establish choices and priorities while taking into account our particular charism.

39. On the other hand religious apostolic life, in general, bears the clear mark of its origins, often European. This is true in our case. So if we wish to live our apostolic life together in a way which corresponds to different world cultures, it seems to

us necessary to reflect deeply on the manner in which we are to live this consecrated life. Can we not, with other religious of our own country or continent, do some research together so as to find out the best way of expressing in our culture, the vows of chastity, obedience and poverty? Here again we are invited to be creative, to draw deeply from the “old and the new”, from the realities of the present, as well as from the living traditions of our people, and from the Gospel which is always a source of life.

4. Conclusion

41. This diversity in the Congregation between continents, which is even expressed by different rites, is good and even necessary. It is a sign that we are in communion with the peoples to whom we belong. It reflects the Catholicism of the Church present in diverse cultures. It is an appeal to each one to be open in heart and soul to the Spirit who is present in all the continents.

The Good News is welcomed on all the different pathways of the world: in Africa, in Asia, in Oceania, in the Americas, and in Europe. Sometimes on the same continent, in the same country, or even within the same province, there may be different approaches to it expressed. But what unites us is this Gospel of the Lord Jesus. It questions and purifies our different cultures. It invites us continually to brotherhood, to be open to those who differ from us, and to a dialogue which purifies, and is ever a source of enrichment.

42. The broad outlines of the message of the XXIst General Chapter are an appeal for a more profound conversion on our part. We are invited to take another step forward during the coming six years, to be more “authentic” and more “daring” apostles. “We want to encourage the growth of these seeds of hope” which we find in all the continents. We are more and more convinced that our

Alphonsian charism is a gift for the people of God (FD, No. 6). We desire to share it in the Church. May we all together be filled with zeal for the spread of the Gospel, and following in the footsteps of Saint Alphonsus, may we proclaim this Good News to the most abandoned, especially the poor: “God loves you!”

As we end this reflection we pray also that Mary, the first disciple of the Redeemer, may lead you on the way, which identifies you with Christ, the Redeemer. She is “the most perfect icon of freedom and liberation” which we are called to bring to the world with abundant Redemption.

With fraternal greetings in the name of the General Council.

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

(Translated from the original French).

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 2

Rome, January 14, 1994
Communicanda N. 2
Prot. N. 0007/94

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Dear Confreres,

1. More than two years have passed since the XXI General Chapter. During that time the General Council has joined the Congregation in reflection on the conclusions of that moment of grace. Together with all of you, we have sought to apply the contents of the Final Document to our service of the Congregation, both in Rome as well as during our presence in the (Vice)Provinces and Regions.

2. We have already offered you our first reflections on the theme proposed for the present sexennium.¹ During our visits we have listened to the experience of different Units of the Congregation.

We have continued to study the implications of the theme for the day to day living in our own community in Rome. We believe it is time to share our thoughts with you once again.

3. We observe that the past decades have witnessed a growth in appreciation for the great diversity in the life of our Congregation. The decentralization of our government, the rise of regional cooperation, and the freedom given to local units to attune their apostolic methods and community lifestyles to the cultural demands of their people, have all served to further root the Congregation in the local church and civil society.

4. The principle of inculturation received strong endorsement by the last General Chapter (FD,2 13-21) and by the first Communicanda of the present General Government (3.1–3.9). We believe that inculturation is a proper response to the signs of the times and a challenge to the creativity of today's Redemptorist missionary.

5. However, we wonder if it is not now time to reflect on what should unite Redemptorists, no matter what their cultural ambient or particular apostolic methods. The question of the unity of the Congregation was certainly put to us by the last General Chapter: "We ask the General Government to pursue this unifying factor of our evangelical dynamism, while respecting legitimate pluralism in pastoral methods" (FD, 14).

6. In response to this challenge we wish to acknowledge the diversity of Redemptorists, while at the same time promoting what is essential for our apostolic life and working always to safeguard the unity of the Congregation (GS3 0120). Without a clear appreciation of what must unite us, we will risk an unconscious

slide into becoming a loose federation of autonomous units and independent monasteries, thereby sacrificing the powerful witness of a world-wide religious congregation that finds unity in the midst of its diversity.

7. We begin this reflection with a consideration of pluralism in the Congregation and how that pluralism is endorsed, as well as some difficult challenges posed by it. We then propose to offer what we consider to be the basis for our animation of the Congregation: elements of that “unifying principle of our evangelical dynamism”. We ask you to consider seriously these elements, for they constitute the message we wish to carry to all the units of the Congregation and we believe that they can further clarify the identity of all Redemptorists today.

I. Pluralism in the Congregation

8. There is no doubt that the Congregation finds itself spread over an immense geographic area embracing many and varied cultures (FD, 14). Practically every month editions of *Communicationes* and *Informationes* highlight the vast spectrum of ecclesial, economic, social and political situations in which we Redemptorists find ourselves. General Chapters and other international meetings remind us of the strikingly different portions of the world in which we Redemptorists live and work.

9. The plurality of cultures that we see throughout the Congregation can also be present in a single country (FD, 14), or even a single Province. In the same region the birth rate among some

population groups declines, while increasing dramatically among others. The migration of peoples as well as the influx of refugees can suddenly change the face of a single unit of the Congregation. Confreres of the same Province often find themselves ministering in totally different cultural environments.

10. Over the last two decades the effort towards the formulation of pastoral priorities has reflected the pluralism within the Congregation. We have recognized the diversity and plurality of human and ecclesial situations in the various regions (FD, 3). We admit that Redemptorists are moved by the powerful cultural and social movements of our times (FD, 18). It is apparent to us that very different situations call for various and creative responses from us. In his report to the last General Chapter, the Superior General judged that a healthy pluralism of pastoral “urgencies” was a motive for hope in the apostolic life of the Congregation.²

11. Furthermore, while there once was a significant degree of uniformity in the community lifestyles of Redemptorists throughout the world, this is no longer so. The order of the day, manner of dress, forms of community prayer, and other similar indicators of a common Redemptorist identity now vary widely from one area of the globe to the next.

Pluralism is Endorsed

12. It is apparent that our Constitutions and Statutes encourage Redemptorists to be flexible in carrying out their mission. Our actual circumstances should determine our response: “According to the situations in which they find themselves, they should eagerly try to discover what they should say or do” (Const. 58). Pluralism

is recognized in the people to be evangelized (GS 010-015) and the possible forms that evangelization may take (GS 016-024). There is no doubt that our proper law envisions a variety of missionary responses to particular situations as a valid, even necessary, expression of the Redemptorist charism.

13. The organization of our local communities should reflect the diversity of the Redemptorist world: “Local norms should be capable of being modified according to what the Church, circumstances of time and place, and the particular culture and character of a nation require” (Const. 44; cf. GS 041). Even the forms for living our vows take into consideration cultural differences (GS 044-047, 048a),

14. The general principles of government in the Congregation have dismantled the overly centralized and vertical structure of the past, in the hope of giving “apostolic value to the norms ratified in the constitutions and statutes” (Const. 91). The five fundamental principles of co-responsibility, decentralization, subsidiarity, solidarity, and flexibility (Const. 92-96) provide ample space for a variety of expressions of the Redemptorist apostolic charism. Furthermore, the General Chapter is advised to choose the General Council so that the entire Congregation is in some way reflected in the General Government (GS 0124).

15. Pluralism in the life and mission of the Congregation was endorsed during the regional meetings which preceded the most recent General Chapter. One Region noted as a positive development in Redemptorist community life a greater tolerance of differences and acceptance of pluralism in lifestyles.³ Several Regions

recognized the importance of reflecting the particularity of their mission in the way they structure experiences of first formation.⁴

16. Another Region saw the pluralism within the Congregation as a potential source for our enrichment:

But we must recognize among ourselves different ways of understanding the mission, the Church, the activity of the laity, the option for the poor, etc. That is to say that we are moving under the influence of different ecclesiologies or visions of the Church. That could enrich us in our being and in our actions.⁵

17. The XXI General Chapter, in proposing its own goal, affirmed the value of the present pluralism in the Congregation:

The major concern of the Chapter is to foster the good of the whole Congregation. The Chapter seeks to promote what is essential for our apostolic life while positively acknowledging the diversity and plurality of human and ecclesial situations in the various regions (FD, 3).

The concern of the Chapter for the principle of inculturation presumes the variety of situations in which the Congregation presently finds itself and calls for missionary responses that are acutely sensitive to the particular circumstances (cf. FD, 13-21).

Several of the Chapter's recommendations in two areas of particular interest, youth ministry and collaboration with laity, advised sensitivity to the nuances of the local culture (FD, 56d, 59d).

18. The General Chapter underscored the variety of forms in the community life of Redemptorists: "The Redemptorist community adopts many and varied forms in accord with the

socio-cultural pluralism in which the Congregation lives” (FD, 29). It also strongly recommended to the whole Congregation that its search for new forms of a genuine Redemptorist spirituality take into account the social and ecclesial reality of each unit (FD, 34c).

19. Our initial study of the Final Document led us to affirm that:

This diversity in the Congregation between continents, which is even expressed by different rites, is good and even necessary. It is a sign that we are in communion with the peoples to whom we belong. It reflects the Catholicism of the Church present in diverse cultures. It is an appeal to each one to be open in heart and soul to the Spirit who is present in all the continents (Communicanda 1, 4.1).

20. Our judgment on the value of the importance of inculturation for our apostolic activity, community life and spirituality, also received extensive discussion in Communicanda 1 (3.1–3.9).

21. However, our appreciation for the diversity for the Congregation is not simply theoretical. We have a daily experience of both the richness and the challenges offered by the task of building an apostolic community whose members each come from a different culture, have had quite diverse theological formation, as well as a variety of apostolic experiences. Our continuing commitment to grow together in our Redemptorist vocation is itself an endorsement of pluralism in the Congregation.

Pluralism Presents Serious Challenges

22. The diversity of situations and the plurality of responses in the Congregation is not an unmixed blessing. It was a source of

great concern for the General Chapter, as well as for the present General Council.

The General Chapter offers this analysis of the problem:

The Chapter acknowledges that there is presently a marked gap in understanding and appreciation between Regions, especially when their respective concrete situations are discussed. Some Regions, for example, find it difficult to understand the motivation and consequences of the option for the poor, while other Regions can hardly understand and feel what it is like to continue to believe in the Gospel in a secularized world. For this reason there is a tendency for one Region to judge another without sufficient understanding (FD, 9).

23. We share the concern of our immediate predecessors on the General Council, who commented on the apparently divisive effect of the theme of the previous sexennium among the various Regions of the Congregation.⁹ Reactions to the theme threatened to widen a gap in the Congregation along ideological lines.

24. There is also a type of pluralism widespread in the Congregation that is really a sort of dichotomy that juxtaposes pastoral activity against community life. As the Superior General reported to the last General Chapter:

At times it appears to me that some models of community life say nothing to the world of today. The daily living of our religious consecration as a mission, the acceptance of our religious vows as a way of consecration in the context of the present society and the unfolding of the transcendental dimension of our whole life show serious weaknesses...

We put much more effort into renewing our activities than in renewing our community.⁷

25. It has been reported that pluralism within a single Region challenges efforts toward collaboration:

It is difficult to arrange common programs involving various units because of the great distances within our region and also because of the diversity of languages, cultures and attitudes of national governments.⁸

26. It is understandable that tensions within the local Church or among countries of the same region affect the Congregation.⁹ But the presence of such tensions within the units of the same Region can have a debilitating effect:

But we must recognize among ourselves different ways of understanding the mission, the Church, the activity of the laity, the option for the poor, etc...not to have a minimal agreement in our way of thinking, leads us to isolated and parallel apostolates which destroy rather than build up the Kingdom of God.¹⁰

27. The meeting of different cultures within the same Region may provoke misunderstanding:

There were, inevitably, some concerns which created occasional uncertainties in our meeting, for example, what was seen by some as the negative influence of the Western world on religious life in Eastern Europe.¹¹

28. Finally, it is no secret that several of the Regions struggled to understand and implement the general theme of the last sexennium. As one Region expressed it:

A lack of precision in the sexennial theme gave rise to different interpretations among us, and the continuing debate on “who are the poor” created some further difficulties for us. In part, we have found it difficult to understand the sexennial theme because we are not often living among and with the poor.¹²

29. Our experience of the Congregation demonstrates to us that the diversity of situations, attitudes and responses that create tensions at the regional level are often found in individual units and even local communities. There are truly diverse cultures within a Province, created by differences in age and theological formation, as well as opposing visions of the Church and the Congregation. There is the continuing debate over the recipients of our evangelization, as well as its appropriate forms. Some confreres clamor for new apostolic initiatives, while others cling steadfastly to present commitments. There are radically different expectations expressed for community life, for common prayer, for the exercise of co-responsibility.

30. The challenge presented by pluralism in its most extreme form is that of individualism. By this we do not speak of the high esteem that must be given to each confrere and the concern the community must have for the growth in maturity and responsibility of each of our members (Const. 36). We refer, rather, to the situation in not a few units where a significant number of confreres are practically autonomous, each pursuing his own wishes. The consequences of this attitude are truly ruinous: pastoral priorities of many units remain unfulfilled; local communities become boarding houses; our identity as Redemptorists disappears; young people are unable to sense in us any sort of agreement or common purpose.

II. The Unity of the Congregation

31. A great deal of reflection has been made on the pluralism of our Redemptorist apostolic community, how it is “incarnated” in the various regions of the world. We now ask ourselves: can there be common elements in our animation of the Congregation? We believe that there are. First of all, we sense that there are characteristics that distinguish Redemptorists throughout the world today. It is possible to paint a sort of informal “portrait” of Redemptorists, highlighting our peculiar approach to our pastoral service, the people we serve, our community life, and some elements of our spirituality.

A Redemptorist Portrait

32. The purpose of our Congregation is “to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor” (Const. 1). Preaching the word of God has been a hallmark of Redemptorists since the very beginning and we have jealously guarded this legacy. Whether the particular context be parish missions, retreats or other spiritual exercises, or a homily at a Sunday Eucharist, the zeal we bring to the task as well as the simplicity of our style seem to distinguish Redemptorists in all parts of the world. We often seek to be very flexible in searching for new and more adequate methods in presenting the revelation of God.

33. Redemptorists display a preference for ordinary people, especially for those whom we have traditionally named “the poor and the most abandoned”. We still want to go where the institutional Church cannot or will not venture. We strive to be close to our people and generally display a high degree of sensitivity to their popular forms of expressing their faith.

34. Community life is highly prized among us. More than a requirement of our proper law (Const. 21), it is so basic to our self-understanding that even when our community life is seriously deficient or practically non-existent we are troubled by the absence of something we perceive as absolutely vital.

We esteem a family spirit in our communities, we love our celebrations, and we are practically indefatigable in story-telling that unites a particular community with the wider family of confreres that have gone before us.

35. Redemptorists generally eschew esoteric or arcane forms of spirituality, preferring methods of personal and common prayer that are more familiar to the people we serve. In the quest for renewal in our common prayer we try to maintain a spirituality that is centered on Christ the Redeemer, with a special love for the Blessed Virgin Mary.

36. These are some characteristics common to us Redemptorists today, no matter how different are the circumstances in which we live and work. We sense that such distinguishing marks of Redemptorists, which we believe to be our heritage from the foundational insights of Saint Alphonsus, are in danger of becoming obscure or even lost, perhaps irretrievably so. Because of some of the factors cited in the first sections of this *communicanda* and for many other reasons as well, we believe that vital aspects of our identity as Redemptorists are threatened.

The Theme of the Sexennium and Coherency

37. We feel that this same concern motivated the members of the XXI General Chapter when they proposed the theme for this sexennium. We have chosen to find the foundation for our inspiration and our stimulus of the Congregation in the interpretation of this theme:

In accord with the theme of the sexennium, the Chapter asks to underscore the interconnection between the tasks of evangelization, community Life and the spirituality proper to the Congregation; as well as the need to incarnate this three-fold dimension of our life in historical forms which express the option of the Congregation for the most abandoned and especially the poor (FD, 12).

38. We believe that a key word to understand the theme is coherency. Simply stated, the theme teaches us that there are three necessary elements of our identity as Redemptorists and there ought to exist a vital interconnection between them. Put another way, the absence of one or more of these elements destroys our Redemptorist identity; while we may arguably be fine religious or priests, we no longer are faithful to the legacy we have received. As we affirm that God is calling this General Council to promote a clear coherency between the three constitutive elements of our Redemptorist identity today, we also invite the (Vice)Provinces and each local community to consider the necessary interconnection in the three-fold dimension of our life.

Our Mission

39. The point of departure for our animation is always the Redemptorist mission. We are called to “continue the presence of Christ and his mission of redemption in world” (Const. 23). Fidelity

to that mission demands the establishing and implementation of apostolic priorities in every unit. In a given region, we must respond to those urgent pastoral needs which are consonant with our charism as it is expressed in our Constitutions and Statutes (cf especially Const. 3-5).

40. It follows that not every apostolic endeavor, no matter how praiseworthy in itself, can be accepted as a valid expression of our missionary charism. Nor can the category “the most abandoned, especially the poor” be so broadened as to include every possible form of pastoral service. We Redemptorists cannot absolve ourselves from the often painful choices to be made.

41. The priorities of each unit must be subjected to review and revision. This demands of us mobility and flexibility (cf. Mk 1: 38-39), as well as a spirit of detachment (*distacco*) from our past successes. Clinging to institutions or pastoral methods that no longer respond to contemporary situations seriously blunts our effectiveness.

42. The missionary dynamism of our Congregation takes precedence over its juridic structures, including the present demarcation of Provinces and Vice-Provinces. In fact, new pastoral initiatives may be possible, even for ageing Provinces without a great number of candidates, provided they are open to the process of collaboration and restructuring to which the Final Document refers (FD, 62).

Our Community Life

43. It is not enough simply to renew our work and make it more consonant with our charism. The last General Chapter reminds all Redemptorists that our community life and spirituality

are not afterthoughts to our pastoral activity, but together with our particular dynamism form indispensable parts of our mission in the Church.

Each of our communities must feel challenged to be in itself a manifest proclamation of the Gospel, as well as an efficacious presence of the Reign of God in the midst of men and women (FD, 23).

44. While there is a widespread desire to improve the human relations within our communities, we do not feel this effort to be the only criterion for our community life. We note that the pastoral activity of the first Redemptorists was tremendously enhanced by the witness of their community life. The preaching of Alphonsus and his companions was tremendously credible on account of the simplicity, the prayer, the austerity, and the openness of the first Redemptorist communities. There was a recognizable coherency between their pastoral activity and their community life. When the Final Document speaks of our community as an “efficacious presence of the Reign of God” as well as the “power of the community witness as a sign of the presence of the Kingdom” (FD, 23, 29), it reminds us of the vital relationship between our mission and our community life.

Our Spirituality

45. Incalling for a coherency that includes our own spirituality, the Chapter warns against a dangerous sort of dualism that would lead to attitudes unacceptable for Redemptorists (FD, 35). It calls us to discover a real consistency in our lives that is nothing less than a coherent integration of our faith and our personal

and communal experience. The person of Christ the Redeemer connects our spirituality with our mission (FD, 36). We are called to work creatively in order to make our spirituality the “soul of our communities” (FD, 41).

In Summary

46. We see the pluralism in our international religious family as a “sign of the times” that is absolutely necessary, but at the same time a source of concern. We feel that the search for the type of unity that both respects the particular human and ecclesial situations of Redemptorists today while fostering in us a faithfulness to our common legacy from Saint Alphonsus must begin and end with a real coherency among the constitutive elements of our vocation: our particular mission, our community life, and our spirituality. In a real sense, to the extent that individuals, local communities and (Vice)Provinces discover such coherency in themselves, to that extent will we remain united as a global religious congregation.

Conclusion

47. The elements we have chosen to highlight form our response to the “signs of the times”: what we have seen and heard in our Congregation, considered in the light of the word of God, our Constitutions and Statutes, the recent General Chapters, and the reflections of our predecessors. We recognize pluralism in our apostolic directions, expressions of community life, and spiritual paths. This is the work of the Spirit, who is the source of all gifts. But, we also feel called to underscore that which should unite all confreres in all parts of the world, elements of that “unifying factor of our evangelical dynamism, while respecting legitimate pluralism

in our pastoral methods” (FD, 14). We propose that this “unifying factor” is to be found in the sexennial theme, especially in its insistence on a real coherency in Redemptorist life today. In our animation of the (Vice)Provinces, we want to search with you for this coherency which is a clear sign of our faithfulness to the will of God for our Congregation.

In the name of the General Council,

Juan Manuel Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

(The English version is the official text of this Communicanda).

NOTES TO COMMUNICANDA N. 2

1. Communicanda 1; Vitality and Essential Growth in Our “Apostolic Life”, Rome: 1 August 1992.
2. Acta Integra Capituli Generalis XXI, (Roma: Curia Generalis C.Ss.R., 1992), p. 210.
3. Meeting of the Asia-Oceania Region, 1.2.1e, in XXI Capitulum Generate: Reports of Regional Meetings, (Roma: Curia Generalis C.Ss.R., 1 June 1991), p. 8.

4. Asia-Oceania Region, 2.3.3, Reports of Regional Meetings, p. 13; North American Region, 1.2.3.c, Reports of Regional Meetings, p. 17.
5. Latin American Region, 2.2.6, Reports of Regional Meetings, p. 25.
6. General Council, Report on the State of the Congregation to the XXI General Chapter 1991, (Roma: Curia Generalis C.Ss.R., 1990), 2.3.10.1-2.3.10.2, pp. 19-20.
7. Acta Integra Capituli Generalis XXI, (Roma: Curia Generalis C Ss R 1992) p. 213.
8. Asia-Oceania Region, 1.4.2a, Reports of Regional Meetings, p. 10.
9. Latin American Region, 1.5.j, Reports of Regional Meetings, p. 23.
10. Latin American Region, 2.2.6, Reports of Regional Meetings, p. 25.
11. Europe-North Region, 1.1.5, Reports of Regional Meetings, p. 40.
12. Europe-North Region, 1.2.2e, Reports of Regional Meetings, p. 41.

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 3

Communicanda N. 3
Rome, September 8, 1994
Prot. N. 0000 0237/94

TO READ THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Editor's Note: The Communicanda N°. 3 is a historical witness of the early interest of the Redemptorists on the Statistics applied to religious life. Our gratitude, to the Redemptorists Frs. Michael Kratz and John Vargas and Bro. Placido, among others. At the level of the Church to Fr. Ángel Pardilla, Claretian.

Introduction

0.1. During our visitation of the (Vice) Provinces, the members of the General Council are frequently asked about the state of the Congregation. Which units of Redemptorists are flourishing? What is being done to assist (Vice) Provinces that are struggling with declining numbers and advancing age? How does the General Council see the future of the Congregation across the world?

We welcome such questions as a sign of the solidarity that should unite us Redemptorists. But we believe that it is necessary now to go beyond the informal answers we have offered during the visitations towards a deeper analysis of the present state of the Congregation and share with our brothers a more formal statement of our findings.

0.2. The General Council has spent some time studying the statistical portrait of the Congregation in the world today. We tried to place the development of the Congregation in the wider context of some significant changes in the Church and in the societies in which Redemptorists live. We brought to our analysis the personal experience of the visitations. This work has led to some very lively discussions among us. In this Communicanda we wish to present the initial results of our work.

0.3. We believe that the present state of the Congregation is an invitation to all Redemptorists to discern the will of God for us today. As a missionary congregation we should not be so much concerned where we are, as in what direction we are going. The questions we should ask ourselves should be “What can we see down the road?” “Are we going in the right direction?” “Are we moving at all?” This sort of discernment is a most serious task and one which the General Council cannot hope to accomplish on its own. So we want to promote a wider reflection within the Congregation.

We address this Communicanda in a very special way to the (Vice) Provincial and regional councils of the Congregation. We expect that each council involve all the members of its unit in a reflection on the contents. Furthermore, we ask that each (Vice) Provincial council itself formulate a response to this Communicanda and forward it to the General Council by 1 June 1995.

FIRST PART: THE STATISTICAL REALITY

1. A Short Survey of the Development from 1963 to 1994 and of the Present State of the Congregation

The differences in the development of the (Vice)Provinces over the last thirty years suggest their presentation in four groups: (see Appendix: Tables 1-4)

1.1. **The first group (Table 1)** shows the 22 (Vice)Provinces which have experienced continuous growth over the last 30 years (the list includes some (Vice)Provinces erected since 1963). These Units represent 29% (1,688) of the total membership and have 52.5% (343) of the students. According to geographical region they are:

- Europe:

Bratislava (1603), Michalovce (1604), Warszawa (1700), Lviv (4200)

- North America: Extra Patriam (3401)

- Latin America: Asunción (0705), Fortaleza (1304), San Salvador (1506), Resistencia (1701), Bahia (1702), Perú-Sur (2201), São Paulo (2300), Brasília (2302), Bogotá (2800), Porto Alegre

- Asia–Oceania: Kagoshima (0802), Weetebula (1003), Bangkok (1204) Ipoh (2103), Bangalore (3800)

- Africa: Luanda (3301), Niamey (0404)

1.2. The situation of the 14 (Vice)Provinces in **the second group (Table 2)** is more ambiguous. While most of these units have suffered a net decline over the last thirty years, they have most recently given evidence of some modest growth. They represent 14% (824) of the membership and have 24% (156) of the students. They are, according to geographical region:

- Latin America: Manaus (1202), Caracas (1502), Perú-Norte (1507), Buenos Aires (2200), Rio de Janeiro (2600), Santiago (3000) México (3600), San Juan (3900)
- Asia–Oceania: Cebu (1302), Tokyo (1902), Viet-Nam (3400)
- Africa: Matadi (0603), Fada N’Gourma (1402), South Africa (4000)

1.3. The third group (Table 3) represents the Regions and Missions of the Congregation. These differ one from the other. Most are recent foundations. Some of them offer positive signs of growth. Taken together they represent 2.8% (163) of the membership and have 6.7% (44) of the students.

- Latin America: Pilar (0101), Tupiza (1703), Haïti (1904), Reyes (2501), Propriá (3201)
- Asia–Oceania: Korea (0058), Colombo (3801), Alwaye (3802)
- Africa: Zimbabwe (1103), Nigeria (2702)

1.4. **The fourth group (Table 4)** shows the 35 (Vice)Provinces which have steadily decreased in membership over the last 30 years. These provinces now include 54% (3,151) of the membership but have only 16.8% (110) of the students.

- Europe: Roma (0100), Napoli (0200), Palermo (0300), Lyon (0400), Wien (0500), København (0502), Noordbelgië (0600), München (0800), Amsterdam (0900), Köln (1000), London (1100), Dublin (1300), Paris (1400), Madrid (1500), Praha (1600), Strasbourg (1800), Helvetica (2500), Bruxelles-Sud (3200), Lisboa (3300)

- North America: Baltimore (0700), Richmond (0704), Saint Louis (1200), New Orleans (1203), Sainte-Anne de Beaupré (1900) Toronto (2000), Oakland (2700), Edmonton (2900), Yorkton (3100)

- Latin America: Recife (0903), La Paz (1801), Quito (2400), Campo Grande (4100)

- Asia–Oceania: Canberra (2100), Manila (2101), Wellington (3700)

There is no indication that this development will be reversed in the near future. The following table uses the example of a few selected provinces to illustrate what sort of change would be necessary to halt or even reverse the steady decline of personnel:

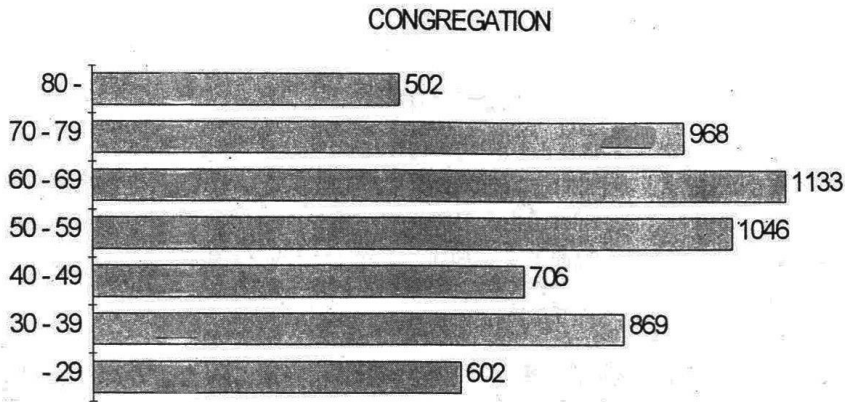
The figures in the first column indicate the average annual loss of confreres during the period 1981-1993; the figures in the second column indicate the annual average of first professions for the same period.

1981- 1993	Average Yearly Loss (Dead and Dispensed)	Yearly Average of first Professions
Baltimore	18.6	5.61
St. Louis	8.7	2.69
Colognr	7.5	1.92
Madrid	7.4	1.92
Sainte Anne	6.3	1.76
Canberra	6.1	1.38
Dublin	5.9	2.76
Munich	5.3	1.61
London	4.5	1.76
Naples	4.5	2.23
Toronto	3.7	1.38
Rome	3.1	0.15
Strasburg	2.9	0.23

A province can maintain its status quo in personnel only if the number of first professions equals its annual loss. If a province expects to recover from a decline in its personnel, the number of first professions should be considerably higher than the annual loss.

2. The Age Structure of the Congregation as of August 1, 1994

The age structure allows a different view of the world-wide situation of the Congregation:



25,2% (1,470) of the membership are 70 years and older, another 19,4% (1,133) are between 60 and 70, a total of 44.6% (2,603). This situation will last for at least the next 10 years because another numerous group will soon enter the highest age brackets of the Congregation.

Never in its history has the Congregation had so many elderly confreres. There are two principal reasons for this: the great number of men who entered the European and North American provinces from 1930–1950, as well as the longer life expectancy in most regions of the world.

More than two thirds (68,7%) of the elderly are in the so-called First World, i.e. North America, Australia and New Zealand, and western and southern Europe: 1,114 (of a total of 1,470) older than 70 years and 674 (of a total of 1,133) between 60 and 70.

At the same time, these very provinces have relatively few young people: 558 are 50 years and younger:

Southern Europe: 129

Western and Northern Europe: 157

North America: 253

Australia & New Zealand: 19

3. Some landmarks in the Redemptorist history of the last 30 years

In order to understand the implications of this statistical portrait and to be able to judge the quality of our response to this situation, it seems necessary to place these numbers in a broader context that would include events within the Congregation, the Church and world over the last thirty years. Here are some landmarks from our recent history that seem noteworthy to us.

3.1. Democratization and Decentralization (1969)

The influence of the General Government has been considerably reduced during the period covered by the statistical portrait. In 1969, for the first time in our history the (Vice)Provinces themselves elected their major superiors and councils. These (Vice)Provincial governments in turn appointed the local superiors, another novelty in Redemptorist history.

This led to a greater provincial autonomy in the Congregation and contributed in part to the pluralism in our Congregation

mentioned in *Communicanda* 2, n. 14, with the dangers and challenges described in nn. 22 ss. of that same document.

3.2. The renewed Constitutions and Statutes

At the peak of the post-conciliar crisis in the Church were renewed our Rule. As the old Rule was abandoned and the new Constitutions not yet assimilated, a whole generation of Redemptorists may have grown up without any fundamental guidelines for their religious identity. A common complaint at the last General Chapter was that the Constitutions and Statutes are still unknown to most of the confreres.

3.3. New provinces, vice-provinces and missions

- Some (Vice)Provinces became provinces: Viet-Nam (1964), Porto Alegre (1964), México (1966), Wellington (1970), Bangalore (1972), San Juan (1984), South Africa (1989), Campo Grande (1989), Lviv (1989), Brasília (1994)

- New missions or (vice)Provinces were started in: Propriá (1963), Reyes (1970), Extra Patriam (1984), Tupiza (1984), Nigeria (1987), Kenya (1990), Hong Kong (1989), Korea (1991), Côte d'Ivoire (1993), Ghana (1994).

3.4. The crisis of mission preaching in the late 60's

In the wake of the Second Vatican Council our tradition of mission preaching was effectively halted. Some provinces were later successful in renewing the content and format of the mission; others completely gave up mission preaching. For some provinces whose work was almost exclusively identified with mission preaching, the decline meant the loss of their self-understanding as Redemptorists.

3.5. The closing of most of the formation houses

In the last 30 years, the following major seminaries (studentates) were closed:

Cortona (Roma)	Sousceyrac (Lyon)
Mautern (Wien)	Leuven (Noordbelgië)
Esopus, Suffield (Baltimore)	Gars (München)
Wittem (Amsterdam)	Hawkstone (London)
Oconomowoc (Saint Louis)	Galway (Dublin)
Waterford (Saint Louis)	Windsor (Toronto)
Beauplateau (Bruxelles Sud)	Valladolid (Madrid)
Echternach, Ostw. (Strasbourg)	Aylmer (Sainte-Anne)
Floresta (Rio de Janeiro)	Ballarat (Canberra)
Villa Allende (Buenos Aires)	Dreux (Paris)

At the same, almost all the minor seminaries (juvenates) were closed.

3.6. Losses in personnel between 1964 and 1973:

the first professions dropped from 325 in 1964 to 88 in 1973, they never returned to the level of the years immediately prior to Vatican II.

2332 professed members left the Congregation, among them more than 500 priests. (In the ten previous years 565 professed members left, among them 60 priests!)

3.7. As the following statistics demonstrate, we are not the only religious congregation to have experienced a severe decline in numbers over the last decades:

Religious Institute	1966	1992	%
Societas Jesu (S.J.)	35.919	23.570	-34%
Ordo Fratrum Minorum (OFM)	25.272	18,558	-26%
Salesiani Don Bosco (SDB)	22.726	17.497	-23%
Fratres Minori Cap, (OFM Cap)	15.710	11.676	-26%
Confoed. Benedictina (OSB)	11.963	8.738	-27%
Ordo Praedicatorum (OP)	9.946	6.561	-34%-
Redemptorists (C.Ss.R.)	9.052	6.052	-33%
Oblati Mariae Immac. (OMI)	7.890	5273	-33%
Congregatio Missionis (CM)	6.230	3.668	-41%
Congr. Spiritus Sancti (CSSp)	5.137	3.280	-36%

(Source: *Annuario Pontificio*, Città del Vaticano, 1968, 1994; figures include the novices)

4. The Ecclesial Context of this development

4.1. The doctrine of Second Vatican Council has brought about immense changes in the Universal Church and in the process

has indelibly marked the most recent decades of the history of our Congregation. The renewed ecclesiology of the Council, especially its understanding of the universal call to holiness of life, has served to empower the laity in the Church and in a sense, questioned the consecrated life as the “better” or “higher” way. The Council rightfully acknowledged the position of the laity and authorized their wider role in the mission of the Church. But at the same time, this reinvigorated ecclesial self-understanding has contributed to the crisis in the identity of religious and priests.

4.2. The Council also broadened the Church’s understanding of the work of redemption, proposing that God’s saving power is in fact at work in other religious traditions and even in people who have never known Jesus Christ. The narrow understanding of extra Ecclesiam nulla salus has been laid to rest. This expanded notion of the economy of salvation, together with a diminished emphasis on the individual’s task to “save one’s soul” has greatly affected the missionary thrust of the Congregation, both in our parish missions as well as the mission ad gentes.

4.3. The conciliar renewal has been accompanied by the phenomenon of growing secularization, especially in the so-called First World, where the institutional Church continues to lose influence in the political sphere and even meaning in the lives of individuals and of families.

5. Landmarks in the Secular History of the last 30 Years

5.1. The present situation of the Congregation has been affected by circumstances beyond ourselves and the Church. There

are no factors that seem common to all the cultures in which the Congregation lives and each unit of Redemptorists ought to consider the recent history of its particular society. An understanding of socio-cultural changes is a necessary condition for comprehending the present situation.

5.2. While the social history of each unit should be analyzed in it self, many of the (Vice)Provinces which have experienced a steady decline in members have been affected by such cultural phenomena as the students' revolution in Europe (1968), the Vietnam War (1963-75), the feminist movement, the sexual revolution and a plunging birthrate. In most parts of the world the growth of universal education, with a consequence of increased social mobility, opened heretofore unknown possibilities for young people. Self-realization and individual fulfillment have become ideals. A life-long commitment of any sort is increasingly seen as something unrealistic. The pressures of modern life have resulted in a sort of fragility among many young people.

5.3. A global phenomenon which continues to mark Redemptorists is the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor of the world. This fact has not only influenced the pastoral options of a vast portion of the Congregation, but has led to some debate within (Vice)Provinces and among regions (see Final Document, n. 9).

It should be clear that the Congregation has never developed in a vacuum, insulated from the conditions of the cultures in which it has lived and worked. To understand the present situation of Redemptorists it is indispensable to attempt to grasp the wider context. But acknowledging the profound effect of these forces does not at all dispense the Congregation from responsible action.

SECOND PART: TRYING TO READ THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

6. What is God saying to us?

The Word of God speaks to people through the events of their particular history. The Hebrew nation understood God revealing Himself in the circumstances of their exodus from Egypt and entry into Canaan (e.g.: the whole Book of Deuteronomy), as well as in the tragedy of the Babylonian exile (e.g.: Jer 13, 18-19) and subsequent return (Is 40, 1ss). The preaching of Jesus, as well as many of His parables, counsel the disciples to a watchful attitude and a sensitivity to the circumstances that surround them (confer Mt 24; 25, 1-13, 14-30, 31-41; Mk 13, 28-29). He chides them for their ability to interpret signs from nature, while remaining callous to the divine communication inherent in the events of their lives (Luke 12, 54-56). Our Constitutions forcefully remind all Redemptorists to discover the plan of God in history (CC. 2; 43; 73-1°; 83). For God speaks through people and the signs of the times (Const. 73-1°).

The question that we must courageously ask ourselves is: What is God saying to us in the present circumstances of the Congregation?

6.1. Many confreres see in the statistical portrait of the Congregation a deepening crisis. A crisis is not necessarily a disaster because God is speaking to us precisely within this crisis. But in order to listen to God, we must first accept the situation, but not

with the resignation of hapless victims or with a desperate hope for some magical intervention or simplistic solution. The first step in discernment is to accept the situation as it is. Only then will we be able to listen to God and hear a call to honest reflection and an invitation to a faithful response.

6.2. Is God telling us that our particular charism is no longer a gift to the Church and therefore we are to disappear? Is the crisis experienced by so many religious Congregations the harbinger of the final demise of the consecrated life? We are not permitted to quickly answer these fundamental questions. Because they are so very important, they demand a most profound reflection on our own responsibility for the present situation.

6.3. Is God telling us that we have not been faithful to the original charism of the Congregation, that peculiar gift He Himself gave to the Church? Is it possible that we do not know how to adapt our charism to the circumstances of today's world? Or, if we begin to understand what God is asking from us, do we shrink from the sacrifice such adaptation would entail?

6.4. Is God telling us to honestly evaluate the testimony of our missionary life? Have we sacrificed the radical nature of our consecration and abandoned our rightful position in the van guard of the Church? Is it possible that in trying to inculturate our lives, we have forgotten that there should also be a necessarily counter-cultural witness of Redemptorists?

6.5 Is God telling us that we have been more concerned about ourselves, our power and our prestige rather than building the Kingdom? Have we been more interested in constructing a Tower of Babel (Gen 11, 4), rather than the Kingdom of God?

7. Reflections of the General Council

We do not propose to attempt to answer these questions that emerge from our consideration of the present crisis in the Congregation. We must together discern God's will for us through a reflection on the "signs of the times and places", so we will offer some of our own thoughts, inviting all our confreres throughout the Congregation to join the General Council in this search for God's message in the present circumstances.

A sense of solidarity should impel all units to take active part in this reflection. It may well be that nothing further can be done to guarantee the future presence of Redemptorists in some parts of western Europe and North America, at least in the existing provincial structures. But it would be a tragic error for confreres in provinces not yet seriously affected by a decline in numbers to ignore the experience of these aging and diminishing units.

7.1. As we have suggested above (nn. 4 and 5), the dramatic ecclesial and social changes of the last thirty years have not left the Congregation untouched. We have experienced a violent rupture from our past and have not successfully adapted the fundamental values of our Congregation to the changed circumstances of the modern world. It would seem that the renewed Constitutions and Statutes and knowledge of the history of our Congregation do not normally affect the lives and the decisions of individual confreres or units. We are afraid that in many areas of the world confreres simply cannot agree on what it means to be a Redemptorist. What is even more frightening is an apparent unwillingness to search together to discover the Redemptorist identity today.

7.2. If our most basic values are unclear or do not really affect our lives and decisions, we are unsure how to respond to a changed

world. It is understandable that such uncertainty often breeds a fearful and defensive mentality. Therefore, we can become quite inflexible in our pastoral methods. We may agree on a few common apostolates, but without a common vision or purpose.

7.3. If we are doubtful about our common mission today, it is not surprising to find difficulties in carrying it out as a community (Const. 21). Our common prayer, our style of life, our religious consecration and our manner of making decisions often say nothing to our world, to our Church and in all honesty, to ourselves. Our spirituality risks becoming a very private and personal affair.

7.4. The failure to discover our missionary identity today not only distorts our community life. It has very deleterious consequences for the recruitment and initial formation of our candidates and students. For what sort of missionary life can we effectively prepare them for, if our understanding of the Redemptorist task is unclear? And how can we appeal to the idealism of the young, if the actual state of our community life offers weak testimony to the visionary aspirations of Alphonsus?

7.5. Perhaps at the root of the widespread uncertainty in the Congregation there lies a fundamental doubt about our future and, indeed, the future of the consecrated life. We feel that many confreres and even entire communities do nothing to promote vocations. This might indicate a lack of confidence that our way of life is still an ideal worth sacrificing oneself for. And there are confreres who will never physically abandon the Congregation, but dispense themselves from any personal responsibility for the life and the future of their local community and their (Vice) Province. These confreres invariably have a most harmful effect on their brothers.

7.6. We are concerned about the frustration of the few young people who have entered the aging and declining (Vice)Provinces. The reduced number of the young and frequently, the rigidity of their confreres, often make it impossible to attempt any new pastoral initiatives or experiments in community life. These young Redemptorists are so few and so dispersed that they have little effective voice in the future of their unit or support from other Redemptorists their age.

7.7. While (Vice)Provinces generally dedicate personnel and finances to the initial formation of their members, there is often little special care given to young Redemptorists in their first years of ministry. Does such inattention contribute to the elevated number of young Redemptorists who quickly abandon the Congregation?

7.8. Many (Vice)Provinces have responded to the growing number of elderly confreres by enacting very admirable policies on retirement and health care. As praiseworthy as these policies are, we do not believe that they represent the final word. Aging does not absolve any Redemptorist from living some of the demands of our missionary consecration. Are the elderly in many units really challenged to continue to proclaim the Gospel through their contribution to community life?

7.9. We sense a variety of responses to the crisis in the Congregation and these can be found in individuals and governments, including our own Council. Some recoil in fear from the statistics. Others deny the severity of the crisis and its deeper implications. Some feel the crisis is a problem only for western Europe and North America. But, the most dangerous and least evangelical attitude to the crisis is a quiet resignation to the disappearance of the Congregation in many areas of the world. The

real crisis is not of statistics, but of passivity. Provincial Chapters and councils often fall prey to the temptation to manage the day to day affairs of their units without ever venturing into the more difficult analysis of their Redemptorist identity. It may be a far easier task to deal with finances and personnel matters than to try to read the “signs of the times” and honestly question the quality of our response.

7.10. There are those who would see the present situation as a result of unwarranted experimentation done in the name of “renewal” and would therefore call for a return to the past structures of the Congregation. An appeal is made to the apparent growth of certain traditional movements in religious life. For our part, we do not believe God is calling us to frantically reassume all the structures, traditions and practices of our past. But the actual crisis of so many Units, with its potential to touch (Vice)Provinces as yet unaffected, may be God insisting that we reconsider the meaning of our religious consecration in the circumstances of today’s world.

7.11. This insistence of God is nothing less than a call to conversion. The invitation is not a vague summons addressed to Redemptorists en masse, but a personal proposal directed to the heart of each confrere. Its content is not a set of propositions goals or objectives, but rather a single Word. The present situation of the Congregation is the Lord leading each of us to a desert where He can “speak to our hearts” (Hos 2, 16). In a desert where the Congregation is stripped of the dubious security of an ideology and the shelter of unimpeded growth, where we have no other choice but to depend on God and on each other, the Lord might well “speak to our hearts”, urging each of us to be converted to the person of the Redeemer.

7.12. Simply listening to the voice of the Redeemer in our present circumstances is not enough. We must respond. We may protest that what the Lord requires is hard to endure and difficult to take seriously (Jn 6, 60). We may ignore the invitation, protesting that we already have too much to worry about (Mt 22, 5). We may “go away sad”, because the sacrifice is simply too much (Lk 18, 23). Or, we may conclude that we have “no where else to go” (Jn 6, 68) except to remain with the One who has the words of eternal life. This last conclusion can never be discovered except in prayer and never lived in theory, but only as a *praxis amandi*, a life of unselfish love.

In the name of the General Council,

Juan Manuel Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

(The English text is the original version).

STATISTICS C.Ss.R. as of August 1, 1994

Table 1: Growing (V)Provinces

Unit	Membership			% of Increase / Decrease		Average Age	Students	Brothers 1st prof.
	1963 ¹	1980 ²	1994 ²	1980 - 1994	1963 - 1994			
1003	24	23	63	173.91%	162.50%	33.88	34	4
1702		13	31	138.46%		40.87	6	1
2201		18	42	133.33%		42.85	16	1
1506	42	36	69	91.67%	64.29%	43.34	14	2
2800	174	129	206	59.69%	18.39%	44.46	54	7
1603		19	30	57.89%		46.88	6	1
1204	38	42	65	54.76%	71.05%	42.05	20	4
3301	14	11	17	54.55%	21.43%	43.55	4	0
1701	14	34	49	44.12%	250.00%	44.91	14	0
3800	95	103	144	39.81%	51.58%	41.92	41	1
1304	14	33	44	33.33%	214.29%	48.59	4	0
2302	40	54	71	31.48%	77.50%	53.21	6	2
1604		23	30	30.43%		45.66	11	0
1700	301	286	370	29.37%	22.92%	44.40	44	4
3401		32	41	28.13%		55.54	8	0
4200		54	64	18.52%		46.55	17	0
0705	29	30	35	16.67%	20.69%	46.30	2	1
2300	179	184	195	5.98%	8.94%	50.47	29	5
0404	20	21	22	4.76%	10.00%	58.64	2	0
3500	46	48	49	2.08%	6.52%	51.30	6	0
0802	15	17	17	0.00%	13.33%	54.35	1	1
2103	16	34	34	0.00%	112.50%	44.61	4	0
	Total: 1688					Total: 343	343	34

¹ Source: *Conspectus Generalis C.Ss.R.*, 1985

² Source: *Computer Statistics of the General Secretariat*

Table 2: (V)Provinces in an Ambiguous Situation

Unit	Membership			% of Increase / Decrease		Average Age	Students	Brothers 1st prof.
	1963 ¹	1980 ²	1994 ²	1980 - 1994	1963 - 1994			
0603	90	13	38	192.31%	-57.78%	40.33	13	1
1402	24	15	20	33.33%	-16.67%	46.46	4	0
1902	36	22	29	31.82%	-19.44%	57.52	1	0
1202	64	30	36	20.00%	-43.75%	48.77	7	0
3600	93	63	74	17.46%	-20.43%	46.01	20	0
1507	59	24	28	16.67%	-52.54%	49.21	5	0
1302	81	67	72	7.46%	-11.11%	48.88	6	0
3900	106	77	82	6.49%	-22.64%	47.00	11	4
2600	176	63	67	6.35%	-61.93%	56.21	12	1
3000	69	53	55	3.77%	-20.29%	46.40	18	0
2200	152	84	87	3.57%	-42.76%	49.92	8	3
3400	185	143	146	2.10%	-21.08%	53.99	45	0
4000	42	51	46	-9.80%	9.52%	49.08	4	3
1502	39	50	44	-12.00%	12.82%	60.90	2	1
Total:			824			Total:	156	13

Table 3: Regions and Missions

Unit	Membership			% of Increase / Decrease		Average Age	Students	Brothers 1st prof.
	1963	1980 ²	1994 ²	1980 - 1994	1963 - 1994			
0058			3			44.12	0	0
0101	12	17	24	41.18%	100.00%	46.94	5	0
1103			5			50.35	0	0
1703			23			34.71	6	0
1904			18			50.01	4	1
2501	13	20	20	0.00%	53.85%	66.60	1	0
2702			18			33.60	13	1
3201		4	2	-50.00%		59.75	0	0
3801	10	24	17	-29.17%	70.00%	46.26	0	0
3802			33			36.03	15	0
Total:			163			Total:	44	2

¹ Source: *Conspectus Generalis C.Ss.R.*, 1985² Source: Computer Statistics of the General Secretariat

Table 4: (V)Provinces in Steady Decline in Numbers

Unit	Membership			% of Increase / Decrease		Average Age	Students	Brothers 1st prof.
	1963 ¹	1980 ²	1994 ²	1980 - 1994	1963 - 1994			
4100	87	63	61	-3.17%	-29.89%	48.47	7	0
2400	89	60	58	-3.33%	-34.83%	52.11	8	4
0704	76	69	66	-4.35%	-13.16%	62.80	5	0
0903	50	21	20	-4.76%	-60.00%	57.88	3	0
2101	32	35	30	-14.29%	-6.25%	52.51	1	0
0200	217	171	140	-18.13%	-35.48%	59.31	9	1
1300	311	226	185	-18.14%	-40.51%	60.04	10	0
3100	75	52	42	-19.23%	-44.00%	64.35	1	1
1203	94	95	75	-21.05%	-20.21%	59.37	5	1
3300	100	70	55	-21.43%	-45.00%	61.87	3	1
1500	414	279	217	-22.22%	-47.58%	60.23	10	1
0500	148	105	78	-25.71%	-47.30%	61.23	5	0
2700	139	102	75	-26.47%	-46.04%	62.22	4	0
1900	323	223	161	-27.80%	-50.15%	66.56	5	0
1801	66	35	25	-28.57%	-62.12%	57.59	3	1
1100	191	138	98	-28.99%	-48.69%	57.29	3	0
0800	238	168	119	-29.17%	-50.00%	61.45	1	3
2500	106	94	66	-29.79%	-37.74%	65.74	1	0
2000	222	104	73	-29.81%	-67.12%	64.29	3	0
1400	173	114	79	-30.70%	-54.34%	72.43	1	0
1200	357	253	174	-31.23%	-51.26%	60.32	1	1
1000	308	242	166	-31.40%	-46.10%	62.39	3	0
1800	171	113	77	-31.86%	-54.97%	68.68	0	0
2900	104	64	43	-32.81%	-58.65%	66.43	0	0
2100	232	190	126	-33.68%	-45.69%	64.61	4	0
0400	191	108	71	-34.26%	-62.83%	71.46	0	1
0300	45	35	23	-34.29%	-48.89%	66.04	0	1
0502	19	14	9	-35.71%	-52.63%	61.14	0	0
0700	584	481	307	-36.17%	-47.43%	61.25	9	2
0100	173	104	65	-37.50%	-62.43%	66.51	0	0
0600	234	188	112	-40.43%	-52.14%	67.73	1	0
3700	46	34	20	-41.18%	-56.52%	69.26	0	0
3200	118	91	53	-41.76%	-55.08%	68.10	0	0
0900	376	248	142	-42.74%	-62.23%	72.04	0	0
1600		88	40	-54.55%		65.71	4	1
		Total:	3151			Total:	110	19

¹ Source: Conspectus Generalis C.Ss.R., 1985

² Source: Computer Statistics of the General Secretariat

Table 5: Statistical Summary

Unit	Membership			% of Increase / Decrease		Average Age	Students	Brothers 1st prof.
	1963 ¹	1980 ²	1994 ²	1980 - 1994	1963 - 1994			
0000	8868	6593	5830	-11.57%	-34.26%	55.61	653	68
0010	301	470	534	13.62%	77.41%		82	6
0011	1836	1273	892	-29.93%	-51.42%		24	5
0012	1697	1235	863	-30.12%	-49.15%		23	3
0013	1974	1475	1057	-28.34%	-46.45%		41	5
0014	1613	1259	1513	20.17%	-6.20%		271	34
0015	810	746	799	7.10%	-1.36%		172	10
0016	190	119	166	39.50%	-12.63%		40	5

¹ Source: Conspectus Generalis C.Ss.R., 1985² Source: Computer Statistics of the General Secretariat

List of the Units of the Congregation

0000	Congregatio	1603	Bratislava (V-Pr)
0010	Europa Orientalis	1604	Michalovce (V-Pr)
0011	Europa Meridionalis	1700	Warszawa (Prov)
0012	Europa Septentrionalis	1701	Resistencia (V-Pr)
0013	America Septentrionalis	1702	Bahia (V-Pr)
0014	America Latina	1703	Tupiza (Reg)
0015	Asia-Oceania	1800	Strasbourg (Prov)
0016	Africa	1801	La Paz (V-Pr)
0058	Korea (Miss)	1900	Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré (Prov)
0100	Roma (Prov)	1902	Tokyo (V-Pr)
0101	Pilar (Reg)	1904	Port-au-Prince (Reg)
0200	Napoli (Prov)	2000	Toronto (Prov)
0300	Palermo (Prov)	2100	Canberra (Prov)
0400	Lyon (Prov)	2101	Manila (V-Pr)
0404	Niamey (V-Pr)	2103	Ipoh (V-Pr)
0500	Wien (Prov)	2200	Buenos Aires (Prov)
0502	Kobenhavn (V-Pr)	2201	Perú-Sur (V-Pr)
0600	Noordbelgië (Prov)	2300	São Paulo (Prov)
0603	Matadi (V-Pr)	2302	Brasília (V-Pr)
0606	Beyrouth (Reg)	2400	Quito (Prov)
0700	Baltimore (Prov)	2500	Helvetica (Prov)
0704	Richmond (V-Pr)	2501	Reyes (Reg)
0705	Asunción (V-Pr)	2600	Rio de Janeiro (Prov)
0800	München (Prov)	2700	Oakland (Prov)
0802	Kagoshima (V-Pr)	2702	Nigeria (Reg)
0900	Amsterdam (Prov)	2800	Bogotá (Prov)
0903	Recife (V-Pr)	2900	Edmonton (Prov)
1000	Köln (Prov)	3000	Santiago (Prov)
1003	Weetebula (V-Pr)	3100	Yorkton (Prov)
1100	London (Prov)	3200	Bruxelles-Sud (Prov)
1103	Zimbabwe (Reg)	3201	Propria (Reg)
1200	Saint Louis (Prov)	3300	Lisboa (Prov)
1202	Manaus (V-Pr)	3301	Luanda (V-Pr)
1203	New Orleans (V-Pr)	3400	Viêt-Nam (Prov)
1204	Bangkok (V-Pr)	3401	Extra Patriam (V-Pr)
1300	Dublin (Prov)	3500	Porto Alegre (Prov)
1302	Cebu (V-Pr)	3600	México (Prov)
1304	Fortaleza (V-Pr)	3700	Wellington (Prov)
1400	Paris (Prov)	3800	Bangalore (Prov)
1402	Fada N'Gourma (V-Pr)	3801	Colombo (Reg)
1500	Madrid (Prov)	3802	Alwaye (Reg)
1502	Caracas (V-Pr)	3900	San Juan (Prov)
1506	San Salvador (V-Pr)	4000	South Africa (Prov)
1507	Perú-Norte (V-Pr)	4100	Campo Grande (Prov)
1600	Praha (Prov)	4200	Lviv (Prov)

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

COMMUNICANDA N. 4

Communicanda N. 4
Rome, September 8, 1995
Prot. N. 0000 0257/95

**COLLABORATION BETWEEN
THE REDEMPTORIST COMMUNITY
AND THE LAITY**

DIRECTIVES AND NORMS ¹

INTRODUCTION

01. In recent years, stimulated by the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, the Church has become more clearly conscious of the complementarity of the religious and lay vocations. Hence collaboration between Religious Institutes and the laity is being promoted as one of the means best calculated to develop the apostolic dynamism of both religious and laity as well as giving clear witness to the evangelizing mission of the ecclesial community (cf. VFIC, 'Fraternal Life in Community, n. 70).

02 The Synod of 1994 on Consecrated Life recommended that the Institutes create new structures and define programs of formation to foster and promote the participation of the laity, while turning to better account the role which belongs to women in the Church and in society. At the same time it called to mind that while united with the laity in closer collaboration the religious must keep their proper identity and their own special dynamic way of life (cf. ILSVC, n. 80; Propositions, n. 33). This marks a significant and complex development in today's Church.

03 Our Congregation from the beginning has always been close to the people, particularly the poor and abandoned, and has always sought collaboration with the laity in its apostolic work. It will be sufficient to recall, for example, what Alphonsus accomplished with the 'evening chapels' in Naples to realize how much he had at heart this nearness to and sharing with the abandoned and with what constancy he endeavored to adapt to simple people in all his missionary activity and writing. St. Clement, especially during his period in Vienna, always sought to associate with the laity and to involve them in his multiple apostolic works so as to have a more profound and lasting effect on the European society of his time.

04 In recent years the Congregation has taken concrete steps to increase evaluate and direct collaboration with the laity. The XXI General Chapter was especially concerned in this project devoting an entire section of the Final Document to "Collaboration with the laity on a basis of partnership" in which:

- y it acknowledges the progress already made in the field of collaboration and encourages its promotion where it has not yet begun (cf. n. 57);
- y it recommends that "the different Units of the Congrega-

tion share their experiences in the area of lay collaboration, so that we can learn from each other and begin to evaluate the results of our experiences thus far” (n. 59b);

y it decides to establish the category of Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer as an active co-worker and participant in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist congregation “(n. 60a);

y it urges our communities to open themselves up to the laity, so that they may have a greater share in our experiences of life, work and spirituality “(n. 60b);

05. In order that the project of the Congregation with regard to collaboration with the laity might have common points of reference and thus more profitable results, the same General Chapter requested the General Government to propose:

y “guidelines for such collaboration which the units could adapt to their particular circumstances”(n. 59a).

y “general norms “ for the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer “which would apply to all units of the Congregation”(N. 60a).

06. After the General Secretariat for the Laity had already presented to the Congregation a general synthesis of the initiatives already in operation in the different units, the General Council on 8 September 1995, approved the following Guidelines and Norms, the fruit of a complex period of study and consultation in which it sought to involve the whole Congregation together with qualified representatives of the laity who are already working with us. These Guidelines and Norms are addressed in the first place to the different

units of the Congregation as an instrument to stimulate and unify our research for the most suitable forms of collaboration with the laity. Naturally they concern as well the lay people themselves who are collaborating with us.

07. The decision to present them in one sole document arose from the necessity of showing more clearly:

y the plurality of forms of collaboration existing between the laity and Redemptorist Communities: for this reason the Guidelines are traced in general terms which should be made concrete according to the circumstances of the different units;

y the more committed form of active collaboration and participation in the apostolic life of the C.Ss.R which is found in the category of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer: thus some General Norms are defined which are to be observed in all the units of the Congregation (N. 60a).

08. The contents of the following pages do not certainly express the full commitment which Redemptorists are called to make in promoting a more mature and generously apostolic laity. Such a commitment is of a much wider dimension and should be present in all our apostolic initiatives. The Guidelines and Norms are concerned solely with “collaboration with the laity on a basis of partnership”, that is such collaboration as visualizes the laity actively participating in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community. This we have made clear from the beginning and it is in this sense that “collaboration with the laity on the basis of partnership” is to be understood all through this document.

09. Both the Guidelines and the Norms aim at stimulating the units of the Congregation and each confrere to be more positive and creative in their activity, while at the same time drawing attention to some requirements and conditions aimed at fostering a more unified approach which respects the special circumstances of the various contexts.

PART I

GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATION WITH THE LAITY

1.1. Collaboration

10. The fact that the Holy Spirit today is urging lay people to a greater collaboration in the evangelizing of the poor constitutes a precious sign of the times for the ecclesial and Redemptorist community. It is imperative therefore for us, Redemptorists, to be prompt and positive in our response:

- y by encouraging the laity to a more mature awareness of their specific vocation, which is rooted in their baptism, and to a greater promptitude and generosity in their response;
- y by inviting them candidly to participate in the Redemptorist mission and spirituality;
- y by opening up our communities to them and intensifying the formation of Redemptorists so that we may be better disposed to and more capable of collaborating with them;
- y by leaving ourselves always open to be enriched by what the Spirit works in them.

11. The Collaborationistobesoplannedthatthe Redemptorists and laity are effectively co-workers in the evangelization of the poor. Its realization should always be marked by real co-responsibility and sincere mutual respect. The objective to be attained is “the Redemptorist family” demonstrated at different concentric levels of belonging.

12. Complimentarity and reciprocity between the charisms in that communion proper to the Church, should constitute the basis of all collaboration. It is imperative, however, to ensure that the Redemptorist community does not become laicized and that the lay people do not become clericalized or sacralized, but that a real reciprocal enrichment is attained. This balance must be constantly preserved in the actual concrete situations.

13. The basis of collaboration is the sharing of the laity in the mission which is proper to the Redemptorist community. The secular dimension, the specific charisms and the skills of the laity will contribute to make incarnate and more significant the evangelization of the Redemptorist community. The Redemptorist community in its turn will make available to the laity the richness and fruit of its spiritual and material patrimony. In this way a greater thrust and incisiveness will be given to apostolic dynamism.

14. Fidelity to the abandoned, especially the poorest and marginalized will enable the Redemptorist community and the laity to select the concrete forms of collaboration best suited to the various situations. When all of us are animated by the Alphonsian charism we shall operate in such a way that the evangelization of the poor will make the poor themselves co-evangelizers. This will bring us all together in the school, of the gospel in order to understand and live better its richness.

15. The forms of collaboration can only be correctly selected in dialogue with the laity themselves. It is necessary therefore that the Redemptorist community be already committed to listening to their aspirations and needs (cf. FD, n. 58e).

16. There are many criteria for bringing about this discernment. The following, however, must never be omitted:

- y the respect for the way forward of the laity in the universal and local Church;
- y the promotion of a clearer awareness of their responsibility for the evangelical transformation of the world;
- y a sincere commitment to inculturation and to being adaptable to the various social sensitivities;
- y listening attentively to the desires and needs of the laity and respecting their requirements taking into consideration their secular and family situations;
- y being in harmony with the pastoral priorities of the community of the (V)Province;
- y the degree of maturity for collaboration existing in the Redemptorist community and the legitimate needs of its community life.

17. It is imperative to avoid all forms of collaboration which do not make the laity more responsive to their vocation as members of a family living in the world. On the other hand those which allow them to be evangelizers beginning in their own home or place of work must be encouraged.

18. In all forms of collaboration, the Redemptorist community must be concerned that the requirements of justice be respected with regard to remuneration and social security. As regards reciprocal relations and obligations these should be set out precisely in a written agreement.

1.2. Participation in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community

19. Collaboration with the laity shall always be in line with the unified sense of our apostolic life” which comprises at one and the same time a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work” (Const. 1) and has as its essential law “to live in community and to carry out their apostolic work through community” (Const. 21). Collaboration therefore always includes some participation of the laity in the spiritual and fraternal dynamic of the community.

20. The forms and degrees of such collaboration and participation (that is partnership) should always be realistic in their inspiration and should be based on a sincere desire to grow and develop, taking into consideration the way forward planned by the community and the desires and grade of formation of the laity.

21. Our lay collaborators have an active role with the Redemptorist community in planning and evaluating common apostolic commitments and moments of participation in the life of the community itself. (Vice)Provincial statutes² must give more precise indications in this respect considering the degree of collaboration and participation of the laity themselves.

1.3. Forms of Collaboration

1.3.1. Criteria

22. Taking into consideration the desires of the laity themselves and the actual possibilities in the Redemptorist community, collaboration and participation (partnership) can be realized:

- y at the level of individuals or groups;
- y for a limited period of time or in a more stable manner (e.g. one year, five years, lifetime...);
- y according to greater or lesser availability of time and according to possibilities (e.g. part time or full time dedication...);
- y on a voluntary basis or for remuneration.

23. The Redemptorist community should see to it that the lay people who collaborate with it can meet among themselves also in order to set up these structures which will prove more useful for their life and ministry.

24. The forms of collaboration with the laity which are actually in place in the different units of the C.Ss.R. must be increased and constantly renewed so that they may the better respond to the evangelization of the abandoned. It is necessary however to be ever attentive to new requirements and new possibilities opening ourselves promptly and creatively to the Spirit who never ceases to inspire the Church. Such animation and discernment belong particularly to the competence of the (Vice) Provincial government.

25. The spirit of voluntary service inspired by Christian motives must be encouraged and evaluated in so far as “it is an indication of a deeper understanding of the solidarity which unites all mankind”. We must work out an accurate discernment of the “vocations to voluntary service”, those who are ready to be partners in our specific mission and charism (Propositions, n. 33b).

26. The special attention which it is necessary to give to young people should lead us to plan “forms of community or of ‘temporary’ consecration, in such a way that the young people are formed in prayer and the apostolate”, while respecting at the same time the ways and means characteristic of the different cultures (Propositions, n. 33c).

1.3.2. The different forms

27. In many of our houses there are lay people who have placed their ability and their technical professionalism at the service of the Redemptorist community in different ways. While paying careful attention to the requirements of justice and the desires of the laity themselves we shall take steps to see that such collaboration becomes a conscious participation in the Redemptorist mission.

28. In the various forms of our mission we are often accompanied by lay people who belong to local groups or movements who have already their own spiritual and apostolic outlook. We must respect their specialty, stimulating them and strengthening them in loyal coherence with their own charism. At the same time we must not be lacking in giving faithful witness to our own Redemptorist charism. In this way mutual enrichment will become possible.

If any of these desires a closer collaboration with us in our specific mission, we shall suggest forms which will allow them to participate more deeply in our charism. On the other hand we are frequently invited to give our collaboration to different lay

movements. Our community must always be open to such an encounter “showing an attitude of mutual recognition, dialogue and exchange of gifts” (VFiC, n. 62),

29. At times, on the other hand, we may be requested by the laity to set up groups attached in an explicit manner to the Redemptorist community for the purpose of:

- y a stronger spiritual growth;
- y a more explicit commitment to the evangelization of the poor.

We should welcome and encourage all such with joy and promptitude as an expression of the fertility of our Redemptorist charism. Fidelity to the Spirit who continually enriches our religious family with ever new fruit should suggest ways of discernment and creativity so that appropriate steps are taken in a constructive way for the laity and for the community.

It is good that such groups:

- y should provide themselves with those indispensable structures of organization which will promote their vitality and just autonomy;
- y in dialogue with the Redemptorist community should determine the methods of collaboration and mutual commitments;
- y after the necessary discernment be recognized by the (Vice) Provincial government.

30. Finally there are lay people who seek a closer collaboration and participation in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community. The title of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is reserved for them and the Norms concerning them make up the second part of this document.

1.4 Formation

31. All forms of collaboration and participation must be prepared and supplemented by an adequate formation of both the Redemptorists and the laity in which the following must not be neglected:

- y a more profound reflection on the theological spirituality of the vocation and mission of the laity;
- y a specific apostolic preparation for the areas in which this collaboration is planned;
- y a more profound reflection on the apostolic and communitarian spirituality of the C.Ss.R.

32. The (Vice)Provincial government shall define a global plan of formation of the laity and shall animate the different initiatives. They shall make an attentive evaluation of inter-provincial initiatives and those of the local Church.

33. The formation of the Redemptorist community for collaboration with the laity is equally necessary (cf. FD, n. 59c). It is a dimension which must be given particular emphasis both in initial and ongoing formation.

34. It is a good idea to have our lay collaborators participate actively in formation sessions of the Redemptorist community, especially at those times when such participation is profitable for them and for the community itself. Their active presence is recommended in the formation of young Redemptorists.

1.5 Coordination

35. Given its importance for the future of the Congregation the (Vice)Provincial government should display a particular interest in collaboration with the laity regarding as its special task its animation, discernment and coordination. In this it shall be assisted especially by the Secretariat for apostolic life.

36. The (Vice)Provincial government should particularly take care that:

- y a proper formation of the lay collaborators is assured;
- y that they never lack constant spiritual animation;
- y the lay collaborators be evaluated according to their specific lay vocation;
- y the demands of justice with regard to remuneration and social security be respected and with regard to the future as well;
- y good relations develop between the lay collaborators and the Redemptorist communities;
- y that the lay collaborators are made aware of the obligations assumed by them towards the Redemptorist community.

37. The official recognition of lay Redemptorist groups and the approval of their respective statutes, once the requirements of the canonical norm have been respected, pertain to the (Vice) Provincial government based on criteria decided by the (Vice) Provincial Chapter. Such recognition should be expressed in a liturgical celebration by the whole community.

38. It is a good thing that there be in every (Vice)Province a group (commission or secretariat) appointed by the (Vice)Provincial government more particularly charged with the duty of promoting collaboration with the laity. It is appropriate that it be composed of Redemptorists and lay people.

It should be particularly concerned to:

- y stimulate the community to a greater opening with regard to the laity (FD, n. 60b);
- y encourage a more intense preparation of the confreres for collaboration with the laity (FD, n. S9c);
- y select, in the light of the expectations of the laity, the projects of the local Church and the priorities chosen by the (Vice)Province, the perspectives and aims most likely to be profitable for collaboration (FD, n. 58f);
- y promote an adequate vocational ministry with regard to lay collaboration;
- y provide realistic programs of formation in line with the various forms of collaboration;
- y promote exchanges of information and inter-provincial collaboration especially at regional level (FD, n. 58c).

PART 2

GENERAL NORMS FOR THE LAY MISSIONARIES OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER

39. Established by the XXI General Chapter, the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer constitute the fullest expression of collaboration and participation (i.e. partnership) of the laity in the apostolic life of the Congregation.

40. The Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer must be seen in the context of a more ample and more positive lay promotion and collaboration which already exists in a multiplicity of forms in the Congregation. They wish to be the strongest expression of it.

41. The Lay missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer are not duplicating as Redemptorist Brothers who are an integral part of our community; nor do they wish to substitute for them. On the contrary they signify a further development of the organization and opening up of the Redemptorist community.

42. The Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, though not juridically part of the Redemptorist community in the strict sense, participate actively in its life. Together we try to realize the “Redemptorist family” which in different degrees of belonging and commitment, “follow” to day “the example” of the Redeemer in the evangelization of the poor.

Identity

43. The Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer are members of the faithful (men or women, married or single) of

mature faith to which they give consistent witness and who called by the Spirit to follow Christ the Redeemer more closely,

y decide to share the spirituality and the mission of the Redemptorist community;

y choose a stable form of partnership that is of collaboration and of participation in its apostolic life;

y commit themselves to carry out the Redemptorist mission as lay people “whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives and through these very situations” (LG, n. 41).

44. The partnership of the Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer may be temporary or permanent according to the forms provided for in the (Vice)Provincial Statutes.

45. The admission of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer pertains to the (Vice)Provincial Superior with the consent of his Ordinary Council, having heard the opinion of the local community in which the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer are to be enrolled. It is necessary that the admission be preceded by adequate formation and appropriate time for experience according to the directions of the (Vice)Provincial Statutes. The General Council must be duly informed.

Mission

46. The Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer commit themselves to sharing the mission of the C.Ss.R. (“to follow the example of our Savior, Jesus Christ, by preaching the Word of God to the poor”, Const. 1), carried out in accordance with the pastoral priorities of the different units of the Congregation.

However, the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer live out this preferential choice for urgent pastoral needs and the option for the poor from their own lay situation (family, work, social responsibilities...).

47. The Redemptorist community through its Superior shall see to it that the authorities of the local Church are informed of the forms of collaboration realized by the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer within their territory and if necessary request the necessary permission and authorization.

48. The Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer shall commit them selves to make clearer and more effective the dimension of incarnation and sharing with the people, especially the most abandoned, which is characteristic of the Redemptorist community for the explicit proclamation of the Gospel.

49. The Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer supported by the Redemptorist community shall inscribe “the divine law in the life of the earthly city” (GS, n. 43) by according a privileged place to the expectations and needs of the poor and most abandoned. In this way they are not only responding personally to the baptismal call to sanctity but they shall also act as a stimulus and support to the other baptized.

50. The participation of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer shall help the Redemptorist community to proclaim the Gospel in a way which shall be effectively perceived and lived as a liberation and salvation of the whole person. The evangelical promotion of the fundamental rights of the poor to justice and freedom shall constitute therefore a continual preoccupation of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Participation in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community

51. The concrete ways and means of collaboration and participation of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community shall be determined by the (Vice)Provincial Statutes in the light of the reality and possibilities of each region and by the contribution of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer themselves while respecting the norms of Canon Law and our own legislation,

52. These should be planned in such a way that they in fact respect and promote the religious character of the Redemptorist community and the lay condition of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer to their mutual enrichment.

Moreover it will be necessary that they permit a more positive recognition and a further development of the charism and role of the consecrated Brother who forms an integral part of the Redemptorist community.

53. Rooted in and nourished by the same spiritual sources, it is necessary that the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer:

- y participate at least sometimes in the prayer life and Gospel reflection of the Redemptorist community;
- y share likewise some significant occasions of the ‘family’ life of the community itself;
- y have a recognized role in the pastoral projects of the community;

- y collaborate positively in the realization of the pastoral priorities of the (Vice)Province.

54. The Statutes of the (Vice)Province shall determine the ways and means of the active participation of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer in the process of discerning, decision-making and evaluation of apostolic projects of the Redemptorist community, both at (Vice)Provincial and local level, at least in these areas which concern their collaboration.

55. The commitment (temporary or definite) of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer shall take place in an appropriate community liturgy.

56. The relations of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer with the community as regards the economic and social security aspects (salary, insurance, pensions...) should be in line with the local civil law and should be ratified by a written agreement which also guarantees their future. This should be the case whether the service is voluntary or involves a real work contract.

57. The Redemptorist community should guarantee to the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, especially those committed for a longer period, fraternal solidarity and assistance especially in old age and in case of illness. The (Vice)Provincial Statutes should give precise directions in this matter.

Formation

58. One does not become a missionary without preparation. This demands adequate previous cultural, spiritual and pastoral formation. For the lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer this formation must continue right through their life. It is a

necessity which must be considered a priority not only by the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer but also by the Redemptorist community.

59. The first person responsible for formation is the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer himself or herself. They must above all be concerned about developing unceasingly their human and Christian formation according to their specific vocational choices and professional responsibility. This is the radical basis of their spiritual and pastoral formation according to the perspectives typical of Redemptorist apostolic life.

60. The Redemptorist community for its part shall see to it that means and possibilities for this formation are provided:

- y by outlining a systematic plan for initial and ongoing formation which respects and harmonizes its different dimensions;
- y by inviting the formandi to participate in important occasions of formation planned for the community itself;
- y by designing someone or some group at (Vice)Provincial level who with the help of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer themselves will take a more active part in their formation process.

61. The Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer shall hold meetings periodically among themselves – at (Vice)Provincial or Regional level – for mutual help, a sharing of experiences and exchange of information, etc.

62. The Redemptorist community should see in the presence and collaboration of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer a precious contribution to its work of formation (initial and ongoing) so that it may the better respond to the needs and expectations of those it is called today to evangelize. It should particularly value their contribution in the preparation of young Redemptorists.

On behalf of the General Council,

Juan Manuel Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

(The Italian text is the official version of this Communicanda).

NOTES

1 Abbreviations:

FD: *Final Document* of the XXI General Chapter C.Ss.R.

ILSVC: *Instrumentum laboris* of the Synod on Consecrated Life.

Propositions: Propositions of the Synod on Consecrated Life.

VFIC: Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Fraternal Life in Community (1994).

2 (V)Provincial Statutes may include an appendix to them, provided always that it has been accepted by the (V)Provincial Chapter and confirmed by the General Government.

**CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS
SUPERIOR GENERALIS**

LETTER OF FR. LASSO TO FORMATORS

Rome, November 9, 1995

Prot. N. 0000 0298/95

Letter of the Most Reverend Fr. Lasso de la Vega
to Formators

**THE REDEMPTORIST FORMATION
FOR THE MISSION**

To formators and those in formation.

To (Vice)Provincial and Regional Superiors.

Dear Confreres,

We are drawing near the Tercentenary of the Birth of Saint Alphonsus and the Congregation has already begun to organise various programmes to recall the life of our Founder. I would not like this occasion to pass without sending a special word to our formators and so this letter is directed particularly to them. I know of course that many other members of the Congregation will read it with particular interest. In the context of the Tercentenary, I have endeavoured to give this message a spiritual content while at the same time dealing with some crucial points touching our present situation.

While I do not claim to cover everything nor indeed to say the last word, I do wish to address our formators and those in their charge. What I have to say is based especially on my own personal experience and on a synthesis of various themes treated in the recent meetings of formators. As well as having been a formator myself in my own Province, I have had many contacts with groups of formators throughout the Congregation. As President of the General Secretariat for Formation, I coordinated the different stages in the drawing up of the *Ratio Formationis*, still in force, and I have organized several meetings for formators. I have always been convinced that formation is at the very core of the renewal of the Congregation and a sign of its vitality.

1. Formation is a way forward realized in a group.

Two disciples were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them (Lk 24: 13-15).

1. On their way to Emmaus “the disciples were talking to each other about all the things that had happened...”

Recently some things have happened in our Congregation about which you also are talking to each other. In *Communicanda* No. 3 “Reading the signs of the times” the General Council endeavoured to give an objective description of the actual state of the Congregation. One of your major preoccupations is that formation should take account of what has happened and what is happening in society, in the Church and in the Congregation. These preoccupations you have shared in the meetings organized by the General Secretariat for Formation. The General Council also has devoted much time to discussing initial and permanent formation.

While the present number of those being formed gives ground for hope, it is also a cause of worry. At the moment there are 752

professed in formation of whom 685 are Chorists and 67 are Brothers in temporary vows. The Chorist students are distributed as follows: Southern Europe 24 Northern Europe 20 Eastern Europe 104; Latin America 273 North America 30; Asia Oceania 176 Africa 58. To these should be added the novices, philosophers and other young people who are preparing to enter the Congregation as Chorists or as Brothers.

While there is new hope in certain areas of the Congregation, questions like these are being asked: Are we really capable of forming our young people to identify with the Redemptorist mission and are we able to integrate them into our communities? What will be our future in these areas where there is a lack of vocations? Our society is marked by great instability in making commitments and this also has repercussions on the perseverance of our young people. An average of 80 confreres leave the Congregation every year. How do we guarantee that personal, emotional and religious maturity that is necessary to make stable commitments? How do we prepare our candidates to accept celibacy for the Kingdom of Heaven, to dedicate themselves to God and to the mission of Christ personally and as members of a community?

2. Formation is a personal journey with Christ. "Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them". Since it is a personal journey formation must take into account the concrete person of each one being formed, with his own individuality, the social and religious situation of each country; it is a personalized and inculturated journey. Formation is not an automatic machine which always produces the same model and neither is it a supermarket where each one chooses what pleases him. The purpose of this journey is to become personally penetrated and permeated by the mission of Christ who died and rose from the dead. This is the good news for the poor and it is this which identifies us as Redemptorists. Spiritual Direction helps to discover how Christ walks by the side of each one and what He desires to transform in our life.

3. This journey with Christ is not undertaken individually but in a group in a formative community. The community dimension is essential in our Redemptorist life and demands a training which leads us to share everything with the confreres. When the number being formed is very small, the possibilities of effective communication are much less. Even though Interprovincial collaboration has increased it seems to me that we ought to take more advantage of it to ensure a more competent formation.

4. Formation as well is in reference to a larger community, the Congregation or Province which gives meaning to the whole life. The two disciples of Emmaus after having met the Risen Christ returned to the community reunited in Jerusalem, because that was the place where they could relive their experience with the Risen Christ. Formation is a journey towards integrating oneself in a community which has a concrete mission in the Church.

We know that the clearer our identity, the easier and more effective is the formative process. Young people need to be confronted with clear models who can show them the ideals of the community in which they are inserted. The recent General Chapters have requested us to make a serious clarification of the pastoral priorities of each Province and of our mission in its unifying and global sense. The Final Document of the last Chapter uses a key word which today is our theme of reflection and conversion. The word is “coherence” between inculturated evangelization, community and spirituality (No.11). Coherence in “apostolic life” on the part of the members of the Province naturally stimulates the coherence of those being formed in their option for Christ, the Redeemer.

5. In this journey forward, the person of the formator is of outstanding importance. He is an integral part of the specific mission of the Congregation. A good preparation of formators and

a certain continuity in their mission give solidity and stability to the formative process. It is the Provincial community which confers on them the office of formation. They should therefore, carry out their duties not merely as a community of formators in community with those being formed but also in the name of the (Vice)Provincial community since they are forming for this community. The young men should not be formed according to impractical ideals but in order to revitalize the actual situation of the (Vice)Province or Region. The provincial community should be closely involved in the training which the young men are receiving. It must understand well in what way they are to be formed and what their aspirations are. Young people always bring us something new.

2. A journey full of difficulties and risks

Though seeing Jesus “they somehow did not recognize him. He said to them ‘What are you talking about back and forth as you walk along?’ And they stood still with sad faces. One of them said to him ‘Are you the only man living in Jerusalem who does not know what has been happening there these last few days’. ‘What things, he asked?’” (Lk 24: 17-18).

1. The formative process is not easy as you well know. At the outset it seems to be too long a journey and, too confused. At the end one realizes that it has been insufficient to prepare one to be a witness to Christ in our world. Many things prevent Christ being seen as present on this journey. Sometimes it is discouragement and, apathy. Young people are influenced by many things in today's world that create difficulties for formation in families and in our centres of formation as well. The very fact that our studies of philosophy and theology are done in outside academic centres does not always permit a formation which takes account of the specifics of the Congregation, of our spirituality and of our mission, of our history as preachers of the Word and of our mode of living the

Alphonsian charism in which all the dimensions of our life should be included. Sometimes there is really no time to create a family spirit and a religious community. Certain things are lacking in the study of Moral Theology and other subjects which are necessary for a missionary. All this was much easier when we had our own Houses of study.

What is important is not the many things one has learned or has experienced, but the depth and coherence with which one forms a concrete project for life. As Formators, you should help the young people to take all these elements and to integrate them in their proper personality. The Final Document of the last General Chapter says “During first formation, the greatest attention must be given to the experience of a spiritual life, a communal life and a solid formation at the human, academic and practical pastoral levels ... In formation communities, the spiritual life must be the force which animates the studies and the work, as well as the community and pastoral life” (FD, 4849). In order to arrive at this harmony, it is indispensable to have a continuous and ongoing dialogue with the young men you are directing.

2. Formation is an answer to the question ‘What is happening in the world’? There is no question here of experience in the abstract nor of a hothouse situation which protects from the problems and worries of ordinary people. It presupposes a knowledge of past history and of the reality in which we live. In the past, the preoccupation was often about ‘learning’ theories and prefabricated answers. Today, the point of departure is the question ‘What is happening’? It is the same question which Jesus asked the disciples. The human sciences tell us what is happening at present and they form an essential part of formation for a religious missionary life. However, it is necessary that they should be underpinned by theological and spiritual reflection in order to give true meaning to the problems of the world. The apostolic experiences themselves

which form part of the period of formation ought to help towards an evangelical understanding of the question “What is happening”? Formation which takes place through insertion, when this has been chosen by the Province, can have no other purpose than a better understanding of the anxieties and hopes of human beings to be taken up and redeemed in Christ.

3. It is at this point that there are many worries and many questions. For example what should be done so that the apostolic purpose of the Congregation inspire and permeate all formation? How can we bring about our participation in the mission of Christ as the unifying principle of our whole life? Our life is lived together with today’s women and men, many of whom are marked by suffering, by poverty and injustice. What must we do so that our option for the poor may be effective in our life and in our activities? In some countries religious life can be seen as moving up the social scale and capable of making us lose that prophetic witness of our mission “to evangelize the poor, allowing ourselves to be evangelized by them”. If our houses of formation are not fairly austere, it will be difficult for us to become incarnate among the poor. Today many things are “happening”. How do we give a unified sense to so many things done during formation prayer, study, apostolate, manual work? The object of the Ratio Formationis is to promote an appropriate coherence and harmony in all the dimensions of our life. This should also be the main theme at local and regional meetings of formators.

3. Your word is a lamp for my steps

“Then he said to them ‘How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said! ... and beginning with Moses and the writings of all the prophets, he explained to them what was said about Him in all the Scriptures. When they came near the village to

which they were going, he acted as if he were going further. But they held him back saying 'Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark' (Lk 24, 2529).

1 In our complex world of today, it is not always easy to understand how God operates. Neither is it easy to find the best way to form missionaries who will courageously proclaim abundant redemption to the world. For this very purpose, Jesus walks along with us so that he may enlighten us. His presence opens our hearts and our intelligence to recognize where he is passing in the world and in the life of each one. Foolish and slow to believe..." Christ is active in formation as well as the one called to this office and with his Spirit guides our steps and opens our minds. Formation for the religious missionary life entails much more than what one can give in a university centre or in a students' residence. It does not mean so much a period of time or the learning content, but rather a total growing into Christ. This continual contact with Christ and with his Word gives us the strength through faith and prayer to be able to respond to all the difficulties in a secularized world which has different values. "Your Word is a lamp for my steps".

2 Our Christocentric Redemptorist spirituality is very well defined in the Final Document, "The centre of Redemptorist spirituality is Christ the Redeemer, as he reveals himself above all in the mysteries of his Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection which we celebrate in the Eucharist. This profoundly Christocentric spirituality impels us to rediscover the heritage of St. Alphonsus in his 'exodus' towards the poor. The Redemptorist 'follows' Christ the Redeemer and 'continues' his liberating action" (FD, n.36). This spirituality, understood as the following of Christ the evangelizer under the guidance of his Spirit, is the soul of the apostolic community, of our evangelizing work as well as being the very kernel of our Redemptorist formation. How is this to be achieved?

“Stay with us, the day is almost over and it is getting dark”, say the disciples. The period of first formation is a privileged one. During it, the experience of studying and living the Word of God in a community is realized and in such a manner as to provoke a thirst for the presence of Christ, the desire to speak through Him with the Father in prayer and to make real his merciful love in the Liturgy, especially in the Eucharist. The openness of formators and those being formed to the Word of God is a continual call to conversion and will be the best guarantee for a formation which follows Christ and continues his liberating action. The most important thing is not knowledge about Christ, but living by his Word which is the source of divine wisdom.

3 The spirituality of a religious group is always a tradition, an historical experience and at the same time an answer to the signs of the times. For each Redemptorist, by virtue of his vocation and profession, the Alphonsian way of living the Gospel as an exodus to the poor becomes a normal reality. More than many other systems of spirituality which have arisen in the history of the Church, the Redemptorist vocation includes, as well, an identification with the way of the Founder. This spirituality is an integral part of our mission. It does not mean a lack of appreciation of other forms of spirituality or movements in the Church, rather it integrates them giving priority to the ‘Christian experience’ of St. Alphonsus.

4 At the end of the journey, there is Christ again

“Their eyes were opened and they recognized him; but he disappeared from their sight.... They got up at once and went back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven disciples gathered together with the others.... The two then explained to them what had happened on the road, and how they had recognized the Lord when he broke the bread”. (Lk 24, 3135).

1. First formation is not an end in itself. It is oriented towards the growth of the person to make a conscious option for Christ and to be a permanent witness of his presence and activity in the world. One day this first formation will end. It cannot be reduced to a form of protection which makes young people incapable of facing the stresses of concrete life in the communities of the Province. Redemptorist formation, like the experience of the disciples of Emmaus, should enable the young man to set out on his journey.

Formation finishes, but the formative process never comes to an end. Formation is for life and during the whole of life. This is the only way to draw the generations nearer to each other and to avoid a generation gap. We must have, not only one heart but also one mind (cf. Acts 4, 32; Phil. 2, 5), which means, that we must allow ourselves to, be guided by the same scale of values. All this will not prevent tensions, but will help us to contain them. The new generations will continue to be idealistic and problematic. The older generations will continue to be realistic and prudent. Both of us need one another. However, all of us should have the same mind of Christ.

2. It is a very important moment for young people when they become members of the communities of the Province. We know from experience that, for some, it is a privileged moment of coherence and maturity; others discover difficulties and crises which seemed to them to have been already overcome. It is very important to prepare young people for insertion into new communities and, on the other hand, it is important to, prepare the communities to receive the young people and to have confidence in them. The Superior of the community should direct the young people closely at this stage of their journey; avoiding treating them as seminarians in continuing first formation but rather sharing with them community and pastoral responsibilities. Annual meetings

of young fathers and perpetually professed brothers are important for continual formation. Some provinces have begun to organize trimestral courses for these confreres five years after priestly ordination or perpetual profession. I think this pause for reflection and prayer should be planned in the whole Congregation.

3. It should be the task of formators to, consider their mission in a spirit of hope. When, in 1743, St. Alphonsus assumed the direction of the Institute, his primary concern was the complete first formation of the candidates. He himself became a formator and professor. On different occasions, he showed his satisfaction with the young people in formation, to whom he dedicated his great work of Moral Theology. Your satisfaction consists above all in seeing your confreres make progress in their work, when they tell what happened to them on the journey and how they have recognized Christ in the breaking of the bread. Let us leave the growth of the seed to God in patience and in that hope that is born of faith.

Conclusion

I am well aware that I have not dealt with all the themes regarding formation which concern you at this time nor have I claimed to do so. What I wish to emphasize is that this letter of mine is meant to be a support to you in your Redemptorist mission as formators. I wish also to stimulate you to give the best of yourselves to this task on which depends the future of our Institute and its renewal. We are all convinced that the renewal of the Congregation is brought about through first and permanent formation. On this, depend our growth and our effectiveness. I think this is the point which we Redemptorists must stress most strongly if we wish to respond to the challenges which we face today.

I would like to have been perhaps more concrete in what I have said. But you know well that in formation, there are no ready recipes. The process of personal insertion into the redemptive mystery of Christ cannot be directed from a distance. So that your mission as a formator may be effective, you must frequently ask the Lord: “Where do you wish us to prepare the Pasch for you?” In what place do you want us to be or what do you want us to do so that we may experience the reality of your death and the power of your resurrection?

Together with the General Council I send fraternal greetings to all of you.

Yours in the Most Holy Redeemer,

Juan M. Lasso de la Vega, C.Ss.R.,
Superior General.

LETTER
FROM THE POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE REDEMPTORISTS

ON THE OCCASION OF THE TERCENTENARY
OF THE BIRTH
OF ST. ALPHONSUS M. DE LIGUORI

(The letter is addressed to Fr. Juan Manuel Lasso de la Vega, Superior General with the date September 24, 1996. The text was published in the *Boletín de la Provincia Española*, Vol. XXIV, Num. 143, on December 31. 1996, pp. 347-351).

To the Most Reverend Father JUAN M. LASSO DE LA VEGA, Superior General of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer

1. The Tercentenary of the birth of St. Alphonsus Liguori, September 27 1996, is an occasion to express profound gratitude to the Lord for that “plentiful redemption” whose proclamation to the most abandoned people and especially to the poor was the whole purpose of the life of the holy Doctor. It is an incentive to all Redemptorists today to renew their fidelity to this charism putting

it into practice with courage and hope in the light of the challenges which the Church has to face on the threshold of the third millennium. As I have had already occasion to say on the second centenary of the death of St. Alphonsus, it is with great joy that I unite with all Redemptorists “in honouring the memory of a saint who was a master of wisdom for his time and who continues to enlighten the path of the people of God with the example of his life and teaching, as a light reflecting Christ, the light of the nations” (Apostolic Letter *Spiritus Domini*, AAS 79 [1987], 1365). On that occasion associating myself with what had already been said by my predecessors, and after having recalled the fundamental features of the spiritual, moral and pastoral teaching of Alphonsus I wanted to stress “the advice that such a great father would give his children. This is expressed in his life, in his pastoral work and in his writings: fidelity to Christ and to his Gospel, fidelity to the Church and its mission in the world, fidelity to the people of our time, fidelity to the charism of your Institute” (Ibid. l.c. 1374). What I said then deserves to be reconsidered and further developed in the perspective of the imminent Third Millennium, which demands from the whole Church a renewed enthusiasm for evangelization, nourished by a sincere conversion on the personal, community and social level.

2 The life and teaching of Alphonsus constitute an invaluable stimulus in this regard. From the moment of his “conversion” in 1723 his life was one of wholehearted and restless evangelizing zeal, according to the words of the Apostle Paul “I have no right to boast just because I preach the gospel. After all, I am under orders to do so. And how terrible it would be for me if I did not preach the gospel” (1 Cor 9,16). St. Alphonsus has pointed out that this

apostolic zeal is a fundamental characteristic and indeed the specific purpose of his Congregation. The vitality and dynamism of the Redemptorist community during the two centuries of its history are rooted in this fidelity to its missionary dynamism. Among others, an eloquent witness of it is Gennaro Maria Sarnelli (1702-1744) whom I recently inscribed among the number of the Blessed. It is in this perspective that the whole Congregation and each member of it should continue to go forward because the Gospel is needed more than ever in the world of today.

It is necessary to proclaim strongly the fullness of meaning which Christ opens up in the life of a human being, the indestructible foundation he provides for values and the new hope he brings into our history. It is a preaching which must become incarnate in the concrete challenges which humanity today has to face and on which its very future depends. It is in this manner only that a civilization of love, so much longed for by all today, can become a reality.

3 The forms of this proclamation must continually be renewed in the light of possibilities and the needs of different contexts. Such a renewal has become more urgent today because of the rapid cultural and social evolution. This is particularly true of “parish missions” which have been the hall mark of Redemptorist preaching during the past two centuries. Fidelity to the Alphonsian tradition should combine with the courage to make timely adjustments so that the apostolic method may continue to respond to the expectations of the People of God.

Moreover, it is necessary to avail of the other modern means by which it is possible to communicate the truth to the men

and women of today. Among the aspects which strike us in the work of St. Alphonsus is his commitment to the printed word. His numerous writings, his successive editions and translations, his capacity to express in simple language accessible to all the most demanding truths of faith and morals have spread his teaching among all classes of christian people. Following this example the Redemptorists of today should be stimulated to make an ever more effective use of the means of communication while remaining faithful to a simple, solid and clear style. Preaching will be authentic if following the teaching method of Christ it becomes concrete in the patient direction of the conscience of each one as they gradually progress towards goodness and truth. St. Alphonsus strongly testifies that forceful preaching should include the welcome of a father and the patience of a doctor, especially in the sacrament of reconciliation, so that every person may open up to the action of Christ, the Saviour. Fidelity to the Founder requires particularly from Redemptorists such a capacity and such a commitment, indispensable for that “general mobilization of consciences and united ethical effort” which I am tirelessly pointing out as solutions for even the gravest problems, such as those concerning human life (Encyc. *Evangelium Vitae*, 95).

4. The more profound study of moral theology lies in this perspective. St. Alphonsus particularly committed himself to ensure that in all classes of the people of God the gap between faith and life style should be filled. The practical sense of the Founder must continue to stimulate his sons in their pastoral work, especially with regard to the renewal of the sacrament of reconciliation. It is imperative never to confine oneself to the sole proclamation of principles, without showing how they apply to daily life in a way which

enables the conscience of every baptized person to follow a sure way. This Alphonsian practical sense requires that we be substantial and concrete in our response to the questions which are really important for people, while being faithful to the Gospel and the living Tradition in the Church. Moreover it stimulates maturity of conscience making it capable of throwing light, through the wisdom of the Spirit, on the complexity of the different situations of life.

With St. Alphonsus it is necessary to reaffirm in all pastoral work the centrality of Christ as the mystery of the Father's mercy. The Redemptorists must never tire of proclaiming "plentiful redemption", that is the infinite love with which God in Christ bends down towards humanity, beginning always with those who have most need of healing and liberation, because more marked by the evil consequences of sin. May it be true of his sons today what the Founder affirmed of himself and his companions "As for us we speak of nothing else but of the Passion of the Redeemer in order to leave souls bound to Jesus Christ" (Opera, Vol.III, Turin 1847, 289). May the pastoral commitment of the entire Congregation continue to lead people to meet the crucified Christ, that is with "the love that he has shown for us on the Cross" (*Practice of the love of Jesus Christ: Ascetical Works*, Vol. 1, Rome 1933, 5).

5 For this reason we must never tire of proclaiming the divine mercy. The admonition of St. Alphonsus is still relevant for all pastoral work: "We must be persuaded that conversions made solely through fear of divine punishments do not last long.... if the holy love of God does not enter the heart, perseverance will be difficult". Therefore "the principal task of the preacher" should be "in every sermon he preaches to leave his hearers

inflamed with holy love” (Opera, Vol. III, Turin, 1847, 288). From this conversion centered on love arises the constant striving for sanctity. By making them experience the intensity of the mercy with which God bends down towards human beings to heal and liberate them, St. Alphonsus succeeded in making all, even the most humble and the poorest, rediscover the call and the path to sanctity: “the religious as religious, the secular as secular, the priest as priest, the married as married, the merchant as merchant, the soldier as soldier and so on speaking of every other state” (*Practice of the love of Jesus Christ*, cit., 79). At the same time he includes a manifest evangelical zeal in this sanctity which leads to the assumption of responsibility for one’s own milieu.

The commitment to the promotion of the laity, ever more aware of their baptismal dignity and responsibility, is essential for a Church wishing to respond to the challenges of the third millennium. The Redemptorists have always been very close to people. Today on the part of the laity, especially young people, there are more demands for a greater participation in the life and mission of religious. These have already found a first response in the directives decided at the last General Chapter of the Congregation. It is a path on which to proceed with courage while respecting the specific characteristics of the lay life as well as that of the religious.

6 St. Alphonsus never tires of insisting on the necessity of being faithful to the choices and manner in which the Redeemer has been the Good News of God among us. In the primitive rules of the Congregation “following the example” of the Redeemer was affirmed as a fundamental law. The Incarnate Word shares our condition, becomes for us a presence and an experience of God,

and subsequently proposes himself as a clear and decisive message including ultimately his Cross and Resurrection. The Spirit continues to guide the Church along the same path (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 8). St. Alphonsus asks his sons to witness in an ever clearer and resolute manner to the necessity of continuing on these same pathways of Christ: incarnation and sharing, clear witness, being frank and meaningful in preaching, generous participation in the deprivations of the Cross. All are essential for anyone who wishes to evangelize with apostolic efficiency.

Above all it is necessary to remain faithful to the choice of the Founder for the most abandoned people. It was precisely because of such a choice that the Congregation came to birth in 1732. It was a radical choice in favour of those who were relegated to the margins in pastoral work itself. The world of the abandoned became the world of Alphonsus. It must remain the world of every Redemptorist as the result of continual discernment at the very heart of diverse ecclesial situations in order to be able to respond promptly to urgencies as they become apparent. All this is meaningful for the entire People of God in its intensified commitment to the new evangelization and conversion in preparation for the third millennium. Faced with old and new situations of neglected people, the Church must continue the action of the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety nine who are safe and goes in search of the lost sheep (cf. Lk 15, 4-7).

7. Such a commitment is impossible without constant spiritual renewal. St. Alphonsus never tires of repeating in accents that are rich in love and confidence: “He who is called to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, shall never be a true follower of Jesus

Christ, nor shall ever become a saint if he does not fulfill the purpose of his vocation and has not the spirit of the Institute, which is to save the souls most destitute and most spiritually abandoned, such as the poor people of the countryside. This was already the purpose of the coming of the Redeemer who stated: *The Spirit of God... anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor*" (*Opera*, Vol. IV, Turin 1847, 429-430). And for this reason he confided in the powerful intercession of Mary to whom he had entrusted himself and his Congregation.

I gladly make my own these words and prayers of the Founder, confident that his example may inspire not only the Redemptorists and Redemptoristines but the whole People of God to an ever greater yearning for the fullness of sanctity in the generous service of our brothers and sisters.

With these wishes I impart to you and to the entire Congregation as a pledge of continual affection, a special Apostolic Blessing.

Castel Gandolfo, september 24, 1996,

Joannes Paulus II, P.P.

(An unofficial English translation of the original Italian text by Fr. Anthony Mulvey CSSR, Rome).

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