



Communicanda 3 / 2026

THE VOCATION OF THE **REDEMPTORIST BROTHER** IN ONE MISSIONARY BODY

Orientations for Understanding, Promoting, and Renewing the
Identity and Mission of the Redemptorist Missionary Brother



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The Vocation of the Redemptorist Brother in One Missionary Body (cf. Const. 2)
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Contents

INTRODUCTION	6
1. THE SITUATION OF THE BROTHERS IN THE CONGREGATION	12
2. THE VOCATION OF THE RELIGIOUS BROTHER	14
3. THE IDENTITY OF THE RELIGIOUS BROTHER	17
4. THE FORMATION OF RELIGIOUS BROTHERS	23
5. THE SPECIFIC MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS BROTHERS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION	28
CONCLUSION.....	32

“Following the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, the Synod expressed great esteem for the kind of consecrated life in which religious brothers provide valuable services of various kinds, inside or outside the community, participating in this way in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel and bearing witness to it with charity in everyday life. Indeed, some of these services can be considered *ecclesial ministries*, granted by legitimate authority. This requires an appropriate and integral formation: human, spiritual, theological, pastoral and professional.” Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (1996), no. 60.

INTRODUCTION

1. On 1st March 1982, one of my predecessors, Fr. Josef G. Pfab, published the first *Communicanda* 64/1982 to the Congregation on Religious Brothers, entitled *The Coadjutor Brothers in our Apostolic Community: Who are they? – What do they do?*.
2. As we celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of St Gerard Majella and recalling the decisive importance of the presence of Brothers in Redemptorist history and mission, I am issuing this second *Communicanda on the Redemptorist Brother*. It is addressed not only to the Brothers, but also to Redemptorist priests, formandi, and lay associate partners in mission, *as an invitation to deepen, value, and renew together our understanding of this essential vocation within the one missionary body of the Congregation. The purpose of this Communicanda is to help us better understand this vocation and to encourage Major and local Superiors, vocation promoters, and formators to embrace and promote it, not as an exception, but as a natural and constitutive expression of Redemptorist consecrated life.*
3. From the origins of Christianity, the term ‘brother’ has been identified with those who, in Christ, recognise God as Father and welcome one another in the fundamental equality of God’s children (cf. Mt 23:8–9; Rom 8:14–17; Gal 3:26–28; Eph 2:19). Fraternity is therefore not a secondary element, but a constitutive dimension of Christian identity. Before any ministerial distinction, the Church is a communion of brothers.

4. Historically, male religious life emerged predominantly as a lay experience, prior to any clerical structure. The desert monks, the early coenobitic communities, and numerous forms of consecrated life arose as radical expressions of baptismal discipleship. *The historical processes of clericalization, understandable in certain contexts and pastoral needs, ended up obscuring, at times, the originality and perceptibility of the Brother's vocation.*
5. Since the foundation of the Congregation in 1732 at Scala, under the inspiration of St Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, the presence of the Brothers has been integral to the Institute's identity. Nine days after the foundation of the new Congregation, on 18th November 1732, Brother Vito Curzio (1706–1745) arrived in Scala. It was he who intuited the Congregation's coat of arms there in Scala where he lived, in the oven of the residence known as Casa Anastasio, which is preserved to this day. He was also the only one who remained at Alphonsus' side during the trials of the Institute's early years, persevering until his death. Similarly, on 9th November 1748, St Alphonsus Maria de Liguori sent Villani and Brother Tartaglione to Rome to seek approval of the Rule. It was Villani and Tartaglione, a priest and a Brother, who received the newly approved Rule from Benedict XIV in a private audience on 26 February 1749. The same happened with the foundation of St Benno in Warsaw. It was St Clement Hofbauer, together with Thaddeus Hübl and Brother Emmanuel Kunzmann (two priests and a Brother), who established in Warsaw the Congregation's first foundation outside Italy. Thus, it is clear that from its beginnings the Congregation has been as an apostolic missionary community, made up of priests and Brothers, who are united

in the same vocation who have the same purpose: to follow the example of the Redeemer by proclaiming the Gospel to the poor.

6. St Gerard Majella (1726–1755), a Redemptorist Brother, lived out his vocation by serving the Congregation's mission in various ways (working as a tailor and a porter, accompanying his fellow Redemptorists on missions, visiting families, especially the poor and the sick, praying for and blessing children, leading retreats for religious women, and offering them spiritual direction, raising funds, etc.). With simplicity, joy and a deep sense of union with God, Gerard became a witness to the holiness to be found in the circumstances everyday life. *Gerard embodied Redemptorist spirituality through obedience, humility and apostolic service, transforming simple tasks into acts of love. His life was marked by intense prayer, trust in Divine Providence and compassion towards the poor.* In the face of misunderstanding, he responded with silence and evangelical fidelity. In him, the vocation of the Brother reveals its full dignity, revealing that holiness springs from conformity to the humble and obedient Christ.
7. Throughout history, Redemptorist Brothers have performed a wide range of services, from domestic chores to skilled labour, from building churches to collaboration in popular missions, from administration, to technical training, from social work and education to presence in challenging areas. In all of these areas brothers have made a significant contribution to the spiritual, cultural, technical and missionary life of ecclesial institutions. However, to reduce the identity of the Redemptorist brother to the purely functional would impoverish the richness of their vocation.

Beyond their specific tasks, brothers have been and are consecrated persons called to safeguard and embody the charism, and to participate co-responsibly in the common mission, even amidst historical tensions, maltreatment and forms of clericalism that at times have relegated them to the background. Beginning, with St Alphonsus and the first Brothers, and continuing through the successive reflections of the General Chapters, the ecclesial understanding of their identity and the distinctive richness of their vocation has deepened, *recognising the Brother as one who lives a full and distinctive form of consecrated life within the Church, having its own spirituality and mission, and following the Congregation's charism, he is called to contribute actively and with creative fidelity to the work of evangelisation in the face of current challenges.*

8. Constitution 1 states that “the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, founded by St Alphonsus, is a clerical missionary religious institute, of Pontifical right and enjoying the privilege of exemption, and having members belonging to various rites. Its purpose is “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”””. It is essential to understand this in the light of the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, no. 60: “The vocation of Brothers in what are known as “clerical” Institutes is different, since, according to the design of the founder or by reason of legitimate tradition, these Institutes presuppose the exercise of Holy Orders, are governed by clerics, and as such are approved by Church authority. In these Institutes the sacred ministry is constitutive of the charism itself and determines its nature, purpose and spirit. The presence of Brothers constitutes a different form of

participation in an Institute's mission, through services rendered both within the community and in the apostolate, in collaboration with those who exercise the priestly ministry.”

9. In the light of this text, it is clear that Brothers participate fully in the Congregation's mission, although in a manner proper to them and distinct from the priestly ministry. *The mission is the same for all: to proclaim plentiful redemption and preach the Gospel to the poor; however, the forms of service are diverse and complementary. In this sense, Brothers actively collaborate in community life, in apostolic works and in the mission of evangelisation, in communion and cooperation with those who exercise the priestly ministry.* Although the Congregation is a clerical missionary institute because it includes the ordained ministry as an integral part of its charism, this in no way diminishes the dignity or importance of the Brothers' missionary vocation. On the contrary, they participate in the same Redemptorist mission in their own way, contributing their gifts and services to the life of the community and to the proclamation of the Gospel. It is, therefore, a single mission lived out through complementary vocations within the same Redemptorist charism.
10. The Redemptorist Brother is, above all, a living memory of apostolic fraternity. His presence constantly reminds us that mission springs from communion and that the fundamental authority within the community is evangelical witness. He embodies, in a particular way, dimensions of closeness, simplicity and solidarity with the poor and abandoned, which are central features of the Redemptorist charism, reminding

us that the experience of apostolic fraternity is a calling directed to us all: clerics and lay people.

11. References to the *'holy Brother'* are common in the Congregation's texts. This concept remains valid not only for the Brothers, but for every member of the Congregation. However, it is important that such an expression not reduce the Brother to a merely decorative or functional figure. We need to recover an evangelical vision of an incarnated holiness which is lived each day faithfully, a holiness that silently gives witness and that is profoundly missionary. Thus, as we approach the 300th anniversary of the Congregation's founding, and as we read the signs of the times anew, we realize that our understanding of the what it means to be a Redemptorist Brother must be broadened and that our concept of holiness must be reinterpreted in the light of the charism, in a way that avoids any form of reductionism.

1. THE SITUATION OF THE BROTHERS IN THE CONGREGATION

12. In recent decades, concerns have grown regarding the decline in the number of Brothers and the lack of clarity regarding the identity of the Brother within a mixed Congregation. The XXV General Chapter, in decisions 23, 27 and 29, decided to establish a commission to study this situation and propose concrete steps toward renewal. The study which was carried out in the various Units confirmed certain challenges that had already been identified as well as highlighting the urgent need for greater theological, formational and pastoral

reflection to clarify the identity and specific mission of the Redemptorist Brother.

13. Among the main challenges one in particular stands out, that is the steep decline in the number of brothers; in 1992 there were 759 Brothers, that number fell to 336 in 2020 and to 291 in 2026. This shows a steady and worrisome decline, which is exacerbated by an ageing membership and a shortage of new vocations.
14. The identity of the Religious Brother remains, in many contexts, poorly defined, and which is frequently obscured by a clerical view of religious life that associates Redemptorist identity almost exclusively with sacramental ministry. This understanding has a negative impact on vocation promotion, which is often characterized by definitions ‘by negation’, a lack of suitable materials, limited missionary visibility and insufficient institutional support.
15. Weaknesses also persist in initial and ongoing formation: the absence of specific formation programs, the predominance of the clerical model, the limited presence of Brothers on formation teams, and insufficient accompaniment after temporary vows. Add to this the historical legacy of roles restricted to domestic or technical spheres and the persistence of clerical attitudes that devalue the Brother’s vocation or regard it as replaceable by lay collaborators, all of which are factors that weaken enthusiasm for the vocation of brother and compromise its vitality.
16. Despite these challenges, there are concrete signs of hope and renewal. Since the Second Vatican Council, the field in

which brothers exercise their activity has expanded significantly; today brothers carry out diverse ministries in education, administration, healthcare, risk management and other specialized areas, moving beyond narrow field of domestic tasks. University education and the study of theology are being promoted, as well as structured initiatives, such as the one developed in Brazil, which have become a point of reference for the development of specific formation programmes. There is also greater participation by Brothers in the governance of the Congregation, including in (V) Provincial Councils and in the General Council itself.

17. The decision of the XXV General Chapter to explicitly revitalize the promotion and formation of the Brothers demonstrates a clear institutional commitment to the renewal of this vocation, recognizing that the clarification of their identity and their full ecclesial appreciation are indispensable conditions for the Congregation's missionary future.

2. THE VOCATION OF THE RELIGIOUS BROTHER

18. Using 1Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:4–8 as a starting point, the vocation of the Religious Brother can be understood as a specific gift of the Spirit at the service of communion and mission. Saint Paul does not structure the Church according to categories of power, but rather according to the logic of the body in that it displays a real diversity of gifts, a profound unity of origin, and an organic complementarity of functions. “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit” (1 Cor 12:4). From this perspective, the Brother is not defined by a negation—that which he “is

not”—but by the positive gift he embodies within the Body of Christ.

19. In the light of these texts, the Religious Brother is, above all, a charism raised up by the Spirit for the building up of the community. His vocation does not consist in the absence of ordination, but in the presence of a gift of his own that enriches the ecclesial fabric. If everyone were the same, the body would lose its harmony and vitality (cf. 1 Cor 12:17–19). Difference is not a deficiency, but a condition for communion; it is not inequality of dignity, but diversity of mission.
20. When Saint Paul states that the members who seem more fragile are indispensable (1 Cor 12:22), he shifts the criterion of importance from the functional level to the charismatic level. The Brother reminds us that, in the Church, fruitfulness does not depend on ministerial rank, but on fidelity to the gift received and offered. His presence prevents the community from being reduced to a hierarchical or merely organizational structure, reaffirming its nature as a mystery of communion.
21. “Let each one put the gift he has received at the service of others” (cf. Rom 12:6–8). The Brother’s vocation is rooted in this dynamic of generous, joyful, concrete and fraternal service, where charisms are lived out as a shared responsibility. His mission is not to compete, but to complement; not to replace, but to edify; his mission does not seek power, but rather makes visible the primacy of love in service.

22. In the Pauline imagery of the body there is neither self-sufficiency nor isolation. The Brother, by virtue of his radically fraternal identity, makes visible what the Church is, above all, a missionary communion. His consecrated life proclaims that all Christian authority springs from the gift received, the full potential of which is realized in shared responsibility and mutual service.



3. THE IDENTITY OF THE RELIGIOUS BROTHER

23. The Second Vatican Council, by reviving the ecclesiology of the People of God (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, chapters II and VI), restored to the Church the appropriate hermeneutical key for understanding the Brother not as an exception or a functional complement, but as a qualified witness to the lay dimension of consecrated life. *The Brother reminds us that religious consecration does not derive from the sacrament of Holy Orders, but from Baptism, and that the radical following of Christ is a universal call, taken up in a specific way by those in consecrated life.*
24. The document of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church: "And You Are All Brothers"* (Mt 23:8) [2015], presents the Brother as a living memory of Jesus the Brother at the heart of the Church as a Communion and as a prophetic sign of the fraternity that born of the Trinity. Rooted in Baptism and deepened by a special consecration, the religious brother makes visible the primacy of God and the common dignity of all the faithful. He lives out the baptismal priesthood through a total gift of self, by living fraternal communion, and in service to the most vulnerable. His identity is not defined by functions, but by being a mediator of God's love that builds communion. Integrating prayer and daily life, contemplation and action, the secular and the sacred, the religious brother personifies a spirit of fraternity which is a sacramental expression of the presence of the Risen One. Thus, he becomes both a source of mission and its fruit., both of which invite the Church to rediscover her fundamental vocation: Communion for Mission.

25. The Religious Brother constitutes a distinct, complete, and essential expression of Consecrated Religious Life. *His identity springs from baptismal consecration and is shaped as an ecclesial sign of the fraternity inaugurated by Jesus Christ. His vocation is not defined in opposition to ordained ministry nor by categories of absence ("not a cleric"), but by a distinct and integral way of following Christ: to be a brother, entirely a brother, bearing witness that, in the Church, primacy belongs to communion and not to function. Vita Consecrata*, no. 60, states: According to the traditional doctrine of the Church, the consecrated life by its nature *is neither lay nor clerical*. For this reason the "lay consecration" of both men and women constitutes a state which in its profession of the evangelical counsels is complete in itself. Consequently, both for the individual and for the Church, it is a value in itself, apart from the sacred ministry.
26. *Communicanda* 64/1982 offers a profound reflection on the identity and mission of Brothers, affirming that they are Redemptorists fully and completely and as such are equal members of the apostolic community. Their vocation is defined not by what they do, but rather by who they are: consecrated disciples called to a holiness that bears witness to *Copiosa Redemptio*. Inspired by St Alphonsus, the *Communicanda* emphasises that priests and Brothers form one missionary body, enriched by a diversity of charisms. It further highlights that their prayer, humble service, and daily fidelity constitute the heart of the communal apostolate. Finally, it insists on an appropriate promotion of the brothers' vocation and a formation, that rejects all clericalism and that reaffirms the essential and prophetic nature of their presence in the Congregation.

27. The document of the *General Commission of the Redemptorist Brothers* (2020, pp. 19–24) reaffirms that the identity of the brother stems from his total consecration to God within the one missionary body, where primacy is given to “being” rather than to “doing”. As a consecrated lay person, he lives the evangelical counsels to the fullest as the complete expression of religious life, giving witness that what is essential is his special consecration and mission (cf. Const. 1). His vocation is fraternal, prophetic, and marked by solidarity; visibly living communion and serving with concrete charity in various apostolic fields. In the midst of a wounded world, he is a contemplative of the Word and of the people, a witness to hope. With simplicity and joy, he makes visible the *Copiosa Redemptio* which he proclaims.
28. *The Redemptorist Brother is a consecrated person who, within the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, dedicates his life to God through the vows of obedience, chastity, poverty, together with the vow and oath of perseverance. Called to follow Christ more closely, he lives out the Redemptorist charism in fraternity, mission, and service, proclaiming plentiful redemption not only with words, but above all through the witness of his own life.* Thus, the Brother’s identity can be understood as resting upon three inseparable theological pillars: consecration, fraternity, and service—a framework applicable to all Christians.
29. The Brother’s *consecration* points to Christ himself, the One consecrated by the Father, sent into the world to proclaim the Good News: “I consecrate myself for them, so that they too may be consecrated in truth” (Jn 17:19). Lived as a deepening of baptismal grace, it affirms the primacy of being over doing, reminding us that the fruitfulness of mission

springs from a radical belonging to God and not from the role one fulfils. It is a loving response to God's call, which draws us to Him and to His mission (cf. Jer 1:5; Jn 15:16; Eph 1:4; Rom 14:8). It is not a privilege, but a gift and total self-giving. It is not isolation, but a radical belonging to God that transforms one's whole life into an offering.

30. *Fraternity* forms the foundational core of his vocation (cf. Mt 23:8; Jn 13:34–35; Acts 4:32; Heb 2:11). “You are all one in Christ Jesus” (cf. Gal 3:28). Fraternity flows from the truth that we have one Father and form one Body. The Brother makes visible a Gospel-inspired form of relationship, founded not on hierarchy but on communion, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. His presence challenges models that are self-serving and that legitimate authority in the Church is demonstrated only as service.
31. *And finally, service*, shapes the concrete nature of his mission. Inspired by Christ the Servant, the Brother offers his human, spiritual, and professional gifts for the building up of the community, the advancement of the mission, and the transformation of the world, in harmony with other ministries (cf. Gal 5:13). Service is the concrete expression of his consecration and fraternity. Anyone who is consecrated to God and lives as a Brother must necessarily serves. “I have set you an example, so that you may do as I have done for you” (Jn 13:15).
32. Within Religious Institutes and in the life of the Church, the Brother is a prophetic sign and a concrete hope. He is always a living memory that the Church is, above all, a communion of brothers and sisters, called to overcome every form of

clericalism and division, bearing witness, within the very the heart of the world, the Gospel logic of equality, generosity, and service.

33. Thus, simply being a Brother is enough. His vocation is complete, unique, and necessary for the Church of today and tomorrow. The charism of the Congregation is not realized exclusively through ordained ministry; it can be lived out fully and fruitfully in the vocation of the Brother, who manifests in his own way the beauty of following Christ and of apostolic fraternity. In this sense, all members of the Congregation share the same fundamental vocation: Redemptorist consecration. Before any specific ministry, we are called to live out our charism in the total dedication of our lives to God and through missionary service. Some would add the priestly vocation to this consecration, but our first and most basic identity is always that of a consecrated Redemptorist, from which the priestly ministry flows.
34. A young man, having followed *a thorough, free, and mature process of discernment, may recognize that he is called to be a Brother, finding in that choice his specific way of serving the Church. Such a decision must be welcomed and respected by Major Superiors and formators as an authentic expression of God's action in that person's life. To compel him to enter the ordained ministry would be to disregard vocation as a gift from God and to fail to respect the conscience of the one who is discerning.* Fidelity to the charism demands that every calling be accompanied with freedom, responsibility, and profound respect for the pre-eminence of grace.
35. To summarize, the identity of the Redemptorist Brother flows from his baptismal consecration, is deepened by his

religious profession, and is defined principally by who he is rather than by what he does. He is a consecrated lay person, a Redemptorist in his own right, called to live out the primacy of God within the one missionary body alongside the members who are priests, where the diversity of vocations enriches their communion. As a living memory of Jesus the Brother at the heart of the Church, the Brother's vocation is structured around three inseparable pillars: consecration, fraternity, and service, which express a Gospel-based form of relationship founded on communion, shared responsibility, and generosity. It is neither defined by functions nor by ordained ministry, but rather by the prophetic witness of fraternity, a life of prayer, humble self-giving, and active participation in the mission, making *Copiosa Redemptio* visible in the community and in the world. Thus, his vocation is complete, unique, and necessary: that serves as a counter-cultural sign in the face of clericalism, the brother builds communion, and gives witness to the fact that the Church is, above all, a fraternity at the service mission.

If the vocation of the Brother is the foundation of religious life, how can some today claim that in their "culture" the priestly vocation is valued, but not that of the Brother? The Gospel is meant to shape and transform culture, it is not culture that shapes the Gospel. Is this not an opportune moment therefore, for some Units of the Congregation to stop using the title "Brother" for clerical students? We are called to be counter-cultural and prophetic, by promoting this essential vocation within the Congregation and the Church as a whole.

4. THE FORMATION OF RELIGIOUS BROTHERS

36. In the *Redemptorist Ratio Formationis* (2020), paragraphs 124–129, the formation of the Brothers is presented as a specific process following first profession, that lasts at least three years, is lived out in a formation community and is directed at an integral maturation prior to perpetual profession and full integration into ministry. It remains a *tempus probationis*, during which vocational discernment and suitability for the Apostolic Life are consolidated accompanied by formators, in spiritual direction, and through psychotherapeutic support. This phase is intended to foster self-knowledge and honest discernment in the face of possible serious limitations. The goal is to form Brothers capable of living out their consecration, fraternity, and mission in a balanced way, as mature and competent witnesses to the charism within the Church and in the world.
37. Formation is comprised of five integrated dimensions: the *human dimension*, which fosters affective growth and responsibility; the *spiritual dimension*, which nurtures prayerfulness, provides qualified spiritual direction, integrates faith and academic studies, in a deepening commitment to the Alphonsian charism; the *communal dimension*, which promotes a mature fraternal life, shared responsibility, and administrative training; the *academic dimension*, which ensures sound biblical/theological preparation, together with knowledge of the human sciences, missiology, intercultural study, and appropriate professional skills in harmony with a person's gifts and abilities; and the *pastoral-missionary dimension*, through accompanied and

assessed ministerial experiences, particularly in Redemptorist contexts.

38. *What should be done in situations where there is only one candidate for the Brother's vocation and no suitable formation structure exists to accompany him?* Taking into account the candidate's maturity, the formation process may be carried out on an Interprovincial basis, in a house of formation that has the necessary conditions to accompany him adequately. However, if this is not possible, a structured process of accompaniment may be developed, in accordance with the *Redemptorist Ratio Formationis*, as follows:

- a) The process developed must guarantee the candidate a genuine formation community, even if there are no other candidates for the Brother's vocation. The *Ratio* emphasizes that the process must be lived out in a formation community, which does not necessarily mean the existence of a house exclusively for Brothers or a community composed solely of Brothers. In this regard, it may be possible to carry out the formation process within an intergenerational Redemptorist community, where the young man can experience authentic fraternal life. It may also take place in a community in which there are clerical students, but which ensures that the candidate is not in danger of losing his identity as a Brother and is fully respected in his specific vocation. If it is not possible to guarantee these conditions at the local level, an Interprovincial or Inter-Conference community may be chosen, always ensuring the quality of the community and the formative experience.

- b) If the candidate is alone on his specific vocational journey, personalized accompaniment must be provided, the program being organized around the following elements: stable spiritual director; a designated formator; a Brother assigned to accompany him, even if he does not belong to the same Unit; regular psychological support; and periodic evaluations of his formation process. Furthermore, it is essential that he be guaranteed a concrete experience of Redemptorist community life, one that ensures authentic fraternity and mission opportunities.
 - c) Formation within communities in which the majority are preparing for the priesthood, risk stimulating vocational comparisons, or feelings of inferiority, or confusion. A deeper understanding of the theology of consecrated life is essential, especially after the novitiate, never forgetting that the Redemptorist is, first and foremost, a consecrated person and a missionary. The priestly vocation must be integrated into this identity, this means neither replacing nor taking precedence over it. In all formation communities, the study of the document *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother* is an imperative so that the lay dimension and non-ordained ministry are increasingly valued. This will promote a more mature, clear, and harmonious understanding of the Redemptorist vocation.
39. Continual and specialized formation of the Brothers is essential for the maturation of their vocation and for the quality of Redemptorist mission. This is not merely a matter of academic updating, but a permanent process of spiritual,

human, communal, and pastoral growth. Through specific studies, professional training, and a deepening theological proficiency, the Brother can offer his gifts with greater competence and inner freedom (cf. Const. 90; Gen. Stat. 084). Studies must *be in harmony with the Congregation's charism and the needs of the (Vice-)Province, and integrated into a programme that matches personal aptitudes* with the demands of the Institute. In this way, the Congregation enables not only the development of a person's skills, but also strengthens the fraternal, missionary, and prophetic nature of the charism.

40. *It is essential that the Brother always remember that, above all, he is a Consecrated Religious. His academic or professional development does not make him a freelancer detached from the community, nor can it be allowed to bind him more closely to the institution where he works than to the Congregation. Competence is at the service of the mission, not to an individual project. It is necessary to maintain a balance between professional competence and his sense of belonging, in a way that avoids any form of isolated autonomy. Similarly, there are no first- or second-class Brothers: the Brother who lives out his holiness in the sacristy, in domestic chores, or in the vegetable or fruit garden is not inferior to the Brother who works at a university, in the media, or in administration. When a Brother loses awareness of his religious and communal identity, he risks emptying his vocation of its meaning. Only when rooted in consecration and fraternity does his mission remain fruitful and faithful to the charism.*

41. In recent times, many young Brothers have applied for admission to priestly ordination. From a canonical point of view, this presents no legal difficulty, provided the candidate acts of his own free will, possesses right intention, meets the qualities required for sacred ministry, and has, furthermore,

been deemed suitable by the competent authority (cf. canons 1026–1039). Likewise, it must be established that the candidate has completed the theological formation required for admission to Holy Orders, as prescribed by law (cf. can. 1032). However, this also raises some questions: Why was this step taken? Was the period of formation insufficient for proper discernment? Was there any outside pressure placed upon him? Did it appear to him that priestly ministry was the only means by which he could fulfil his vocation and mission?



5. THE PROPER MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS BROTHERS IN THE CONGREGATION

42. *It is worth recalling that Religious Brothers have a broad field of action within the mission, contributing in their own specific and complementary way to the ordained ministry. Their service is not defined by sacramental ministry, but rather is expressed particularly through closeness to the people, integration into the daily life of communities, attentive listening, fraternal accompaniment, and spiritual discernment.*
43. Throughout Redemptorist history, as the experience of Saint Gerard and so many others show, many people have found in the Redemptorist brother a safe space in which to share their vulnerabilities and in which they receive comfort and hope. Thus we can see, that brothers can work so many different areas of the mission that do not require the exercise of sacramental ministry, living out their vocation as a full, complementary, and indispensable evangelical presence within the one missionary body.
44. I believe there is a wide range of possibilities for pastoral action open to the Brothers. It is important to recognize that while there are cultural and ecclesial contexts that value the participation of the laity, others remain excessively centred on the priest. Without confusing the respective vocations, and with a clear understanding of each, it is possible to identify areas in which the Brother can act in full fidelity to the charism, while also helping to broaden and enhance presbyteral service especially in the following areas:
- a) In *direct evangelisation and missionary proclamation*, the Brothers can play a significant and complementary role in the Redemptorist mission, actively participating in popular

missions through proclamation, visits to families, participation in formation meetings, accompanying mission teams, providing logistical support. They contribute to catechesis in the Christian initiation of children, ongoing formation of young people, and adults, and promoting biblical formation and literacy in the faith. Where ecclesial discipline permits, they can preach and give witness at retreats, novenas, and missionary weeks. Furthermore, they can provide non-sacramental spiritual accompaniment, offering attentive listening and guidance to individuals and families.

- b) In *pastoral work with young people and the laity*, they can carry out a fruitful mission characterized by closeness to others in a spirit of fraternity. They can actively lead or provide support to youth and vocation ministry, promoting discernment and the formation of groups. They can contribute to the formation and coordination of lay missionaries and mission collaborators, strengthening co-responsibility. They can also revitalize communities through prayer groups, Bible study groups, and small communities.
- c) In the *field of human development*, they can take on a prophetic and transformative role within the Redemptorist mission. They can be involved in social projects relating to nutrition assistance, shelter, migration, drug dependency, prisons, and homelessness, all of which make concrete the option for the most vulnerable. They can contribute to the defence of human dignity and to the organization of solidarity initiatives. Their missionary presence on the peripheries, along borders, in rural areas, or in high-risk

areas manifest the Redeemer's closeness in "difficult situations".

- d) In *initial and ongoing formation*, they can serve on formation teams, contributing to the human, communal, pastoral, and professional formation of candidates. They may accompany candidates as brother mentors, strengthening their vocational experience and their identity as consecrated lay people. They can also collaborate in planning and preparation of missionary work and vocation promotion, offering technical and professional training, as well as formation in servant leadership.
- e) In the fields of *education, culture, and vocational training in the service of the mission*, they may work in institutions of higher education, seminaries, Redemptorist schools and colleges, training centres, workshops, and vocational courses, promoting concrete opportunities for human development. They can contribute by teaching music, the arts, technology, and languages, and by providing job training and support for those in the process of naturalization/citizenship. Furthermore, they strengthen popular education and support community leaders, integrating evangelization and human development.
- f) In the *fields of media and evangelization*, brothers work in radio, television, the internet, and social media, producing evangelizing content, testimonies, and missionary campaigns. They contribute to audiovisual production, design, photography, editing, and the management for digital platforms. They also collaborate in institutional

communication and in preserving the historical memory of the mission.

- g) In *administration, management, and mission effectiveness*, they can contribute to the administration of houses, as economs and the bursars' office, in accounts, and in fundraising, all carried out with transparency. They are involved in the organization and management of apostolic works, maintenance, purchasing, and building maintenance. They also provide planning and organizational support to missions and communities, ensuring continuity in the service of evangelization.



CONCLUSION

45. As I bring this *Communicanda* to a close, I wish to express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude to our Redemptorist Brothers. We remember in a special way those who have already departed from this life, having generously offered their lives in the service of *Copiosa Redemptio*. Their memory is not merely a historical remembrance, but a spiritual legacy that continues to bear fruit for the Congregation.
46. I also wish to express my deep gratitude to our elderly and infirm Brothers (cf. Const. 55). Their silent fidelity, sustained over the years, is an eloquent testimony that vocation is not measured by productivity, but by belonging. *To be a Brother is to belong, to bear witness, and to persevere to the end. Their lives proclaim that consecration is a gift that is renewed every day, even in the frailty of old age.*
47. To the young men in formation and to those who feel the call to be Brothers, I say clearly: do not lose heart. The vocation of Brother is full, complete, and necessary. In the Congregation there is room for all the gifts that the Spirit raises up. There are no second-class vocations, but rather diverse ways of living the same Redemptorist consecration.
48. It is essential to recover the historical memory of the Congregation from its foundation, when the Brothers were present as constituent members of the one missionary body. They were there at the beginning, they are here now, and they will continue to be as long as God wills the Congregation to carry out its mission within the Church. Without the Brothers, Redemptorist history would not be complete.

49. To the Brothers living through this historic moment in the Congregation's life, I make this fraternal appeal: be bold and courageous. Be a visible sign of consecration at the very heart of the Congregation and in the midst of society. Your presence is prophetic. Your fraternity is a witness. Your life is a proclamation.
50. We are therefore invited to look back on the past with gratitude and clarity, while also discerning those elements which, at certain times, obscured or weakened our understanding of the Brother's vocation. This reflection has not meant to accuse, but rather to call for a conversion of perspective. We must purify our mentality, move beyond reductionist views, and rediscover the Gospel as our fundamental criterion.
51. To rediscover the charism through the vocation of the Brothers is to rediscover our own Christian and Redemptorist identity. *We are one missionary body (cf. Const. 2), called to live out the complementarity of vocations in communion and co-responsibility. Let us walk together as a Congregation that breathes with two lungs—priests and Brothers—allowing the same charism, the same consecration, and the same missionary ardour to flow through our veins. Thus, strengthened by apostolic fraternity, we shall continue to proclaim Copiosa Redemptio with boldness to the world that so needs hope.*
52. As we conclude this *Communicanda*, we reaffirm with gratitude that the vocation of the Redemptorist Brother is full, constitutive, and indispensable to the Congregation's one missionary body, as a prophetic sign of consecration, fraternity, and service. Under the watchful gaze of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, who accompanies and intercedes

for us in our mission, we entrust the Brothers' journey of renewal with hope and courage. In Saint Gerard Majella we contemplate the beauty of a simple and fruitful holiness, lived out in daily life with faithful love. And we also venerate all the holy Brothers, especially the anonymous ones, hidden in the small tasks and in the silence of perseverance, whose lives continue to proclaim, with joy, *Copiosa Redemptio*.

On behalf of the General Council and the Commission for Brothers,

Fr. Rogério Gomes, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

Br. Laurence (Larry) Lujan, C.Ss.R.
General Consultor and President of the Commission for
Brothers

Rome, 16th October 2026
Feast of Saint Gerard Majella

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Congregatio Ss. Redemptoris

