

COPIOSA

The motto of the Redemptorist Congregation is: ‘*Copiosa apud Eum Redemptio*’ – ‘With him there is plentiful redemption’. What is the meaning of this *copiosa*?

‘*Copiosa*’ is used in connection with ‘*redemptio*’. To understand the full content of *copiosa* redemption, we have to know what ‘redemption’ is. Fr Paul Hitz says: Redemption is essentially and radically that marvellous miraculous intervention of God who delivers fallen human beings from slavery and damnation to introduce them into his kingdom.

Redemption is liberation from sin and guilt, from anxiety and despair, from social and political slavery and oppression. It is also reconciliation with God, with the world, with ourselves.

St Alphonsus and *copiosa redemptio*

The abundance of God’s saving love so enthralled Alphonsus that it led to his conversion to Jesus Christ, to the abandoned poor and to the community. Jesus, whose incarnation, paschal mystery and Eucharistic presence together express the radical solidarity of God with human beings, becomes the centre of Alphonsus’ life and the reason for his self-giving to others. And the conversion of Alphonsus leads him to embrace the preferences of Jesus and to live the reality of God’s love in situations of social marginalization or ecclesial estrangement. What is more, Alphonsus understands that this conversion to Jesus Christ must be realized in community, so he invites others who feel likewise to live together in a way that will ensure an ongoing connection with this abundant love and Jesus Christ’s preference for the poor.

The 23rd General Chapter (2003) chose as a theme for the following sexennium ‘Giving our lives for plentiful redemption’. In their Final Message the capitulars said: ‘The overriding reason for our choice of this theme is faith in Jesus our Redeemer. We have been so captivated by the call of God that only by giving our lives for plentiful redemption can we respond to God’s love for us.’

Again, the spirituality of abundance is clear: ‘The plentiful redemption we experience is rooted in the mystery of God becoming one with us. Such a solidarity transforms our relationship with God, and it gives meaning to our mission. We see the current focus on solidarity with one another in community, on solidarity in formation and in the work of restructuring the Congregation for the sake of our mission as aspects of that plentiful redemption to which we have given our lives.’

Copiosa as used in Scripture

The expression ‘*copiosa redemptio*’ as such comes from psalm 130 which is the prayer of someone who prays from the heart’s depth. It is an acknowledgement of littleness, of sin: if the Lord counts our sin, we are lost. We are convinced that he forgives: ‘with you there is forgiveness’. Therefore, in spite of our sin, we look for the Lord, we wait confidently for the Lord because with him is love, with him there is *abundant redemption*.

Generally, we are so inclined to emphasize the noun ‘redemption’ that the adjective *copiosa* is easily overlooked. It means: the Lord forgives, not a little bit, not once or on special occasions or only a restricted number of people; no, he forgives abundantly. He forgives always and far more than we would be inclined to do. *Copiosa redemptio* transcends our comprehension. It is shown in the father who forgives his son who was lost, and above all in Jesus who on the cross cries out: ‘Father, forgive them because they do not know what they do.’

Plentiful redemption often appears in the Scriptures in literal or in equivalent terms. A few examples suffice to show this.

- Matthew 13:12 ‘To those who have, more will be given, and they will have an **abundance**.’
- Luke 6:38 ‘A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, **running over**, will be put into your lap.’
- John 1:16 ‘From his **fullness** we have all received, **grace upon grace**.’
- John 3:16 ‘For God **so** loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have **eternal life**.’
- John 10:10 ‘I came that they might have life, and have it **abundantly**.’
- Romans 5:17 ‘If because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the **abundance** of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.’
- Romans 15:13 ‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may **abound** in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.’
- 2 Corinthians 9:14-15 ‘They pray for you because of the **surpassing** grace of God...Thanks be to God for his **indescribable** gift!’
- Ephesians 1:3 ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ **with every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places.’
- Ephesians 2:7 ‘...so that in the ages to come he might show the **immeasurable riches** of his grace.’
- Ephesians 3:8 ‘...this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the **boundless riches** of Christ.’

So ‘plentiful redemption’ according to Scripture is a transformation from death to life, from sin to justice. It is impossible to speak of it in an exhaustive way, though we make a beginning in the Liturgy. We will have eternity to express our amazement and our joy in the abundance of God.

The human being is called to share in the very nature of God. In Jesus the union is made complete; in his person we have the union of heaven and earth. St Athanasius says that God became man so that man can become God, that is, become partakers of the divine nature of God. We are called to share fully in the divine life. This fullness of life is not only something that is hoped for in some future time, but rather it is already experienced and received in the celebration of the Holy Mysteries – the Sacraments – especially in the Eucharist.

Copiosa redemptio in our Constitutions and General Statutes

Constitution 6. ‘All Redemptorists... must be humble and courageous servants among people of the Gospel of Christ, the Redeemer and Lord... This message has for its special object **plentiful redemption...**’

Constitution 20. ‘Strong in faith, rejoicing in hope, burning with charity, Redemptorists... follow Christ the Redeemer..., they share in the mystery of Christ and proclaim it..., that they may bring to people **plentiful redemption.**’

Statute 06. ‘The seal of the Congregation consists of a cross with a lance and sponge mounted on three hills; on either side of the cross are the abbreviated names of Jesus and Mary; above the cross is an eye sending forth rays; over all a crown. Around the seal is the motto: **‘With him Is Plentiful Redemption.’**’ (cf. Ps. 129:7)

Pope John Paul II ended his testament (6 March 1979): *‘Apud Dominum misericordia et copiosa apud Eum redemptio’*.

‘*Copiosa*’ in connection with ‘*redemptio*’ means that Jesus not only redeemed the world but that he did so in a way that is overwhelming, beyond all our desire or imagination or in the words of St Paul: ‘And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus’ (Phil 4:7).

SUGGESTED READINGS

- General Chapter 2003, Final document.
- Tobin, J.: *Communicanda 1; Called to give our lives for plentiful Redemption*, 2004.
- Tobin, J.: *Communicanda 2: Redemption*, 2006.
- Brehl, M.: ‘Plentiful Redemption’, conference chapter of Denver Province, 2004;
- Hitz, P.: ‘*Copiosa apud eum redemptio*’ in *Readings on Redemption*, edited by Corriveau, de Mingo Kaminouchi, Rome 2006.
- Schermann, H.: *Een brug bouwen*, [to build a bridge], Zenderen, 1998.
- Sianchuk: ‘Redemption’, in *Readings on Redemption*, edited by Corriveau, de Mingo Kaminouchi, Rome 2006.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Can you recall one occasion when you were aware of the sheer abundance of the grace you were receiving?
2. Can you recall one occasion when you were aware of the sheer abundance of grace you were mediating to another?
3. Does our motto help you to face your own death?

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