

**REDEMPTORIST NORTH AMERICAN SECRETARIAT FOR PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION
INITIAL RETREAT DAY
FOR CIRCLES OF REDEMPTORIST ASSOCIATES**

CENTRE OF BEAUTY:

- In a central place in the room, gather some symbols of the spirituality of St. Alphonsus, such as:
 - an image of the infant Jesus from a Nativity scene (Crib-Incarnation),
 - a crucifix (Cross-Redemption),
 - wheat and grapes (Altar-Eucharist),
 - an icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help or one of the Alphonsian Madonnas.
- An icon of St. Alphonsus
- Candle
- Bible

HANDOUTS:

- Small sheet for personal description/definition of spirituality
- Copy of “We Remember: A Prayer Celebrating Alphonsian Spirituality” (adapted from *In the Spirit of St. Alphonsus*)
- Section on “Redemptorist Spirituality” from *Charism 2000* (attached)

MATERIALS:

- Flip Chart
- Markers
- Masking Tape
- Name Tags
- Pens/pencils
- Paper

NOTES:

SATURDAY

9:00 a.m. **Gathering, hospitality**

9:30 a.m. **Welcome and Introduction**

- Overview of the Day
- Sharing hopes for the day

Icebreaker Getting to Know You activity

10:15 a.m. **SESSION IB WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?**

Facilitator: _____ **Input:** _____

10 mins. **Experience:** On chart paper, brainstorm a list of responses to the following question:
When you hear the word *spirituality*, what comes to mind?

15 mins. **Reflection:** Pull these responses together, using the following key points:

- Some people think of *spirituality* as becoming the best person one is capable of becoming, etc. If this is the way that someone thinks of Spirituality, then self-help books, inspirational websites, etc. might be used as means of development and seeking fulfillment.
- Others think of *spirituality* as DISCIPLINES, PRACTICES or PATHWAYS from the Church=s Tradition that help a person or group develop or deepen a relationship with God in the Spirit.
- Still others think of spirituality as a way of life, a way that they “pull it all together,” making meaning out of life along the way. It includes disciplines, practices, etc., but goes beyond that somehow.

20 mins. **Generalization:** Input Session on Christian Spirituality

- When we talk about Christian Spirituality, we are really talking about a way of life.
- Christians realize that it all begins with God, who first loved us.
- Christian spirituality is rooted in Jesus, in whom God became human, took on our flesh. Why did God become human? Out of love.
- Spirituality, then, is about our search for and response to God. It is about an encounter with Jesus that changes our lives.
- Our model for the Christian spiritual life is Mary, and her “yes” to God.
- Spirituality is about how I am responding to God=s invitation and initiative in my life.
- Spirituality has to do with my relationships with God and with others.
- Many saints and other holy people developed spiritual practices, methods of prayer and pathways that can be a model for others. We often think of Ignatian prayer, or Franciscan prayer in that vein.

11:00 - 11:15 a.m. BREAK

- 30 mins. **Action:** Towards a personal definition of spirituality
- Make sure that everyone has a small piece of paper (2 a sheet) on which to write.
- Ask: How would you describe or define Christian Spirituality?
- 15 mins - Give people some time for personal, quiet reflection.
- 5 mins- Then, in pairs, share what you have been able to formulate.
- 10 mins - Large-group sharing of definitions/descriptions

12:00 noon- 1:00 p.m. LUNCH

1:00 p.m. SESSION IIb A LOOK AT REDEMPTORIST SPIRITUALITY

Facilitator: _____ **Input:** _____

- 30 mins. **Experience:** Large-group sharing on the following questions:
- How were you drawn to the Redemptorists?
- What attracted you to a particular Redemptorist? ... to the Redemptorist community?
NOTE: As members of the group are telling their stories, the leaders will take note of the key words, upon which they will draw in the reflection and input session that is to follow.

- 15 mins. **Reflection:** Characteristics of Redemptorist Spirituality
- The leaders begin by listing on flip chart or screen the key words, phrases, images and ideas that they gleaned from the group sharing and storytelling. The following words and ideas will likely arise:
- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| ≡ Hospitality | ≡ Youth Ministry |
| ≡ Closeness to people | ≡ Universality |
| ≡ Acceptance | ≡ Warmth |
| ≡ Good Homilies | ≡ Concern for the poor |
| ≡ Simple language | ≡ Team work |
| ≡ Collaborative style | ≡ Stress on God's Love |
| ≡ Emphasis on the Sacrament of Reconciliation | |
| ≡ Call to constant conversion | |
| ≡ Community Life | |
| ≡ An open and inclusive vision of Church | |
| ≡ Mutuality—Evangelizing the poor and being evangelized by the poor | |

- If all of these aspects/elements do not arise, the leader/s

might point them out and see how the group responds.

15 mins **Generalization:** Input from the leader/s on Redemptorist Spirituality
-The qualities that you named in your recollections of the Redemptorists with whom you have come into contact, these qualities that attracted or drew you, are all characteristics of Redemptorist spirituality. You might realize that some of these words and phrases characterize or describe your spirituality, too. This is probably because you share the same spirituality as the professed Redemptorists. That's why there's really something to this notion of a "Redemptorist family," sharing the same charism and spirituality, but living it out differently according to their varied callings.

Redemptorists themselves often think and talk about Redemptorist Spirituality as having four "pillars:"

- Crib (Incarnation)
- Cross (Redemption)
- Altar (Eucharist)
- Mary

In follow-up sessions we will explore each of these "pillars," but for now, it is enough to name them in this way. These four "pillars" will also be the focus of our closing prayer today. There is an ancient Christian saying, "*lex orandi, lex credendi.*" It means that what we pray is what we believe. As we pray, ponder the words. What we pray today is what we hold most firmly as the core of our shared Redemptorist spirituality.

35 mins. **Action:**

1. Read aloud the section on Redemptorist Spirituality from the Introduction to *Charism 2000*.
2. Allow people some time to read over the text themselves with the following reflection questions:
 - Is there a word or a phrase that strikes you?
 - Does this raise any questions for you?
 - Is there anything you wish to say about what you have read?

3:00 - 3:15 p.m. BREAK

3:15 p.m. CLOSURE ITEMS

1. Thank-you and housekeeping items
2. Resources that are available, and from which we drew in preparation for this session:
 - ≡ C.Ss.R. *Constitutions and Statutes*

- ≡ *Charism 2000: A Journey in Redemptorist Spirituality*
 - ≡ *The Holy Longing*, by Ron Rollheiser, o.m.i.
 - ≡ *In the Spirit of St. Alphonsus*, by Terry Moran, C.Ss.R.
3. Follow-up GatheringsB the local leaders will want to speak about plans for future follow- up gatherings.

3:30 p.m. PRAYER

Prayer Service, AWe Remember@, Attached, adapted from *In the Spirit of St. Alphonsus*.

4:00 p.m. DEPARTURES

REDEMPTORIST SPIRITUALITY
from *Charism 2000*, Introduction

We affirm that there is a Redemptorist spirituality—it is the particular style of life (Christian spirituality) which is marked and shaped by the experience of a group: Alphonsus, the first Redemptorists, and those who have followed them, right up to the present moment. It is essentially missionary in its orientation, sharing in the Mission of Christ, the first missionary, who declared of himself, “He sent me to preach the Good News to the poor” (St. Alphonsus, as quoted in Constitution 1).

Redemptorist spirituality has no being apart from Christian spirituality. Like a member of the body in relation to the whole, it is intimately connected to Christian spirituality, yet shaped in a way which is appropriate to its Mission.

It may also be considered as a set of lived values and attitudes which give a particular “flavour” to the whole. It is not a recipe which one can follow blindly, but a way of life, articulated in our Constitutions and tradition. It is also shaped by and passed on through the lived experience of the members in Mission, community and dedication to Christ the Redeemer.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR REDEMPTORIST SPIRITUALITY (*Charism 2000*)

Having read and reflected upon this passage concerning Redemptorist Spirituality...

1. Is there a word or a phrase that strikes you?

2. Does what you have read raise any questions for you? If so, what are these?

3. Is there anything you wish to say about what you have read?

WE REMEMBER: A PRAYER SERVICE CELEBRATING ALPHONSIAN SPIRITUALITY

(adapted from *In the Spirit of St. Alphonsus*, by Terry Moran)

Environment: In a central place in the room, gather some symbols of the spirituality of St. Alphonsus, such as:

- an image of the infant Jesus from a Nativity scene (Crib-Incarnation),
- a crucifix (Cross-Redemption),
- wheat and grapes (Altar-Eucharist),
- an icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help or one of the Alphonsian Madonnas.

INVITATION TO PRAYER

Presider: God is ever present, around us and within us--
God, who took human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary;
God, who accompanies us through death to new life;
God, who is present among us when we break the bread;
God, who gave us the gift of St. Alphonsus Liguori.
May this God be with you, now and forever.

All: Amen.

READINGS AND RESPONSES

Reader 1: This reading is from the Final Document of the XXI General Chapter: The center of Redemptorist spirituality is Christ the Redeemer, as He reveals Himself above all in the mysteries of the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection which we celebrate in the Eucharist. These lead the Redemptorist to be His living memorial and to continue His mission in the world. This profoundly Christocentric spirituality impels us to recover the heritage of St. Alphonsus in his “exodus” towards the poor. The Redemptorist follows Christ the Redeemer and pursues His liberating action. Mary is the first disciple of the Redeemer, whom she accepted as the Word of God; she guides us on our journey of identification with Him. In her is found the most perfect image of liberation and of liberating activity.

All sing this or another suitable response:

We remember how you loved us to your death,
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here.
And we believe that we will see you when you come in your glory, Lord.
We remember, we celebrate, we believe!

CRIB

Reader 2: This reading is from the works of St. Alphonsus:
“O Word made flesh, you are at a loss to know what more you can do to make yourself loved by us. You first appeared among us as a poor child. Even from your birth, you lost no time in drawing our hearts to yourself. Make us fall in love with your goodness.”

Presider: In the Incarnation, St. Alphonsus saw a God who shared our life completely.

All: May the example of the Word made flesh inspire us to open ourselves to one another and to make all the struggles of the human family our own.

All sing this or another suitable response:

We remember how you loved us to your death,
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here.

And we believe that we will see you when you come in your glory, Lord.
We remember, we celebrate, we believe!

CROSS

Reader 3: This reading is from a letter of St. Alphonsus dated November, 1751:

“My brothers, by the grace of God we perform wonders wherever we go on mission. People say they have never before experienced a mission like ours. Why? Because we go by obedience, we go in poverty, and we preach Christ crucified.”

Presider: In the paschal mystery, St. Alphonsus saw Jesus in total commitment to the mission of healing, liberating, and redeeming God’s people.

All: May the power of the cross, which we preach by word and witness, renew in each one of us our desire to give ourselves to the mission of Jesus Christ as we see it lived out in the Redemptorist Family.

All sing this or another suitable response:

We remember how you loved us to your death,
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here.

And we believe that we will see you when you come in your glory, Lord.
We remember, we celebrate, we believe!

EUCCHARIST

Reader 4: This is a reading from the works of St. Alphonsus:

“My God, my true and only love. What more could you have done to be loved by us? To die was not enough for you, my Lord. You instituted the Eucharist to give yourself totally to us and to bind yourself, heart-to-heart, with us. My God, I love you above all things. I wish to see you loved as you deserve.”

Presider: St. Alphonsus devoted his life to building up communities centered around the Eucharist.

All: May our devotion to the Sacrament of Unity empower us to lives of sharing of faith and service with one another and among the people of God.

All sing this or another suitable response:

We remember how you loved us to your death,
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here.

And we believe that we will see you when you come in your glory, Lord.
We remember, we celebrate, we believe!

MARY

Reader 5: This reading is from the works of St. Alphonsus:
“Mary co-operated by love in the spiritual birth of all the members of the Church. It was on Mount Calvary that Jesus formed the Church and the Virgin Mary co-operated in a special manner in the accomplishment of this work. It was on Calvary that Mary began, in a special way, to be Mother of the whole Church.”

Presider: St. Alphonsus saw Mary as the midwife in the spiritual birth of the Church from the wounded side of the Redeemer.

All: May the prayers of Mary accompany us as we proclaim the Gospel anew by word and witness, and so continue to build the Church.

All sing this or another suitable response:

We remember how you loved us to your death,
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here.

And we believe that we will see you when you come in your glory, Lord.

We remember, we celebrate, we believe!

FAITH SHARING

Presider: After a few moments of silent reflection, please share with some of the people around you your answer to the following question:

- Which element of the Redemptorist spiritual tradition is particularly nourishing to you?

Presider: Gathered as one in the spirit of St. Alphonsus, we pray the prayer that Jesus

taught us:

All: Our Father...

CLOSING PRAYER

Presider: Loving God, we gather today to celebrate the call of Alphonsus Liguori, whose faith inspires us in our own commitment to the mission of Jesus, the mission of sharing his redeeming love with all. United in a common heritage, we look to your Spirit, alive in every age, to renew us, sustain us, and fortify us with zeal for mission. May that same Spirit draw us more closely to one another as one missionary Redemptorist family, so that the future we build will have no other foundation than Jesus the Redeemer, who is Lord forever and ever.

All: Amen.

All sing this or another suitable response:

We remember how you loved us to your death,
and still we celebrate, for you are with us here.

And we believe that we will see you when you come in your glory, Lord.

We remember, we celebrate, we believe!

