

C.Ss.R.

PIRITUALITY

ONE BODY (Eph 4,4)

UN SOLO CORPO (Ef 4,4)

UN SEUL CORPS (Eph 4,4)

UN SOLO CUERPO (Eph 4,4)

JEDNA WSPÓLNOTA (Ef 4,4)

UM SÓ CORPO (Ef 4,4)

EIN LEIB (Eph 4,4)

EIN FEIB (Eph 4,4)

07 - GIVE US, LORD, A NEW HEART

If it seems appropriate, the meeting may set time apart for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Among the symbols to be emphasized, one might consider the Eucharistic ones (bread, wine, grain etc.) or ones linked to the heart.

A hymn, a greeting and a prayer freely chosen may initiate the meeting.

Return to the first love

What did the General Chapter mean when it spoke of 'hearts renewed'? According to the Final Message (n. 8), it's our heart which makes us *return to our first love*, both as individuals and as a community, and enkindles the true *missionary zeal*, opening us up to the newness of the heart and of the Spirit. Just now we'd like to concentrate on this first point.

We're all aware of a certain **weariness**. This has to do with so many efforts to make our mission more effective and our life more meaningful. Meetings, chapters, documents, projects. We all experience frustration because the results don't measure up to our expectations. And then the lack of vocations is a cause of pain in many of our Units.

Along with this there's a danger: we're exposed to the **fragmentation** which is typical of our age. We run the risk of losing sight of the true priorities. Where should we begin each day? Where are we to find that which really counts?

Begin from the heart - so Christ, the Father's missionary, tells us. **Begin from the love**: you won't be making a mistake.

The heart enables us to put **order** in our life. It's our heart which makes us aware whenever our integrity is threatened. It's the heart alone which binds together in one realities which are so diverse, realities which impinge on our everyday life, along with the endless ways of interpreting these realities. It's the heart alone which unites the fragments into something which remains at the end, namely love. *"Without love the human person cannot live. He remains incomprehensible to himself, his life is without meaning, unless love is revealed to him, unless he encounters love, unless he experiences it and makes it his own, and shares it in a living way."* (Redemptor hominis 10).

A renewed heart is our wager for living a **full life**. Let's reflect: it's life, not just bits and scraps of it, that we have dedicated to Jesus Christ. It's love alone which will allow us to say at the end: I haven't frittered this life away. But this will happen under one condition only: that our existence, like a compass, has Jesus Christ as its focal point. It is He who is our life, **my** life.

We'll succeed in winning the wager if all of us - Redemptorists and Redemptoristines, formation candidates, lay and religious friends - if we all **pass** from a faith based on theoretic 'truth' to a heart which welcomes Christ as life and love. Otherwise, waste and incoherence will render our entire mission vain and empty.

Your Word is a light for my steps

*The Alleluia - and it might be better if it were accompanied by a gesture of veneration or by a procession - leads to the reading of **Mk. 12, 28-34**. A moment of silence or of shared reflection may follow.*

Here we emphasise that:

- the question of the scribe is **ours** too. If the risk for the pious Israelite was to get lost in the maze of prescriptions, the question for the man and woman of today is: what really counts? What can resist the wear and tear of time and the conflict of interpretations? It's love, says Jesus: but that begins with **listening**. Only when we realise that we are loved, and loved by God with an infinite love, will we find the strength to love.
- Our God is a **jealous** God, whose aim is to have **everything**: our heart, our mind and our energies. His love is a command, because we must look to him and to his humbling of himself in Jesus Christ to learn what love is. It's a command because the second commandment must flow from the first, otherwise it will be marred by self-interest and will stifle the first. I must love my neighbour as myself, because I discover both myself and him to be objects of the same love of God.

From the Redemptorist tradition

In a century in which the winds of Jansenism froze the heart with fear, and the light of reason quenched the reasons of the heart, Alphonsus Liguori carried his fight forward: **the enlightenment of the heart**.

Reason guided our founder to discover something which runs throughout history from beginning to end: God's desire to restore human beings to their true dignity.

It's the heart which enables him to grasp the strategy pursued by God, to understand why He adopts the language of love: it's the only language that human beings are able to understand. The **cross** is the summit of this way, and from it another proceeds, following the rhythm of the **Eucharist**.

If Redemptorists today are valued as '**persons of heart**', if the people, when they meet us, experience welcome and simplicity, if our missionary activity and especially the sacrament of penance give special prominence to compassion, the reason is to be sought for in that pre-eminence of the heart which fills the works and the missionary project of our founder.

There are two other features of our spirituality which are worth mentioning. The first is **conformity to the will of God**. This is not just a passive and resigned adapting of oneself to the events of life. If it is love that's to inspire our existence, we'll learn *ipso facto* to do what God wills. But if, on our way, we run up against ingratitude and failures, that will be the time to conform our will to that of God: because God wills that love should never give up.

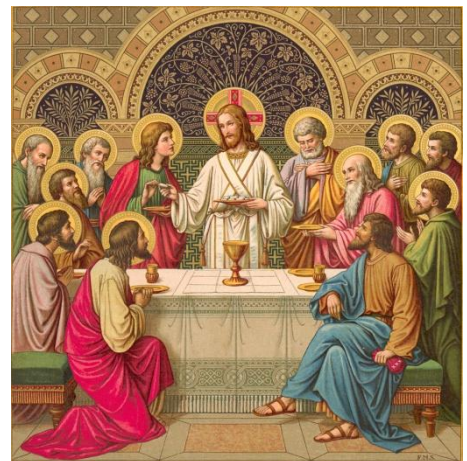
Here another element comes to our help, one typical of our tradition: **the right intention**. We must always check out the motive of our action, that is, whether it springs from the depth of a consciousness in dialogue with God. Here too accidents on the way and lack of understanding will not be lacking. We have to turn back on what has happened and ask ourselves: was my objective inspired by the Gospel or marred by other objectives? If it was the first of these, we won't lack peace of heart and the will to raise ourselves again.

If one wishes, we can recall other elements of our tradition which reveal the "reasons of the heart" .

The Constitutions today

A heart "**enlarged by love**" is necessary so that our mission and our own consecration may touch the source of the love of God (Const. 58).

In these last years the Congregation has seen in the "**life in the Spirit**" an indispensable condition for the renewing the heart: think of the General Chapter of 1997 and of its decisions on spirituality. To be specialists in regard to our origins, to understand again the original intuition of our founder is fundamental, but it's not enough. Our creative fidelity will be possible only in the rhythm of a



walking in the Spirit, beginning with listening and cadenced by the **appropriate rules** of every spiritual life, starting with those of the incarnation and of the paschal mystery, and continuing with the knowledge of ourselves and the conditions of interior joy.

There must be a courageous investment in **prayer**, personal and community prayer. The time and the quality of our prayer are already in themselves an eloquent indication. But that's not enough: we must lend our prayer the force of **passion** and of **feeling**, such as today again will become ours, if we pray with the words of the *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament* of St. Alphonsus.

Fraternal life, then, is the place in which our love for God takes form and models itself. Beginning with the attention which we reserve for the most fragile part of our communities, that is, the **aged**: called to mature the good wine of their lives, and at the same time recipients of our gratitude. And continuing in a fluent and deep **communication** among ourselves, in the ability to meet each other, to make projects and **decisions together**, always respecting the decisional processes expected by our Constitutions and Statutes.

Finally, a heart renewed will express itself in an ever stronger **sense of belonging**, which makes us earn - each day that passes - the gift of having been called to follow Christ in the Congregation. Still eloquent are the words of St. John Neumann, the first professed Redemptorist in north America, which he jotted down on the day of his profession (16.01.1842)

"I now belong body and soul to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. The corporal and spiritual aid mutually given and received, the edification and good example which, in a society of this kind, one has around him till death, wonderfully facilitate the life I am now leading, the vocation to which I have been called. I have every reason to hope that death will be more welcome to me in the holy Congregation than it usually is to seculars"

Conclusion

One can use the traditional text of the visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin Mary (St. Alphonsus). Alternatively, the following, also taken from the book of the *Visits*, can be useful:

"I pray you, Father, through the love of Jesus Christ, who promised: *if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you* (John 16,23). Therefore you cannot refuse it to me. Lord, I wish only to love you, to give myself entirely to you and not be ungrateful any more, as I have been up to now. Look at me and listen to me. Make today the day in which I turn to you, so as never again to cease loving you. I love you, my God, infinite goodness; I love you, my love, my paradise, my good, my life, my all".



We finish with a hymn and a final blessing.



ONE BODY is a monthly text of prayer proposed by the Center for Redemptorist Spirituality - sfiore@cssr.com - seraflower@gmail.com

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