

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)

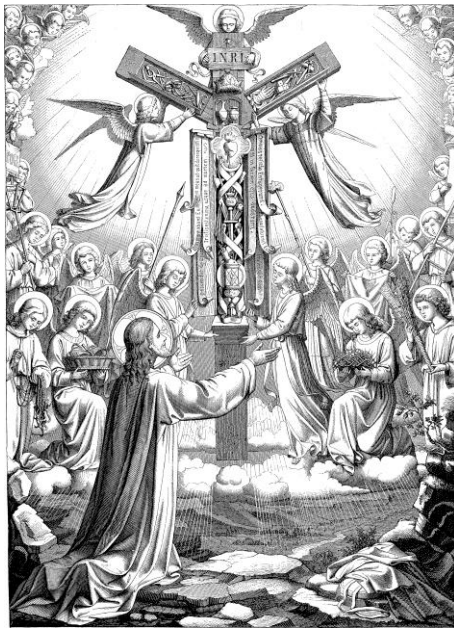
## 08 - FERVENT IN ZEAL

*A hymn and a greeting, as well as a prayer freely taken from the liturgy, may be used to begin the meeting.*

### *At the origin of mission*

The heart not only promotes the deep unity of the apostolic life. It's also the condition of a renewed **missionary zeal** (XXIV General Chapter, Final Message, n. 8).

The two things stand or fall together. Jesus experienced the danger of interior torment in the moment in which he prepared himself for his **public ministry**. It was the Spirit which led him into the desert. But in his heart Jesus experienced the dizziness of power, inner aridity and the attraction of that which is sacred, religious, miraculous. Already in his heart Jesus encountered the world into which the Father sent him, where the Word would be rejected and love mocked, - the world made of the hardest stones, of arid clods and thorns, of ground where each seed produces either a hundred, or sixty or thirty-fold. (Mt. 13, 23)



It's from the same humility of heart that **missionary enthusiasm** springs. The heart beat strongly in the breasts of the disciples of Emmaus. It made the apostles rejoice when they saw the risen one. The heart experiences joy and peace in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14, 17). It's from the heart that one goes out to proclaim that a new and beautiful life is possible. The Church is nothing but this: entry into the risen life of Christ, and the consequent desire to tell everyone about it.

**Proclamation of the Gospel dictated by the heart:** it's of this that the world has need. So many spiritual values have been decisively affirmed in the last few centuries, even in the secularized world: the search for truth, sensitivity to justice, solidarity, the ethics of duty, outrage at corruption etc. Palliatives have been found for reducing anxiety and solving the problems of meaning. But it remains a world satiated with pleasure and deprived of joy; glutted with sex but incapable of love; familiar with scientific knowledge but closed to mystery; where people are fixated on their own navel but distrustful of others; a world protective of its own (false) image of God, yet remaining an enemy of its own happiness; curious about everything that takes place under its own eyes, but incapable of raising its eyes to heaven to see there a Father who loves and looks after us.

For the missionary, it's a question of marking out a **space ever more clear**, ever more 'his own': to help men and women to administer the **world as God's gift** and to relate to the Giver in harmony and peace. To look at reality and to see everywhere in it **Christ**, the beginning of the risen humanity. This is a vision possible only to one who loves. A vision that's possible only if there is someone who proclaims Christ to those who have never heard him spoken about (Rom. 10.14)

## *Your Word is a light to my steps*

*The proclamation of Luke 6, 43-45 may be introduced with the singing of the alleluia. Silence or shared reflection may follow. Here we emphasise two points:*

- **The image of the tree.** Like a plant, our life today shows itself as the fruit of growth, as the expression of our history, as the summation of the many choices – good ones and false ones – which have marked it. This is of value up to a certain point. The fruit is of value today. But only if it is compassion. In other words, if we are able to re-read our history in the light of the compassion which God has shown us, we will know how to pass on to others this same fruit. In Christ this is possible: because we know ourselves to be forgiven unconditionally. Through him we have been grafted (Rom 11, 20) on to the tree of good fruit.. namely, the tree of the cross.
- It's the **fullness of the heart** which is the first condition for mission. If compassion [mercy] penetrates and heals my life, then the word which will flower on my lips will also be as sweet as the fig and as luscious as the grape (v.44), fruits typical of the land of God. It will be able to continue on its way and reach the ears of others and heal them. One of the fundamental rules, which St. Alphonsus recommended to the preacher, will be realised: *only the heart can speak to the heart.*

## *From the Redemptorist tradition*

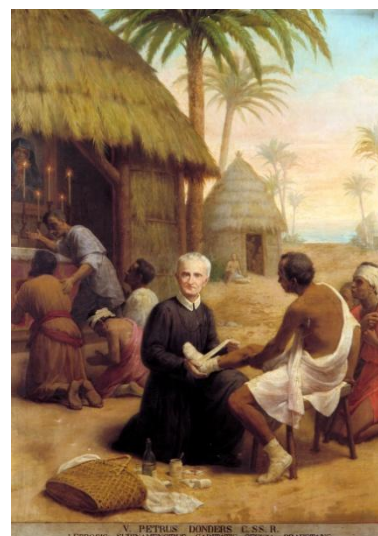
From the very beginnings, Redemptorist preaching has been marked by trust in a **God who loves and forgives**. At a time when people claimed to convert others by threatening eternal fire, Alphonsus insisted that “conversions brought about solely by fear of divine punishment don't last long, and if the holy love of God does not enter the heart, the sinner will persevere only with difficulty” More than once we Redemptorists have forgotten this primacy of the heart. In the last few centuries we have even been seen as preachers of terror (*Redemptorists*). Today, however, the question remains: how are we to act so that the poor and the abandoned may really experience the love of God in their life, above all by learning to pray and receive the word of God? To rediscover the **popular note**, to come back to speaking in a simple manner of Jesus Christ and to show what he has to do with life: this is really an important part of our task today.

But the renewed heart is also at the origin of **missionary dynamism**, of that zeal which in so many parts of the world even today recalls the presence of the Redemptorists, where crosses and other monuments were erected in memory of a mission to the people.

The General Chapter of 2003 has stamped this zeal with the theme of the sexennium: “to give one's life for the abundant Redemption” . We could cite many examples, but here we want to reflect on something that happened one day to Blessed P. **Donders**: an episode that was bitter if it weren't also amusing.

We're in the year 1883. Bishop Schaap visits the leper colony in Batavia, where our confrere had spent his years and his energies. Certain delegates wish to speak privately to the bishop, but he doesn't understand their language, pidgin English. He needs an interpreter. The only available one is Fr. Donders. But he has to interpret his very being... already a **useless servant**. The delegates complain to the bishop that Fr. Peter has become old, that they no longer understand him when he preaches, that he is always repeating the same things. In fact, they were getting their own back on the missionary, because he had often publicly criticized them for their behaviour. In spite of himself, the bishop had to ask Fr. Donders to return to Paramaribo.

**St. Gerard** is also a shining example of a life spent without sparing himself: just remember the terrible winter of 1754 at Materdomini, and the famine that followed on it and brought affliction on the population. Gerard gave bread and the Word to the miserable people who crowded the hall door of the Redemptorists, and did so with a generosity which has earned for him the title of '**friend of the poor**'.



*Free sharing can further the exchange of witness, and recall also examples and experiences shaped by missionary zeal.*

### The Constitutions today

The Constitutions see our reciprocal union as closely connected with our **relation to Christ** (Const. 23). They speak of a “daily life characterized by the conversion of the heart and the continual reform of the spirit”(Const. 41), and of decisions which are efficacious to the extent that they are born of a “fraternal union of mind and heart”(Const. 142).

The objective to which all this points is the **constant education of the heart**, so that it may open itself ever more freely to others. Once more, it's our apostolic vocation (ib.), the winning post to which we look, though it is always moving.

The manner in which our Constitutions view the apostolic community can seem exacting to us, and often distant from our habitual life-style. But more recently John Paul II has said that “the entire richness of religious life depends on the quality of fraternal life in common”. And *Communicanda* 11 (1988), with its very title, launched the challenge: “The Redemptorist apostolic community: of itself the prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Gospel”. And it reminds us that the mission of the Redemptorist community is not simply a list of things to do. It evangelizes already by the **very fact of its existence**, by its ability to create really fraternal relations.

For St. Alphonsus the first mission derived from the **community** as such. It (the community) presents itself as a response of the gospel to the most abandoned, and in view of its apostolic *raison d'etre*, it organizes everything: structures, order of the day, government, formation. Animated by charity, the community becomes a place of **welcome** for all who need a welcome, beginning with those who have already been reached by the Redemptorist mission, and continuing with retreats and formation offered to the clergy and the nobility, and with pastoral services in our churches.

Today we're becoming more and more aware that, in a world marked by individualism, that religious community can become a sign which summons every person of good will, beginning with the young. But this sign will be a luminous one if we keep before us always the exacting standard of **perfect charity**. And if, recognizing our fragility, we create and pay heed to the conditions under which people really grow, and with them the missionary **dynamism**.

### Conclusion

*The participants can make their own prayer freely, taking inspiration from the passage of the Word of God that has been proclaimed, Lk. 6, 43-45.*

*We recommend also to the Lord the deceased Redemptorists who gave their lives for the redemption, those of their (our) own unit, or of the Congregation.*

*A hymn to the Blessed Virgin concludes the meeting.*



ONE BODY is a monthly text of prayer proposed by the Center for Redemptorist Spirituality

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