

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 LEIB (Eph 4,4)

11 - EVERYTHING IS FOR THE MISSION

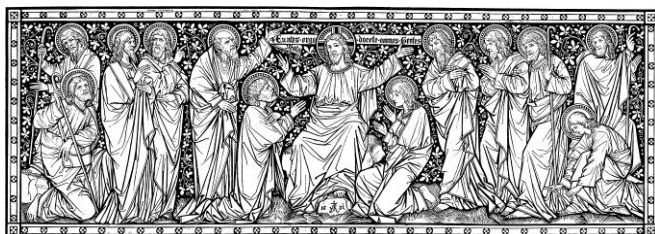
A hymn and a liturgical greeting can introduce the prayer meeting

SENT BECAUSE CALLED

Mission is the centre of gravity of the theme of the sexennium. Preaching the Gospel, revitalizing our hearts and our hope: all this is for the sake of mission. Restructuration too has no other motive than that of fostering a new missionary availability, - so say the first two principles of the restructuring process.

We don't find the same clarity of horizon in our everyday life. The geography of the Congregation has changed. The West no longer succeeds in sending out missionaries as it did for centuries, and the rest of the world doesn't seem ready to undertake the process in the opposite direction. Inter-religious dialogue has, rather wrongly, made the proclamation of the Gospel to 'unbelievers' seem superfluous. And secularization has made us hesitate to offer more news – the Gospel – to a world which has already too much 'news'. So we're all exposed to the danger of isolating ourselves, of reducing mission to the frontiers of our own home, or reducing it to the good management of ordinary pastoral activity. **"Don't disturb"** has become an ideal for living, more than a norm of good education.

Two words can animate a new missionary availability. The first is **"way"**. In fact the eddying interaction of ways and models of life can make the real light of the Christian way shine forth. Many



people today still think that faith means abiding by certain norms, belonging to an institution, attending catechetics and learning its formulae. The first Christians, by contrast, were convinced that theirs was a **"way"** (Acts 19,23; 9,2; 22,4). They followed a way in the midst of others, which precisely for that reason aroused fascination and interest.

It was to walk, with their eyes fixed on Christ, he who is at the origin of faith and brings it to its fulfillment (Heb. 12, 2). Our own mission as Redemptorists is to **follow Jesus**, step by step, "in preaching the Gospel to the poor" (Const. 1), not sitting down on the side of the road, but cultivating a holy restlessness, which is the raw material of mission.

The second word is **vocation**, and the General government recently invited us to reflect on and pray about it. Mission is nothing but the transmission to others of a beauty that has been experienced, felt, and become a source of joy for ourselves. We are emerging from years of research: projects which started and often failed, pastoral methods and strategies. And what if we are to transmit to others, starting with the youth, the experience which really counts, that of feeling ourselves loved by God in Jesus Christ? Is this not an opportunity to revitalize in ourselves the attraction of a beautiful life, which we have glimpsed in the sight of Christ and which made one day of our existence decisive?

It's possible to recover the missionary impetus, if we return to the **enthusiasm** of our first 'yes' to Christ who called us. Vocation will be the centre which unifies our energies, in a world that's more and more fragmented. Vocation will make us rediscover the essential, in a life more and more exposed to the peripheral and superfluous. Vocation will be the soul of our mission.

At this point it would be advisable to set aside a period, quite a short one, in which each one can tell freely the story of his own vocation.

Your word is a light for my steps.

*A gesture or some symbols, accompanied by a hymn, introduce the reading of **Matt. 4, 12-23**. Among the points for reflection which the passage can suggest, we point out two here:*

- The **scenery** which Matthew is very concerned to throw light on: it's not any more the dry desert where the Baptist has preached up to now, but verdant Galilee. Jesus leaves Nazareth and moves towards "the way of the sea", the Galilee of the nations (v. 15) which anticipates the universal mission. If the rest is in shadow, the first announcement of the Gospel shines forth a great light. Everything speaks of new life, beginning with the countryside which receives it.
- The first words which Jesus proclaims are "**be converted**". Light and life are possible if we dismiss the principles which inspired the old life, and decide – just as Peter, Andrew, James and John did – to leave everything, placing our own footsteps on those traced out by Christ. Mission means sharing the very *kenosis* of Jesus, leaving one's own privileges and - taking all things into consideration - leaving life that is "reasonable", to make oneself available to the folly and extravagance of love, wherever that leads.

From the Redemptorist tradition

Our **saints and beatified** confreres are an example of an existence matured by vocation. Theirs was a heroic and concrete response to needs that were urgent and real, and through which God called them. The original manner in which they incarnated the charism makes them the true patrimony of the Congregation, which is really worth while promoting.

There's an element in the life of these men which speaks to us still today, namely that which relates to their **use of time**. They weren't people who fell into the trap of activism. Nevertheless, reading their biographies, we get the sense of a life that was full but always reaching out to the one thing necessary (Lk. 10,42). Confining ourselves to the Redemptorist saints, it's symptomatic that our founder made a special vow of not ever wasting time. The biographers have tried to calculate his agenda from 1752 to 1762. Of the twenty-four hours, eight were for prayer, one for recreation and meals, ten for work and five for sleep, and that at a time when the rule allowed seven and a half.

And reading the life of St. Gerard don't we get the impression of a completely intense life, conscious of the few years of life that he had at his disposal? And what are we to say of the extraordinary activity of St. Clement, starting with the permanent mission at St. Benno's in Warsaw and finishing with the various forms of pastoral experiments at Vienna? In the case of St. John Neumann we know that his day began at 4.30 and finished at 22.30.

Today we certainly have more clocks at our disposal. The way we use time, however, is a faithful index of our vocation. Not just in taking on ourselves "that part of **work** and of responsibilities which derive from our missionary vocation" (Const. 39). Not just by sharing with the poor the law of work (Const. 64). But also by trying to live in a fruitful and creative way the hours and the health that God offers us.

At this point too there can be a sharing: for example, on what the community could do to promote a further knowledge of our saints and blessed, or of those servants of God who haven't yet arrived at the honours of the altars.



The Constitutions today

“ All the confreres, in virtue of their esteem and love for their vocation, feel the need to foster vocations for our Congregation”(Const. 79). **Esteem and love** are very compelling words, much more so than the **duty** which should emanate from them.

Esteem makes us think of an existence in which joy dwells, an existence rich in meaning. Love presumes that we couldn't do without this our vocation. It's our life, to be cared for by the contribution of everyone. It's a life so beautiful that we want others to share it.

“ Life alone generates life”, said John Paul II. To say to a young man “join us” should be natural for one who is convinced that his own life is beautiful. If we don't do it, isn't this a further stimulus to a profound “restructuration” of our personal and communitarian existences?

To **foster vocations** is not a task to be delegated. Each one should play his part: which can be that of prayer, of offering up his own sufferings, of joyous witness, of direct invitation, of accompanying and of spiritual direction. Our own mission and our preaching of the Gospel are a call to read life as vocation. Because God calls everyone. A Word which doesn't address and summon people is a word that is wasted.

Conclusion

The prayer proposed by the General Government for the YEAR FOR THE REDEMPTORIST MISSIONARY VOCATION can be used:

Lord Jesus, out of love for all, you have called us to continue your redeeming mission in the world. O Father, blessed be your name forever!

With humble heart and open hands before you, we give you thanks for the gift of life, and above all, for our baptismal vocation which calls us to live as your sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, with freedom and confidence, we ask you, our Redeemer: make us strong in faith, so that we can witness to everyone that you are the centre of our lives.

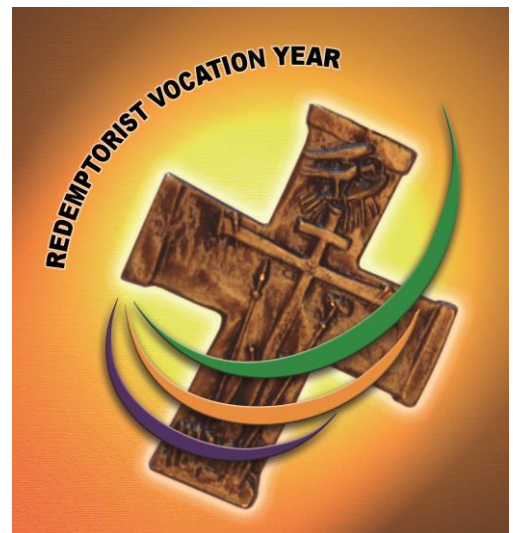
May we always live in joyful hope in order to announce that Redemption is plentiful for all, especially for the most abandoned, the poor.

May we be untiring in love, so that we serve all with a generous and creative heart.

Give us also a sincere humility which makes us conscious that we need you always, and that we can do nothing without you.

May this Year of the Redemptorist Missionary Vocation wake us up to your call, Lord, above all to that which promotes the dignity of human life, especially for young people, so that we may be authentic Redemptorist Missionaries: witnesses and missionaries of the great work of Redemption.

May St. Alphonsus and Our Mother of Perpetual Help accompany us and keep us always faithful to the MISSION. Amen.



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

sfiore@cssr.com – seraflower@gmail.com

The letter head of this project is the work of Biju Madathikunnel cssr

Translated by Eamonn Breslin cssr