



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 lieb (Eph 4,4)

εἰς ἓν (Eph 4,4)

I – 01

A GIFT TO CONTEMPLATE

God speaks in every age and in many ways, first of all through the person and the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 1:1-2). God also speaks through the events of nature and the daily news, and even when we seek and reach out blindly for Him and perhaps find Him, though he is not far from any one of us (Acts 17:27).

God also speaks to us Redemptorists through the 150 years (1866-2016) since the day Pope Pius IX entrusted to us the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which we are getting ready to celebrate. And we want to live it as an intense moment for our spirit.

As missionaries, we are led by instinct to think: how have we responded to the mandate of the pope: *“Make her known throughout the world!”*? What further initiatives should we undertake? What instruments should we use?

The first instrument is me. I will only make known to the world something that has first become important to me. Christ is the motive and the source of my missionary dynamism. It is passion for Christ that the icon wants to inflame in my life.

It is not necessary to start with grand ideas. It is enough to take some time, to pause before the icon, to contemplate and open ourselves to a truth that goes beyond us.

There is no lack of difficulties. Our engine is always running. There is so much to do. And when we decide to stop, fatigue, sleep or the thousands of images, by which we are constantly besieged, overcome us.

“Modern man has lost the virtue of contemplation. We are skilled at reading, thinking, speaking; but we cannot do it without clinging to images that are highly sensible [i.e., capable of being perceived by the senses; material],” said Pope Paul VI. And this was before the internet and satellite dishes.

The icon is also a gift for this. It is an image, but it evokes something else. It catches the eye but wants to touch the heart. Therefore, we must give it time and implore, before all else, the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Ideally, the icon is part of an iconostasis: the wall of images that separates the people of God from the presbytery. Actually, more than separate, it unites. While the people accompany with prayer and songs the gestures of the celebrant at the altar, the iconostasis shows the face of Christ, of the Virgin and of the saints, to blend together in mystery what the mind’s eye sees as separated.



Your Word is light for my feet

It's time to read Jn 19:25-27. A period of silence or sharing may follow, preferably using the method of lectio divina. Here we indicate two points

- Calvary not only anticipates the paschal mystery, but inaugurates a law of existence,

fundamental for those who believe: life and death are intertwined; joy and pain are two sides of the same coin. The pain of the agony and that of childbirth follow one another. The love of Mary for Jesus and John permits life to triumph again.

- After entrusting John to Mary, and vice versa, Jesus knew that “everything was finished.” If the “why have you forsaken me?” had made the illusion of meaninglessness drift through the air, the maternity of Mary will permit the river of redemption to water the earth yet again.

Before the Icon

Our Lady of Perpetual Help is a great gift, given by the Church to the Redemptorists and to their increasingly large spiritual family: the one that goes from the Redemptoristines, to so many other religious Institutes who share our spirituality and mission, to the vast number of lay people who identify with our charism and who give us a hand in the ministry of plentiful redemption.

The 150th anniversary of this gift asks all of us to do what John did at the foot of the cross: to welcome Mary into our home.



We are questioned about the place Mary occupies in our spiritual life, but this is not enough. We must take one more step. We must embrace the icon and make it our own.

No doubt there are Provinces, Vice-Provinces, Regions and Missions where this devotion has attained astonishing results. There are Sanctuaries/Shrines where the number of Novenas during one day cannot meet the demands for participation, so extraordinary is the attendance. These numbers make us say with pride that we have responded to the mandate of Pius IX.

Nevertheless, there are Units, communities and individual confreres who have not yet accepted Our Lady of Perpetual Help “into their home.” They consider it just one more title, just one image among many. They prefer to give time and place to local devotions and to more popular Marian titles.

It is not easy to change people’s habits, nor replace one tradition with another. However, regardless of the pastoral possibilities, the first home where the Redemptorist must welcome Our Lady of Perpetual Help remains the heart.

In an icon there is something we do not find in any other pious image. The icon has its own theology, to be read and interpreted. The icon has its own criteria which, especially for those unfamiliar with Eastern spirituality, risk not being grasped. One needs to take time, to study and to do research, if one wants to escape the trap of superficiality.

But then, in the light of lessons learned, it is necessary that the icon should speak to us, read us from within and allow us to look out onto the mystery of God. The silence, the attention to details and to colors, the attitude of abandonment and the invocation of the Holy Spirit already create the necessary “environment” for us to fall in love with Our Lady of Perpetual Help and take her as an efficacious companion in our mission.

Most of all, however, the object of our contemplation is the fact that a child has been given to us (Is 9:5). Mary, who offers us her son, is the image of grace. She tells us that nothing in life is owed to us. By grace, we are what we are. To keep this in mind is to already contemplate.

Drinking from our own well

“So as to share truly in the love of the Son for his Father and for people, they will cultivate the spirit of contemplation which deepens and strengthens their faith. This will enable them to see God in the people and in the events of everyday life. They will see his plan of salvation in its true light, and be able to distinguish between what is real and what is illusory.”

Constitution 24 makes the Redemptorist a contemplative at the service of the mission. To contemplate is the source of our consecration or – to use the language of the Constitutions – of our dedication. Otherwise, we risk turning into mere managers, as functional as you please, but not for following the Redeemer. Or to imitate Don Quixote, we find ourselves like him, defeated by our own visions. Or we set out with the bellicose enthusiasm of the crusaders: to assert, however, our rights more than those of Jesus Christ.

It helps to distance ourselves from our projects. To question our plans and to make them the subject of prayer also helps. We need to start again from the love of God for the world, and with the same search for the will of the Father, which moved the footsteps of Jesus.

For St. Alphonsus it was a great help to spend some time at Scala, to linger in the grotto, and there to seek to capture “in its true light” what God desired of him, imploring light to distinguish the real from the illusory. And Mary was there.

In conclusion

You may pray thus:

Mother of Perpetual Help,
in your image
we recognize the mystery of our salvation.
Obtain for us
the gift of contemplation.
Grant that in our journey of faith
we will never stop looking to Jesus
and to you who hold him tenderly in your hands.
Grant that we never lose
the unity of body and spirit.
And if this should happen,
may we know how to find again,
in the Father’s forgiveness,
the strength to get up and start anew.
Grant that we set aside time
for a loving dialogue with your Son, Jesus,
for it is through him that we participate
in the life of the Triune God,
who lives and reigns forever and ever.



ONE BODY is a service offered by the Center for Redemptorist Spirituality
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The graphic in the header is the work of Biju Madathikunnel, C.Ss.R.

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