

Rome, Italy  
December 8, 2011

## *Feast of the Immaculate Conception*

### *Patroness of the Congregation*

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Associates and friends of the Redemptorists,

On December 8th, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Under this title of the “Immaculate Conception”, the Redemptorist Missionaries honor Mary as the Patroness of our Congregation. During this Season of Advent, the Immaculate Conception of Mary reminds each one of us of the destiny to which we are called in Christ. Like Mary, “God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless, to live through love in his presence” (Ephesians 1:4). Mary stands as the shining witness of the glory and life to which we are all called.

St. Alphonsus was an ardent defender of the truth of the Immaculate Conception. He was convinced of Mary’s special role in the mystery of our Redemption, and the honor we should have for her as the brothers and sisters of her Son, Jesus. But St. Alphonsus was also convinced that the Immaculate Conception is a most eloquent witness to the power of God to redeem and save our human nature. To honor the Immaculate Conception is to praise the God whose will and power to redeem embraces all humanity.

The Advent and Christmas mystery invites us to consider the love of a God who will go to any length to save us. This God dares to embrace our humanity and become one of us – through Mary who offers herself as the servant of the Lord.

This time of Advent is a time of joyful and silent waiting. Into this silence, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception breaks in as a foretaste of the glory to which Advent inevitably leads. When we honor Mary under the title of the Immaculate Conception as our patroness, she reminds us that this is also our special vocation in the Church. The Redemptorist family is called to shine forth in the world as a prophetic witness of the holiness by which we are all called to live through love in God’s presence.

What does this mean for us? In the face of violence and division, we bear witness to peace and reconciliation. When fear and doubt weigh people down, we live in confidence and hope. To a people who walk in darkness and the shadow of death, we point to the light of Christ, and the fullness of life to which he calls us. In the midst of poverty, oppression and injustice, we live simply, and welcome in love those who are abandoned and marginalized.

To celebrate the Immaculate Conception during the season of Advent is to celebrate *copiosa redemptio* – redemption so abundant that it embraces Mary even before her birth, and this redemption never let go of her. This is the redemption we are called to both receive and to share.

As we begin the final days of this Advent Season, may you truly experience this *copiosa redemptio* and may you share it with others through your prophetic witness - just as Mary did. I wish you a very blessed celebration of our Patroness, the Immaculate Conception.

Your brother in the Redeemer,  
Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.  
Superior General