Message for Lent 2014

Dear Confreres, Sisters, associates and friends:

As we begin the **Season of Lent**, we are invited once again to enter the **path of conversion**, following Jesus the Redeemer who "though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9). The path of Jesus reminds us that the call to conversion is not only for our own personal holiness, but also for the sake of others, and especially for the sake of the most abandoned and the poor. Conversion must always lead to action for justice and peace, especially in a world torn by violence and division. "Spending themselves for others in this way for the sake of Christ (cf. 2Cor. 4:10ff), they will acquire that interior freedom which brings unity and harmony into their whole life." (Cons.41). This is **missionary conversion** – which brings true freedom ('distacco') so that we can truly "preach the Gospel ever anew".

As Redemptorist Missionaries, sisters and associates, we know and appreciate the value of continual conversion. "For conversion of heart and continual renewal of mind should characterize their whole daily life." (Cons. 41). The Season of Lent is a special time of grace in which we more consciously engage in this process of conversion and renewal. It is a constant reminder that formation for mission is a lifelong process.

As our Constitutions make clear, conversion is not just an individual and personal process – as important as this is. The Community is called to conversion, freedom and missionary availability. "It is most important that the members regard the community as something which must aim at continual progress through constant interior renewal." (Cons. 40). This requires a conscious effort to pray, dialogue, plan and minister together. The Community must go beyond words to concrete decisions and action: "The community itself must similarly give expression to this same conversion, so that day by day it may give effective witness and acquire a complete generosity which will be a worthy response to the word of God." (Cons. 42). In this way, our conversion is both **missionary** and **prophetic**.

This **missionary and prophetic conversion** to which we are called is a witness to hope. "Hope is the tangible expression of the power of the resurrection – of which we are called to be 'signs and witnesses' (Cons. 51)… Hope strengthens our conviction that change is not only possible. In God's plan, it is inevitable". (XXIV Final Documents, Preface, p. 9). Justice and peace are possible. The Reign of God is near!
Accompanied by Mary, our Perpetual Help, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, may we follow the Redeemer on the path of conversion and freedom this Lent.

Your brother in the Redeemer,

Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.