



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)

ΕΙΝ ΛΕΙΒ (Εφ 4,4)

ONE BODY – 05

JOY

We suggest that you prepare a comfortable place for community prayer. In addition to the Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help you might also place flowers, the lit paschal candle and other elements that indicate joy and hope.

PROCLAMATION OF JOY

Does it make sense to speak of joy in a world marred by violence, terror, the globalization of indifference, neglect of the poor...?

Can you announce joy in the context of a “tired” Church, wearied of reforming itself; in the context of a Christianity that finds itself a minority, even in the West?

Can you proclaim joy within a Congregation that grows old in certain regions (North America and Europe), or where vocations begin to decline in areas of growth (Asia, Latin America, Africa)?

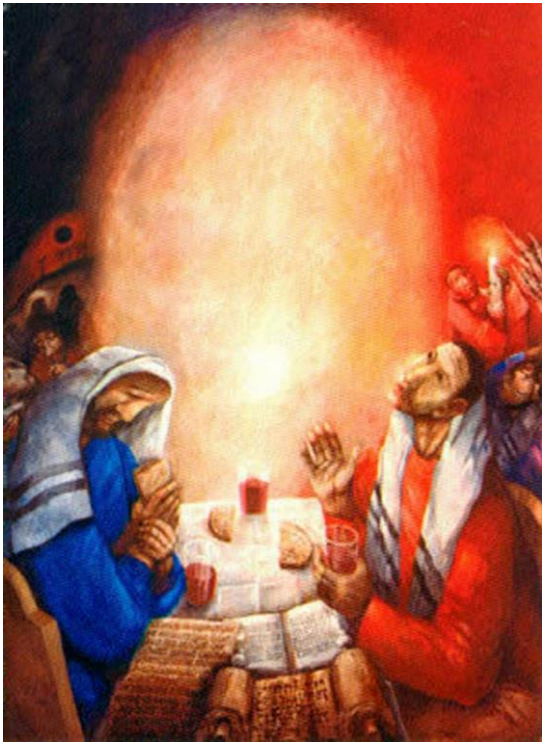
Yes, joy does make sense, and should be proclaimed. Because authentic joy is that which is born from the certainty that we have been redeemed; from the certainty of the unconditional love of God that first loves us, accompanies us, awaits us, welcomes us...

This joy is not the fruit of successes that intoxicate us or a facade of happiness that alienates us from reality. It is the joy of the little ones, of the simple-hearted, whose intuition assures them that, despite the negative signs in life, God is there to pick them up and sustain them. It is the joy that springs from the conviction that the last word of history is not that of the Evil One, but that of the Loving Father of Life.

Joy is an element intrinsic to the message we proclaim: the Gospel, the Good News of a God “crazy with love” (St. Alphonsus) for humanity, especially for the poor and for the little ones: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor; (...) to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord”* (Lk. 4:18-19).

The certainty of this love is able to transform pain, like Easter light projected on the passion and cross. Redemptorists are called to *“become signs and witnesses before people of the power of his resurrection, proclaiming new and eternal life”* (Const. 51). The “new life” that we proclaim contains in itself a powerful seed of resurrection. The Gospel is Good News because, in Jesus of Nazareth, God stands beside the little ones, the oppressed and the excluded,... to restore hope,

dignity and life to them. And so – continuing in the footsteps of the Redeemer – we stand beside them, serving them, struggling with them for their rights, being signs of divine compassion.



For us Redemptorists, joy has two fundamental dimensions, like two sides of the same coin. The first side is the joy of a life transformed by an Encounter: *“The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.”* (EG, 1).

The second side is the joy of a life that makes itself a Gift to all. Two sides of the same *“apostolic life, which comprises at one and the same time a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work”* (Const. 1). Disciples and missionaries, called and sent, who live the joy of having been loved and forgiven, the joy of loving and forgiving.

Many lives transformed by the Encounter and made a Gift to all, *“continuing the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer”* (Const. 1), have allowed joy to blossom every day among the children of St. Alphonsus School in Tanjonandriana (Madagascar), or among those of the newly rebuilt St. Gerard School in Port-au-Prince (Haiti), after the earthquake. Redemptorist lives – both religious and lay – have allowed the adolescents of the Center for street children in Pattaya (Thailand) to face the future with hopeful eyes; or abused women to find, in the psycho-spiritual ‘workshops’ of Casa Cristo Redentor in Aguas Buenas (Puerto Rico), the strength to stand up with dignity.

Many Redemptorist lives – transformed and given as a gift – have allowed the pilgrims of Baclaran (Philippines), of Aparecida (Brazil) or of any other Redemptorist shrine in the world to find a warm welcome, care and mercy. Or Christians of an urban parish, a suburban community or a secluded rural chapel – of the thousands cared for by Redemptorists – might experience redemption, fraternal sharing, renewed humanity, and the motivation to work for peace, justice and solidarity.

It is impressive to see in the faces of so many confreres throughout the world - the joy of being redeemed and of being instruments of Redemption, even in difficult situations, illness or old age. Radiant faces, with a cheerful serenity, happy to continue being sowers of hope...

Your Word is a light for my feet

Now let us create an environment conducive to the listening of the Word. Let us read the text of Isaiah 40:9-11:

“Go up onto a high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news! Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah: Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord God, who rules by his strong arm (...). Like a shepherd he

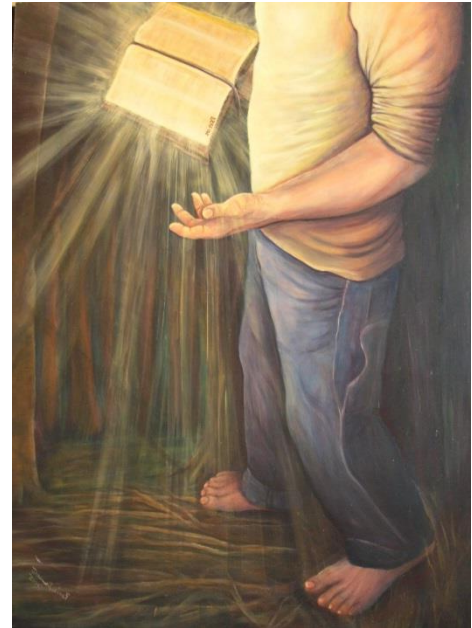
feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.”

In silence let us allow the Word to echo within our spirit. Next, let us share this echo, making it a shared gift among us. Two points may serve as guides:

1. What does the attitude of the messenger suggest to us: “go up onto a high mountain,” “cry out at the top of your voice”, ...? – How do we proclaim and witness to the Gospel?
2. The content of the proclamation: God... shepherd of his people...

The dialogue can continue, inspired by the thinking of Pope Francis:

“The centrality of the kerygma calls for stressing those elements which are most needed today: it has to express God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical. All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental” (EG, 165).



Before the Icon (praying with Mary)

The Icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help suggests the centrality of the redeeming presence of God in our life: the right hand of Mary points suggestively to Jesus surrounded by the signs of the Passion and wrapped in an atmosphere of Resurrection (the golden background). It is a presence that comforts and fills us with serene joy. The incarnation and paschal mystery are solidly represented there. The Lord God is among us, is with us. He made himself our brother, taking our flesh in Mary’s womb. As a loving shepherd, he gave his life for his sheep. Rising, he conquered sin, evil and fear, giving us the strength to pass constantly from death to life, through service and mercy.

The greeting of the angel to Mary: “Rejoice, O highly favored (*‘kecharitoméne’*), the Lord is with you!” (Lk 1:28), echoes loudly in our Icon. For a moment, let us rest our contemplative gaze upon it, allowing ourselves to be enveloped in its atmosphere of joyful stillness,... for the Lord is with us! Like Mary, let us feel “highly favored,” loved gratuitously, “gazed at” by God... and chosen to be another incarnation of his redeeming love for humanity, especially for the little and forgotten ones.

Drinking from our own well

“Strong in faith, rejoicing in hope, burning with charity, on fire with zeal, in humility of heart and persevering in prayer, Redemptorists as apostolic men and genuine disciples of Saint Alphonsus follow Christ the Redeemer with hearts full of joy; denying themselves and always ready to undertake what is demanding, they share in the mystery of Christ and proclaim it in Gospel simplicity of life and language, that they may bring to people plentiful redemption” (Const. 20).

This text, which is like “our genetic code” (Rapone), presents in strong brush strokes some of the fundamental elements of Redemptorist spirituality and mission. It speaks of the way “to be a Redemptorist,” following the Redeemer and serving the redeemed, with joy, strong faith, ardent charity, humility, availability...

Let us read it quietly two or three times. Then, each one of us can choose two of these elements, which we will seek to develop throughout this month.

“The paradise of God, so to speak, is the human heart. God loves you! Love God. God’s delight is to be with you, and your delight is to be with God, to spend every moment of your life with the One whom you hope to pass blessed eternity, in God’s loving company” (St. Alphonsus, *A method for conversing familiarly with God*).

In conclusion

We now pray with the words of Pope Francis:



*Virgin and Mother, Mary,
You who, moved by the Spirit,
welcomed the Word of Life
in the depths of your humble faith,
completely surrendering to the Eternal,
help us to say our “yes”
before the urgent need, more imperative than ever,
to make the Good News of Jesus ring out.
(...)
Obtain for us now the new fervor of the risen
in order to convey to all people the Gospel of life
that overcomes death.
Give us that holy audacity to seek new paths
so that the gift of beauty that never fades
will reach all people.
(...)
Star of the new evangelization,
help us to shine brightly with the witness of
communion,*

*service, passionate, generous faith,
justice and love for the poor,
so that the joy of the Gospel
might reach the farthest ends of the earth
and no peripheral place will be deprived of its light.*

*Mother of the living Gospel,
source of joy for the little ones,
Pray for us.
Amen. Alleluia!*

(Pope Francis, in *Evangelii Gaudium*)



ONE BODY is a monthly text of prayer proposed by the Center for Redemptorist Spirituality. Please contact: Fr. Piotr Chyla CSsR (Director of Spirituality Centre, Rome) fr.chyla@gmail.com

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