



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 ΓΕΙΒ (Εφ 4,4)

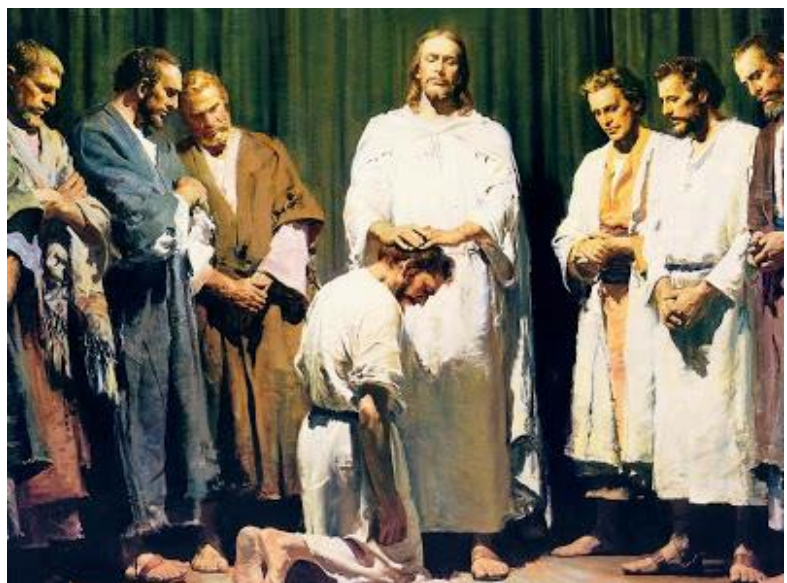
ONE BODY: I – 04

APOSTOLIC LIFE

In reflecting on *Apostolic Life*, we look at not merely a theme but the principle of unity, the thread that brings coherence and congruence to living out our life as Redemptorists.

The very title of our Constitutions and Statutes is: “*The Apostolic Life of Redemptorists- Constitutions and Statutes*”. A Redemptorist is one whose whole life is apostolic. This is not only ‘apostolate’, or ‘missionary work’, (Chapter One of our Constitutions), but the Apostolic Life also embraces and unifies all aspects: missionary work, community, consecration or missionary dedication, formation, government. Ignaz Dekkers points out: it is significant that the title is not “The Religious Life of Redemptorists”, but “The Apostolic Life of Redemptorists”, which is much more comprehensive and unifying.

Evidently, *Apostolic Life* means a life as lived by the apostles. C. 22 precisely mentions Mark 3:14 and Acts 2:42-45; 4:32. There is no formal definition given to the term *Apostolic Life*, but we discern its expression in our spirituality - in the varied constitutions and statutes. These are further understood in the lived experience of exemplary confreres.



The intuitive genius of Alphonsus is expressed in his belief that Mission gives unity to our whole life as Redemptorists. The first two Constitutions highlight what is meant by *Apostolic Life*. Our Congregation “follows the example of Christ in the apostolic life, which comprises at one and the same time a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work” (C. 1). In this way “all Redemptorists urged on by the apostolic spirit, and imbued with the zeal of their founder, continue the tradition developed by their confreres in the past, and are ever attentive to the signs of the times. Sent as helpers, companions and ministers of Jesus Christ, in the great work of redemption to preach the word of salvation to the poor, they build up an apostolic community, specially dedicated to the Lord” (C. 2).

This unifying force – ‘at one and the same time’ – is crucial to our understanding of Redemptorist spirituality and way of life. Today, we are increasingly conscious of the need for consistency

between who we are and what we do; between our life "dedicated to God" and our "missionary work"; between our own personal spiritual experience and the need to share it with others.

Our Apostolic Life expressed in Redemptorist missionary spirituality, serves as a sort of vital connective tissue that harmoniously joins all aspects of our life, encompassed by the five Chapters of our Constitutions. Hence, it is not appropriate to speak about spirituality and Mission. The conjunction 'and' could suggest that there could be Mission without spirituality or that spirituality could exist in some way divorced from Mission.



The term *Apostolic Life* serves to effect unity and harmony to the missionary life. To 'reduce' the understanding of this term to apostolic activity is to betray its meaning. This confusion could be further compounded since one of the Secretariats recommended by our Constitutions is the Secretariat for Apostolic Life. As a result, some (V)Provinces and Regions understand its function as dealing with matters of the Apostolate or ministry alone. That would be reductionist and fail to do full justice to what *Apostolic Life* means, according to the founding intuition and recovered tradition of the Congregation.

While community life does not constitute the purpose of the Institute, it is, according to Constitution 21, "an essential law of life for the members" in order to "fulfil their mission in the Church". This means that community exists for mission, to make effective the "apostolic charity" we are called to live. Our *Apostolic Life*, lived both in the community and in our pastoral activity, is where we are missionaries and where we will become saints. Our community life itself is Mission and witness.

The term *Apostolic Life* is, therefore, a deliberate choice that intends to produce, on the one hand, doctrinally coherent discussion, and on the other, to serve as a pedagogical means for education on the unitary character of the Redemptorist vocation that hinges on evangelization. (cf. Raponi)

Apostolic Life finds expression in the term 'missionary disciple' prominent in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Being a disciple and a missionary are not parallel dimensions. They are operative at one and the same time! We read in EG 120. "In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt28:19*)... Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples"..."

Your Word is light for my feet

At this stage, we slowly and prayerfully read Mark 3:14, lingering over the words and thoughts contained in it.

Mark 3:14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message

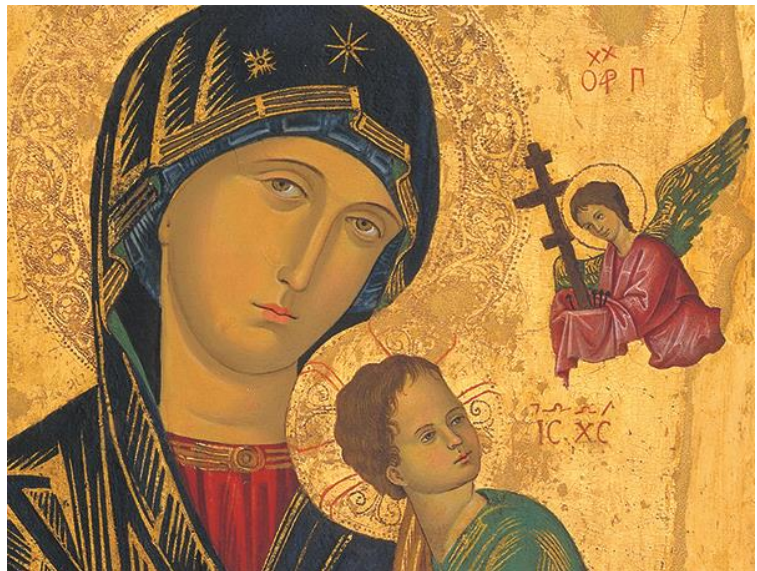
¶ Jesus says COME, he also says GO! To be a disciple is to be a missionary. These are not parallel but interactive. This vocation is to be lived at 'one and the same time'. Growing in discipleship, we become ardent missionaries. Living seriously our missionary vocation, we grow in discipleship. There is no room for spiritual dichotomy or religious schizophrenia!

¶ C. 23 notes a condition for realizing our particular vocation in the Church: "Since the members are called to continue the presence of Christ and his mission of redemption in the world, they choose the person of Christ as the centre of their life, and strive day by day to enter ever more intimately into personal union with him".

Before the Icon

In Mary, we see what it means to live the vocation of being the Mother of Jesus; and her Mission to be the Mother of us all, a life of dedication and a life of mission.

In the eyes of our Mother of Perpetual Help, we are met with a gaze that is engaging and embracing. They have pondered much on her Son whom she holds so gently and securely in her arms. You could call it a meditative gaze. It was this active pondering that makes us call her the first disciple, the model disciple.



But this compassionate gaze, as the Scriptures remind us, also embraced situations of need that required her presence and action. This was the gaze that sensed the embarrassing need of the couple at Cana of Galilee. This gaze also looked upon the broken body of her Son on Calvary.

And it was Jesus on the Cross who entrusted to Mary the Mission of being a Mother to us and so she continues to be an inspirational missionary. Mary is the model missionary disciple.

Drinking from our own well

Alphonsus was firm in stating that the Institute would have a single purpose or end. At that time, religious congregations generally spoke of two ends: the sanctification of the members and apostolic ministry. Alphonsus' passion was to respond to the needs of the most abandoned poor as Jesus himself did. The sanctification of the members would come about in giving themselves wholly to this mission. He centred his vision on the very mission of Jesus Christ, not on a part or dimension of his divine mission (the teacher, the healer, etc.). Hence Alphonsus asserted that the Congregation, in having one single purpose or end, integrates into a fundamental unity - the mystical or contemplative dimension with the ministerial or apostolic work. (*Opuscoli relativi allo stato religioso*).



This intuition of Alphonsus, as expressed in the Rule that he wrote, was changed by the Holy See to conform to the accepted view of the two ends. Alphonsus put in writing his own clarification in the well-known Consideration XIII. Yet, this expression of the two ends remained in the Rule until Alphonsus' formulation was rediscovered by the new Constitutions.

The abundant study, reflection and discussion carried out by Redemptorists before the 1967-1969 General Chapter prepared the way for the new Constitutions. They sought to rediscover our uniqueness through the term *Apostolic Life*. They found in the origins of our Congregation, in the intuitions of Alphonsus and his companions - a desire to respond in a new way to the needs of the Church.

Thus, in preserving this basic unity we give expression to our missionary charism in the Church. In continuing the mission of the Redeemer, we shape a consistent lifestyle that integrates a deep union with God and with the most abandoned poor in Jesus. In this way our Redemptorist lifestyle is in itself missionary, no matter whether we are studying, recreating, praying or at work in ministry, whether we are active or no longer capable of being active anymore (cf. C. 55).

In conclusion

Prayer to Mary (Evangelii Gaudium)

*Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own "yes"
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.*

*Filled with Christ's presence,
you brought joy to John the Baptist,
making him exult in the womb of his mother.
Brimming over with joy,
you sang of the great things done by God.
Standing at the foot of the cross with unyielding faith,
you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection,
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.*

*Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.*

*Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty
may reach every man and woman.*

*Virgin of listening and contemplation,
Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast,
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,
that she may never be closed in on herself
or lose her passion for establishing God's kingdom.*

*Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.*

*Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us. Amen.*



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