



## REDEMPTORISTS AND THE VALUES OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

### Why a PS-JPIC?

The General Chapter, after considering the changing realities of the world during recent decades, influenced by the expansion of markets, the influx of new media and information technologies, human migration, and policies adopted by countries and regions has coined the expression "wounded world" as a diagnostic category of this reality. This diagnostic category compels us to ask ourselves about the urgency or importance of the social dimension within our apostolic work as Redemptorists, and, in the same way, how do we understand our mission in the context of these changing realities with their environmental problems, questions regarding human mobility, human trafficking, and other social issues?

The General Secretariat for Evangelization and the General Commission for Social Ministry (SM-JPIC) are aware of limitations when addressing and encouraging justice and peace since authentic commitment occurs more in the concrete realities in which many confreres are already immersed than it does from the academic or administrative instances of the General Government. More concretely, although social work engages the fundamental elements of our Christian faith, theoretical argumentation and the impulse of Church leadership is necessary, because it finds the concrete application at the local level. The point is that both, the concrete efforts for social justice in our local communities and the efforts of the General Government and the Commission for Social Ministry are needed to influence the structures that oppress the poorest. A metaphor may help to illustrate this point: within the apostolic work of the Congregation, the work of the General Government and the Secretariat for Evangelization come to act as a *lighthouse* that provides guidance, while the local pastoral work comes to act as a *lightning rod* that grounds the values of Social Ministry. Within the Congregation as a body, the commitment to social issues involves the insertion into the realities of the wounded and suffering, and at the same time, reflection and leadership on the part of those in these ministries.

This present and the subsequent documents seek to continue raising awareness for more effective involvement in the field of justice and peace. Healing a wounded world implicates all Redemptorists in the fostering of a more harmonious world, especially for the most vulnerable in our society. This work is totally coherent with our Constitutions which establish that our mission is characterized by service to people, especially those "who are poor and more neglected within the Church and society."<sup>1</sup> This mission "includes the liberation and salvation of the whole human person,"<sup>2</sup> and leads all Redemptorists to stand in solidarity with the poor, and promote their fundamental rights of justice and freedom. Following the example of Christ in his dedication to all those oppressed by sin in all its expressions, the Redemptorists make the option for the poor their very reason for being in the Church.<sup>3</sup> Thus, our mission consists in the explicit announcement of Jesus Christ, in His solidarity with the poor and as the Liberator of all structures of death. Our mission is an announcement made by the explicit proclamation of the Good News, but also through our lifestyle.

---

<sup>1</sup> Const. 14

<sup>2</sup> Const. 5

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem

Pope Benedict XVI affirmed that "*social issues and the Gospel are inseparable.*"<sup>4</sup> For that reason, the promotion of justice and peace cannot be an optional tangent to our mission, or much less an ideological option (whether to the right or to the left). The consciousness of social commitment is something that we must incorporate in all our actions because it is inherent to our mission. "In any case, evangelization does not mean only teaching a doctrine but the announcement of Jesus Christ with words and actions, that is, becoming an instrument of His presence and action in the world."<sup>5</sup>

### **Solidarity with the poor is a source and expression of our spirituality**

Our spirituality is dynamic and one that finds its revitalization by incorporating the awareness of new values, which perhaps we had not considered before, for example, the values of creation, the role of women in the mission of the Church, interreligious dialogue, etc. In addition, the commitment to the values of the SM-JPIC cannot be claimed as exclusive to some sector, person or group of Redemptorists. It is the expression of the charism that is common to all Redemptorists.

Our mission is sustained by our spirituality, and our spirituality tells us that the poor represent a place of encounter with God (*locus teologicus*). Although in the past the option for the poor has been subjected to suspicion, today it is clear that, as the last Popes have masterfully affirmed, the option for the poor and for justice is at the heart of Christianity. Hence, the importance of identifying and cultivating, individually and communally, our spiritual roots and connecting them with those present realities that affect the poorest. Each of our Conferences has recently been involved in the task of identifying the apostolic priorities in which the poor and situations of misery find their place.

Social Ministry is that spiritual and integrating force that unites all phases of our ministry such as mission, preaching, academia, sacramental ministry, etc. For this reason, it is important to incorporate our commitment to social issues in all of our apostolic endeavors. We can affirm that commitment to social issues is an expression of our spirituality and our mission to the wounded world of today. This approach enables us to enrich our understanding of justice by an attentive dialogue with the sources of spirituality that, in the past, have inspired our Redemptorist saints and have unleashed the commitment of our communities and that of the associated lay people who share our charism.

We reflect, for example, on the great love of St. Alphonsus for the mystery of the Incarnation, which did not simply remain a discarnate devotion far from reality; it assumed its best expression when he was in the midst of the poor and abandoned. For us, as Redemptorists, it is clear that SM-JPIC has its roots in the theology of the incarnation, of a God who becomes man and shares the pain of humanity. This is one of those many elements of our spirituality that binds us to the realities of the wounded world as it bound our Redeemer.

### **And what can we do?**

The reconfiguration that is taking place in the Congregation and in each Conference is an opportunity to get in touch with those realities that affect us at a global level, but that require different responses at the local level. The social dimension of our charism can find its way into projects at the Conference level that focus on their particular "wounded" realities such as immigration in Europe and the United States, environmental care in areas such as the Amazon, interreligious dialogue in Asia and Africa, etc....

Given that the culmination of our mission in these areas is beyond our reach, we should be aware of the need of association with other people, communities or institutions that also promote the same values of respect for the human person and the defense of the poor. This awareness allows us to transmit to others the richness of our own Redemptorist charism while enriching ourselves from the power and gifts of others. In turn, we are humbled as we recognize that the establishment of the Kingdom of God does not depend

---

<sup>4</sup> Homily, Sept. 10, 2006

<sup>5</sup> CDF, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, 2.

exclusively on our role in the history of salvation. The establishment of the Kingdom of God goes beyond any exclusive capability.

Given the magnitude and complexity of the social challenges and the diversity of contexts in which the Redemptorists are involved and in order that justice, peace and the integration of Creation have an enormous impact in a wounded world it should be done in collaboration with other members of human society. Thus, intersectoral collaboration produces its greatest fruits when it is carried out in response to apostolic and social challenges identified in common. Within the design of the plans of the Conferences, apostolic priorities are reviewed to see if they are truly responding to the purpose of the Congregation. From there, some Redemptorists communities have been able to take steps in the right direction by strengthening projects that express commitment to social issues and establish collaborative links with other people and institutions. These collaborative links allow us to learn while projecting our charism in these new realities.

In these contexts, the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer and other associated laity who share our charism, have enriched and can continue to enrich our apostolic work. They are a gift and a great resource for this moment in time enabling us to move towards a participatory and co-responsible Congregation that welcomes with gratitude the contribution of the laity, men and women, while fulfilling its mission of liberation from the structures of death. On this point, the recent Synod of bishops said: *"In a world marked by the diversity of peoples and the variety of cultures, walking together is fundamental if the initiatives of solidarity, integration, and promotion of justice are to be credible and effective."*<sup>6</sup>

#### **For Discussion and Reflection**

- In what way is my apostolate having a transformative impact on the structures of injustice and death in the world surrounding me?
- *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has consecrated me to bring the good news to the poor; He has sent me to announce freedom to the prisoners and to give sight to the blind; to release the oppressed; to announce the favorable year of the Lord"* (Lk 4: 17-21). How do I read and interpret this foundational text?
- In the apostolic work of my unit, is there a "walking together," integrating the laity, other religious communities, and institutions who share our charism? Is there openness to this new reality?

---

<sup>6</sup> Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, 126