



CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS

Superior Generalis

Rome, May 20, 2018

Prot. N.0000 070/2018

***WITNESSES OF THE REDEEMER:  
In Solidarity for Mission to a Wounded World***

Dear Brothers in Christ our Redeemer,

Today we celebrate the great Solemnity of Pentecost and commemorate the gift of the Holy Spirit which transformed the disciples into courageous missionaries and prophetic witnesses of the Redeemer. On this great feast so important to St. Alphonsus, I write to you in the name of the General Government.

Over the course of the next few months, the Congregation will discern the Major Superiors and Councils called to the service of authority and leadership for the next quadriennium. In the spirit of the 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, this discernment requires careful attention to the voice of the Spirit of Jesus, and to our call as prophetic witnesses of the Redeemer today. In this way, we can continue the process of revitalizing our *Vita Apostolica* through personal and community conversion.

Already, we are more than halfway through the Extraordinary Visit to the entire Congregation initiated after the conclusion of the Third Phase of the 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. In each Conference, the Commissions for the Apostolic and Restructuring Plan are listening carefully to you, the confreres, through the material you have prepared during the Extraordinary Assemblies. Soon, these Commissions will present the first draft of their work to the Conference Assemblies. The results will be shared with you to help guide you as you discern the Redeemer's call for your (V) Province or Region during your Chapter or Assembly at the beginning of the new quadrennium.

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter makes it clear that during the next quadriennium, every (V) Province and Region will be involved in the process of Apostolic Planning and Restructuring-Reconfiguration (see especially Decisions 1, 2, 3, 5). The Commissions for the Apostolic and Restructuring Plan are preparing the way for this work. However, we need Major Superiors and Councils in every Unit who are committed to putting these decisions into practice.

As a Congregation, we are living through a period of conversion and change, inspired by evangelical hope and our Redemptorist charism. At this time of transition, the discernment process for the service of authority and leadership in the (V) Provinces and Regions of the Congregation is especially important.

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter struggled with the 'crisis of leadership' in the Congregation which you identified during the period of preparation. It is important to note that our 'crisis' mirrors the crisis of leadership in the world at large. More and more, we see a rise in 'populist' politics which polarizes societies and divides peoples. The struggle for power often seems to overshadow the ideal of public service.



We must be careful not to imitate within the Congregation the current political landscape of our world! As we began the process of elections in 2014, I wrote a letter in which I outlined some of the temptations to engage in the 'worldly' politics which speak more of power than the service of authority. Once again, we must resolve not to give in to those temptations. We must maintain the integrity of our election process so that we engage in authentic discernment.

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter reminds us that:

*"The Congregation needs leaders in the style of Jesus Christ, communities and persons: who exercise leadership in the mission, who have a vision of the future, who show us the direction to follow, who are authentic and persons of integrity, who are capable of teamwork and obedient to the mission". (Message #15)*

In the person of Pope Francis, we recognize this leadership in the style of Jesus Christ. Consistently, year after year, Pope Francis has been recognized internationally as the most trusted world leader. He expresses one very important element of his own vision of leadership in the following words:

*"Every man, every woman who has to take up the service of government, must ask themselves two questions: 'Do I love my people in order to serve them better? Am I humble and do I listen to everybody, to diverse opinions in order to choose the best path?' If you don't ask those questions, your governance will not be good." (Santa Marta, Sept. 16, 2013)*

In order to choose the confreres who will lead us as we continue this process of conversion and restructuring, we must all engage in a process of prayerful discernment. To do this, we must cultivate and nourish an attitude of prayer, listening to the Holy Spirit as we ask ourselves those questions from Pope Francis. We must listen to one another, in respectful conversations and reflection together. Who are the confreres who lead in the style of Jesus Christ, loving the people in order to serve, obedient to the mission and faithful to the abandoned and the poor? Who are the ones who are capable of teamwork, listening to everybody, yet maintaining a vision for the future which is faithful to our charism? Help us, Lord, to recognize among our brothers the gifts we need at this moment in our history.

It is important to discern the qualities necessary for leadership today. These involve the personal qualities of humanity, spirituality, vision, lifestyle and a great love for our missionary charism. We need leaders with the ability to live in community and animate our fraternal life. We seek leaders with missionary experience and passion for the abandoned and the poor, *Witnesses of the Redeemer: In Solidarity for Mission to a Wounded World.*

Perhaps the words of Pope Francis to religious leaders in October 2013 can speak to us today in our process of discernment:

*"Who are those among us who can warm the hearts of the people, who will walk through the dark night with them, who know how to dialogue and to descend themselves into their people's night, into the darkness, but without getting lost."*

The 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter strongly affirms that we need teams of leaders who can work together in solidarity and collaboration. In this process of discernment, we seek not only the major





superiors for the (V) Provinces and Regions, but Councils that together with the superior can live these qualities of leadership and animate the whole Unit in the process of conversion and renewal.

Once again, with the support of the General Council, I designate **July 15, 2018, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Redeemer, as a Congregation-wide day of prayer for discernment.** Before that date, you will be sent the outline for a possible Community prayer service which can be celebrated during the week before or after July 15<sup>th</sup>.

I also encourage every Unit which holds an electoral Assembly or Chapter to plan a period of prayerful retreat before beginning the first ballots for (V) Provincials and Councils.

In the name of the Most Holy Redeemer, I ask every confrere to enter into this Congregational process of discernment with an open heart. Personally, and in Community, let us implore the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and hearts, and to give us the true freedom necessary to respond with generosity and availability.

On behalf of the Congregation, I would like to thank the hundreds of confreres who have served with generosity during this past quadrennium as (Vice) Provincial and Regional Superiors, as members of Councils, and as local Superiors in communities. May God repay you for your goodness, compassion and availability to serve your brothers and God's people in this challenging ministry.

To those who will be candidates for leadership as Superiors and as Consultants for the coming quadriennium, I pray that you will be strengthened so that you may in turn animate and strengthen your brothers! Let us serve in the style of Jesus Christ, filled with his Holy Spirit, obedient to the mission which calls us beyond ourselves to form 'one missionary body' (Cons. 2) so that the Good News will be preached to the poor.

May Mary, our Mother of Perpetual Help and missionary disciple, accompany us and guide us in our way!

Your brother in Christ our Redeemer,

*Michael Brehl, C.S.R.*

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