



CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS

Superior Generalis

August 1, 2017

Solemnity of St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori

Prot. No 0000 100/2017

WITNESSES OF THE REDEEMER:

In Solidarity for Mission to a Wounded World

“When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”

(Matthew 9:36)

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Lay Missionaries and Associates,

As we celebrate the Solemnity of St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori, C.Ss.R., our Founder and Custodian of the Charism entrusted to the Congregation, I invite you to remember his profound spirit of solidarity and closeness. Alphonsus was close to the confreres, and close to the abandoned and the poor to whom we are sent. This closeness was born out of his profound solidarity with the Redeemer and his deep compassion for the abandoned poor, the sisters and brothers to whom the Redeemer was sent by the Father.

1. Solidarity and Closeness

This spirit of solidarity and closeness must be the motivating force that guides us as we live the theme proposed to us by the 25th General Chapter. It was this spirit, which was also at the heart of **Decision 44** about the Visitation of the Congregation by the General Government at the beginning of this Sexennium:

To revitalize the Apostolic Life of the Congregation and to promote a greater awareness among confreres of the process of restructuring, the General Government will integrate programs of Renewal of our Life and Mission with the Visitations during the sexennium beginning in 2016.

The process of the General Chapter surfaced a deep concern that the message, decisions, and theme need to be communicated by the General Government to the whole Congregation, and to every confrere and lay partner, as soon as possible following the conclusion of the Third Phase. To achieve this, no document would be sufficient. Thus, the Capitulars decided that the General Government would integrate this dimension into the Visitation process.

As I met with the General Council to begin our service for this sexennium, it became clear that if we are to do this in a way that is both meaningful and challenging for all, we need to carry out an **Extraordinary Visitation** of the whole Congregation – if possible, before the Mid-Sexennial Meetings in 2019. After talking with the Coordinators in March 2017, and consulting with many of our (V) Provincial Superiors, we decided to begin this Extraordinary Visitation in each Conference as soon as possible upon the completion of its Third Phase of the General Chapter. We hope that this Extraordinary Visitation will lead us to a deeper spirit of closeness and solidarity with one another within the Congregation, and that it will also challenge us to a more radical closeness and solidarity with the abandoned poor we are sent to serve.

2. The Extraordinary Visitation of the Congregation – 2017-2018

The General Government, together with the Coordinators of the Conferences, will conduct this Extraordinary Visitation of the Congregation in consultation with the (V) Provincial and Regional Superiors of the Units. The primary instrument will be Assemblies in the different geographic zones of the Congregation. These Assemblies will generally not be for only one (V) Province, Region, or Mission, but for the confreres living within a particular country or geographic area.

It is our vision and our hope that every Assembly will involve confreres from a variety of (V) Provinces, Regions and Missions, so that it will be both multicultural and interprovincial, expressing the reality of the Congregation and the vision of restructuring affirmed by the General Chapter. At times, because of apostolic commitments, some confreres will not be able to take part in the Assembly nearest to their Community. However, we ask each confrere to try his best to participate in one of the Assemblies scheduled for the geographic zone to which he belongs. This international and interprovincial nature of the Assemblies will be an important dimension of the Extraordinary Visitation.

As part of the Extraordinary Visitation, the General Government will also meet with the (V) Provincial and Regional Superiors of each particular geographic 'zone'. As helpful and necessary, there will also be meetings with other particular groups on a periodic basis, such as Councils, Secretariats, Commissions, etc.

As Superior General, I will participate in as many of the Assemblies as possible. Even when I am not able to be physically present in an Assembly, I will meet with the Superiors of that particular geographic zone.

Apostolic Plan and Restructuring

The 25th General Chapter decided that the General Government will “produce criteria for the apostolic activity of the Congregation” (Decision 5) which will assist the Conferences and the Units to develop their Apostolic Plans. It also decided that the “General Government, in coordination with the Conference coordinators and the Units of the Congregation, will continue the process of restructuring for Mission with all its implications” (Decision 1).

The Decisions of the 25th General Chapter insist that this process of developing the Apostolic Plans, as well as the process of restructuring, must involve each Conference and every Unit and Community: rich or poor, large or small, strong or weak, because together we form “one missionary body” (Cons. 2). This process will also challenge each confrere and lay partner to participate as fully as possible.

As part of this process of missionary planning and restructuring, Decision 44 makes clear that the Visitations by the General Government are to revitalize the

Apostolic Life (*Vita Apostolica*) of the Congregation and promote a greater awareness among confreres of the process of restructuring. This will be the

primary objective of these Assemblies during this Extraordinary Visitation – for the sake of the Mission entrusted to us by the Redeemer.

3. **Participation in the Visitation**

To accomplish this objective, your participation in this Visitation through active engagement in one Assembly is very important. After the Third Phase of the General Chapter in your Conference, further information will be communicated to every (V) Province, Region, Mission and confrere about the schedule of the Visitations, the necessary preparation in each community, and how to participate. As Superior General, I make a personal appeal to each community and to each confrere to take part as fully as possible.

I realize that some confreres will not be able to attend an Assembly. Age and health will be obstacles for many. There may be other valid reasons. Still, I encourage you to take part in the preparation and in the dialogue in your community both before and after the Assembly in your area. Your contributions and opinions are vital to this process. If you cannot personally participate in an Assembly, it is important that you respond to the preparatory questionnaire either personally or through your community.

Once the Extraordinary Visitation has been completed, the General Government will begin more specific Visits to (V) Provinces, Regions and Missions, and especially to those confreres who were legitimately impeded from full participation in the Assemblies.

4. **Blessing and Conclusion**

As we celebrate the Solemnity of St. Alphonsus, I encourage every community and every confrere to ask his intercession for this Extraordinary Visitation which will begin in Latin America in September. We are living in an extraordinary time, a moment of great challenges and great opportunities. I look forward to living this Extraordinary Visitation with you.

In communion with the whole Church, guided by the leadership of Pope Francis, we commit ourselves to the theme of this sexennium: **WITNESSES OF THE REDEEMER: In Solidarity for Mission to a Wounded World.**

May God bless us with the grace as genuine disciples of St. Alphonsus to follow Christ the Redeemer with hearts full of joy. Denying ourselves and always ready to undertake what is demanding, may we share fully in the mystery of Christ and proclaim it Gospel simplicity of life and language, that we may bring to people the gift of plentiful redemption (cf. Cons. 20)

May our Mother of Perpetual Help accompany us always.

Your brother in our Redeemer,

Michael Brehl, CSSR

Michael Brehl CSSR
Superior General

