

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)



C.Ss.R

PIRITUALITY

200



KLEMENS MARIA HOFBAUER

A Holy Man: Strong in faith, Rejoicing in hope, Burning with missionary dynamism

Introduction

Who are saints? Strictly speaking, only God is holy, as we affirm in the "Gloria": "For you alone are the Holy One; you alone are the Lord ..." However, we speak of holy persons inasmuch as they partake in the life of God, and not so much because they reach holiness on their own merits. Therefore, to celebrate the life of the saints is to celebrate the abundant life that God pours onto them. Better yet, we can affirm that to some degree the saints mirror the mystery of the incarnation, at a specific time and place, as they receive and reflect the life of Christ. The Mystery of our salvation has not been concealed into a remote past but is renewed in the liturgy and in the life of every believer who strives to follow Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life.

God continues to manifest Himself in the life of his saints. The life of St. Clement reveals to us the fullness of the Redemption of Christ in a new and special way. The celebration of the two hundred years of the "*dies natalis*" of St. Clemente is an opportunity to celebrate the effective and unceasing action of the Holy Spirit not only in his time and place but also today in the life of each Redemptorist and each community.

The celebration of this bicentenary is a fitting occasion to assess and renew the relevance and potential of our charism as we contemplate the way St. Clement embodied it in his time. May this resource serve as an inspiration for the renewal of our missionary spirituality and creative ways of living our Vita Apostolica.

Holiness and Mission, a single call

The vocation to which we have all been called, as a Church and as a Congregation, is manifested through the lives of its saints. We pray in the prefaces of the Eucharist: "For in the marvelous confession of your Saints, you make your Church fruitful with strength ever new and offer us sure signs of your love"(preface II)

and because “in crowning their merits, you crown your own gifts” (preface I). Because of this, in order to understand our unique vocation, we need not only theologians but especially saints and mystics; they are the ones who show us the intimate communion with the life of Christ, they are the concretization of the response to the call to holiness and mission.

The life of St. Clement allows us to see not only the path of holiness but also the path of our missionary vocation. Inner life and missionary action are two sides of the same coin. For this reason, *Redemptoris Missio* affirms that the true missionary is a saint, and a saint is truly a missionary. St. Clement, who knew how to integrate the inner (mystical) life and missionary action, understood that the work of sanctification that the Spirit intends to perform in us and in the world was carried out in the mission. “The universal call to holiness is closely linked to the universal call to mission. Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission.” (Cfr. RM 90).

Missionary Spirituality in times of change

One of the aspects in which St. Clement reflects his greatness, as a saint and as a missionary, can be found in Constitution 20: denying himself and always ready to undertake what is demanding in order to bring the Plentiful Redemption of Christ to all. We can borrow from social science the term “resilience” in order to understand the adaptability of Saint Clement amid adverse situations. Until the day of his death, he showed an enormous capacity to confront crisis situations, and even better, to make them opportunities to test his own confidence in Divine Providence. The many difficulties that he had to endure are well known to us.

The characteristics described in Constitution 20 have been consistent features of the following of Christ since the origins of Christianity: no matter how many times they were forbidden to preach (Cf. Acts 5:40), the first Christians stood firm in their faith; despite the threats, they remained joyful in hope; in a hostile environment they persevered because they were inflamed by charity (cf. Acts 2:42; 1Cor 13, 2b); persecution sparked missionary ardor and led them to give their whole lives to Jesus Christ in the fulfillment of their mission.

These traits were also present in San Alphonsus. In Scala, for instance, finding himself alone and despite criticism, he decided to move forward in response to the call to found the Congregation. Both Clement and Alphonsus managed to redirect the internal resources they possessed in order to respond to the continuous and changing circumstances and moments of crisis that arose in their lives. If the Congregation exists today, it is, in part, thanks to the capacity of these two saints to respond to adversities, even emerging from them transformed and strengthened. Conflicts with the civil and religious authorities, tensions with the transalpine and Italian confreres, accusations, misunderstandings, the suppression and dispersion of foundations, political tensions, etc. (F. Ferrero) were some of the challenges faced by Saint Clement. In one of his letters to the then flourishing community of Saint Benno, which would be suppressed two years later, he wrote:

“Take courage! God is our Lord! He guides everything to his glory and for our good, and nothing has the capacity to oppose him. All human designs, even when they are prepared in their smallest details, serve only for the fulfillment of his will ... I know that when the odds are against us, it takes us wherever the Lord wants ... Let us leave it to God to guide us and everything will be fine ... My dear confreres! Let us be careful with sin, strive to perfection; This is the only thing we must keep in mind, let’s be brave and encourage each other to do good. Let’s treat each other with love. I greet you all in the heart of Jesus.” (Letter from St. Clement to the Community of St. Benno, in Warsaw. August 6, 1806).

Our world is characterized by constant change and the Redemptorist mission today also faces its own external and internal pressures, as does also in general the Church. These changes may seem too threatening, and we may think that a defensive attitude may be the most convenient response. In this sense, the missionary spirituality of Saint Clement inspires important relevance in our concrete circumstances.

Conclusion

Holiness and mission are two comparable words that allow us to understand the life and work of Clemente M. Hofbauer. The characteristics of a missionary spirituality that allowed him to carry out his work, overcoming the harshest of

adversities, with creativity and radical fidelity to Christ, remain part of our Redemptorist “DNA” for the challenges of today.

Questions for dialogue:

- In what concrete ways do my personal life and the life of my community “renew” the redeeming mystery of Christ in the here and now of history?
- Saint Clement lived with creative fidelity (to the Congregation and the Church) the characteristics of a missionary spirituality as indicated in Constitution 20. In what way are these characteristics also present in my personal life and the life of my community?
- How does San Clement’s resilience in times of crisis challenge me in the specific situations that I find myself?

PRAYER

Father of mercy, in the life of St. Clement you have revealed to us the original freshness of the Gospel.

Pour out your Spirit so that we can serve with creative fidelity the mission of the Church and the Congregation.

When doubting, make us strong in faith;

if we feel threatened, keep us rejoicing in hope;

when faced by the uncertainty of the unknown, inflame us with the fire of your love, and rekindle in us the missionary dynamism

so that your Church may rejoice with the joyful announcement of the fullness of the Redemption of your Son Jesus Christ.

May we live a life rooted in prayer undertaking what is demanding, as did St. Clement, until we can attain the glory of the promised crown.

We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son ...

Amen

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

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