



CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS

Superior Generalis

August 1, 2020

0000 13172020

Solemnity of St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori, C.Ss.R.

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Lay Missionaries and Associates,

Blessings to you on this Solemnity of St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori! As we celebrate the Eucharist on his feast this year, the words of the first reading echo a prophetic challenge that St. Alphonsus addresses to us, reminding us of the vocation to which our Redeemer has called us. Let me paraphrase slightly the words of Isaiah:

“The spirit of the Lord God is upon [us], because the Lord has anointed [us]; he sends [us] to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to prisoners; to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour... to comfort all who mourn.” (cf. Is. 61:1-2).

Herein lies the challenge! Do we truly believe that this year, 2020, is the Lord’s ‘year of favour’? What is the ‘good news’ we proclaim? As we celebrate this feast, in many countries our Churches are still locked, and our people cannot celebrate the Eucharist with us. In others, restrictions limit the number of people who can be physically present. But this is not all. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic – economic, social, political – are only beginning to be really felt around the world. In this situation, St. Alphonsus challenges us in the name of Jesus to comfort those who mourn and to bind up the broken-hearted. He reminds us that we have been anointed by the Lord with the gift of the Spirit for this very purpose.

Like Jesus in the gospel reading, Alphonsus *saw* the crowds, not as faceless masses of people, but as sheep without a shepherd. Like Jesus, Alphonsus not only saw, but was moved to *compassion*. Like Jesus, Alphonsus found *new and creative ways* to proclaim good news in very difficult circumstances.

For the General Government in Rome, it has been a source of inspiration to hear from so many of you about the ways that you are following in these footsteps of St. Alphonsus today, really *seeing* the wounds of our people and our world, entering into prophetic solidarity born out of *compassion*, and reaching out *creatively* in mission with a message of hope and joy.

May St. Alphonsus continue to accompany us in our mission. May Mary, our Mother of Perpetual Help, teach us how to bring comfort and joy to all. May God bless you and all those to whom and with whom you serve!

Your brother in Jesus Christ our Redeemer,

Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.
Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

