

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)

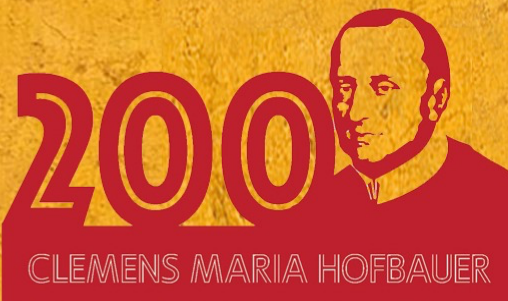
UM SÔ CORPO (Ef 4,4)

EIN LEIB (Eph 4,4)



C.Ss.R.

PIRITUALITY



ONE BODY

St. Clement, poor among the poor

To evangelize and be evangelized by the poor of the periphery

Introduction

Poverty is an essential dimension of our consecration as Redemptorist missionaries. The primary reason is our configuration to Jesus, who became poor with the poor by his *kenosis*, to make us rich by his Copious Redemption (Cf. Const. 61). The second reason is the establishment of our missionary community, which shares all its goods in a fraternal way, as an ideal of evangelical life and apostolic availability (Cf. Const. 62-63). The third reason is our solidarity with the poor, our lifelong friends in evangelization, whose work lifestyle and dedication inspire us (Cf. Const. 65). Finally, poverty is a condition for our missionary availability, which has no material or cultural requirements to lead us in meeting the most abandoned (Cf. Const. 66-67).

St. Clement Mary Hofbauer embraced consecrated poverty as a friend from whom he would never be separated. He was born poor, lived poorly, and cared for the poor. Religious and clerical life never gave him any material privileges. We can affirm that he did not have to make an option for the poor because he never left the poverty and environment of the poor, with whom he always shared his material and especially spiritual goods.

A poor family

From his childhood, St. Clement shared "the hardship and insecurity of the poor" (Gen. Stat. 045). As the ninth of twelve brothers, St. Clement saw his father die before he was seven years old. After this event, the struggle for survival of this large family began, in which the children had to participate in the daily work so that no one would lack food. Could this precariousness have been the cause of the extinguishment of the lives of seven of his brothers when they were still children? Even dreaming of becoming a priest, St. Clement was never able to pay for his studies. As a teenager, he became a baker by profession, to financially help his family. Thus, the combination of poverty and work would shape St. Clement's lifestyle. Already as a Redemptorist, he always felt "bound by the law of labor" (Cf. Const. 64), and he was a tireless worker to ensure the survival of his confreres and the poor.

Poverty on your vocational path

During the 69 years of San Clemente's life, very few things were accomplished where he did not experience difficulty. He had to fight hard, and only his faith and tenacity allowed him to overcome the constant obstacles and precariousness. To carry out his studies, he was employed as a baker in a monastery. When he finished his studies, he found himself once again without the resources to move forward. Since he longed to give himself totally to God, at the age of 24, he began an experience as a hermit and pilgrim, which would last nine years. This experience of poverty and insecurity led him to deep intimacy and total trust in God while preparing him to face with determination the pleasant and difficult situations that he would encounter on his journey. Only at the age of 32, already an adult, would he be able to complete his studies, and finally, at the age of 33, while on a pilgrimage again to Rome, he would meet the Redemptorists, an experience that would mark his vocational arrival and his missionary departure. The novitiate and preparation for ordination would take place within a year. In an unprecedented turn, St. Clement (at the age of 34) and Father Thaddeus Hübl would leave for the north as Redemptorist priests, without money, and without a fixed destination.

Poverty in their missionary ministry

St. Clement inaugurated the first transalpine Redemptorist foundation in St. Benno's on the outskirts of Warsaw, with a small church and a very simple house. There the first three non-Italian Redemptorists planted the seed of the Redemptorist Congregation that would flourish and radiate the charism of St. Alphonsus on all continents. They lacked neither the poor nor the missionary zeal for Jesus, but they were not free to preach popular missions, as was done in Italy. And since they did not resign themselves to living with these limitations, they had the wise idea of starting a permanent mission in the Church of St. Benno, where the ministry of continuous welcome and well-prepared celebrations radiated and attracted everyone. Thus, in poverty, as an expression of the missionary charism of St. Alphonsus, St. Clement found a way to proclaim the Gospel with increasingly new zeal.

Poverty as a concern for the poor

St. Clement "was called the 'father of the poor'; and indeed, the poor, the abandoned and the marginalized found in him a companion and a sincere friend. He lived with the poor, being poor himself, and shared generously with them what he had. He often spent time with the sick and the dying, preparing them through the sacrament of reconciliation for their encounter with Christ the Redeemer". (Letter of Father General, 02/02/2020). In Warsaw, St. Clement identified these poor, especially in those who were the fruit of so many wars: abandoned children and orphans. He welcomed them as he could and faced hardships in order to feed, educate, and catechize them. The image of him knocking at the door of the tabernacle, asking for food for his children, is an icon of his affective and effective love for the poor. He passed on this same sensitivity to his community, which never stopped offering food to the poor who knocked at his doors.

Poverty in the Redemptorist Community

The Warsaw community depended entirely on the work of each of the confreres and on the benefactors who would help it in times of crisis. St. Clement often took charge of the kitchen to prepare food for his confreres. They had a very small house for the growing number of members, but even so, it was still shared with the orphans. St. Clement, although he had an international community with members from both invaded and invading countries, always showed great esteem for his confreres and considered them all as saints. During the persecutions and injustices they suffered, St. Clement appealed to God and to all possible authorities to protect his community. We know that this was in vain and that they were forced to disperse.

Despite his difficulties, the solidarity of St. Clement led him to collaborate with the brothers in Italy, especially to advance the canonization of St. Alphonsus. Without a doubt, St. Clement preached what he lived and lived what he preached. He had the courage of one who trusts that "it is God who directs everything". That is why he could insist on his motto: "To proclaim the Gospel in an ever new way". His poverty constituted his missionary wealth, which, in turn, allowed God to work wonders through his history and missionary dynamism. His death was his last act of poverty because from it emerged the flourishing tree of the Redemptorist Congregation in every corner of the world. For this reason, it is worth paying tribute to him as the co-founder of our missionary family, whose charism enriches and complements the founding charism of St. Alphonsus.

Questions for discussion

- 1) In what way is St. Clement's experience of poverty a testimony that edifies us, but also confronts us in our way of practicing poverty in our personal life, in our community, and our Unit?
- 2) Do I feel that commitment to work is an important dimension of the practice of poverty in my personal life and my community?
- 3) Has solidarity with the poor challenged my personal lifestyle, community life, and the life of the Unit, and has it encouraged me to go out to meet the poor to help them in their needs, as it did St. Clement?
- 4) To what extent have we been faithful to the distribution of goods within the community, between communities, and between Units?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, our Most Holy Redeemer, you have given us a missionary charism that has its roots in the proclamation of your mission in Nazareth (Lk 4:18-21). You have anointed us with your Spirit

to be bearers of the Good News to the poor and abandoned. And you have given us in our saints, like St. Clement Mary, concrete examples of this charism, to stimulate us to live the missionary life and holiness.

May the contemplation of the witness of poverty in the life and mission of St. Clement renew in each one of us and our communities the desire to live poverty in all its dimensions. Free us from self-complacency and individualism, give us a deep sensitivity for every poor person and the social injustices of our world.

Compel us to practice poverty and the sharing of our goods. May this be a source of joy for fraternal life in community, and commitment to daily work and open us to missionary availability to serve wherever we are called.

We ask this of You, our Most Holy Redeemer, through the intercession of St. Clement Mary Hofbauer, as a gift for this Jubilee Year, as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of his birth. Amen!



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

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