

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)

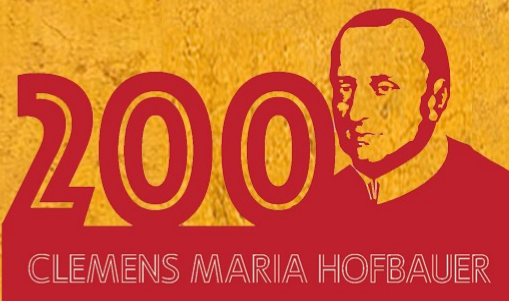
UM SÔ CORPO (Ef 4,4)

EIN LEIB (Eph 4,4)



C.Ss.R

PIRITUALITY



ONE BODY

Persevering faithfully in the Mission – Bread for the Journey

Scriptural impetus:

“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much.” (Luke 16:10)

“Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.” (Luke 24:35)

Reflection: Bread for the Journey

As a child, I loved to stand next to my great-aunt Mamie and help her make bread. It took hours gather the ingredients, grease the pans, mix the dough, allow the yeast to rise, leaven the dough, let it rise, punch it down, let it rise again, and then bake the bread in the oven of the old oil stove. All through those hours, we talked, and she told me stories about “the old days” as the comforting aroma of baking bread filled the old house. I loved those times together. It seemed as if we had all the time in the world. Mamie made bread every second day. Those delicious golden loaves fed not just our extended family, but also a number of neighbours, especially the sick and elderly ones!

I don’t bake bread very much these days. I don’t seem to have the time for it. If I want a loaf of bread today, it’s easy today for me to nip around the corner to the convenience store and buy it. It was quite a different experience in the 17th century. Then, making bread was such a time-consuming activity that it could only be done once a week, according to historians.

Our brother Clement—like Mamie-- was a baker. For three significant periods in his early life, he trained and worked as a baker, and I think that we might look to this early training for some insights into how he became the saint we know and recognize as an example of perseverance.

In Clement’s day, breads, muffins, puddings and other baked goods were made in a "beehive" oven, the brick or clay forerunner of the modern oven. The oven's 3-by-5-foot interior had to be heated over a period of about four hours by a well-tended coal fire. When

it reached the desired temperature, the messy, hot coal had to be cleared out quickly in preparation for baking.

While the oven was heating up, the baker would prepare the bread and other foods to be baked. He would use wheat flour that had been grown and threshed locally and ground by a local miller. Temperatures varied depending on location in the oven, so different types of baked goods were strategically placed for best results. There were no baking tins yet, and so the hand-formed loaves of bread in difference sizes were cast onto the floor of the brick oven. Other types of foods, such as beans, would be slow-cooked in the back of the oven throughout the day.

The entire baking process was completed again and again throughout the day, and deliveries were made as each batch was completed. As each batch was completed, the entire process of lighting the coals, heating the over, cleaning the over and baking was repeated, from before dawn until sunset.

It took years, keen observational skills, patience and perseverance to learn and perfect the complex skills of the master baker-- the intricacies of recipes, maintaining the right temperatures in the temperamental ovens, timing and managing the cooking of a number of different items in the same small oven space, customer relations and – above all- hospitality and charity, for the bakery was a magnet for the poor and broken of the world, a place where warmth, food and companionship were likely to be offered, along with words of comfort and a listening ear.

Many people came and went around the bakery, normally a busy place and a focal point for the community. Apprentices, farmers, millers, people delivering coal, bakers, customers, delivery people and townspeople, rich and poor, eager to hear or share stories came and went throughout the day.

When I reflect on the life of our brother Clement Hofbauer, the first word that comes to mind is “perseverance.” Some people think of perseverance as a synonym for persistence, but for me, perseverance is a very different attribute. Far from dogged persistence, perseverance has a deeper quality, and carries a connotation of deep fidelity and depth of commitment. When I looked up the word in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, I found that perseverance is defined as “continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition... steadfastness.” There should be a picture of St Clement Hofbauer next to that definition!

It seems to me that the skills and capacities that he young Clement learned as an apprentice baker in Znaim were, in seed form, the same skills and capacities that he was to draw on throughout his life, in varied pastoral, community and political settings.

The first clue that we might identify lies in what he baked. More than cakes or pies, bakers made bread. Bread has a significance beyond mere nutrition. Bread is also significant in

Christianity as one of the elements (alongside wine) of the Eucharist. The word *companion* comes from the Latin *com-* "with" + *panis* "bread". As an apprentice baker in a busy shop, Clement learned to be a companion to all: rich, and poor, master and apprentice, woman, man and child. As a keen observer, he would have learned to read the stories behind the tired smile of the servant, the proud, guarded expression of the wealthy home-owner, the worn posture of the housemaid, and the hungry, lowered eyes of the beggar. He would have learned the skills of accompaniment: listening, encouraging, asking the gentle question that loosens the tongue and frees the spirit. He would have seen the same people, day in and day out, year after year, and learned what it means to be there for the long haul. Perseverance.

Patience is certainly one of the qualities that is included in that package of qualities that go together to build perseverance. Clement was not by nature a patient person; in fact, we know from various accounts that he had a fiery temper, and sometimes regretted his impulsiveness. But it takes bread time to rise, and then it has to be punched down and allowed to rise again. The process cannot be rushed. This is a lesson that I am certain Clement would have applied to other areas of his life as time went on. It takes time to soften a heart and open a mind. Formation takes time. It takes time to form a young Redemptorist. It takes time to forge the bonds of friendship. It takes time to mould a community. As a baker, Clement would also know that what takes ten minutes today might take twelve minutes tomorrow, depending on the heat of the oven or the humidity of the air. We can plan all we like, but the work and the timing are God's. Waiting for God to do God's work is a constituent element of perseverance.

Bakers guard their recipes as closely-held secrets. A particular herb in just the right portion could be the key to success in business. Clement knew that there was a secret recipe to a tasty loaf of bread and also to an engaging sermon. One of the secrets for Clement was prayer. The story is often told of how, on the day of his father's death, Clement's mother led him to a crucifix, pointed to the image of our Redeemer, and said, "My child, from now on, this is your father. Be careful to follow the path that pleases him." David Louch, CSsR, in *One Body* in June 2020, wrote:

The whole of Clement's life journey was in fact marked by an unwavering trust in God and the commitment to doing God's will. His personal relationship with God was at the heart of all he said and did – especially in the face of his many personal and apostolic failures."

Perseverance in prayer was Clement's "secret ingredient."

Becoming a master baker is the result of a lot of trial and error. To truly succeed, one has to have failed often. Clement's pilgrimage of missionary discipleship was marked by astounding pastoral successes—the institutions founded in Warsaw, the inventive pastoral initiative of the perpetual mission at St. Benno's, the early expansion of the Congregation of

the Most Holy Redeemer North of the Alps, the growth of the lay community of Oblates. And every one of these successes eventually failed due to political forces beyond Clement's control. Miraculously, when we look back with the hindsight of two hundred years, we see not failure, but success. Why? His perseverance is itself viewed as success by his brothers and sisters who look to him as model and mentor.

In his letter proclaiming the jubilee of St Clement Hofbauer on March 15, 2020, Fr. Michael Brehl wrote,

Time and again he repeated: The gospel must be preached anew, in every age and generation, in a language that ordinary people can understand. These words continue to inspire us we ask God to revitalize our *Vita Apostolica* and our missionary charism today!

The yeast added to the Congregation by St Clement Hofbauer has continued to work on the “dough”, enlivening us, adding taste and colour, calling us to creative missionary response, empowering us to be true “companions”- bread- for others on the way.

Reflect and Discuss:

- What Scripture passages enlighten your own reflection on the impact of St. Clement Hofbauer?
- How do you understand St. Clement as “companion” to you, bread for you, on your own journey of missionary conversion?
- St Clement experienced situations of dramatic failure and breakdown. Nevertheless, he remained faithful to the mission. What does it mean today to be faithful to a mission? How can that be lived today? Which attitudes and experiences can help on this way?

Prayer

God our Heavenly and loving Father, we thank you for gifting our Congregation with the life and example of St. Clement Maria Hofbauer. In his life and spirituality, we see a perfect model and example of what St. Alphonsus wished for every Redemptorist to be, one who follows the example of your Son Jesus our Redeemer in proclaiming Good news to the poor and abandoned. We pray for the grace of your Holy Spirit on each of us in the Congregation and on all our lay associates and collaborators, on our sisters and Redemptorist family that we may be always be true to a life of Missionary Consecration to your Son Jesus our Redeemer. We make our prayer in his name, Jesus Christ Our Redeemer, Amen.



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

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