

## HOMILY FOR THE CLOSING OF THE MEETING OF THE MAJOR SUPERIORS

Dear Confreres,

1. Today we are here in this place where the body of our founder Saint Alfonso is buried. To celebrate the end of our week of meetings, studies, and fraternity, in this holy place, we are invited to return to our origins. We are here to learn from Alphonsus how to walk through these difficult times. A man of the Enlightenment, he experienced the criticism of Christianity by the men of the Enlightenment such as Voltaire and Diderot. He fought against Jansenism and sought a balance between rigorism and laxism. He experienced the historical and ecclesial tensions of his time and saw the newly founded Congregation almost disappear. *How does St. Alphonsus inspire us today? How or in what way does he encourage us now? And does he speak to our hearts to respond to the signs of our times?*
2. *Alphonsus inspires us not to fear the times in which we live, because we are not alone. The Lord who called us walks with us, he shows us the way, he becomes light when everything is dark, and he makes our hearts burn when we are discouraged. The harvest is great, and we cannot be discouraged, even if we are few (cf. Mt 9:38). Alphonsus believed in the project of redemption and persevered to the end. He totally consecrated his life to this project. The failure of our Redemptorist life begins when we cease to consecrate our personal and community life to redemption and there, we cease to offer ourselves and be redemptive.*

3. *Alphonsus inspires us not to forget the abandoned.* He is a living memory for us. He reminds us that we must go to the existential peripheries, and like good Samaritans, sympathize with, approach, and heal the wounds of the fallen on the side of the road. *The day we lose our sensitivity to the most abandoned and do not sympathize with their existential pains, the Congregation will be too far from the Gospel and lose its reason for existing.* The Spirit of the Lord is upon us; because the Lord has anointed us to preach good news unto the poor; he has sent us to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to those that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (cf. Is 61:1-2). This must encourage us!
4. *Alfonso inspires us to abandon ourselves to God. He teaches us that we must have vision, but leave room for providence, for God's grace.* In this service of government, we often want to control everything, know everything, organize everything and we do not leave room for divine providence. We must do our part with great responsibility because it is our ministry but, we must leave room for the Spirit of the Lord to act, especially in these challenging times. Remember, Alphonsus threw himself entirely into God's arms.
5. During these days I have had the opportunity to listen to the heart of each one of you: your joys, your concerns, your fears, and your dreams. And sharing all this makes us human and not superhuman. It makes us men who walk together, accompany each other, work together, and learn together. *We must be very careful when we have all the answers. Often the answer is found on the way when we walk together. Often our answers are born on our Emmaus roads and not within our offices or temples. Walking and working together to be a missionary body with others is a constant learning process.*

6. I ask you to encourage the superiors of your local communities and to help them in their mission. According to our Constitutions, they are called to be spiritual shepherds of the community so that it may be formed and grow in Christ and to help everyone to give themselves to the work of evangelization. They are also co-responsible for the good of the (V) Province (cf. Const. 139). *In this year dedicated to Community Life, they have a very important service and can exercise creative fidelity in the community in favor of the mission.*
7. Once again, I want to thank you all for coming! Beyond the content that you received; your presence is very important. For me, it has been a wonderful experience to listen to the heart of each one of you. I thank each one of the members of the General Council who helped prepare this meeting. I am also thankful to the other confreres who work in the Curia and Casa Sant 'Alfonso who collaborated in the realization of this meeting. I pray to St. Alphonsus that we may indeed be a missionary body, a sign to the Congregation, to help the confreres in their consecrated life and in their missionary work.
8. Today I want to entrust our Congregation to the protection of Saint Alphonsus and to our Mother of Perpetual Help, our Mother General, who protects us and sends us to be Missionaries of Hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer.

P. Rogério Gomes, SG-C.Ss.R.

Pagani, 11 March 2023.