

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

(MT 5:14)

OUR CONSECRATED LIFE AT THE SERVICE
OF THE MISSION OF THE REDEEMER



Missionaries of Hope in the Footsteps of the Redeemer
Communicanda 1/2024

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Introduction

“In the light of Jesus' consecration, we can see in the initiative of the Father, the source of all holiness, the ultimate origin of the consecrated life” (*Vita consecrata* # 22).

1. This Communicanda on Consecrated Life is dedicated to the CONFRES, FORMANDI, LAY ASSOCIATES OF OUR MISSION AND TO THE ENTIRE REDEMPTORIST FAMILY. It emerges as a result of the special situation that we are experiencing as a Congregation: the process of restructuring and reconfiguration, the search for our identity, the reflection on Redemptorist Consecrated Life highlighted by the XXVI General Chapter, the decline in vocations, the large number of those leaving the Congregation and the constant requests for incardination into the diocesan clergy. These phenomena are experienced not only within our Congregation, but also in the wider context of the Church and of Consecrated Life itself. All of this in the reality of a changing world, where the lack of credibility of the Church and the discouragement of many confreres is evident. Thus, this change of epoch demands from us commitment and courage. *Faced with this world, perhaps we feel like the flame of a torch that blows in the wind, refusing to be extinguished and yet struggles to fulfil its task, to illuminate and warm.* What are the winds that try to extinguish our light? Where does the energy of our light come from to resist the storms of this world?

2. This *Communicanda* is not meant to give precise answers to all our concerns, but *is rather a provocation and an exhortation to each confrere to allow his heart to burn (cf. Lk 24:32) and to be encouraged to seek his first love (cf. Rev. 2,4). It is an invitation to each confrere to recover that enthusiasm for his vocation and the joy of being a Redemptorist missionary. At the same time to search for the light of the Redeemer and to recognise the good that his light does as a consecrated Redemptorist missionary, forming one missionary body (cf. Const. 2). This is an invitation to encounter, to listen to one another, to pray personally and in community, to discern, and to revitalise one's vocation. It is most importantly an exhortation to follow the Redeemer, to renew our desire for Him and to be enthusiastic about one's consecration and mission in order to go forward with perseverance until the very end. Yes Indeed, it is worthwhile to be a Redemptorist missionary today!*

3. *We need to look at our consecrated life with much fervour. We are not supermen, but fragile men, with generous hearts, who seek to give the best of ourselves to God and therefore to his people. We are men who are in a continuous process of conversion, who seek to follow the Redeemer and to make this path one of personal and community holiness and of light in the world. In consecrated life there are no perfect human beings. There are people who are formed along the way, as disciples, listening to the Redeemer. In the Gospels, the perfect ones were always those who rejected Jesus, while He called people with limitations to be with Him and most importantly to have the desire and the freedom to follow Him (cf. Mt 19:16-30, Mt 10:2-4, Lk 5:32, Lk 9:57-62).*

4. The Redeemer illuminating us with his light, says to us today, as an encouragement for our apostolic life: “You are the light of the world. A city on a hilltop cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket, but on a lampstand, that it may give light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before all, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:14-16). It is very significant that this text is found after the Beatitudes, as it fits perfectly with the call to each of us as missionaries of light and hope.
5. Therefore, *Dear Confreres, You are the light of the world, You are blessed!* “As long as you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be children of light” (Jn. 12:36). Our question is: Where is your light? Where is the light of your community? Where is the light of your (Vice) Province? Where is the light of the Congregation? How can we communicate the beatitudes of the Lord with our light?
6. In harmony with the Second Vatican Council, the XXVI General Chapter (2022) addressed the theme of consecrated life. It called us to re-imagine our whole apostolic life in this new epoch. Finally, it left us with five important themes for our reflection and renewal: identity, mission, consecrated life, formation and leadership. These are themes that touch directly on our charism. In this way “Renewing consecrated life today in response to the Second Vatican Council requires us to recreate the charism so that it remains current and eloquent. First of all, initial and on-going formation must be ensured, we must insist on redefining the way of praying and acting, and it is also

necessary to reorient the exercise of authority and the way of discernment. Fidelity to the Congregation demands that we create, maintain and stimulate fraternal relationships that contribute to the realisation of brotherhood.”¹ This is our daily task!



¹ MARTÍNEZ M., Víctor M. La vida consagrada del mañana. *Theologica Xaveriana*, Bogotá, Colombia: Facultad de Teología Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, n. 148, p. 543. 2003. (*Consecrated Life for Tomorrow*).

1. THE REDEEMER IS OUR LIGHT

7. Light in Sacred Scripture is associated with the essence, wisdom and divine justice, life, goodness, being a creature of God, the beauty of the manifestation of nature and of the human being, salvation and the Resurrection. On the contrary, darkness reveals the situation of the human being and of humanity itself. We are, of course, a mixture of light and darkness and this is part of the human mystery.
8. Whoever thinks he has his own light is mistaken! In consecrated life, those who attract the spotlight to themselves burn themselves and run the risk of suffering from the Narcissist syndrome.... The consequence is to scorch oneself with one's own light, to dilute one's own identity and to drown in the lake of one's own vanities. We have no light of our own! *Our consecration is a daily and persevering lifelong effort to capture the light of the Redeemer, in the most direct and transparent way, in order to communicate it to our interlocutors, our dialogue partners* and they, in the same way, radiate the light of the Redeemer towards us! The beam of illumination will be greater when the light of each professed member shines together with that of the others in community life (cf. Const. 21). Our light is never to illuminate ourselves. It is a kenotic light (cf. Phil. 2:5-11) which comes from the Redeemer and which we must send out into the world by our witness of life. *“The vocation to the consecrated life is, despite its renunciations and trials, and indeed because of them, a path “of light” over which the Redeemer keeps constant watch: “Rise, and have no fear!” (Vita Consecrata, #. 40).* The light of the Redeemer is our pillar of fire when we

cross the darkness of the desert (cf. Ex 13:21), it is the living flame of our vocation, it is our pastoral enthusiasm.

9. The Redeemer, the Light of the world, called each of us one day. He set our hearts on fire, we recognised his radiance and left everything to follow him, to be with Him, the Light of the world. The radiance of His light seduced us and we experienced its intensity in such a way that we gave our Yes to respond to our baptismal light through our religious profession. *On the day of our profession, the Redeemer gave us a lamp, not to leave it hidden, but to take care of it, so that it may shine before all, so that they may see our mission and glorify the Father who is in heaven* (cf. Mt 5:16). This light is not for us alone, but to share it with those we meet on the way. *Do we communicate this light that we have received from the Redeemer to people, to the world? Do we believe that our consecration is still a light? Or is it a fading or dying flame? Do we hide this flame that Jesus has given us, so as to dazzle ourselves by trying to shine with our own light?*
10. It seems that over the years we lose the flame of our vocation, it becomes a thing of the past, a lost memory, a dusty old shoe. We do not share this treasure with others (cf. Mt 6:21, Mt 25:14-30) and very often this happens in our own community. There are confreres who live together and do not know each other's vocation story. Perhaps each community should give itself the opportunity to get to know each other, creating and taking advantage of different moments for sharing, such as: Community retreats, community meetings, group prayers and celebrations of profession and ordination of confreres,

among many others that may arise. *Listening to the vocation story of our companions on the journey renews in us the day when the Lord looked us in the eye, called us by name and our hearts burned* (cf. Mk. 10:21; Lk. 24:32). The vocation stories of the confreres are worth listening to as it strengthens our identity as a missionary body.



2. THE LIGHT THAT WITHSTANDS STORMS

11. In the context in which we live, consecrated life is going through a great crisis of faith which is manifested in five dimensions: *Theological/Christological faith*: belief in the mystery of Christ and in the call He makes to continue His mission; *Identity faith*: belief in one's own consecration as a call from Jesus and in the vocation to the service of the Gospel and of the charism; *Ecclesial faith*: the discrediting of ecclesial and congregational structures which no longer respond to the Gospel and to the present times; *Anthropological faith*: believing that human beings are capable of loving, consecrating their lives and giving meaning to the mission of Christ to the most abandoned; and *faith in the world*: in the face of the complexity of the changes around us, the lack of response of consecrated life, at the same time the distancing from God and the lack of a perspective of change, that do not allow us to do anything more as consecrated persons.
12. The storms and darkness of this world test our faith and our light and constantly try to extinguish them. Dark nights should not frighten us; on the contrary, they should be an opportunity for our light to shine even more brightly. Even if it is like an ember under the ashes, it is always there to shine as soon as the wind of the Spirit blows. Dear confreres, let us not be afraid of our present reality so full of darkness, but rather let us be afraid of our own darkness and the lack of that light which does not allow us to see the light of the Redeemer. The world in which we live, with its upheavals, is the world loved and blessed by God. In

this very world we must be the light, making our creative contribution in order to continue His redemptive work. Light overcomes darkness (cf. Jn 1:5).

13. From this perspective there are some shadows that obscure our light and do not allow our witness to shine. Some of these shadows are: self-referentiality, individualism, lack of commitment to community life and mission, a lack of interest in one's own personal formation and in what is proper to the Congregation and the community, lack of availability for missionary service, a bourgeois lifestyle, personal projects justified as the mission of the Congregation, prejudices against the culture of the other, the lack of fraternity, the absence of prayer and of the cultivation of Redemptorist spirituality and mysticism, a variety of abuses: of power, sexual, economic, psychological, and of conscience; contempt for and alienation from the poor, and clericalism. In the face of these shadows, we can only allow the light of the Redeemer to penetrate these realities and transform them in order to be credible before the world.
14. It is increasingly evident that we will be, as a Church and as consecrated men and women, a small flock. This should not discourage us or make us give up our mission. "The minority called for by the Spirit has nothing to do with forgetfulness. On the contrary. The small 'remnant' learns to recognise and value itself. It learns to take care of itself in the concrete and to enjoy the encounter. The integrated minority leads us to pronounce and bring to life the following affirmation: 'I cannot renounce you', to your

living together, your presence and your richness.”² Our consecration has meaning for us and for the world, even if the world does not recognise or see our light, hence the need to qualify it more and more. If we succeed in being a significant presence in people's lives, welcoming them, they will recognise in us the light of the Redeemer. The time for self-referentiality in consecrated life is over. It is time to incarnate simplicity, humility, the time to walk together, to listen and to be Samaritans for others (cf. Lk 10: 25-37). If we want to be light, we must free ourselves from our narcissism and our negative concepts of purity and rather radiate humanity and hospitality wherever we are present.

15. It is possible that, as the years go by, our light becomes more fragile due to various circumstances. *I am thinking here of confreres who are going through the dark nights of a vocational crisis, searching for meaning in their consecration and going through a process of discernment as to whether our way of life is worthwhile. Do not let the light of consecration be extinguished in you. Seek the help you need to overcome the perilous desert journey and to make a profound discernment.* There are many departures from the Congregation in order to seek other horizons without a true discernment and a personal examination of life. Many students and confreres, some of them very young, leave the Congregation without a deep knowledge of what it is,

² GONZALO DíEZ, Luis Alberto. *¡Crucemos a la otra orilla!* El diálogo y el cambio de la vida consagrada. Madrid: Editorial Perpetuo Socorro, p. 65. (*Let's Cross to the Other Shore! Dialogue and Change in Consecrated Life*).

especially of our missionary spirituality. We must, as a Congregation, reflect on our perseverance!³ The darkness of crises and doubts can be transformed into a great light if they are well managed, both at the individual and community level.

16. *At the moment when our vocation is like an ember under the ashes, the breath of the Spirit enkindles our light to radiate, animate and evoke our memories of Redemption. Keeping our light burning to radiate the Redeemer is our mission and this is done by cultivating personal and community mysticism, grounded first and foremost in our Redemptorist Spirituality.*

17. Dear confreres, our light withstands the storms because it comes from the Most Holy Redeemer, the Light of the world (cf. Jn. 8:12). But if we abandon our first Source, we will be easy prey to the gales and tempests. Our intimacy with the Lord through our personal and community prayer life, through personal Redemptorist Mysticism, will always keep our inner flame burning, even if it is tested by the adversities of the world in which we live. What is the nature of our faith in the Redeemer and in our mission?

³ Cf. GOMES, Rogério. "Liquid Perseverance in a Fragmented World". <https://www.cssr.news/2020/09/liquid-perseverance-in-a-fragmented-world/> (September 18, 2020 in Scala News).



3. THE PARABLE OF THE VIRGINS (CF. MT 25:1-13)

18. The parable of the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins, which we find only in Matthew's Gospel, in the context of a wedding feast, makes us think about how we wait for the Lord in our consecrated life. The commitment of the wise virgins was to welcome their bridegroom and to accompany him with lighted lamps. They prepared themselves for the long-time of waiting. In the parable, the character of watchfulness emerges, the waiting for the Son of God, since neither the day nor the hour of his manifestation is known. The lamp of the wise virgins is that of faith and works.
19. In the text there are the virgins who took care of their own light and those who already felt sufficiently enlightened and would be easily recognised by the bridegroom. The latter represent the example of a self-centred and self-referential consecrated life, which loses itself in accidental values and forgets the essence. And when they present themselves to the Lord, they are not recognised because they have not fulfilled the requirements of the feast, they do not have enough oil. The former can be understood as a consecrated life always vigilant, attentive to the signs of the times, above all available to the call of the bridegroom. It is a religious life that bears witness to the God-humanity relationship and uses all its possibilities to make it so. If this is true, we can ask ourselves: Does Redemptorist consecrated life have enough oil and light to read and take up the signs of the times with fortitude?



4. THE LAMPS OF PRUDENCE

20. In our Redemptorist life, certain lamps are necessary if we are to be attentive to the hour of the Redeemer. These are: the lamps of our witness of life, our missionary availability, our fidelity to our evangelical counsels, our deep humanity and our capacity to serve the most abandoned

a) The Light of our Witness of Life

21. Referring to the words of Pope St. Paul VI, “Contemporary man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, or if he listens to teachers, it is because they are witnesses”.⁴ A witness is someone who offers proof, attests to something, to a certain fact, to a testimony (*testimonium*) before a competent forum. We are therefore witnesses to the life, death and Resurrection of the Redeemer and our testimony must communicate the light of His mission, which today must be our own. This is not an easy experience, but we have to make sure that what we say is consistent with our preaching. Otherwise, we will be throwing words to the wind and our word will have no social, ecclesial or moral credibility. The Greek word for witness is *martirya*, one who gives his life for a cause. In the

⁴ PAULO VI. Discorso ai Membri del “Consilium de Laicis” (2 ottobre 1974). *AAS* 66. Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974, p. 568. (Pope Paul VI: *Discourse to Members of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*).

Christian sense, one who consumes his life in the name of the Redeemer. How do you bear witness to the Light in your personal life? And that of the community?

b) *The Light of Our Missionary Availability*

22. The light of our life witness translates into missionary availability, which is the antidote to complacency, a bourgeois lifestyle, individualism and the accumulation of goods. *Missionary availability places us in a constant exodus. And those who do so take only the essentials with them.* There are many confreres who have an incredible availability for mission, but unfortunately there are many others who cling to their posts and to their comfortable lifestyles, forgetting the commitment they made on the day of their religious profession. “Through this total dedication to the mission of Christ, the members share the self-renunciation of their crucified Lord, the virginal freedom of his heart, and this wholehearted offering of himself for the life of the world. They must, therefore, become signs and witnesses before people of the power of his resurrection, proclaiming the new and eternal life” (Const. 51). The light of our missionary availability comes from the *kenosis* of Christ, who emptied himself completely in order to give his life for others (cf. Phil 2:5-1). It is worth asking ourselves here whether, as Redemptorists, we communicate the light of Christ's mission in this world through our availability, or do we simply distance ourselves from the poorest and most abandoned and cling to the walls of our security?

c) *The Light of Our Simplicity of Life: The Evangelical Counsels*

23. "Those who are called to the consecrated life have a special experience of the light which shines forth from the Incarnate Word. For the profession of the evangelical counsels makes them a kind of sign and prophetic statement for the community of the brethren and for the world" (*Vita Consecrata*, # 15). Our Constitutions remind us of our simplicity of life through the evangelical counsels (cf. Const. 56-76). They are a light that illumines our personal journey and that of those we meet on our missionary journey. The evangelical counsels are not a burden for us, since we have made this choice freely, but they are a way of bearing witness to the Redeemer in the world. Do we, as Redemptorists, believe in the light of our consecration to the Lord, in the light of our evangelical counsels, or is it merely a convention and a canonical formality? Let us then ask ourselves the following question: How would I spell out the renewal of my evangelical counsels so as to be immersed and connected to today's world?

d) *The Light of our Humanity*

24. It is assumed that, thanks to the formation we have received and our daily experience of the Gospel, we are experts in humanity. However, this reality is not always evident in our midst. In fact, the manifestation of our humanity must begin within our religious communities. If we do not care for the quality of community life, for

creating an ecology of relationships between professed members and those in formation, the light of our missionary witness may be extinguished. We are killed by the schizophrenia of preaching beautifully and bringing tears to people's eyes, but not 'bringing the same tears' within ourselves through a lack of dialogue, misunderstanding and acceptance of the other. The community in which we live and serve must be a place of humanisation and mutual learning. Otherwise, we will always be placing our light under the bushel (cf. Mt 5:15) and what we will achieve is to be more and more discredited. In conclusion, our humanity must radiate the light within us.

e) *The Light of Service to the Most Abandoned*

25. We exist as a Congregation to serve the most abandoned. If this flame is extinguished in our hearts and in our actions, our Congregation will cease to have a *raison d'être* a reason for existence and will be heading towards its end. The most abandoned are our priority. Today they are out in the open within reach of our religious communities, victims of inequality and social exclusion. "When one reads the Gospel, one finds a strong orientation: not so much to rich friends and neighbours, but above all to the poor and the sick, to those who are often despised and forgotten, to those who 'have nothing to give you in return' (Lk 14:14). There should be no room for doubt or explanation that would weaken this clear message. Today and always, 'the

poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel', and evangelisation directed freely to them is a sign of the Kingdom that Jesus came to bring. It must be said in no uncertain terms that there is an inseparable link between our faith and the poor. Let us never leave them alone" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, # 48). In this sense, as Redemptorists we are called to be at the frontiers, at the peripheries, available for the most difficult things in order to bring to people an abundant redemption (cf. Const. 20).

26. "Going out to the frontier", says Gonzalo Díez, "questions and stirs up, questions and resituates that infinity of projects in which we are habitually immersed. It 'wakes us up' from the industrial dream into which we have been able to turn the mission. It brings us back to that longed-for vocation as artisans of taking care of the instant, of creation, of taking care of each person and each encounter. It leads us to the meaning of life in gratuity and insignificance. And it comes to provoke decisions as risky and striking as turning the word into deed, by being willing to lose and make a path with the 'least ones', or stepping on the street every day. The frontier is evidence of the rupture with the known and the opening to the stranger so that he ceases to be a stranger. It is not so clear as to where we are, locally and intellectually, we transmit well that tone of gratuitousness essential to the vocation. The frontier can loosen sleepy tongues, tired or short-sighted views and

open hearts with unsuspected and creative proposals. It can give us back the capacity to love. Almost nothing!”⁵



⁵ GONZALO DÍEZ, Luis Alberto. *Amanece, que es mucho*. Normalidad y profecía de la vida consagrada en el siglo XXI. Madrid: Editorial Perpetuo Socorro, 2016, p. 197.

5. QUESTIONS FOR OUR REDEMPTORIST CONSECRATED LIFE

27. In the light of the text of Mt 5:14-16, we propose some questions that will guide us in a personal and community way to reflect on the power of our light. These questions can be themes for the monthly personal and community retreat. They could help us to make a conscious and serene review of life, an examination of conscience and also serve as a way of educating our consciences about our Redemptorist consecrated life so as to make our light shine brightly from our conversion of heart, of our mentality and our attitudes. We wholeheartedly ask Major and Local Superiors to encourage confreres to set aside a time to pray about their Redemptorist vocation, to review their journey as consecrated men and to reflect on our consecrated life and mission in today's world. This will help us to be more aware of who we are and whom we serve.

a) Initial and Ongoing Formation

28. Initial and ongoing formation are guiding lamps, directing and generating purpose in our consecration. *What is it that is missing in our initial and ongoing formation so that we can be the light of the world? Does our initial formation help candidates in this regard? Why is the light of our ongoing formation so dim, personally and in our religious communities and (Vice) Provinces? If we are not formed, in the complex context in which we live, will we be able to communicate our light, or will we be overshadowed by indifference? What initial and ongoing formation do we need as Redemptorist*

Missionaries living and doing mission in today's world? What steps do we need to take in this direction? Ongoing formation is a crucial issue if we are to respond to the missionary challenges of our day as consecrated religious. Is it carried out in an organised and coherent way?

Texts for Prayer and Meditation: Const. 77-90; St. 050-084, Jn 3:1-15, Mt 10.

b) Mission and Missionary Availability

29. The XXVI General Chapter exhorted us to be light through the motto Missionaries of Hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer. “My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an “extra” or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing. All around us we begin to see nurses with soul, teachers with soul, politicians with soul, people who have chosen deep down to be with others and for others. But once we separate our work from our private lives, everything turns grey and we will always be seeking recognition or asserting our needs. We stop being a people.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 273). *How is the flame of my missionary ardour, has it diminished or increased since I joined the*

Congregation? As professed members, have we communicated the light of our missionary zeal to those in formation, to the laity associated with our mission and to those we serve? Are we where we should be as Redemptorists? Are we responding faithfully to our apostolic and missionary priorities?

Texts for Prayer and Meditation: Const. 1-10, 13-15, 30; *Evangelii Gaudium*, # 259-283; Lk 4:16-20; Mk 6:30-44.

c) *Restructuring for Mission*

30. Redemptorist Consecrated Life seeks to respond to the promptings of the Spirit and to respond faithfully to the charism today. Restructuring and reconfiguration for mission are along these lines, calling us to a conversion of mentality and structures in order to respond effectively to the Gospel today. It is a call from the Lord to “put new wine into new wineskins” (cf. Mk 2:22).⁶ *What insights has the process of restructuring shed on us for our Redemptorist Consecrated Life? What does restructuring bring about in us as individuals and as community? What comfort zones do we need to free ourselves from as individuals, communities, (Vice) Provinces and as a Congregation? How does uprooting (distacco) and the kenosis of Christ help us to understand this process?*

⁶ Cf. CIVCSVA. *Per vino nuovo otri nuovi*. Dal Concilio Vaticano II la vita consacrata e le sfide ancora aperte. Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2017 (*New Wine in New Wineskins. Consecrated Life since Vatican II and the continuing open challenges*).

Texts for Prayer and Meditation: Const. 15, 17, 19; Phil 2: 5-11.

d) *The Service of Leadership for Mission*

31. The service of leadership is important to animate the apostolic life of the Congregation. The crisis of leadership begins when the leader uses his position for personal gain and not for the benefit of the community that elected him for a particular service. In this way authority is lost. And when authority (closeness, dialogue, obedience, discernment) is lacking, authoritarianism is resorted to. This is a source of wounds and death and has been an evil in many places in the Congregation. The service of leadership is to be a light so that the community can see new horizons.⁷ *How is the service of leadership in my local community, (Vice) Province and in the Congregation? What are the shadows that darken our light in the service of animation of the confreres? Does the evangelical council of obedience still make sense to us or is it an institutional formality? Have our elective processes been evangelical or have they been guided by personal and group interests? What kind of leadership do we exercise in our religious, formative and pastoral communities? What role does our leadership play in the formation of people's consciences in today's world?*

⁷ Cf. BOCOS MERINO, Aquilino. *Leadership and proximity*. The value of presence in the governance of Consecrated Life. Madrid: Claretianas, 2020.

Texts for Prayer and Meditation: Const. 91-103; *Communicanda* 2 (2019); Mk 10: 35-45.

e) *The Lay faithful associated with our mission: Men, Women and Young People*

32. As consecrated men and women, we cannot forget the laity and the young people, for they are an important light on our life's journey. We have to admit that their participation in our Redemptorist life is still scarce. For us, “the formation of the laity and the evangelisation of professional and intellectual groups constitute an important pastoral challenge” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, #. 102). *What is preventing us from working more effectively with the laity? What obstacles must we overcome? What elements of our consecrated life can we share with the laity and what elements of their life can help us to live our consecration and mission? What contribution can we as Redemptorists make, starting from Moral Theology, to the formation of the consciences of our laity? What steps do we as consecrated people need to take to insert ourselves better into the world of young people? How have we dealt with generational differences in our religious and pastoral communities? What lessons can we learn from the more experienced and current generations in terms of living consecrated life and missionary experience?*

Texts for Prayer and Meditation: Const. 43, *Evangelii Gaudium*, # 102-107; *Christifideles laici*, #. 9-17.

f) *The Vocation of the Redemptorist Brother*

33. The Congregation is made up of priests and brothers. Vocation promotion cannot refer only to priests, but must present the beauty of both vocations. If a candidate has the vocation to be a brother, he cannot be forced to be ordained. His vocation does not belong to the major superior or the formator. He must be respected in his vocation in this regard. In this sense, the brother's vocation makes us reflect on our pastoral outreach. We have to think of a pastoral ministry that goes beyond the sacramental sphere, free from all clericalism and that opens space for the brother's vocation. The priesthood is not a power, but a ministry (service) and must be shared with our confreres in what they can do. We must fight clericalism, which alienates people from the Church and gradually kills Gospel values. *Has vocation promotion in the (Vice) Province featured the Redemptorist Brother? How has formation worked in welcoming Brother candidates? How does the brother's vocation challenge our understanding of priestly ministry and service to the Church? Do I feel that my vocation as a Redemptorist is better defined by the priesthood or by my religious consecration?*

Texts for Prayer and Meditation: Letter of the Superior General on the Brother's Vocation (Prot. N.: 0000 193/2022, 16 October 2022)⁸, Document of the Commission for Brothers (2020).

⁸ <https://www.cssr.news/2022/10/fr-rogerio-gomes-writes-about-the-vocation-of-the-religious-brother/>

g) *Spirituality as the Fount of our Light*

34. Our consecration must be nourished by a spiritual life. It is fundamental to sustain our journey as consecrated men and women, our perseverance⁹ and our mission. What will we proclaim to the People of God if we do not drink from the fountain of the Lord? “Redemptorist spirituality is inherently missionary. In experiencing God's love and mercy, the Redemptorist is driven to bring everyone to God's love.”¹⁰ This is why care for both personal and community spiritual life is essential. The cultivation of the spiritual life is not an accident for us; it must begin very early in our houses of formation and end with our final encounter with the Lord. With regard to this dimension of our Redemptorist life, we can ask ourselves: *How do I cultivate personal mysticism? Does the community in which I live have space for spiritual deepening? Is there community prayer in my Redemptorist community? Are there retreats? Are there retreats for confreres in the (Vice) Province? Why is it that when our formandi arrive in our houses of formation they are assiduous in prayer and when they finish their formation, they do not have the same motivation? How can we intensify our personal and community spiritual life? What are the foundational biblical texts of my Redemptorist vocation?*

⁹ Cf. CIVCSVA. *Il dono della fedeltà e la gioia della perseveranza*. Manete in dilectione mea (Gv 15,9). Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020. (*The Gift of Fidelity and the Joy of Perseverance. Remain in my love*).

¹⁰ CATALÁ, Felix. *Spirituality*. In: WALES, Sean, BILLY, Dennis. *Lexicon of Redemptorist Spirituality*. Rome, 2011, p. 273.

Texts for Prayer and Meditation: Const. 23-33; 40-42. St. 038-039; *Final Document of the XXVI General Chapter*, # 29-39; Jer 1:4-12; Jn 3:1-15; Jn 4:1-26; Lk 24:13-35.



Conclusion

35. *Redemptorist consecrated life is not dead.* It is a flame that shines brightly, resisting the storms: the lack of vocation, the lack of credibility in the Church, the indifference in today's world, the difficulty of responding to the new problems of today, the internal and community fragmentation and our lack of witness. *But the light that shines in us is that of the Redeemer. Therefore, even if we have our contradictions, it will not be extinguished. What we should never do is to hide this divine light lest it disturb us and we become children of darkness* (cf. 1 Thess 5:5; Jn 8:12).
36. *Redemptorist religious life is worth the effort!* If we have come this far, it is because, from St. Alphonsus until today, so many have given and are giving their lives for this cause! They are radiating their light so that the world may be enlightened. We must acknowledge our elderly and sick confreres who, in their beds, bound to the cross of the Lord, continue to radiate their light by the witness of their lives and so strengthen us in our mission (cf. Const. 55). To each of you dear confreres who is a ray of light contributing from your Redemptorist being and work, thank you very much for your generous "Yes". We wish you 'Courage' in your vocation and 'Perseverance'! We invite you to *Share with young people the beauty of your vocation and missionary enthusiasm. Keep ever in yourself the living flame of the Redeemer, who will always give you the gift of missionary ardour!*
37. THANK YOU, dear confreres, for the gift of your consecration! THANK YOU, dear Formandi, for your

desire, search and discernment to be a Redemptorist missionary! And THANK YOU to the Lay Associates in our mission, to the Oblates and to the whole Redemptorist Family for being a stimulating, evangelising, joyful and enlightening presence in our mission! May our Saints, Blessed, Martyrs and Venerables, together with the Mother of God, help us to be Missionaries of Hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer to “embrace the future with hope”¹¹ in our Congregation renewed by the light of the Spirit and by the missionary availability manifested by each confrere.

Fraternally in Christ the Redeemer, Light of the World.

Fr. Rogério Gomes, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

Fr. Francis Stanula, C.Ss.R.
Vicario General

Fr. Ivel Mendanha, C.Ss.R.
Consultor General

Fr. Jairo Díaz, C.Ss.R.
Consultor General

Fr. Paul Vinh, C.Ss.R.
Consultor General

¹¹ Cf. CENCINI, Amedeo. *Abbracciare il futuro con speranza*. Il domani della vita consacrata. Milano: Paoline, 2018. (*Embrace the Future with Hope. The Tomorrow of Consecrated Life*).

Bro. Larry Luján, C.Ss.R.
Consultor General

Fr. Nicolás Ayouba, C.Ss.R.
Consultor General

Rome, 2nd February 2024
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Original: *Spanish*





CONGREGATIONIS SS. REDEMPTORIS