

Homily on the Occasion of the Opening of the Redemptorist Spirituality Course

Dear participants of the Redemptorist Spirituality Course, dear confreres, and our Redemptorist lay missionary,

1. Today we celebrate the **Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. It is especially meaningful that we officially open this Spirituality Course on this day, here in the **Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help**, where the original icon is enshrined. We are gathered under the loving and welcoming gaze of our Mother, who receives each of you into her home. Welcome to all!
2. The Feast of Mary's Nativity is celebrated in both the Eastern and Western Churches as the dawn of salvation. Daughter of Joachim and Anne, Mary represents the new humanity prepared by God to receive the Word made flesh (cf. Gal 4:4). Her birth already announces the mystery of the Incarnation. Just as the Temple welcomed the glory of God, Mary became the living temple in whom the Son of God assumed our human nature. Therefore, her birth reveals the fulfillment of God's loving plan and anticipates the light of redemption offered to all humanity (cf. Is 9:1; Lk 2:30–32).
3. The readings proposed for today shed profound light on the mystery we celebrate. The prophet Micah (cf. Mic 5:1–4) announces that from Bethlehem, small among the towns of Judah, will come the One who will shepherd Israel and bring peace. The Gospel (cf. Mt 1:1–16, 18–23), presenting the genealogy of Jesus, shows how this promise is fulfilled in the concrete history of humanity and finds in Mary, from her very birth, the image of a new humanity ready to welcome God's plan.
4. In Mary, the promise becomes flesh. She becomes the dawn of a new creation, the place where God definitively enters human history to fulfill His covenant and offer salvation to all. As we contemplate the birth of the one who would become the Mother of the Savior, we too are invited to recognize that God continues to prepare paths of hope and salvation, making use of the humility, simplicity, and openness of those who allow His Word to dwell within them.
5. **Dear confreres and our Redemptorist lay missionary**, over these next three weeks you begin a beautiful journey—indeed, an experience of returning to the sources, though not in the sense of visiting an archaeological museum. Rather, it means reconnecting with the origins of our Congregation, discovering the places where **St. Alphonsus** experienced God deeply, contemplated the reality of the poorest and most abandoned of his time, allowed himself to be touched by their suffering, and came to understand that God was calling him to offer a concrete response. From that experience of God and encounter with the abandoned was born the **Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer**.
6. For this reason, the Spirituality Course is much more than a time of study. It is a lived experience of a praying Redemptorist community, in which each of you is called to renew, at the deepest level, your vocational motivations, apostolic zeal, and joy in being Redemptorist. It is a kind of novitiate experience on the move—an experience of detachment—in which each participant is invited to rediscover the personal story of his or her vocation, to be reconciled with oneself and with the journey already traveled, and to give thanks for the call the Lord has extended to walk with Him.
7. In a certain sense, you will walk the physical and spiritual path traced by **St. Alphonsus** and **St. Gerard**. You will tread the ground they walked upon. You will contemplate the landscapes they contemplated. You will stand in the places where they prayed, discerned, suffered, made decisions, encountered the poor, and listened to the voice of God. Therefore, I encourage you

not to pass through these places as tourists. Allow these places to pass through you. Let them touch your personal history and speak once again to your heart, with all the spiritual richness and mystical depth they carry.

8. Dear brothers and sister, this course is truly a pilgrimage into the heart of the charism. Returning to the origins of our Congregation does not simply mean remembering the past; it means reconnecting with the source from which we were born and allowing ourselves to be challenged anew by it. You embraced this charism when you responded to God's call and chose to follow Christ the Redeemer in this missionary family—as priests, brothers, or Redemptorist lay missionaries. Therefore, as you visit the places of our origins, you are also invited to revisit the origins of your own vocation, to rediscover that first call, that passion for mission, that desire to give your life for the sake of **Copiosa Redemptio**—Plentiful Redemption. The charism that the Holy Spirit inspired in St. Alphonsus remains alive in each one of us today.
9. Yet a charism must be continually renewed. It must be prayed, deepened, embodied, and communicated. The charism is sustained by our faith in God and in the action of His Spirit. If we do not believe in it, we will hardly be able to communicate it to others. St. Paul reminds us that “we hold this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor 4:7). The charism is that treasure entrusted to us. It does not belong to us; it has been given as a gift and a grace to be lived and handed on. If we fail to pass it on to future generations, the charism dies with us. If we are here today, it is because other confreres before us received this treasure, experienced it deeply, lived it with faith and passion, and were able to transmit it. Now this treasure is in our hands, and we must share it with others.
10. At the end of this pilgrimage, may each of you once again ask the Lord: **Why did You make me a Redemptorist, or call me to share in this mission? What do You want from me? To whom are You sending me today? Where and with whom do You want me to live and proclaim Plentiful Redemption?**
11. May **Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help**, together with our Redemptorist saints, martyrs, and blessed, accompany this pilgrimage and renew in each of you apostolic fervor, missionary availability, and the joy of following Christ the Redeemer. May you return to your communities and places of mission carrying not only memories of the places you have visited, but a renewed experience of God, of the charism, and of your own vocation. And may you continue to proclaim, by your life and your words, that **with Christ there is plentiful redemption** (cf. Ps 130:7).

Amen.

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

Rome, September 8, 2026

(Translated from Spanish text)