



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE
CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER (REDEMPTORISTS)**

Clementine Hall

Saturday, 1st October 2022

[Multimedia]

Address prepared by the Holy Father

Impromptu address of the Holy Father

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Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I greet with joy all the Redemptorist Missionaries present in the 85 countries in which the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer is active. I also greet those who are on the path of formation, the Redemptorist religious sisters, all the charismatic family and the laity associated with the mission. I greet you with affection and I thank the new Superior General, Father Rogério Gomes, for the words he addressed to me.

To hold a General Chapter is not a canonical formality. It means living a Pentecost, which has the capacity to *make all things new* (cf. *Rev* 21:5). In the Upper Room, Jesus' disciples had doubts, insecurities, fears, they wanted to remain still and protected; but the Spirit who blows where he chooses (cf. *Jn* 3:8) causes them to move, to go out, to go towards the peripheries to bring the *kerygma*, the Good News.

In these days, you are addressing five themes that are important for your Congregation: identity, mission, consecrated life, formation and governance. They are fundamental, intersecting themes, to rethink your charism in the light of the signs of the times. This community discernment is rooted in the capacity of each one of you to seek the mystery of Christ the Redeemer, the reason for your consecration and your service to the men and women who live on the existential peripheries of our history today. It is rooted in the fruitfulness of the Alphonsian charism, like the lymph that nourishes the spiritual life and mission of each one and makes it flourish again. I encourage you to dare, having the Gospel and the Magisterium of the Church as your only boundary. Do not be afraid to take new paths, to dialogue with the world (cf. *Const.* 19), in the light of your rich tradition of moral theology. Do not be afraid to get your hands dirty in the service of those most in need and of the people who do not count.

In your Constitutions there is a very fine expression, where it says that the Redemptorists are ready to face any trial to bring Christ's redemption to all (cf. no. 20). *Availability*. Let us not take this word for granted! It means giving oneself entirely to the mission, with all one's heart, *dies impendere pro redemptis*, unto the final consequences, with a gaze fixed on Jesus, who, "though he was in the form of God [...] emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (*Phil* 2:6-7), and became a good Samaritan, a servant (cf. *Lk* 10:25-37; *Jn* 13:1-15).

Brothers and sisters, the Church and consecrated life are experiencing a unique historical moment, in which they have the possibility of renewing themselves in order to *respond with creative fidelity to the mission of Christ*. This renewal passes through a process of conversion of the heart and mind, of intense *metanoia*, and also through a change of structures. At times we need to break the old jar (cf. *Jn* 4:28), inherited from our traditions, which have carried a great deal of water but have now fulfilled their purpose. And breaking our jars, full of affections, of cultural customs, of stories, is not an easy task; it is painful, but it is necessary if we want to drink the new water that comes from the wellspring of the Holy Spirit, the source of all renewal. Those who remain attached to their own certainties risk falling into the trap of *sclerocardia*, which hinders the action of the Spirit in the human heart. Instead, we must not set obstacles to the renewing action of the Spirit, first and foremost in our hearts and in our lifestyles. Only in this way can we become missionaries of hope!

Your Constitutions state: "The Congregation must adapt its own structure and institutions to its apostolic needs, and adjust them properly to the different character of each particular mission, always in fidelity to the charism of the Congregation" (no. 96). "New wine is for fresh skins" (*Mk* 2:22). "A renewal process that cannot affect and change the structures, in addition to hearts, will not produce real and lasting change... It requires the open-mindedness to imagine prophetic and charismatic ways to live the *sequela* of Christ through suitable, and probably unprecedented, frameworks".[1]

In this process of reimagining and renewing the Congregation, three fundamental pillars must not be forgotten: *the centrality of the mystery of Christ, community life, and prayer*. The witness and teachings of Saint Alphonsus continually remind you to “remain in the love” of the Lord. Without him we can do nothing: remaining in him we bear fruit (cf. *Jn 15:1-9*). The abandonment of community life and prayer is the door to sterility in consecrated life, the death of the charism and closure towards brethren. Instead, docility to the Spirit of Christ drives you to *evangelize the poor*, following the proclamation of the Redeemer in the synagogue of Nazareth (cf. *Lk 4:14-19*), made tangible in the congregation by Saint Alphonsus Maria de’ Liguori. This mission, carried forward by your saints, martyrs, blessed and venerables, leads the Redemptorists throughout the world to give their life for the Gospel and to write stories of redemption on the pages of our time.

I wish the new General Government, the first body to inspire apostolic life of the Congregation, humility, unity, wisdom and discernment to guide your Institute in this beautiful and challenging moment in our history. The work is of the Lord, we are only servants who have done what we had to do (cf. *Lk 17:10*). Those who appropriate the leadership function for personal interest do not serve the Lord who washed the disciples’ feet but the idols of worldliness and selfishness.

Dear brothers, I entrust your Congregation to the protection of the Mother of Perpetual Help, that she may always accompany you as she accompanied her Son at the foot of the cross (cf. *Jn 19:25*). You are not alone, beloved and cherished children. I pray the Lord that you may be faithful and persevering in your mission, never forgetting the poorest and most abandoned whom you serve, and to whom you proclaim the Good News of the Redemption. From my heart I bless you, the sisters and the lay faithful who share your charism. And I ask you to please pray for me. Thank you!

[1] Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, *New Wine in New Wineskins*. The consecrated life and its ongoing challenges since Vatican II (6 January 2017), no. 3.

Impromptu speech to participants in the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer

I would like to say a few more words spontaneously. To go on mission, to go out on mission, that is, the missionary dimension which you mentioned in your speech. I was struck by a phrase you said: “leaving your comfort zones and going on mission”. I wonder, what are the comfort zones that a Congregation has, that a province has, that a community has and that each one of us has? Ask yourselves this question, because it has been said that each person accommodates the vows

as he pleases. And then, one can practise poverty with a bank account, one can practise chastity with a companion, and one can practise obedience by talking and deciding whatever one wants. These are very distorted forms. But what always produces a distortion in the three vows is comfort. That is where the evil comes in, by trying to be comfortable, to be at ease, to live a bourgeois life, without going out on mission, and going on mission, and going on mission. Each one of us should analyse our own temptation of comfort. We all have that temptation. We all have that temptation.

Just now, for example, when they told me: “There are many priests you have to go and talk to”, I thought: “Ugh, I want to go to lunch...”. Comfort, right? [laughs]. I mean, we all have the temptation of comfort, but each one of us has it “with their own first and last name”. Look for the root of comfort in each one of you, and that will help you to detach yourselves and look out to the horizon of the mission. A Redemptorist without this horizon of mission, even if he has to sit at a desk all his life, has no meaning. The horizon of the mission. And, for that, the ability to leave one’s comfort zone. So, I suggest that, as a fruit of this Chapter, in your prayer during these days, each one of you ask yourself: “How am I tied down, what is my comfort zone, that which does not allow me to be free, that prevents me from flying?”. Try to answer this question.

The second thing that characterizes Redemptorists is that they are moral teachers, and I thank them for that. Above all, I want to thank the *Alphonsianum* here in Rome. I think the Rector is here.... He is not here. Give him my regards, because I wanted to tell him that he is doing very well, very well. You are rendering a service to a mature, serious, Catholic moral theology. And at an impressive level, a very high academic level. So, I thank you, as well as the Father General, that this Institute continues to help the Church. Teachers of morals, but also teachers of morals in the children’s catechism, in the confessionals...

That people understand what is right and what is wrong, that they know that God’s mercy covers everything; but that they know what is right and what is wrong, because one thing is God’s mercy, and another thing is “*manganchismo*”, being indulgent, saying “everything is fine”... not distinguishing, not having a moral culture — that is so important, without reductionism. Today, with great sadness, we have to say that there are commandments that are not fulfilled, that are not upheld, in the face of these social injustices that exist. For example: people who squander their money on travel, tourism, parties, luxury restaurants; and people who do not have enough to eat a loaf of bread. So, there is an immorality of thought there. The Eighth Commandment, who fulfils it today? Nowadays, if one can cheat others, take away what is fair, underpay them... fair wages — there are increasingly less of them. How many jobs are lacking! People accept whatever they can get. In other words, they go against justice, against the truth. Please, teach strong morals there, continue doing so. Apply your conscience. And also all the commandments. Idolatry, for example, what is it? “No, I do not worship any idol”. You are full of idols, but you teach: “This is idolatry”.

I tell you to continue with this because you are doing it, and very well, but don’t forget that you are

formators of conscience. This is what I mean: formators of moral conscience. And this is a charisma that you have, that you inherited from the Founder, who dedicated himself to these things as well, among others.

I thank you for what you do for the Church, truly. I thank you from the depths of my soul. I thank you for your 13 years here... To survive in Rome is not easy! And when you are struggling a bit, drink a little *cachaça* to lift your spirits (laughs).

Now, I want to give you my blessing.

After the Blessing, the Holy Father continued:

And do not forget to ponder: “what is my comfort zone?”...

L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English, 14 October 2022