



CONGREGATIO SS. REDEMPTORIS

Superior Generalis

Prot. N.: 0000 191/2026

Rome, 1st August 2026

Feast of St Alphonsus Liguori

Missionaries of Hope in the Footsteps of the Redeemer

YEAR DEDICATED TO LEADERSHIP AT THE SERVICE OF THE MISSION

Guiding, Animating, Caring and Reconciling: Leadership as Fraternal Service to the Mission of the Redeemer

Texts for personal or communal meditation: Wis 9:13–18; Ez 34:1–16; Ps 23; Mk 10:42–45; Jn 10:1–18; Jn 13:1–15; Jn 17:1–26; Lk 10:25–37; Lk 15:11–32; Acts 15:6–28; Rom 12:5–10; 1 Pt 5:2–5; 1 Cor 1:10–13; Constitutions 91–144; General Statutes 086–0208; *Pastoral Guide for Superiors; Communicanda* 2/2019.

DEAR CONFRERES, FORMANDI AND OUR REDEMPTORIST FAMILY,

1. During this Year dedicated to reflecting on leadership within the Congregation, the life of St Alphonsus offers us profound insights into the true meaning of authority especially as we prepare to elect the confreres who will be entrusted with animating the apostolic life of our Redemptorist Family
2. The Latin word *auctoritas* derives from *auctor*, the one who causes growth, the architect, the founder. Its root lies in the verb *augere*, meaning "to make grow," "to foster," or "to promote life." *Exercising authority, therefore, is not simply a matter of governing; it means helping persons, communities and the mission to grow and to become places where life flourishes according to God's plan. For this reason, authority must always be enlightened by the wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit (cf. Wis 9:13–18).*
3. When we contemplate the life of our Founder, a man of flesh and blood, with his frailties, his virtues, his continual conversion, his profound intimacy with the Redeemer and his tireless pastoral zeal, we recognise the authenticity of his authority as a man of faith, as Founder and Doctor of the Church. *His authority did not stem simply from being the Founder, nor from the offices he held throughout his life, but from the coherence*



between the Gospel he proclaimed and the life he lived. His fidelity to God's will, lived out in service to the poorest and most abandoned, made St Alphonsus an enduring point of reference for both the Church and our Congregation.

4. From an early age, Alphonsus had the opportunity to study both civil and canon law, thanks to his family's comfortable circumstances and, above all, to his remarkable dedication to his studies. He also cultivated many gifts, excelling in painting, music, literature and the arts. As a lawyer, he earned widespread esteem for his competence and integrity. When he became convinced in his conscience that human justice was vulnerable to corruption and falsehood, he had the courage to abandon a promising career. *His example reveals an authority rooted in inner freedom, in the harmony between conviction and action, and in unwavering fidelity to the truth, the Gospel and to justice.* While still a young man, he drew up for himself a brief code of ethics to guide his professional life.
5. Even before his priestly ordination, St Alphonsus encountered Christ in the suffering of the patients at the Hospital of the Incurables. As a missionary, he allowed himself to be evangelised by the poor and the abandoned. From the very beginning of his priestly ministry, he devoted himself to the apostolate among the *lazzaroni* of Naples, drawing close to those living on the human and spiritual peripheries. Through the *Cappelle Serotine*, he gathered lay people, workers and families for prayer, catechesis and Christian formation. In schools and houses of formation, he exercised a fruitful ministry of spiritual accompaniment. His popular missions throughout the Kingdom of Naples and, above all, his experience between 1730 and 1732 in Scala and the villages of the Amalfi Coast, especially at *Santa Maria dei Monti*, led him to discover the profound spiritual abandonment of the rural population and confirmed his call to found a missionary community dedicated to those who were most abandoned. *His missionary experience gave him an authority born of compassion, attentive listening and pastoral closeness. Like the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25–37), he made himself neighbour to those wounded by life. Like the Good Shepherd, he sought the lost sheep, bound up the wounded and cared for the weak (cf. Ez 34:11–16; Jn 10:1–18).*
6. Faced with the challenges of his time and moved by the plight of the poor goatherds living in profound abandonment, St Alphonsus founded the Congregation after a long journey of discernment, guided also by Tommaso Falcoia and Maria Celeste Crostarosa, and sustained by intense prayer and the constant invocation of the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Virgin Mary. *In his vision, this work of evangelisation was never intended to exist for its own sake, but to become a missionary community proclaiming the Plentiful Redemption to those who were most spiritually abandoned. As Founder, he exercised authority by opening new paths of evangelisation sustained by prayer. As a spiritual father, he sought, through the means available in his time, to foster vocations, form missionaries and safeguard the unity of the Institute. Significantly, our Constitutions remind us that those entrusted with the service of authority are called to promote unity, shared responsibility, communal discernment and fidelity*



to the charism, so that the whole Congregation may remain faithful and ever ready for the mission (cf. Const. 91–144).

7. St Alphonsus's authority is also evident in the development of a moral vision that continues to enlighten the life of the Church today. In an age marked by both rigorism and laxism, he charted the path of evangelical prudence by proclaiming God's boundless mercy, placing the dignity of the human person at the centre, and fostering the formation of conscience. *His moral theology was born not primarily from academic speculation but from listening to penitents, missionary experience, and his ardent zeal for the salvation of souls. For this reason, his teaching has endured through the centuries and remains strikingly relevant today, offering sound principles for both moral and pastoral discernment. St Alphonsus's authority lies not only in the depth of his teaching but also in his remarkable ability to unite truth and charity, justice and mercy, fidelity to the Gospel and compassionate concern for human frailty. As we reflect on this dimension of his life, we Redemptorist missionaries are challenged to ask ourselves: How can we make present today the authority of our Founder in order to build bridges within an increasingly fragmented and polarised society, a reality that is also reflected in the life of the Church? The moral authority of our Founder invites us to seek paths of dialogue and reconciliation in these troubled times, becoming authentic artisans of hope and unity.*

8. In obedience to the Pope, Alphonsus accepted the episcopal ministry. *As a Bishop, he exercised his pastoral office with simplicity, generosity and a genuine spirit of service.* Even amid many difficulties, he never ceased to care for the people entrusted to him. During times of famine, he did not hesitate to sell his own possessions in order to assist the poor and the abandoned, *bearing witness to the truth that authentic authority is expressed through concrete charity and the gift of self.*

9. In recognition of the enduring value of Alphonsus's legacy, Pope Pius IX proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church on 23 March 1871, acknowledging both the eminence of his doctrine (*eminens doctrina*) and the outstanding holiness of his life (*insignis vitae sanctitas*). *As a Doctor of the Church, he continues to exercise an authority that transcends the centuries, for his teaching continues to enlighten the Church's conscience with the wisdom of the Gospel, especially through a moral theology deeply rooted in God's mercy and pastoral benignity. Just as the Father welcomes the prodigal son with boundless mercy (cf. Lk 15:11–32), St Alphonsus taught that the supreme law of Christian life is God's redeeming love, always ready to raise up those who have fallen. He reminds us that Christian authority is measured not by the power one possesses but by the capacity to generate life, foster communion, reconcile people, inspire the mission, and care for one's brothers and sisters. Authority born of the Gospel is always service, never privilege.*

10. As we contemplate the life of our Founder and a world so often marked by the pursuit of prestige, competition and self-centredness, *we are challenged to ask ourselves: What kind of authority do I exercise as a baptised Christian and as a Redemptorist missionary,*



priest or brother? Does my leadership guide, animate, care for and reconcile? Is it truly an expression of fraternal service to the mission of the Redeemer, with all that this entails? In the light of St Alphonsus's witness, we are called to exercise an authority that helps people to grow, strengthens communion, awakens hope and places every gift at the service of the mission.

11. Dear confreres, Redemptorist Bishops, formandi, sisters and lay collaborators in the Redemptorist mission, as we celebrate the Feast of St Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, let us turn our gaze to the one whom the Holy Spirit raised up as the Founder of our Congregation and a sure guide along the path of the Gospel. *To celebrate St Alphonsus is to renew our trust in the Redeemer and to rediscover the missionary dynamism that continues to inspire our vocation. As our first Constitution reminds us, we are called to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by proclaiming the Good News to the poor and the most abandoned (cf. Const. 1–5). St Alphonsus strengthens us in this commitment.*

12. *Let us ask St Alphonsus to teach us to exercise every ministry of authority as a true ministry of communion, always at the service of the Redeemer's mission.* May he obtain for us the grace to be Missionaries of Hope, capable of fostering life, strengthening our communities and proclaiming with joy and credibility the Plentiful Redemption wherever we are sent. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Divine Shepherdess, accompany and sustain each one of us in the mission to guide, animate, care for and reconcile, living leadership as an authentic expression of fraternal service to the mission of her Son, our Redeemer.

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Happy Feast of St Alphonsus to you all!

Fraternally,



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

Superior General

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