



Missionaries of Hope in the Footsteps of the Redeemer

Rome, November 9 2022

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Anniversary of the Foundation of the Congregation

Confreres,

Frs. Zdzislaw (Francisco) Stanula, Paul Vinh, Nicolás Ayoubá,
Ivel Mendanha, Jairo Díaz, Bro. Larry Lujan and Fr. Rogério Gomes,

TO,

All Confreres,

Congregations and Institutes that are part of the Redemptorist Family,

The Redemptoristine Nuns,

To our brother Redemptorist Bishops,

To Aspirants, Postulants, Novices and Juniors,

To our Lay Associates and Oblates,

To young Redemptorist Missionaries,

And to Groups of ex Redemptorist Seminarians.

1. This November 9th, the Congregation celebrates its 290th anniversary. During the course of its history, through various joys and sorrows, it has been restructured, at other times, it has expanded, thanks to the availability and courage of so many confreres, and it has never ceased to proclaim the Gospel. *This faithfulness proves that the work is of the Spirit!* And if so, it will continue towards that end as an eschatological reality consummated at the end of history, in the profound divine mystery. Our saints, blessed, martyrs and we will be happy, because the Congregation has succeeded in becoming what we are today, in the footsteps of the Redeemer, with missionaries who always proclaim hope in its deepest sense, redemption. Alphonsus would not recognise the work he founded if it came to an end through the omission of its members. Therefore, *this day should be a great feast to recall our pride in being Redemptorists, without being self-referential, narcissistic, and also to remember with grateful memory those who preceded us and who are now with the Father. The Congregation lives!*
2. It is true that the Congregation is going through difficult times due to the lack of vocations, to ageing, to the weakening of our missionary dynamism, to the lack of credibility due to the actions of some confreres which are contrary to the Gospel. These realities raise the question of how we can re-imagine ourselves with realism, lucidity, humility, self-esteem and moral authority in the face of these thorns in our flesh. However, *this is not a reason*



to become discouraged, paralysed and declare our premature death. It is the today of our history that we must live! Even in this scenario, we must always remain "missionaries of Hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer". We must respond to this reality using our greatest resources.

3. *The centrality of our life in the Redeemer gives us hope and brings us back to a sense of witness. We must continue to cast our nets even in rough seas and dark nights. For this, it is fundamental not to forget that the Redeemer is in our boat, even if he is asleep in the bow (cf. Lk 5,1-11; Mk 4,35-41). To improve the quality of our fraternal life in community, our affectivity, our spiritual life by valuing our rich and dense spirituality, our consecration, our availability to the service of people, our witness of life, to believe in ourselves, to work with other congregations and with the laity! These are fundamental instruments for our fishing.*
4. Despite the challenges we have to face, with courage and creativity, the Congregation remains faithful to the Spirit that impels it to share the foundational charism through the different missionary works that we carry out as *missionaries of hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer*: Popular Missions, Vocations Ministry and Formation, Social Communications Media, Research and Teaching, Parishes and Shrines, Retreats and Preaching, Justice and Peace, Schools and Colleges, Youth Ministry, among many others. Therein lies the beauty of our charism, which is not centred on ourselves, but is translated into the proclamation of the copious apud eum redemptio and the following of the Redeemer, as a missionary body, in cooperation with the Church, with adequate knowledge and experience of the world and missionary dialogue with cultures (cf. Const. 2, 19).
5. *The Congregation cannot lose its missionary dynamism (cf. Const. 13-17), that is, the missionary daring and the extraordinary character of our mission, going where others have not yet gone. Pope Francis, in his spontaneous address to the Chapter Capitulars, challenged us in this sense: "To go on mission, to go out on mission, that is, the missionary dimension, which you mentioned in your address. [...] Leave your comfort zones and go on mission. I ask myself, what are the comfort zones that a Congregation has, that a Province has, that a Community has and that each one of us has? [...] Look for the root of comfort in each one of you, and that will help you to detach yourselves and to look at the horizon of the mission. A Redemptorist without this horizon of mission is not comprehensible, even if he has to sit at a desk all his life. And, for that, the ability to step out of one's comfort zone. So I suggest that, as a fruit of this Chapter, in your prayer during these days, each one of you should ask yourselves: "In what am I tied down, what is my comfort zone, that which does not allow me to be free, which does not allow me to fly? Try to answer that question."¹ We must also ask ourselves whether we are moving towards the geographical and existential peripheries or whether we are moving in the opposite direction, focusing on the centre.*
6. In this sense, restructuring and reconfiguration help us to experience *kenosis, distacco*. The words of the Pope in his written address to the Capitulars enlighten us: "[...] the Church and

¹ <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2022/october/documents/20221001-redentoristi.html>



consecrated life are living a unique historical moment in which they have the opportunity to renew themselves in order *to respond with creative fidelity to the mission of Christ*. This renewal passes through a process of conversion of heart and mind, of intense metanoia, and also through a change of structures. Sometimes we have to break the old vessels (cf. Jn 4:28), inherited from our traditions, which have borne much water, but which have already fulfilled their function. And so, to break our vessels, full of affections, of cultural customs, of histories, is not an easy task, it is painful but necessary, if we want to drink the new water that flows from the fountain of the Holy Spirit, the source of all renewal. Those who remain attached to their own securities run the risk of falling into a *rigidity*, which impedes the action of the Spirit in the human heart. On the contrary, we must not put obstacles in the way of the Spirit's renewing action, first of all in our hearts and in our way of life. Only in this way will we become missionaries of hope."

7. Missionaries of hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer! We do not do this alone, in isolation, but as a missionary body involving the Redemptorist family, the congregations which have links with us through the charism and the laity associated with our mission "called personally by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission for the Church and the world" (*Christifideles laici*, n. 2). This is the future of the Congregation that we must envision on the horizon with great joy, enthusiasm, missionary dynamism and in dialogue and collaboration with others.
8. Dear confreres, congratulations to each of you on the 290th anniversary of the Congregation! *Each one of you, in your missionary work, is part of the construction of our history. To those who have gone before us, our gratitude. To those up and coming Redemptorists, to our young people, to those who seek us out and to those who are in formation, do not be afraid to spend your lives for redemption (dies impendere pro redemptis)*. Forward! The Lord walks with us and the Spirit shows us the way in this moment of history that God has given us. Let us not be afraid!

In the name of the General Council,

Fraternally in the Redeemer,

Rogério Gomes, C.Ss.R.

P. Rogério Gomes, C.Ss.R.

Superior General

