



Missionaries of Hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer

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The Confreres,
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WISH

To all the Confreres,
To the Congregations and Institutes that are part of the Redemptorist Family,
To the Redemptoristine Nuns,
To our brother Redemptorist Bishops,
To the Aspirants, Postulants and Novices,
To the lay women and men associated with our mission and to the Redemptorist Oblates,
To the Redemptorist Missionary Youth,
And to the groups of former Redemptorist Seminarians.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

1. The year 2022 is coming to a close! A challenging year at every level, but also a year of learning for all of us. Living with the insecurity left by the pandemic, with the horrors of war and violence spread around the world, and with the uncertainty of the future, seems to frighten us. We are human, we yearn for safety and security. But this is not a reason to be discouraged. Every Redemptorist missionary has tried, in his own way, to encourage his flock in the various apostolic works he has done. This should fill us with joy and pride, not because of our own self-referentiality, but to be aware that we can do much more and do it better. *The Redemptorist is always restless because of his missionary dynamism founded on the Redeemer. And when we become comfortable, it is because we are losing this call. We must recover it!*
2. In spite of our uncertainties, the Holy Spirit does not leave us alone. We have had the experience of Pentecost through the XXVI General Chapter which gave us 5 themes to deepen during the sexennium: our identity, our mission, our consecrated



life, our formation and our Redemptorist leadership. The Chapter concluded by offering us the theme of the sexennium: *Missionaries of Hope, following in the footsteps of the Redeemer. What does this mean for each one of us individually and communally? How do we communicate this Hope that has its source in the Redeemer and that leads us to walk with Him?*

3. In this intertwining of events, we celebrate Christmas, a reality that deeply touches the mystery of Redemption and our hope. *Paradoxically, the Child of Bethlehem takes upon himself all the frailties of the world and communicates new life, the smile of God for humanity. He conveys Hope in the human being, choosing by free Will and supreme love to be one of us.* “Oh Incarnate Word, who became man to Kindle divine love in our hearts, how could you then find so much ignorance in the hearts of men? You spared nothing to make them love you, you went so far as to give blood and life; and how then are men so ungrateful to you? Perhaps they do not know? Yes, they know, and they believe, that for this you came from heaven, to clothe yourself in human flesh and to take upon yourself our miseries? (S. Alfonso María de Liguori. *Christmas Novena*. Disc. I. Coloquio). This profound Mystery challenges our faith and makes us take a step further: to believe in the human being, in spite of one’s contradictions. It makes us believe that, despite the evil in the world, good prevails. Therefore, humanity has a future, and it is up to us today to make our *kenosis* from our consecration and from the Gospel that we preach. *For us Redemptorists, to celebrate Christmas is to remember (to take to heart) the profound dimension of our spirituality!*
4. We begin the coming year 2023 with the strength of the Redeemer, born in the cave of Bethlehem, and with his Mother Mary, Our Perpetual Help. What awaits us? Hope! Hope is like a mother: tender, she tells us stories, she makes us dream, she knows how to say “no”, she cuts the umbilical cord of illusion and makes us walk with our own feet. Even when we fall, she does not abandon us but makes us dream and prepare for the future as adults. Hope does not deceive us! Therefore, *I would like to invite each confrere, all the formandi and lay people who are part of the mission to pray, meditate and put into practice the motto of the sexennium: “Missionaries of hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer”, together with the themes treated in the Chapter: our identity our mission, our consecrated life, formation and Redemptorist leadership.* With Spirit-filled enthusiasm, let us cast our nets into deeper waters in obedience to the Word of the Lord (cf. Lc 5, 4).
5. *If we want to give a hopeful face to the Congregation, it depends on each one of us. And everything depends on personal openness and teamwork. We are a single missionary body (cf. Const. 2), with our differences that enrich us, who dream and work together towards a single goal: the proclamation of Redemption to the abandoned. And what will we proclaim if we do not have the Hope that comes from the Gospel? What witness will we give if we are not able to work together? What words of Hope will we say if we do not believe in what we preach?*



The Lord calls us to begin the year by making our kenosis and giving the best of ourselves in our work, in our community and with the People of God!

6. Finally, in the New Year the process of restructuring and reconfiguration takes shape with the inauguration of new provinces. *In the midst of all this is the Spirit who guides the Congregation. He is faithful and will follow each confrere in this process. But this process is not a mere forming of structures. If it were, there would be much more efficient means, as the business world does. For us it is a spiritual process: exodus, Easter, incarnation, kenosis, distacco, Eucharist, conversion of heart and mentality, obedience to the Spirit which is manifested in the halls of our general and provincial chapters and, finally, feeling with the Church and making with her, as a congregation and consecrated life, our synodal journey. The Lord walks with us, even if we do not see him. What we cannot do is to lose the ability to let our hearts burn...* (cf. Lc 24, 32).
7. May St. Alphonsus help us to understand the profound dimension of Christmas and with Mary, Mother of Hope, Our Perpetual Help, may we begin a new year and a sexennium blessed by the Lord of the Harvest and Shepherd of the Flock who walks with us and is the reason for our service to the most abandoned. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all!

Fraternally, in Christ the Redeemer,



Rogério Gomes, C.S.S.R.

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Superior General