

C.Ss.R.

PIRITUALITY

ONE BODY (Eph 4,4)

UN SOLO CORPO (Ef 4,4)

UN SEUL CORPS (Eph 4,4)

UN SOLO CUERPO (Eph 4, 4)

JEDNA WSPÓLNOTA (Ef 4,4)

UM SÓ CORPO (Ef 4,4)

EIN LEIB (Eph 4,4)

ΕΙΝ ΓΕΙΒ (Εφ 4,4)

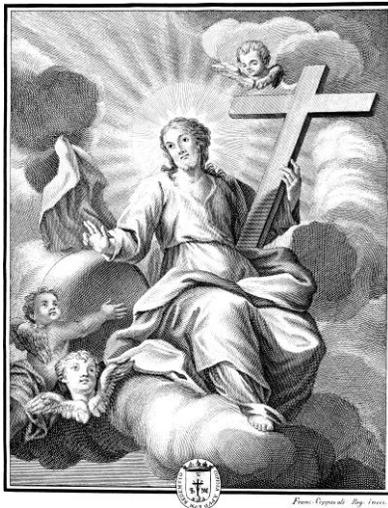
02-THE GOSPEL, THAT IS JESUS CHRIST

In a suitable prominent position place the Image of Christ, if possible that of the Redeemer or the Crucifixion of St. Alphonsus. Then after a hymn the President greets those present. This is followed by a prayer taken from the liturgy or a Redemptorist traditional one.

Encountering the Redeemer

Starting afresh from Christ: Consecrated life began the third millennium with this commitment. Has Christ become more familiar in our lives since? Has it been beneficial for our missions?

'Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with



an event, a Person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction' (*Deus caritas est* 1) said Benedict XVI. In the Aparecida document we read: 'the best possible gift a person can receive is to know Jesus; to have encountered him is the greatest thing that can happen in one's life and to make him known by our words and actions is a source of joy for us' (No. 29).

Some phrases are destined to become empty slogans. We repeat them, we preach them but they do not always have any effect. In this case we take it for granted to have encountered Jesus Christ. But how and when? Do his words open up new perspectives for me today?

As I look back over the years there were days in which the gospel seemed a rock on which to build my life. Perhaps a friend, a book, a Redemptorist, a catechist or some experience were occasions which made me realise that Jesus was speaking to me in different ways. Then one day I saw all this clearly and left all to follow him. I decided to give him a hand in making more abundant his redemption. And now here I am with my resolutions more or less kept, my delusions and my sins. Above all there is the desire to start again with him once again, who knows.

'No one has ever seen God' (1Jn. 4, 12). Who sees Jesus sees the Father (Jn. 14, 9). If life is a search for the face of God then friendship with Christ is vital as it puts us on the right road. At a distance from Christ we will find many other paths to follow. 'Do you also want to go away?' (Jn. 6, 67).

As missionaries we continually run the risk of preaching the Gospel as good news for others without it producing any joy or beauty in our own life. We can make Christ the object of our pastoral work but not really a friend with whom we share all day long.

Your Word is a light for my steps

We may introduce the reading of Jn. 15, 1-5 with a hymn.

If desired there may be a sharing on this excerpt. Here we point out simply:

- **The context** is the last supper. In John the washing of the feet, the image of the vine and the loving words of Jesus take the place of the institution of the Eucharist, but at the same time show its real significance. The 'sap' that passes from the vine to the branches is **the gift of self**. We might describe this as the raw material of our communion with Jesus and at the same time the condition for bearing fruit.
- Among the verbs used the one '**to abide**' demands our attention in a particular way. It means to remain or dwell but also recalls the home, the place of our affections and emotions and a refuge where we can be alone. It means sharing with the Son of God our nature as sons. The first time it is used it is in the imperative. Jesus knows that if we are to bear fruit depends on this and that the alternative is barrenness.

Following the sharing there may be a moment of silence and then a hymn.

From our Redemptorist tradition

The way in which Alphonsus de Liguori contacted Jesus Christ marked his life unmistakably and even today is the mark of Redemptorist preaching. The fact that he lost his case and was deceived at the Tribunal of Naples in the summer of 1723, made him grasp Christ for what he is – the truth and consistency of all that exists. Apart from him all is empty and man becomes a wolf towards his fellow man.

As he moved among the poor in the slums of the Capital and in the isolated villages of the Kingdom of Naples Alphonsus saw how **hard life really was** behind false appearances and images.

Administering the sacrament of penance in his first parish in the centre of Naples helped him to understand the central role of **mercy** in the Gospel. And in the Evening Chapels he came to understand the minds of the people and the important role that **love** occupied in the lives of the poor as they faced sacrifices and tried to draw near to God.

In Scala he discovered the really abandoned people and through them he saw the mystery of Christ in a new light as the One who has pitched his tent among us and from which tent, as it were, he went forth to preach. From then on **presence and mission** became the hall mark of the Redemptorist community.

The contemplative aspect of Maria Celeste Crostarosa so decisive in our history and providential for the project Alphonsus was planning had a missionary dimension. It was the living memory for the Redemptoristines and evangelising for the Redemptorists.

The Christ of Alphonsus de Liguori took on new features in our Saints and Blessed. For St. Gerard Majella he is the playful and crucified Christ; He is the Christ who opens up new ways in the case of St. Clement Hofbauer while for St. John Neumann he is the Christ who leaves his native land to follow the emigrants. In Blessed Gennaro Sarnelli Christ is the catechist and friend of the lowest dregs of society. He is the simple and welcoming pastor in Francis Xavier Seelos, the patient formator in Gaspar Stanggassinger, and in Peter Donders, the healer of the lepers. He is the one who challenges the arrogance of the powerful in Dominick Methodius Trčka, Mykolay Charnetsky, Zynoviy Kovalyt, Ivan Ziatyk and in the Redemptorist martyrs of Cuenca soon to be beatified.



A simple rite of veneration of the image of Christ may take place now followed by a hymn.

Constitutions today

Missionary dynamism (Const. 14) is the characteristic of the Redemptorist vocation and makes us follow the example of our Saviour Jesus Christ by preaching the word of God to the poor (Const. 1). Our relationship with Christ is not an end in itself, nor is it merely a kind of intimacy but it is rather in the service of the mission. It is this dynamism that makes us 'helpers, companions and ministers of Jesus Christ in the great work of Redemption' (Const.2).

However this dynamism can become frenzied and ineffectual activity if it is not based on frequent daily contact with Him with whom we are collaborating, if we do not make his person the centre of our life, striving to enter ever more intimately into personal union with Him (Const. 23). We have to ask ourselves seriously what will our community become if we do not put the Redeemer at the heart of it 'with his Spirit of love to form and sustain it' (Const.23).

Between the two extremes of intimacy and activity there is the **apostolic life** which 'comprises at one and the same time a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work' (Const. 1).

Communicanda 2 (1999) said 'our model of evangelising depends on how the people of God are able to recognise Jesus so as to be able to respond to him' (No.18). And it asks how 'is it possible to make Christ the centre of our pastoral activity if he is not at the centre of our existence and at the heart of our communities?'(No. 19).

For my part, it is only when I have experienced Christ as Redeemer truly in my life even in the most obscure and hidden areas of my personal history and my poor flesh that I can say with Job 'I know that my Redeemer lives and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust' (Job 19, 25).

At this stage a fraternal sharing on the subject is possible and perhaps a definite task is undertaken if desired. Then follows a period of silence and a hymn.

Conclusion



It can finish praying together with Alphonsus:

I thank you, Eternal Father for having given me your Son;
And besides you have given everything to me,
I, miserable being, give myself completely to you.
Through love of this same Son,
You accept me and bind me with bonds of love to this my Redeemer
And you my Saviour, you are all mine
Know that I am all yours
Do with me and all that is mine as you wish
And how can I deny anything to a God who has not denied me his blood and his life

Mary, my mother, keep me under your protection.

I no longer wish to belong to myself, I wish totally to belong to my Lord.

You want to make me faithful; I trust in you.

(Meditations for the Christmas Novena, I)

Conclude with an Our Father and a liturgical prayer.

Finally a Blessing and a hymn to Our Lady.



One Body is a monthly text of prayer proposed by the Center for Redemptorist Spirituality
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- Translated by Anthony Mulvey cssr - -

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