

**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 ΛΕΙΒ (Εφ 4,4)

## 05 - OUR BEAUTIFUL HOPE

*It would be a good thing to have a picture of Our Lady in a prominent position.*

*The meeting may begin with a hymn, followed by some words of welcome and a prayer taken from the liturgy or some traditional Redemptorist one.*

### *Bound to hope*

Anyone who reads the Final Message of the XXIV General Chapter will immediately notice one thing: **hope** is the word that recurs most frequently. It seems that the capitulars were more preoccupied with it than with Jesus Christ and the Congregation!

In the last few decades hope has claimed ever more **space** in our life. The North-West of the world is registering the ever-increasing burden of the crisis, a crisis which is economic but not only that. Poor countries cling to hope to escape from the vice-grip of destitution. New countries are emerging on the global stage and claim the role of protagonists.



In the meantime, we Redemptorists have begun to experience **fragility**. For the first time in history we've foreseen the risk of our disappearance in regions from which in the past we went out to found and to evangelize. Our Redemptorist world-map is registering new units: young people who are enthusiastic about living and working for abundant redemption but who have often precarious economic resources and fragile structures.

It is history which compels us to hope, but it's also the **air we breathe**, pervaded as it is by uncertainty and questions. Doubt and provisionality are part of our daily living. The clarifications which made sense of everything have disappeared from our horizon, and we're living off partial truths which are valid for one area but not for another, for today but not for tomorrow.

Nevertheless, even within our 'throwaway' culture we dare to make a vow of **perseverance**. Our choices, even when we don't live them in a radical way, pose a question for the world. The very laity who share our mission and our spirituality register the paradox of a full-time commitment

Renewed hope asks us to take a step **beyond uncertainty**. It calls us to live the personal and community crises as opportunities to choose God anew and with greater authenticity. *"In the absence of teachers, in the society in which we live, crises are the great masters which have something to teach us, and can help us enter into the other dimension, into that depth which gives meaning to life"* (C. Singer).

Thanks to the crisis we can go beyond what 'they say', beyond appearances, to rediscover in a new light that Someone to whom we have dedicated our lives. It's then that hope takes flesh: bringing it about that the **Absent** One par excellence in this world becomes present. And opens new possibilities of life.

### *Your word is a light to my steps*

*An alleluia can precede the proclamation of Mt.8,23-27, a passage in which we find two elements at the basis of hope: trust and fear. Sharing can complete the personal reflection. Just to help it's worth remembering:*

- The **context** throws light on the range of the passage: in the preceding verse Jesus says to one of the disciples who wishes to follow him “let the dead bury their dead”. In the follow-up of the narrative, it's as if he was saying: it's not your father you have to bury but your own fears. Otherwise you won't reach the other shore.
- For the Church and the individual person this passage points to crisis as the *place where faith becomes faith*. And faith begins when it takes death into consideration. A faith which does not look death in the face does not throw light on the truth of the human being. The '*Lord who sleeps*' grants us this grace, among others.

### From the Redemptorist Tradition

There's no doubt but that the foundation of hope for Alphonsus and his first companions is the Redeemer, understood in the sense used by St. John and St. Paul: **logos**, 'meaning of all things', fullness of all that exists, God who in his **kenosis** towards human beings teaches us to love and to live. It's the living Christ, the very principle of new life, who animates missionary zeal and embodies hope.

In this sense we can grasp the importance – which might seem excessive – which **Mary** occupies in the spirituality of Alphonsus. Mary is the luminous reflex of the face of Christ who is mercy. She is the reflection of God who is tenderness. To exalt Mary is to exalt the mad love of God. And when we love we never exaggerate.

The presence of Mary marks the **stages** of the long biography of Alphonsus. It is she who receives his nobleman's sword when he abandons the world. It's the so-called Madonna del de Alteriis who watches over the first monthly retreats of Alphonsus the priest at Naples, and who will be afterwards carried in the missions preached by the Redemptorists. It's Santa Maria ai Monti who shows him the God who became child and word. It's with the Virgin that Alphonsus converses in the grotto at Scala, receiving from her light and comfort. It's our Lady of Good Counsel who watches over his table as writer and Rector Major. Alphonsus frequently painted the picture of Mary or allowed artists of his time to give the image the finishing touch. According to tradition it was before one of these images – the *Spes Salve* reproduced here – that he breathed forth his last. Alphonsus insisted that the sermon on the Madonna should never be omitted on the missions; and no sermon was as effective as this, because the people were deeply moved by it and changed their lives when they heard about the mercy of Mary.



For us Redemptorists, since 1866, the Virgin has acquired another name: our **Lady of Perpetual Help**. A further motive for becoming acquainted through her of the help of God and struggling against all adversity. Beyond all titles, Mary remains our 'beautiful hope'.

Among our canonized and beatified confreres, witnesses of hope, we can mention Gaspar **Stanggassinger**, the man who reached the heights of sanctity, putting aside his desire to go to the missions in poor countries and dedicated himself instead to the work of formation. He lived in an extraordinary way the simple obligations of daily life: sowing fruit which he was not to gather himself, because peritonitis snatched him from this earth at the early age of 28.

### The Constitutions today

*“Strong in faith, joyful in hope, fervent in charity”*: that's the **portrait** of the Redemptorists which the Constitutions propose to us. Our novices frequently learn Constitution n. 20 by heart and the professed members derive confidence and optimism from it.

Nowadays, hope impels us to live in a permanent state of **vocation**, that is of uncertainty and availability in regard to the future. This doesn't mean fatalism. On the contrary, it challenges us to live

our consecration with the vigilance of someone living in a **limit-situation**, but open to ever new beginnings. It makes us familiar with the paradoxical language of our life and costly grace. (*Bonhoeffer*). It make us look with confidence to the *eskaton* of God. It makes us live the spiritual life for what it is: an ongoing experience of human impossibility in the face of divine possibility. Our hope will be great when our desires are great: let us try to value them, to examine them and to purify them in the light of the Word and in the context of prayer. St. Alphonsus would say: try to filter your desires through **purity of intention**, with the help of which you will do certain things and avoid others. *You will understand how great your hope is.*

A renewed hope includes also:

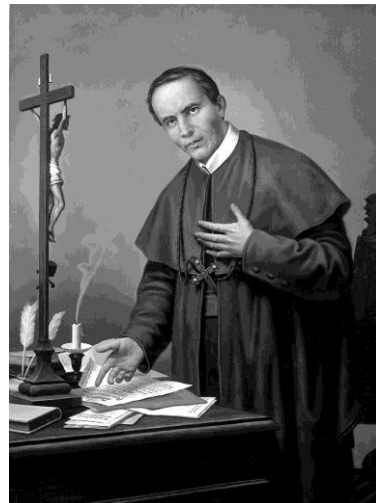
- to beware of the 'politics of the **resignation**' which often inspires our personal and community life: it makes us resigned to die, a sense of defeat prevails, because here and now there's nothing more to do and our life and mission don't have meaning in this world.
- To rediscover **joy**, which flowers in the heart and shows forth in the face, joy in the simple work of every day, as for example in welcoming guests or in attending to the poor.
- To pray for **vocations** and to proclaim **life as a vocation**, in the conviction that it is worthwhile to follow Christ the Redeemer, good news for the world.

*There follows a moment of silence or of sharing*

### Conclusion

*Immediately after his priestly ordination St. John Neumann said the following prayer.*

O my Jesus, how I glory in belonging to you! O Jesus,  
 Searcher of hearts, you know how mine longs to be holy, to be  
 united with you! Your death, O Jesus, made all people my brothers  
 and sisters! Come, then, O Holy Spirit, come upon me that I  
 may show forth to your world the way of eternal  
 salvation!  
 Come upon me, Strength of the weak, that my life  
 and my works  
 may exhibit faith made fruitful by your grace! O  
 Holy Spirit, direct  
 me in all my ways! With the Blessed Virgin, your  
 mother,  
 and with St. Joseph, I kneel at your crib and weep  
 over my sins  
 but ask again your grace. You are my all, My Lord,  
 my God!



*To finish it would be opportune to sing 'O bella mia speranza' followed by the blessing.*



ONE BODY is a monthly text of prayer proposed by the Center for  
 Redemptorist Spirituality

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