



Rome, July 19, 2020
Solemnity of the Most Holy Redeemer
Prot. No. 0000 088/2020

**WITNESSES OF THE REDEEMER:
*In Solidarity for Mission in a Wounded World***

Dear Confreres, Sisters and members of the Redemptorist Family, and especially,
Dear Formators and Formandi,

May God bless all of us and the Congregation on this Solemnity of the Most Holy Redeemer, our Titular Feast Day!

*"Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live!
I will make with you an everlasting covenant." (Isaiah 55:3)*

With these words from the prophet Isaiah, God opens a dialogue with us in the Liturgy of the Word for this Solemnity of the Most Holy Redeemer. Through this intimate dialogue with the Redeemer, the Lord will make an everlasting covenant with us. This dialogue forms us into 'one missionary body' (Cons. 2) and prepares us to be 'witnesses before people of the power of the resurrection' (Cons.51). This dialogue with the Redeemer engages us in a 'lifelong process of formation', which is essential for the Congregation and for every member.

Ratio Formationis Generalis

This process of formation is a central concern of the 25th General Chapter. As the General Secretariat for Formation began its work to implement the Chapter decisions, it became very clear that the *Ratio Formationis Generalis* (2003) needed to be updated to reflect directives, decisions and orientations from the Holy See as well as from the three most recent General Chapters of the Congregation. This revision of the *Ratio Formationis Generalis* also needs to take into account the Process of Restructuring in which the whole Congregation has been engaged.

With this letter, I am also sending each Unit the updated *Ratio Formationis Generalis* (2020). It will also be available soon in digital form on the new Congregation website dedicated to formation (www.cssr.news/formation). My letter at the beginning of the *Ratio Formationis Generalis* (2020) will indicate and explain some of the updated elements of the *Ratio*. I remind you that this *Ratio* is not intended only for initial formation, but also to assist the ongoing continuing formation of every confrere, of every community, and of every (V) Province. I invite you to study it and put it into practice for both Initial Formation and Continuing Formation.

This lifelong process of formation (cf. Cons. 77) invites us to a continuing process of renewal and conversion (cf. Cons. 40-42). It fosters this dialogue with the Redeemer through which our covenant with God and with the abandoned and the poor continues to grow and deepen. In the spirit of the Process of Restructuring, our commitment to initial and continuing formation is



essential for the renewal and revitalization of our Consecrated Life called for by the 25th General Chapter (*Message*, no. 6). The extraordinary Visit to the whole Congregation in 2017-2018 confirmed this intuition of the Capitulars. Formation has also been clearly identified as a Fundamental Priority in the Apostolic Plans of each Conference of the Congregation which were approved in December 2019. The process of Formation should strengthen and promote healthy Apostolic Communities, and prepare us for the mission to which we have been called by the Redeemer himself.

Analysis and Evaluation of Formation Programs (Decision 30)

Confreres, I remind all of you, especially all (V) Provincial Superiors, of the decision of the 25th General Chapter that every Unit and every Conference must engage in a complete and detailed analysis of its initial formation program at all levels. The purpose of this analysis and evaluation is to ensure that every formation program is truly preparing future Redemptorist Missionaries for the mission of the Congregation as embodied in the missionary priorities of the Conference (cf. *Decision 30*).

To assist each (V) Province in this analysis and evaluation, the General Secretariat for Formation had drawn up a plan to visit the formation houses and to meet with the formators in each Conference. These Visits were scheduled for 2020-2021. Unfortunately, the situation of Covid-19 has forced the cancellation of these specific visits. In order to assist the (V) Provincial Superiors and Coordinators in the responsibility outlined in Decision 30, the General Secretariat has elaborated questionnaires that can be sent to every Unit which requests them. Together with the updated and revised *Ratio Formationis Generalis* (2020), these tools can provide a framework in which you can carry out this analysis and evaluation. As we begin the preparations for the 26th General Chapter, your analysis and evaluation will provide us with important information as well as strengthening your formation programs.

Intercultural, International, and Interprovincial Formation

Another vitally important area for the Congregation as it carries out its mission today in a rapidly changing world is intercultural, international and interprovincial formation. The current situation of the Coronavirus pandemic has raised certain obstacles to our formation programs, especially when those programs require international travel, study visas, etc. We hope that this will soon pass. However, the important steps already begun in this area must continue, and these steps require the maximum possible collaboration between (V) Provinces and Regions, between Conferences, and especially among formators and those in formation.

In the spirit of the Profile of the Redemptorist Missionary approved by the 24th General Chapter (*Decision 6*), the new Apostolic Plans, Restructuring and Reconfiguration Plans must be kept in mind. Many of you will recall the response of Cardinal Tagle to the question about the contribution religious communities can bring to the local Church. He told us that one of the greatest witnesses which the world urgently needs to see is the witness of truly intercultural and international communities. This is a witness that international religious congregations like the Redemptorists can offer when many local churches find it difficult to do so. This witness reflects



a growing global reality that we cannot ignore: we are called to live together in truly intercultural communities in our families, in our parishes, in our civil societies. This vision requires not only commitment to a vision of community, but also intercultural formation for community and for mission. It is a challenge that we gladly accept – to truly live and serve as ‘one missionary body’ today.

Formation for Shared Mission

The 25th General Chapter also reminded us that we are called to live and work with others who share our charism and belong to the larger Redemptorist Family: Sisters, lay men and women, families ... As we respond to this call, we can help in the formation and preparation especially of Lay Redemptorist Missionaries. In this process, we will discover that the Holy Spirit is also forming us through this dialogue with the Redeemer and with others which is so crucial to our missionary identity.

A Word to Formators

Before concluding this letter, and on behalf of the whole Congregation, I would like to speak a few words of encouragement and gratitude to all formators. You have a very challenging and important task. You are called to work together as a true team, in mutual harmony of mind and purpose, witnessing to the true meaning of our Apostolic Life primarily as servants of the truth rather than as teachers imparting knowledge. This requires true humility and great patience (Const. 83). Often, along with words of gratitude for your service, you will experience criticism for your shortcomings! But remember that this criticism comes from a deep sense of the importance of your ministry. The Congregation is deeply grateful that you have accepted this service as ministry to your brothers. Thank you. We pray for you daily.

May Jesus, our Redeemer and brother, accompany each formation community, each formator and every candidate and formand in this lifelong process of “human and Christian maturity so that with the help of God’s grace” (Cons. 78) we may generously offer our lives for Plentiful Redemption. May our careful attention to the process of Formation help every member of our Redemptorist Family to grow in the missionary spirit of St. Alphonsus and St. Clement! May Mary, our Mother of Perpetual Help, be our model and help.

Your brother in Christ our Redeemer,

Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.

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