


Pastoral Guide for Superiors



Curia Generalis
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INTRODUCTION

In 1984 the General Government, in accordance with a request from the XIX General Chapter, published a small booklet entitled: *Pastoral Guide For Superiors*. It was meant to complement the *Directory For Superiors*, which had already been available as an aid to superiors for almost 15 years. While the *Directory For Superiors* dealt with legal and procedural aspects of the role of superiors, the *Pastoral Guide* was intended to provide information on other aspects, i.e., the spiritual, and practical/pastoral dimensions.

Since the publication of the 1984 edition the context in which the confreres live has changed greatly. In 1999 the newly elected (vice) provincial superiors requested that the General Government give serious consideration to issuing a new edition. General Visitations have also confirmed this need.

Furthermore, during the last two decades many new strategies have appeared in the Congregation. For example, regional assemblies, regular meetings of regional superiors, cooperation among provinces in regional priorities, provincial assemblies, international communities, shared regional apostolates, joint inter-provincial seminaries, have all become common realities in the daily life of the Congregation.

Therefore, the General Government has seen fit to offer this new edition of the *Pastoral Guide for Superiors* to the Congregation. This new edition has taken the 1984 printing as its starting point. However, this is a completely new text presented in a different format. We hope that it will be useful to superiors.

This text is not another legal document listing the duties, the obligations and responsibilities of superiors. The force of law attached to these matters derives solely from the documents cited and not from the *Pastoral Guide*. It is our hope that the *Pastoral Guide* will contribute to the on-going renewal of our religious life, rooted in the *Constitutions and Statutes*. Our special hope is that it will be helpful to superiors in their efforts to understand and to fulfill the pastoral duties of their office.

May Christ, the Redeemer, bless us in our mission!

CHAPTER 1

A REDEMPTORIST STYLE OF AUTHORITY AND LEADERSHIP

All members and communities must, in their own way, play an active and responsible role in the government of the Congregation in its different parts, making use of the various instruments of government with which it is provided. To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the sake of the common good. Constitution 92

I. Introduction

Our religious profession is the definitive act that makes us Redemptorists (cf. Const. 54). Constitution 35 states clearly that *in community through the exercise of co-responsibility each in his own way plays his part in living the life and carrying out the mission to which they have dedicated themselves*. This is fundamental to our Redemptorist understanding of authority and responsibility. This is the setting in which we understand what it is to be a superior.

Superiors may have been designated in various ways (*election, nomination*), yet their authority comes from the *Constitutions and Statutes* approved by the Church. They are ordered hierarchically – local supe-

riors, regional superiors, (vice) provincial superiors, and superior general. They do have the power to govern (Constitution 100). According to our *Constitutions and Statutes*, however, superiors are neither absolute monarchs nor chief executive officers of their communities. The model underlying authority is that proclaimed by Jesus in the Gospels: *whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant* (*diákonos* – cf. Mk. 10, 43; Mt 20, 26; Lc 22, 26). In our structures of authority superiors are to serve their confreres and exercise their authority in keeping with the principles and spirit proposed by our *Constitutions and Statutes*.

Style is not easy to define. Yet, there is a discernible style of authority and leadership proper for all Redemptorist superiors. It involves a certain *spirit*, an *attitude*, a *way of looking at things*, as well as a *way of acting and behaving*. Much depends on the ability of an individual to embody it. A superior's personality, character, likes and dislikes affect it. Some embody it more easily and more effectively than others. No superior can, however, disregard it or dispense himself from serving the Community in the spirit of the *Constitutions and Statutes*.

II. Basic Principles

Authority and leadership as exercised by Redemptorist superiors must embody certain basic principles (cf. Const. 91). Constitution 91 says of these principles that they *must inspire the entire government of the Congregation...[and] should give true human and apostolic value to the norms ratified in the Constitutions and Statutes*. These principles constitute what we are calling style of authority and leadership in this *Pastoral Guide*.

A. Authority for mission (Const. 1-2; cf. 54, 97, GS 091)

The Congregation exists for the sake of a mission, expressed in the *Vita Apostolica*, which comprises at one and the same time a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work (Const. 1). Communities are established and structured so as to serve and meet the needs of this

mission. Therefore the most basic and general principle informing all authority and leadership in the Congregation is mission. These fundamental notions permeate all our *Constitutions and Statutes*.

Being appointed a superior is not a reward or an attempt at honouring an individual confrere. It is rather a call to service given to a confrere with a view to further the mission of the Congregation and the religious life of the community.

B. Co-responsibility (Const. 92; cf. 35, 72, 98, 124)

Another basic principle governing the mission of the Congregation is the principle of co-responsibility. This principle states that every Redemptorist is co-responsible for the work of the whole Congregation and its mission. The supreme authority of the Congregation is not a person or a small group but the Chapter (Const. 98). This recognizes that co-responsibility means that authority is granted to all the confreres.

The missionary dynamism of the Congregation drives all confreres to work together as community. As General Statute 049 says: *The Holy Spirit dispenses gifts and charisms for the apostolate (cf. 1 Cor. 12: 1-30). Because he has received these charisms, each member has the right and duty to employ them in the service of the ecclesial community in communion with his confreres and especially with those in charge. It is for the latter to pass judgment on the nature of these gifts and their proper use, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but so as to test all things and retain for use what is good (cf. 1 Thess. 5: 19-22; 1 John 4: 1-7).*

The exercise of this principle at the (vice) provincial level must make it evident that all are responsible, though in different ways. So too, at the local level it is not only the superior who is responsible for the life and well being of the community. Each member of that community shares that responsibility and should be encouraged by the superior to assume it.

Dialogue is basic to the exercise of co-responsibility. Structures for dialogue are essential. Meetings among confreres are an indispensable part of our life (cf. Const. 98, 99, and GS 089). These meetings may be gatherings between consultors and superiors (cf. Const. 120, 131; GS 0108, 0131) or community meetings in which all members of a community gather to discuss their apostolic life (cf. Const. 136), or (vice) province-wide assemblies and chapters (cf. Const. 98).

There are privileged places for the exercise of co-responsibility: 1) Community Meetings; 2) Provincial Visitations; 3) Provincial Assemblies; 4) Provincial Chapters; 5) Regional or area meetings; 6) Meetings between superiors and their consultors; 7) General Visitations; 8) General Chapters.

Much of what is demanded in the *Constitutions and Statutes* regarding co-responsibility is based on the concept of active and responsible obedience. Constitution 72 reminds superiors that *they should lead the members in such a way that they will co-operate with an active and responsible obedience in applying themselves to their duties and to the activities they undertake* (cf. Const. 71-75). An active and responsible obedience is a mark of a well-formed and mature Redemptorist.

C. Decentralization and Subsidiarity (Constitutions 93 and 94)

Two consequences of co-responsibility are the principles of decentralization and subsidiarity. Decentralization is described in Constitution 93: *each section, under the leadership of the general government, conducts its own affairs, whether by making laws and decrees and applying them, or by coordinating the life of the members, in communion with the other parts of the Institute, with the local church and with civil society of which it is part.* Authority in the Congregation is seen as distributed throughout its various units.

Decentralization includes the notion that power and authority do not reside in one person, or one office, in the Congregation. Power

and authority are distributed and shared. They exist in the General Government and in the other units, where the confreres actually live and work. The confreres know most clearly the needs of the apostolate in the place and cultural context within which they find themselves. Higher authorities should respect actions and decisions taken by lower authorities. (cf GS 0100) This leads us to the next basic principle contained in our Constitutions and Statutes, that of subsidiarity.

Subsidiarity is intimately related to decentralization. It affirms that, whenever possible, decisions should be taken by those most immediately involved in and affected by such decisions. We cannot truly be responsible for the life and work of the Congregation, or of any given unit or community within it, if all decisions regarding our life and work are simply imposed from above.

Constitution 94 states that *by virtue of the principle of subsidiarity, all the structures of government must serve to promote the responsibility of the members and communities. This is achieved when all the members and structures at lower levels take their part in deciding matters which relate to themselves, and which they can implement with the means at their own disposal. When the occasion arises, higher-ranking structures must come to the assistance of those of lower rank in matters where the latter need their help.*

Taken together, the principles of decentralization and subsidiarity imply respect for the persons who are directly responsible for a given area of our mission. Ordinarily a higher authority does not intervene in the decisions of a subordinate level, nor countermand decisions taken at a lower level, without serious reasons for doing so. There may be situations, however, where the higher authority is obliged to take action. Such interventions are for the sake of the common good and to be done after consultation with and the consent of the appropriate council (cf. GS 0100).

D. *Solidarity (Constitution 95)*

Solidarity affirms the basic unity that is at the heart of our Redemptorist vocation. Constitution 95 says that this is the principle which *ensures real co-operation between institutions of the same level and between the members themselves*. The principle of solidarity is essential for any decentralized organization in which the members desire to safeguard their unity.

Decentralization can pose a danger for the Congregation. If exaggerated or taken in isolation from the other basic principles that govern the exercise of authority in the Congregation, it can lead to the erroneous view that the Congregation is simply the sum of its distinct parts. The Congregation is not a federation of independent or quasi-independent units, any more than those units are federations of independent or quasi-independent canonical houses. The principle of solidarity affirms our basic unity as one religious family. None of us is first a member of a certain unit and only secondarily a member of the Congregation. Quite the contrary, confreres are first Redemptorists and only secondarily members of a specific province, vice-province or region. This does not minimize the fact that each confrere has as his special care the responsibilities of his particular unit and his local community.

With regard to the Congregation as a whole, General Statute 0120 makes it clear that *the general government is an expression of the unity of the whole Congregation, a unity which it is its duty to preserve. It sees to it that a living relationship exists between all its parts*.

We are confreres spread throughout the world who remain responsible for one another, interested in one another and caring towards each other, sharing one another's concerns, problems, financial and personal needs. Redemptorists must not allow themselves to become excessively *provincial* in their outlook. They must always have an awareness of the global outreach of the Congregation and of our

basic unity as brothers in Christ and sons of St. Alphonsus throughout the world. Communion and participation are to be real values for us.

Constitution 141 notes that, *though each (vice) province carries out its missionary work according to the needs of people and places, it must always do so in co-ordination with the whole Congregation, so that the stronger (vice) provinces come to the assistance of the weaker ones.* GS 011 adds to this: *individual (vice) provinces must examine whether they can co-operate with provinces already working in the missions, by sharing personnel or temporal goods, or even by taking on new missions themselves.*

Subsidiarity leads us to share resources between richer (or larger) and poorer (or smaller) communities. Concrete ways for doing this are to be worked out in each unit. General Statute 0198 says in this regard that *there should be a spontaneous sharing of temporal goods between individual communities and (vice) provinces. They should gladly make contributions from their own goods, according to their means, to other needs of the Church and to the support of those in want, saving GS 0193.*

An example of solidarity occurs when the superiors of a number of Provinces look beyond the needs of their individual units in order to formulate regional priorities. These are apostolic initiatives that superiors of a region judge to be of such importance that, if a given unit is unable to maintain an apostolic priority for some reason, the other units agree to share the responsibility. Other examples of solidarity are inter-provincial formation programs, such as joint novitiates or houses of studies. These are concrete expression of Constitution 142: *Where several (vice) provinces are faced with similar problems, especially in matters relating to apostolic works and the formation of members, it is much to be desired that they work in co-operation.* General Statute 0185 adds that *the territorial division of (vice) provinces should not be over-emphasized, but rather projects in common should be encouraged.*

E. *Flexibility and Adaptability (Constitution 96)*

The principles of flexibility and adaptability spring from the first principle described above: that government in the Congregation is for mission. Constitution 96 says that *the Congregation must adapt its own structure and institutions to its apostolic needs, and adjust them properly to the different character of each particular mission, always of course, in fidelity to the charism of the Congregation*. Communities may be structured differently in varying parts of the Congregation. This is legitimate and necessary.

A vibrant institution is able to express its identity and accomplish its mission in changing times and in diverse cultures. While remaining true to its essential character and traditions, it becomes a part of the life of the people. Institutions that cannot adapt tend to become irrelevant and isolated from the very people they are supposed to serve. They almost always fade away. This is not change for change's sake but the dynamic response to new situations, while preserving the essential elements of our identity.

The principles of adaptability and flexibility underscore the call for all Redemptorists to be sensitive to the needs of the peoples they serve and to revise creatively their pastoral methods as well as the lifestyle of the community. Our respect for cultural religious expressions, for example, has led us to be successful at popular devotions, accompanying people and learning from them. The Congregation ministers effectively in several great sanctuaries across the world.

As with decentralization, dangers can result in misunderstanding the principles of adaptability and flexibility. This can happen when an individual places his personal needs above the good of the mission. Likewise, when a community misunderstands flexibility as the absence of even the minimum structures of religious life.

Constitution 134 offers an example for both subsidiarity and of flexibility: *The (vice) province enjoys the freedom and authority required to adjust its own manner of life in a suitable way to the particular needs of its mission, in order to carry out its apostolate.*

F. Collegiality

A final principle informing the exercise of authority and leadership by superiors in the Congregation is collegiality. It is described in Constitution 100: *By reason of the ministry they have received from the Church, chapters and superiors possess the power to govern...Let superiors exercise this power, however, in a collegial spirit together with their consultors, who represent the participation of the members in government.* Collegiality is basic to what a Redemptorist community is supposed to be, a community of brothers working together and sharing their lives with one another.

While final decisions frequently reside with the superior, it is also true that superiors are not isolated in the decision-making process. They have consultors who share in their responsibility and their burden of office. General Statute 0106 notes that *consultors can require of the superior that meetings of the council be held at the appropriate time, that matters which the law requires to be treated be dealt with, and that they be enabled to inspect those things which they have a right to examine.*

The *Constitutions and Statutes* and the *Directory of Superiors* indicate when a superior is obliged to seek the advice of his consultors, as well as the manner in which this is to be done. However, the spirit of collegiality goes beyond legal norms. It involves a true desire to share responsibility and to cooperate with others at all levels of our life. Such sharing contributes to both the human and the spiritual maturity of all. This forms the basis for *discernment* in community. It is the role of the superior to gather the confreres together in a spirit of collegiality where each one's voice can be heard. Together they listen to the voice of the Spirit and seek to make necessary decisions as a community.

III. Conclusion

In the exercise of authority in service to their confreres, superiors are bound by clear norms. These are not meant to cancel out their authority. These norms structure authority in definite ways, so that government empowers the whole community to share responsibility for the mission. Government in the Congregation is collegial, flexible, in solidarity with Redemptorists throughout the world and mindful of the co-responsibility of all confreres in the mission entrusted to us.

A Redemptorist superior is one confrere among many, asked to offer his confreres an indispensable and frequently difficult service. He is called upon to lead and to inspire – difficult tasks today. The basic principles described above provide the framework in which he exercises authority in the Congregation.

CHAPTER 2

N THE ROLE OF THE SUPERIOR

The Holy Spirit dispenses gifts and charisms for the apostolate... (and) each member has the right and duty to employ them in the service of the ecclesial community... in communion with his confreres and especially with those in charge. It is for the latter to pass judgment on the nature of these gifts and their proper use, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but so as to test all things and retain for use what is good.

GS 049

I. The Superior as Pastor

If one wishes to understand the role of the superior in our Congregation, one has to understand the use of the term *pastor* in the Constitutions (Const. 126, 139). This leads us to begin this reflection on the duties of the superior with a look at the image of the Good Shepherd.

In John 10, 1-18, the evangelist compares Jesus' genuine concern for Israel with the insincere care of the religious leadership at the time. As a compassionate and trustworthy shepherd, his type of leadership includes a willingness to die for the sheep (v. 11; cf. 1 Sam 17, 34-35). The Gospel of John links the mission and death of

Jesus to his role as a shepherd through the use of ideas that look back to Ezek 34, 11-16.23-24 (cf. the image of the martyred shepherd in Zech 13, 7; Mark 14, 27). Many early representations of Christ, such as those found in the Roman catacombs, show him as a shepherd rather than a crucified saviour.

In the primitive Church the image of Jesus as the Shepherd and Guardian of souls (1 Peter 2, 25), became a symbol to describe the work of its leaders. They were expected to pattern their life and work after that of Jesus (1 Peter 5, 1-4; Heb 13, 17.20-21). Leaders were instructed to take care of the flock (1 Peter 5, 2). The titles applied to them, *presbyteros* or *episkopos*, are directly linked to the work of shepherding (cf., for example, Acts 20, 28-29; 1 Peter 5, 2-3).

The shepherd is a focal point of unity. It is around him that the sheep of the flock gather. Strike the shepherd and the sheep scatter (Zech 13, 7). The shepherd clearly belongs with his sheep. He is intimately involved with the life and well being of his flock. The shepherd knows his sheep and calls each by name. The sheep follow because they recognize the voice of their shepherd (John 10, 4).

This style of leadership is distinguished from that of repressive leaders. Shepherding and any authority derived from it is clearly a service (cf. Luke 22, 25-27): *I am among you as one who serves* (Luke 22, 27; cf. John 13, 2-15). Those with authority are not to lord it over those in their charge but are to be examples to them (1 Peter, 5, 3). The function of the shepherd is to be at the service of the sheep; the sheep are not there for the sake of the shepherd.

To be a superior in the Congregation is never simply a job precisely because superiors are shepherds not *hirelings* who maintain regular office hours. Superiors are called to love the confreres and to help them to love each other. The Father loves them especially because they *lay down their lives* in all that they do for the confreres.

As a shepherd, the superior keeps the flock united by maintaining the confreres focused on the mission of the Congregation. Beyond any specific task of administration, his most fundamental responsibility toward the members of the community is to help them to live more fully the Redemptorist Charism. The Gospel of John brings together nicely the relationship between the love of Christ and the mission of the apostles in chapter 21: *Simon, son of John, do you love me...Tend my sheep*. Alphonsus himself will single out this text (following John Chrysostom's commentary) when talking about the missionary objective of the Congregation. As pastor, the key role of the superior is to manifest the love of the Lord among the confreres.

II. The superior as animator

A superior is often referred to as an animator, a term that is difficult to understand in some languages. What does it mean?

The word *animator* suggests one who leads, inspires, spurs to action, is an energy source fuelling the dynamism of his province or local community. While the reality is less grandiose, the animation of the community is an essential service of the superior.

Truly charismatic leaders are rare. Even when they are present, there is still a need for leaders who, though less magnetic, can influence the capacity of a group to perform and obtain results. This type of leader contributes to translating great ideas into workable realities. He knows how to elicit good ideas from others. He might not have the most creative proposals about the community order of the day or about its pastoral work. However, he knows how to listen to others and fosters an atmosphere in which ideas can surface. Such leaders are often less appreciated, but are by no means less important.

As an animator, the superior is the custodian of the Redemptorist vision and points to the demands of our vocation, while trying to

keep everyone on course. The superior keeps the purpose of the Congregation before him and helps others do the same. The Redemptorist vocation and vision gives meaning to what is done. Nothing moves a group as much as a dream, a clear vision, or a noble purpose. The mission of the Congregation is the lens through which he views all aspects of community life, even crises. A knowledge of our history, together with enthusiasm for our vocation today, give the superior the energy necessary to be creative and faithful in responding to the needs of the community, the Church and the world.

The superior seeks to transmit a sense of mission that gives meaning to the tasks at hand and promotes a sense of duty. In his efforts to maintain a vision, the superior stimulates others to forget about self-interests in order to give themselves to the mission of the community.

The superior shares the word of God with his brothers in community. He stays close to the confreres, particularly in difficult times. He is concerned about the prayer of the confreres and looks for ways in which the community can give witness to others about its prayer and spiritual reflection. The superior takes great care to provide times for dialogue among the members: concelebrated community masses, monthly days of retreat, common recreation, etc. He does not forget that the community itself should be able to find an appropriate type of recreation, a valuable and necessary means for promoting the common life. He knows each confrere personally. In the words of the 1984 edition of the *Pastoral Guide: The Superior should know the confreres, not only by name, not only 'from old times' when perhaps they were students together, but as they are now, their personalities of the 'here and now'.*

III. The superior as administrator

Another dimension of the leadership of the superior is his role as administrator. The miracle of the fishes and loaves, as described by

the Gospel of St Mark (6, 35 ff.) provides a helpful perspective on administration.

The scene set by the text is one of a problem. The people who have followed Christ find themselves in a *solitary place* and it is *getting late*. They have not eaten for some time. This worries the apostles. There are various possible solutions to this problem.

The people can be sent off so that they can buy food for themselves in the neighbouring farms and villages. This was the solution proposed by the apostles. Each was to take care of his/her own needs. On the other hand, the apostles themselves can feed the crowd. This is the solution that the apostles first thought Jesus was suggesting and which they firmly resisted. *If we are to give them food, we must go and buy two hundred silver coins' worth of bread*. Jesus, however, takes charge and invites the apostles to organize the crowd into small groups. From very little he produces superabundance and nourishes one and all. The first two solutions function primarily to highlight the third solution, which is presented as the only true answer to the hunger of the people.

It is important to note that the apostles seem to constitute a category apart from either Christ or the crowd, and yet they are not completely apart from either. It is the apostles who, at the command of Christ, organize the crowd into groups; they generate community. It is the apostles who distribute what Christ gives them. They feed the groups by serving them. In a very real way one can say that the apostles are made co-responsible with Christ in the ministry.

Christ solves what had at first appeared to be an insurmountable problem. What the apostles could never do by themselves, they easily accomplish in union with Christ and within a community.

It is also worth noting that, as in so many of Christ's miracles, what is produced is far more than sufficient to meet the need or accomplish any particular task. The various symbols of the *blessing of the bread* and the twelve baskets of remnants gathered at the end point to both an eschatological and a Eucharistic sense imbedded in the text. The meaning for any Redemptorist should be quite clear: *In Him is the Fullness of Redemption.*

Superiors are called upon to be part of the solution of problems facing the Congregation. They are not expected to act alone or to solve problems relying solely on their own gifts and talents. As men of faith, obedient to their Lord in the service of others, they administer the saving and guiding presence of Christ in the Congregation. As Constitution 23 states: *Since the members are called to continue the presence of Christ and his mission of redemption in the world, they choose the person of Christ as the center of their life, and strive day by day to enter ever more intimately into personal union with him. Thus at the heart of the community, to form it and sustain it, is the Redeemer himself and his Spirit of love.*

As pastors, superiors try to know the needs of those entrusted to them. As leaders they strive to point the community towards ever richer and fuller ways of accomplishing their mission in the Church. And as coordinators they organize their communities in ways that will enable their confreres to be effective in their work, faithful to their consecration and dedicated to the fraternal life.

The service of superiors in organizing our Redemptorist communities is an essential exercise of their ministry as leaders in the Church. Neither superiors nor individual communities exist apart from the broader context of the Church. It is essential for the success of our ministry that superiors be well informed on the needs and resources of the local Church. They should know the local clergy and ensure that our communities are places where these fellow workers in the vineyard of the Lord can come and feel welcome.

CHAPTER 3

THE (VICE)PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR

Let the provincial superior exercise his office as a pastor, leader and coordinator of all the communities and members of his province. He should make himself completely available to them, while encouraging them to live worthily the vocation to which they are called, and to confidently undertake and carry through their apostolic enterprises. Constitution 126

I. Introduction

The provincial or vice-provincial superior and regional superiors who exercise the duties of a major superior by virtue of a special *conventio* play a vital role in the life of the Congregation. This section of the *Guide* is concerned with Redemptorists who are called to this ministry. What has already been said about the service of superiors in general applies equally to confreres who lead provinces, vice-provinces or regions.

The life and work of a (vice) province are strengthened when the (vice) provincial is filled with the spirit and vision of the *Constitutions and Statutes*. He has been chosen, above all, to promote the mission of the Congregation. His service to his brothers, as well as his own life-style, should be ordered towards this end.

More than being simply an administrator, the (vice) provincial superior is a missionary, who empowers the members of the (vice) province to live more fully their own vocation. As the major superior and the Ordinary of his unit (GS 0156), he is called to grow as pastor, administrator and animator at the service of the whole (vice) provincial community.

II. General Principles

Constitution 125 states that *the provincial superior, as moderator of the province and president of the provincial council, has a mandate to direct and govern the province in accordance with the Constitutions and Statutes, both general and particular.* Along with the council, the (vice) provincial superior implements the decisions and priorities of the province that have been established by the Chapter (cf. Constitution 98, 100; GS 0140, 0141). Furthermore, he and his council must know the concrete situation, the problems and challenges, which face the (vice) province and its individual communities (GS 0155). This presumes knowledge of the situation of the local Church and the maintenance of good relations with the local ordinaries.

The unity of the (vice) provincial superior with his council is critical for the overall cohesion of the (vice) province. It is true that there are legal requirements for voting and distinctions made between moments when a superior is obliged to have the consent of his council and occasions when he need only seek their advice. However, the skilful superior will know how to promote consensus among his consultors.

The (vice) provincial superior is assisted primarily in the leadership of the province by his consultors. He is further assisted by the secretary of the province (GS 0170) who is also the notary and the chancellor of the (vice) provincial curia; by the (vice) provincial archivist (GS 171) and by the treasurer of the province (GS 0172, 0173, 0174). Units responsible for missions *ad gentes* are required to

appoint a *mission procurator* (GS 0176) in order to provide efficient care for the missions.

The *Constitutions and Statutes* envision a number of secretariats in each (vice) province (Constitution 129, 133; GS 0114, 0166). These consultative bodies are intended to give institutional form to the principle of co-responsibility. As such, they exist to help the (vice) provincial and his council in their duties and also to provide a forum in which the membership of the (vice) province may express its voice in the government of the unit. Secretariats are not meant to be another layer of bureaucracy. They are structures that promote solidarity and co-responsibility in the government of a (vice) province. Secretariats can offer a valuable assistance to superiors, particularly when their role is clear and they are genuinely consulted.

Therefore, the (vice) provincial superior does not bear the sole responsibility for the government of a (vice) province. Co-responsibility is a fundamental principle in our *Constitutions and Statutes* and wise superiors learn how to be leaders who delegate tasks and respectfully seek the assistance of their confreres in the fulfillment of their duties.

III. Particular issues

A. Available

A superior is first and foremost a pastor to his confreres, over and above being a leader and coordinator (Constitution 126). As already noted, he should strive to know each member personally and make an effort to become better known by the confreres in the unit. In larger provinces this can be a challenge. In such instances, there is a need to create forums in which he can share both formally (e.g. provincial assemblies) and informally (e.g. provincial celebrations, or attending local community celebrations) with individual confreres and communities.

An important task of the (vice) provincial is to make regular informal visits to the communities of the province. Informal visits lay the groundwork for better relationships and can contribute to the success of the formal (canonical) visitations of the local communities. *The (vice) provincial superior must get to know the (vice) province thoroughly in order to be able to give it inspiration and co-ordinate it. Consequently, to encourage dialogue, he will not only gladly receive the members, but he will also frequently visit the communities and share the life of the members* (GS 0155).

This availability of superiors for listening to and assisting the confreres has been part of our tradition from the very beginnings. St Alphonsus wrote in a 1754 letter: *I repeat, those who are far away do write to me when you have difficulties. Erase from your minds the idea, which truly comes from the devil, that you disturb me when you write or visit me. Rather, you fill me with joy when I see that you trust me. Be assured that I leave all else aside when comforting a brother and son. I am far more interested in helping one of my children that in doing any other good deed, for this is the good that God wants from me while I hold this office.*

B. *Communications*

It is the responsibility of the (vice) provincial superior to ensure that there is frequent and effective communication in the province. This may take the form of circular letters that inform all the members about what is happening in the province, or the form of a provincial newsletter prepared and distributed regularly. Many (vice) provincial superiors make effective use of websites on the Internet and electronic mail to be in touch with the members. What is essential is that communication be maintained at all levels throughout the (vice) province.

C. *Personal well-being*

The members of the province need to have the means for maintaining and growing in the spiritual life. It is worthwhile to maintain the common annual retreats for the confreres in the unit and invite confreres from other units to share in this spiritual event. It is profitable as well to make use of the resources available in the region and those provided by the general government. The (vice) provincial superior contributes by encouraging a style of life that values spiritual direction, celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation and annual retreats. In this area, the testimony of his own life is invaluable. The (vice) provincial superior needs to be attentive to his own health and growth, making time for personal prayer, study, fellowship and recreation. This legitimate care is necessary for the effective fulfilment of his duties.

D. *Pastoral Priorities*

The (vice) provincial superior is responsible for the pastoral activity of the (vice) province, guided by his understanding of the Congregation's Charism and, more concretely, by the *Constitutions and Statutes*. Since the Congregation has been given a particular mission in the Church, Redemptorists are not free simply to take on any apostolic work whatsoever. Every province is expected to have a statement of pastoral priorities established by its Chapter (cf. Constitution 17). If a confrere wishes to take on a "private apostolate," he must obtain the necessary permission before taking on this responsibility. This must be done specifically if a contract is signed which may involve obligations on the community should that confrere become sick or unable to fulfil his responsibilities. The apostolic priorities of the (vice)province take precedence over any personal undertaking. The proliferation of personal ministries has been a source of difficulty and misunderstanding in a number of units and major superiors ought to proceed with prudence when granting such permissions.

E. *Formation*

Another area of concern is the intellectual and professional formation of the members of the province. This applies to both first formation and continuing formation of the members (Constitution 82, 90; GS 081, 082, 084). Formation is always among the most important priorities of any unit. It is vital that the (vice) provincial superior be personally interested and involved in the formation process of the confreres. He needs to know the formators of his province and provide the resources they need to accomplish their mission. Furthermore, the (vice) provincial superior should promote a spirit of on-going study in his (vice) province through sabbatical programs; seminars and workshops open to all the members. These programs can take place at the provincial and the local community level. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the superior has the assistance of the (vice) provincial Secretariat for Formation.

The *Constitutions and Statutes* are at the core of our life. Serious study of these benefits all. Major superiors are to organize a study program on the *Constitutions and Statutes*. Since individual units may lack the resources needed to set up a program on their own, a Region could offer such a program to benefit all. This would also be an excellent example of solidarity and co-responsibility.

F. *Local superiors*

At the beginning of a triennium, it is useful to call together all local superiors to spend time reviewing exactly what the duties of a local superior are and discussing together possible strategies for implementing these in each community. These meetings can be repeated during the triennium, providing a valuable forum for the local superiors to discuss challenges and compare strategies aimed at pastoring the local communities.

Local superiors often need the help of the (vice) provincial. The reason may be a pastoral issue. It may also be a personal issue: the challenges posed by a troubled or difficult confrere. The (vice) provincial superior should look for ways to prepare local superiors for their own service of leadership.

G. Well-being of the province

The (vice) provincial is concerned about the life style in the local communities, the maintenance of the buildings and properties of the province, the health care of the confreres. The (vice) provincial superior is responsible for the economic stability of the province and of the confreres. The (vice) provincial economer or treasurer assists the (vice) provincial in these tasks.

H. Confreres absent from community

Confreres who are legitimately absent from community *remain under the care of superiors* (cf. GS 0211) and therefore a regular schedule of communications should be set up with them so that they do not feel isolated from their confreres or, even worse, drift away and be lost to the Congregation. Even confreres who are illegitimately absent are to be diligently sought out and helped. Confreres absent from community remain members of the Congregation. The community may be liable for the acts of these members. However, GS 0212 notes that *if all this is to no purpose, and the member does not return, he is to be dismissed in accordance with the norms of law*. Such cases are among the most painful and difficult tasks that a superior has to address but neglect and inaction pose very grave consequences for the individual unit and even for the Congregation itself.

I. Administration of temporal goods

The (vice)provincial superior is guided by the common law of the Church and the particular law of the Congregation in the disposition of the material goods of the (vice) province. He is also subject to the norms that the (vice) provincial chapter may establish regard-

ing the holding and disposing of temporal goods. The Chapter sets the limits set by the chapter within which individual superiors, *observing the dispositions of the Holy See* (GS 0193), may spend money with or without the consent of their consultors (GS 0192, 0193, 0194). The *Constitutions and Statutes* are clear in indicating the limits of the authority of a (vice) provincial superior in the use of money. Hence it is important to be aware of these norms. For example, the law of the Congregation specifies that the extraordinary (vice) provincial council must examine and approve the annual budget and financial report of the unit (GS 0195).

J. Records and archives

Record keeping is very important. The (vice) provincial superior ensures that records are kept of all official meetings of both the Extraordinary and Ordinary Provincial Councils. There should always be an official record of all votes taken and decisions made. Because of the sensitive nature of some of the information, (vice) provincial superiors should be prudent in maintaining necessary official and personnel records. The (vice) provincial government should have copies of all deeds to properties on file and easily available if needed.

The (vice) provincial superior is responsible for making sure that the archives of the province are properly maintained and that the history of the province is written and preserved. The proper maintenance of archives forms part of the heritage and patrimony of the Congregation and is vital for future generations.

A yearly report to the General Government that summarizes the state of the (vice) province, including a financial account, is required by GS 0163. The role of the (vice) provincial superior requires that he maintain contact with the General Government (GS 0157, 0163, 0177), other units of the Congregation (GS 0175, 0176), and the bishops of the dioceses in which his (vice) province is working. He

also maintains contact with civil authorities and oversees the settlement of legal matters whenever necessary.

While some of these contacts are informal by nature, many are formal. (Vice) provincial superiors must keep careful records of all agreements and contracts. Written records are essential for able administration. For example, GS 011d states that *to secure the best possible co-operation, superiors of the Congregation should draw up an agreement regarding mutual rights and obligations with the ordinary of the place. Likewise, a clear inventory should be made of the property that belongs to the Congregation and of the property of the diocese.* This is true of agreements between provinces and vice provinces (cf. GS 090, 0175) or regions/missions, as well as agreements with local ordinaries (cf. GS 0200-0208). Proper maintenance of written records can prevent many misunderstandings and difficulties.

CHAPTER 4

THE LOCAL SUPERIOR

The superior of a community must first of all be a spiritual pastor and then a rector and administrator. His chief duty is to serve the community, so that it may be formed and grow in Christ and that all, with united effort, may devote themselves to the work of evangelization. He must likewise look upon himself as being co-responsible, by reason of his office, for the welfare of the whole province. Constitution 139

I. General notions

As the primary responsibility of the provincial is the province, so the primary responsibility of the local superior is the local community and its mission. He is to be a pastor, administrator and animator at the service of the community. His principal responsibility is to help the community to live fully its Redemptorist vocation. The superior encourages the community to *further the personal growth of its members, develop interpersonal relations and build up genuine brotherhood. This will demand that persons, with their values and qualities, be highly esteemed. Moreover, opportunities must be given the members to make their own personal decisions, in order to promote real development of maturity and responsibility* (Constitution 36). As administrator, he encourages and strengthens the structures that bring *the*

members into communion with one another and promote a spirit of fraternity (GS 030).

The confreres in local communities usually count on leadership from the superior. He is expected to guide and lead the community in living out this *essential law of life*: to be a community for mission. In fact, the superior's leadership, or lack of it, will affect the quality of religious life experienced by both the confreres and laity who participate in our ministry, as well as by all who come in contact with the community.

Redemptorists expect superiors to exercise their authority in a fraternal manner that is respectful of every member of the community. Most confreres want to be involved in the important decisions that affect their lives and ministry. The superior promotes this involvement *through the exercise of co-responsibility*, so that *each in his own way plays his part in living the life and carrying out the mission to which they have dedicated themselves* (Constitution 35). The spirit of co-responsibility means that the local superior does not allow himself to be made the person who is solely responsible for the life of the community.

Redemptorist communities are expected to be *apostolic communities* in which all are missionaries (cf. Constitution 55). This means that the community itself shares in, and accepts responsibility for, the mission that has been entrusted to it. Even though the ministries may be divided among the members of the community, this distribution should not be seen as establishing separate territories, the sole responsibility of the individuals to whom they have been entrusted.

Local superiors lead by example. Words fall flat when they are not backed up by convincing practice. Superiors will strengthen their authority and leadership by their dedication to the duties of their office, by their prayer, and by the sacrifices that they make for the good of the community. This is the style of government that best preserves and develops the community in its service for God.

The local superior is to be assisted in his duties by consultors (GS 0181), a community treasurer (GS 0183), and any *other offices customary in our communities* such as prefect of the sick, master of guests and Mass prefect. As in the case of (vice) provincial superiors, a wise local superior will promote the co-responsibility of the members of the community in all possible ways.

II. Some practical indications

A. Teamwork and Communication

Local superiors are men who can work with others. This skill is particularly important in situations where they carry multiple responsibilities, such as rector of the community and pastor of the church. Since the duties of the one do not excuse him from the duties of the other, it is important to know how to delegate responsibilities. Some units normally separate the two offices, dividing them between two confreres. Experience shows that this works well when they are like-minded, sensitive to the needs and duties of the other and when both are men of dialogue and flexibility.

Local superiors seek to be open and honest in their dealings with the confreres. They confront problems and try to resolve them in a straightforward and fraternal manner. They do their best to be approachable and available to the confreres. In this regard, they take the initiative in finding out the needs of the confreres, rather than waiting until the individuals come with their needs. Some will never talk unless they are invited. In situations of conflict within the local community, the superior takes the first step in seeking reconciliation.

The superior is expected to pass on to the members of his communities, present or absent, all communications sent out from either the general government or the (vice) provincial offices. Failure to

do so results in an impoverishment and a weakening of the ties of the confreres with the broader Redemptorist community.

B. *Community Prayer*

The local superior seeks to be a man of faith and prayer. As part of his duties as pastor he ensures that the community prays together. Whenever possible he should try to provide for communal celebrations of the Eucharist: *Since the Eucharistic mystery manifests community and is the source of its life and growth, it is very much to be desired that it be concelebrated or celebrated with community participation* (GS 028).

Local superiors are called upon to explore ways to stimulate prayer so that the prayer life of the community is alive and relevant. Communities can profit from a monthly day of recollection. An effort should be made to celebrate the great feast days of the Congregation: the feasts of the Most Holy Redeemer, Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Saint Alphonsus and our other Redemptorist saints and blessed. These are occasions to reinforce our Redemptorist identity and to share our spirit with the laity.

C. *Concern for the sick and the elderly*

The superior will provide for the special needs of the sick and the elderly. He makes sure that none are isolated or abandoned. GS 034 says: *Sick and aged confreres, weighed down as they sometimes are by loneliness, must always receive special care and assistance, above all as their last hour approaches. On their part, these confreres, whether sick or advanced in years or burdened with other afflictions, should at Christ's invitation accept their condition in a spirit of faith and generosity. Their prayer life, the experience they have acquired, and the services they still are able to render can be a source of inspiration to the younger confreres.*

Caring for sick and aging confreres does not fall on the local superior alone. He coordinates their physical and spiritual care. In larger

communities, he may appoint a confrere who assumes this responsibility.

D. Fraternal correction

General Statute 094 states that *superiors shall draw the attention of the confreres to their defects, especially if they cause harm or are a source of annoyance to the community and are injurious to apostolic activity*. In exercising this responsibility, superiors are to be men of charity, prudence and fortitude. Examples where harm can come to the community, or to the apostolic mission, include but are not limited to abuse of alcohol or drugs, sexual misconduct, serious violations of poverty, imprudent use of language when preaching, and aggressive temperament. Intervention in these cases by the local and sometimes (vice)provincial may be necessary. The aim is always to help the confrere (Mt 18, 15). Corrections are first given in private conversation. A general norm to be followed is that persons are never discussed in a public forum, only issues. The superior is called to make every effort to assist confreres afflicted with serious difficulties, helping them obtain professional assistance if necessary.

E. Community Meetings

The local superior organizes the community meetings. These are formal moments that are set aside by the community to study seriously and discuss its life in all its dimensions (cf. GS 0179). It is not sufficient to discuss community concerns informally, for example, at meal times.

Community meetings are forums in which each confrere can freely express his views in an atmosphere of respect and disagreements are resolved fraternally. It is not essential that the superior himself should always chair these meetings, but it should always be clear beforehand who will carry out this responsibility. Given the importance of such gatherings, whoever leads the meeting should have the skills to do so.

Community meetings do not substitute for other meetings that a local superior is expected to have with his consultors. Thus superiors should convoke these consultations regularly, normally once a month. If this does not happen, then the consultors *can require of the superior that meetings of the Council be held at the appropriate time* (GS 0106).

F. *Community privacy*

Constitution 45 states that *the legitimate superior is to define the extent to which every community is open to outsiders, while keeping a special section of the house reserved for itself and duly observing the laws on enclosure*. A common source of tension in our communities is disagreement on how open the house should be to outsiders. Ideally communities should find a middle way between excessive openness and being totally closed to outsiders.

G. *Finances and material goods*

The local superior works out with the community the question of the budget. In some provinces a monthly allotment is given to each confrere to meet his ordinary needs. Vacation monies are usually handled in a different way.

The local superior ensures that the community property is maintained in good physical condition. This is important for the well being of the confreres and for our apostolic ministry. Our communities should be simple homes that are well maintained. This is the responsibility of the whole community.

In many cases our *Constitutions and Statutes* and the particular law of a (vice) province mandate that the minister of the house and the consultors have a role to play in disposing of community goods. The members of the community should also be taken into account.

The local superior is not free to dispose of the goods of the community in any way he pleases.

H. Confreres living by themselves

The local superior should show special concern for those confreres who for personal or apostolic reasons are permitted to live outside the community.

General Statute 026 states: *Those also share in community of which Constitution 22 speaks, who by way of exception, and with the authority of the community, live alone, because their ministry demands it, and engage in a work which is a concern of the community.* General Statute 027 adds: *Both the superiors and the members themselves will see to it that the members of the different houses come together at stated times to foster the spirit of fraternal cooperation. And this holds in a particular way for those confreres who live and work alone by mandate of the community itself, while keeping united with it in spirit.*

APPENDIX I

A MODEL FOR CONDUCTING A (VICE) PROVINCIAL VISITATION:

I. Introduction

A provincial visitation is an opportunity for the leadership team to get to know the confreres and the province. It provides a venue for fraternal sharing, encouragement, and support of the local communities by the Provincial Government as it exercises its ministry of leadership. As our statutes state: *The (vice)provincial superior must get to know the (vice) province thoroughly in order to be able to give it inspiration and co-ordinate it. Consequently, to encourage dialogue, he will not only gladly receive the members, but he will also frequently visit the communities and share the life of the members. At least once every three years he shall make a canonical visitation of the entire (vice) province. Indeed the provincial superior will also visit the vice-provinces periodically GS 0155.*

II. Preparation

Before the start of a visitation, the local superior, with his council, arranges with the visitor(s) the program for the visitation. The community should be given ample notice of community meetings

and of any other gatherings, which will take place during the visitation.

III. During the visitation

1. Ordinarily a visitation begins with the community in prayer: for example, a concelebrated liturgy, or some other suitable form of prayer.
2. Next there is a community meeting to discuss the pastoral work of the community, the quality of its life, and any other matters of (Vice)Province interest, including financial matters.
3. Each member of the community is given the opportunity to meet individually with the visitor(s).
4. Furthermore, arrangements are made by the local superior for the visitor(s) to meet the local parish council, religious who may be serving in the parish, school administrators, and other groups associated with the work of the community.
5. The visitation also includes an examination of the records of the community and church, if the community cares for a parish. The records of the community include the house chronicles, Mass Books, minutes of community meetings, and parochial books.
6. Regarding financial matters, it may be helpful to have a member of the (vice) provincial Secretariat for Finance visit the community, and examine the financial records prior to a visitation by the (vice) provincial visitor(s). A report from the representative of the Secretariat for Finance will then be made available to the (Vice)Provincial Government before the beginning of the visitation.
7. The visitation may close formally, or informally, according to the judgment of the visitor(s) and local superior.

IV. Report and follow-up

Before closing the visitation, the visitor writes a summary report and, if possible, discusses it with the community. Copies of the report may be distributed to the members of the community who are encouraged to use it for ongoing evaluation at their community meetings.

At the end of the visitation process, the Extraordinary Provincial Council reviews the visitation report, which may be helpful for future decision-making. Further follow-up can take place with the local superior to discuss pertinent issues arising from the visitation as a result of the discussions of the Extraordinary Provincial Council.

APPENDIX II

ISSUES THAT ARISE IN COMMUNITY AND NEED PROVINCIAL POLICIES

(THE FOLLOWING ARE DRAWN FROM
POLICIES IN EFFECT IN SOME UNITS OF
THE CONGREGATION.)

I. Alcohol Dependency and other Dependency problems

We are aware that alcoholism, drug addiction, overeating, and the abuse of prescription drugs are realities in our world and in our Congregation. These problems deeply hurt our affected confreres physically, mentally, and spiritually as well as impair a healthy community atmosphere. Moreover, these problems seriously affect a persons' ability to interact in community and impairs their ability to work in the mission of the Congregation.

While cultural and societal reactions to dependency issues vary, no one will deny that these problems have an impact on the life of our confreres, their community and the people with whom we minister. Each unit of the congregation ought to formulate a policy that commits itself to providing opportunities for treatment or help. The

primary objective is to relieve the individual and his community from unnecessary pain and suffering, to restore health and dignity, and return the confrere to ministry, where possible.

Local Policies might include the following:

1. Most problems of dependency are health problems and need to be treated. Other dependencies such as addiction to television, computers, the Internet or gambling need other kinds of interventions and may also have indirect effects on an individual's health.
2. Confreres suffering from these problems often can be helped with proper interventions
3. It is in the best interest of the individual, and the unit, that the dependency condition be diagnosed and treated at the earliest possible stage.
4. Ideally the primary decision to seek help should come from the individual concerned. However problems of dependency affect the common good and the mission. Therefore, continued refusal to seek treatment needs an intervention by the (vice)provincial superior.
5. Confidentiality, where possible, is critical to respect the dignity of the confrere involved.

Careful consideration should be given to the assignment of a confrere during and after treatment. Some individuals can return to their previous assignment, others will need a change, and still others will need to withdraw from active ministry altogether.

It is important that the unit recognize the invaluable and, indeed, necessary help provided by ongoing programs such as *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The confreres are to be encouraged to associate themselves with such programs, and to continue that association.

II. Issues around deviant sexual behaviors

The possibility of sexual misconduct by a confrere demands a sober and serious response from those in authority. Examples of such misconduct include forcible rape, sexual exhibitionism, fondling or groping, as well as sexual harassment. It can take place with a male or female, with another adult, with a minor or with a child. This kind of misconduct, because of our pastoral position as religious, always involves a breach of trust. In many cases it is legally actionable. With a minor or a child, the aspect of exploitation becomes particularly acute. [*Abuse with a minor*] is by every standard wrong and rightly considered a crime by society, it is also an appalling sin in the eyes of God (John Paul II, April, 2002).

Exploitation can be an issue, apart from explicit sexual behaviour, where proper boundaries are transgressed. The following are examples of such:

- Inappropriate signs of affection, especially for a minor.
- Exclusive, or secretive relationships, again especially with a minor.
- Inappropriate exchange of gifts with a counselee or directee.
- Frequently being alone, or finding reasons to be alone (e.g., a holiday or traveling), with a minor.

Also, today may opportunities exist for abuse of the Internet for child pornography where no direct contact with a child is involved. In addition, it should be noted that in many countries such uses of the Internet are illegal.

Sexual abuse is not just a North American or European problem. There are increasing signs that this problem will surface in many areas where our Congregation is situated. Pastoral interventions,

written policies and protocols of action will help to prevent unnecessary scandal and suffering. As Pope John Paul II stated in his address to the American Cardinals: *Because of the great harm done by some priests and religious, the Church herself is viewed with distrust, and many are offended at the way in which the Church's leaders are perceived to have acted in this matter.*

Church leaders (vice provincials and provincials) need to act in ways that prevent further harm and scandal. Protocols of action need to be developed that reconcile the pastoral responsibilities of the Congregation, the requirements of Canon Law, the *Constitutions and Statutes* of the Congregation, and the obligations of individuals under the laws of the region. Further, these policies should govern how the (vice) provincial will exercise his authority while recognizing the presumption of innocence and the inviolability of the seal of the sacramental Confession.

Policies need to include intervention (as well as conditions for suspension from ministerial activity), treatment and placement of the confrere after a treatment program. As well, written policies need to outline what procedures will be carried out to assist the victim.

III. Issues around the misuse of community finances.

The misuse of finances of the community through fraud and theft, when it occurs, needs to be addressed in frank and open discussions. What does a provincial superior do when a confrere uses money from the collection to support a relationship? What does a provincial superior do when a confrere has accumulated huge debts on his credit card or is caught in a gambling addiction?

IV. Dealing with difficult and uncooperative confreres.

The help of outside resources may often be needed to help a superior deal with confreres who are difficult and refuse to cooperate. The service of professional psychologists, social workers or group

psychotherapists may need to be employed. Often these confreres have such profound personality problems that they consume an unreasonable amount of time from those in authority and are disruptive in any community in which they live. Placement in treatment centres such as the *Casa Alberione* in Guadalajara, Mexico; *Southdown* in Canada; *Kedron* in Ireland or *St. Luke's Institute* in the United States can sometimes be helpful. However, it should be noted that those with severe personality disorders might continue to be problematic even after extensive treatment programs. In the end, not assigning such a confrere to any active ministry may be the only solution. Developing strategies for intervention and policies for treatment can help prevent unnecessary escalation of confrontation and frustration for those in charge.

APPENDIX III

A MODEL FOR CONDUCTING COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Prior to the meeting the Superior or delegate can invite items or topics for the meeting's agenda. The agenda for the meeting should be posted on the community bulletin board at least 48 hours prior to the meeting time, or distributed to the members of the community in some way.

The time and place of the meeting should be clearly indicated.

A liturgical or non-liturgical ritual is often helpful in beginning a meeting. New items to add to the meeting's agenda should be introduced at the beginning. The community can quickly decide if such items should be discussed at the present meeting, or at a subsequent meeting especially if they require serious preparation. As well, the length of the meeting should be clearly stated and agreed upon at the start.

The moderator (not necessarily the rector) should guide the community discussion through the various items of the agenda.

All members of the community should have time to express themselves and be heard.

At the end of the meeting a review of decisions is made, and who is to follow up on these decisions is important. Next the date, time and place of the next meeting should be decided (if this has not been done in some other way such as the assigning a regular time for community meetings).

There should be a secretary who records any votes or decisions taken. Copies of the minutes can be distributed afterwards or posted for the community.

Principles for a good meeting:

The agenda is agreed upon.

The start and finish of a meeting is clearly stated (a meeting should ordinarily last no more than 90 minutes).

The meeting begins on time and ends on time.

No one dominates the meeting – the superior must take care not to dominate or intimidate others from speaking their opinions, however awkwardly.

The moderator keeps people focused so they do not wander off the topic and invites everyone to speak and be heard.

The moderator sticks to the agenda.

If the community is large, it may be useful to break into small groups for dialogue, particularly before making decisions.

Follow up is critical – there needs to be action following meetings. The capacity for misunderstanding is unlimited. Make sure people know what they are supposed to do.

A report to the next meeting of actions taken ensures that people see meetings as valuable to the life of the community.

APPENDIX IV

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following documents may prove helpful to superiors in their role of leadership:

The Constitutions and Statutes

The Directory of Superiors, 1993 edition.

Communicanda 11 on Community life as a way of proclaiming the Gospel (1988)

Communicanda 4, on Lay Collaboration (1995)

Communicanda 3, on the Third age: *Discovering the best wine at the end* (2000)

Fraternal Life in Community (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 1994.

PASTORAL GUIDE FOR SUPERIORS

APPENDIX V

PLAN OF COMMUNITY LIFE

A. Introduction

The 1997 General Chapter asked each community of the Congregation to make a Plan of Community Life (PCL). This is to be done at the beginning of each triennium *with yearly programs based on: consecrated life, fraternal life and the Redemptorist apostolate. The (V) Provincial government must approve this plan* (Postulatum 3.1). Many units have already been doing this. For others, this is still something entirely new.

We offer this appendix as an instrument to assist our communities. For those that are not familiar with this type of community planning, it proposes some general principles as well as some concrete suggestions. For those who have already been working with a PCL, it will serve as a refresher of some fundamental guidelines and may provide some ideas to improve what is already being done.

The concepts behind the PCL are not new. Community life has always been a significant dimension of our Redemptorist life. *An es-*

sential law of life for the members is this: that they live in community and carry out their apostolic work through community (Constitution 21). This phrase comes from our new Constitutions, not yet twenty-five years old. But Alphonsus and the first Redemptorists already lived it. They sought to live in structured communities for the sake of the mission of the Congregation.

A cursory look at what happened on November 9, 1732, reveals that the first group wanted to organize itself as a missionary community. However, they could not work out a common project. Each of the six members seemed to have had a different vision and objectives. The initial failure was inevitable. It was impossible to carry out a common project under such circumstances. Alphonsus found himself shortly alone with Brother Vitus. Yet other members soon came along, Sportelli, Sarnelli, Mazzini, Rossi, Gerard, etc., who shared with Alphonsus a common vocation and apostolic life project. A unity of vision adopted by truly heroic Fathers and Brothers made possible the birth and growth of our Congregation. Today we are asked to do something similar in each of our communities.

Ours are difficult times which influence, positively and negatively, our Redemptorist life style. These are times of great social, cultural and ecclesial changes. Among the great challenges we face is the search for authentic ways of living out our consecrated and missionary fraternity.

The renewal brought about by the Second Vatican Council changed the style of community life in all religious Institutes. In general, Congregations dedicated to the active life, had modeled themselves on monastic structures. With the Council, however, they abandoned these observant, monastic life styles.

Communities had been governed by strict and detailed regulations, following the same norms and practices, schedules and customs, throughout the world. No matter where one went, one would find

the same forms of prayer, community acts, etc., in a given Institute. The principles of centralization and uniformity required the same common observance worldwide. It was enough to comply with what was prescribed in order to achieve the stated ends of the Congregation. The norms and customs were so detailed that little room remained for personal and community decisions.

The renewal of the Second Vatican Council shook community life profoundly. It introduced two basic principles. In the first place, primacy was given to a style of fraternal community, characterized by communion and participation. It privileged the person over the norm. Community life was to provide the necessary space for the human and spiritual development of each member. Secondly, each community was to organize itself in response to the needs of the time and place. Inculturation and integration into the life of the Church and into the social context became important criteria.

The new Constitutions outlined the spirit and fundamental norms of Redemptorist community life. It is up to the (Vice) Provinces and local communities to ensure the practical and detailed organization of the community. The transition to this new reality became a sort of liberating experience.

The fact is, however, that we face many difficulties. Many practices were abandoned. At times communities steered away from anything that hinted coercion. The result was not, in some instances, very happy. Some lost their sense of Redemptorist identity and mission. The spirit of individualism that often crept in did away as well with many aspects of communion and fraternal life present in our tradition. Experience has shown that it is easier to get rid of old practices than to generate new life styles.

A whole series of internal and external factors hinder growth in the human and spiritual qualities required for developing new life styles. Religious had been traditionally formed to live a passive, submissive, obedience with no need to cultivate the spirit of initiative, co-

responsibility and creativity expected by the new commitment to fraternal communion. Many find themselves unprepared for the personal and community sharing of thoughts, feelings, experiences and projects that a deeper community dialogue demands.

The aim, then, of our last General Chapter in proposing a PCL is to promote true and living Redemptorist communities that seek to live fraternally their mission in the Church and in the world. Experience has shown that, wherever communities have taken up the practice of working out and implementing a joint life project, community life is strengthened and enriched.

B. General Indications

A Plan for Community Life is not simply a schedule to organize the daily life of confreres in a community. It is a much broader concept. It is an instrument that attempts to integrate the various dimensions of Redemptorist life as outlined in our Constitutions. It is meant to generate a life process that opens the way for a deepening of fidelity to our Charism and of growth in our spirituality.

By itself the PCL will not produce the ideal community. What will help us live a more fulfilling and meaningful life as communities will depend largely on the commitment of each of us. Put simply, what we get out of the PCL will be related to what we put into its realization. It demands participation and co-responsibility – and a desire to live our lives according to our Constitutions and Statutes.

During the working out of the PCL, the members of the community come together as brothers who are quite aware that the Spirit of Christ brings them together. Each affirms their identity and need to belong, accepting each other in order to develop a sincere communication that will help resolve and negotiate differences and conflicts. The common objective is to live a community experience of discernment of God's will with regard to the task entrusted to the community.

The PCL designs a strategy of community growth for a year. It is revised and adapted to new circumstances each year. It is also necessary to review and modify it whenever a new member joins the community. Since community growth processes are slow, no one should expect that the community would change radically in one year. It's a question of persevering in a process that will develop from year to year. By its very nature, every community plan is provisional, representing a step on the road to a deeper fraternity.

It can take some time to develop a viable and useful PCL. No matter what method is used to develop it, the working out of a PCL requires a careful personal and community preparation.

The community must be informed of (a) what it is, (b) its significance for community life, (c) the method that will be used to write it, (d) and, how it is to be lived. Some units may consider it appropriate to have someone with experience explain the purpose and working out of a PCL to the communities.

As immediate preparation for working out the PCL, the members of the community take time to reflect on their own experience and perspectives on Redemptorist community life. Each should look into the deeper motivations that drive one to persevere in the Congregation.

C. Important criteria

The whole process of writing a PCL is inspired by some basic principles. These come together to pave the way for a concrete, practical community plan.

Realism. The PCL is not meant to be an idealistic project. All programming respects each member and takes into account everyone's potential and limitations. It is much better to take small steps together than to develop a project that will produce frustrations.

It is important to take into account the concrete reality of the community. Each accepts the other as he is, without judging him negatively. If each feels accepted and learns to accept the other, then the members of the community will have the necessary freedom to talk to each other and express what one feels about the other. As trust grows, one can more easily make the sacrifices that a common project implies.

The community realistically programs what is within the reach of all and what corresponds to its needs and options.

Clarity of principles. The ideals and values that give meaning and consistency to the common vocation are shared and clarified. The community expresses them in its own words and from its own perspective. These will be the guiding criteria for new objectives and strategies.

As the community brings out and reaches a common understanding on these ideals and values, its own identity becomes more explicit. It is not a matter of writing down inspiring thoughts but a question of bringing out objectively the very roots that give life and cohesion to the community.

Once written, the community plan becomes a means to remember, develop and put into action the motivations that bind together the members of the community. It is also an instrument to help each member judge and discern the call of the Redeemer here and now. The PCL is intended to make concrete the foundational charism of our Congregation.

Viability. The community develops objectives, priorities and strategies that become the roadmap for its growth and work. These should be clear and concrete, capable of being evaluated, as well as adequate, flexible and efficient. The choices made ought to be those that will help the community bring to life the principles and values previously shared and discussed.

Subsidiarity. The PCL expresses the discernment and will of the members of the community. It is important that all participate in the process of writing it. No single member, not even the superior, should dominate in such a way that he imposes his own views and strategies. In this way each will be more willing to take on the responsibilities demanded by the project. Each member ought to feel that he is responsible for working out and living the PCL.

D. The (Vice) Provincial Government

The (Vice) Provincial Government determines the minimum requirements to be included in the Plan for Community Life. It has the responsibility of approving each community PCL. This is part of its leadership role and duty to serve the communities. It can give specific guidelines for the PCL that take into account (Vice) Provincial statutes, policies, priorities, etc.

The (Vice) Provincial Government should help the communities in the elaboration of their community plans. It should provide any assistance they might need. It may be useful to structure the appropriate forum to answer questions and to take into account the input of the members in adapting the PCL to (Vice) Provincial needs. One way of doing this is by introducing the topic into the agenda of a (Vice) Provincial gathering or assembly at the beginning of the triennium.

Finally, the (Vice) Provincial Government assists the communities in the ongoing realization of the PCL. It can incorporate this task into the topics discussed in the formal visitations and in informal fraternal visits of the communities.

E. The PCL in brief

As mentioned above, there are many ways of working out a Plan for Community Life. The community signs its Plan of Community Life

and presents it to the (Vice) Provincial Government for approval. It should contain at least the following elements:

A concrete objective and specific goals for each of the dimensions of community life, namely, its *Religious Life*, its *Fraternal Life* and its *Apostolate*.

Concrete strategies to achieve its objective and specific goals.

The community also explains why this objective and the specific goals have been chosen.

A method of evaluation.

F. The PCL in more detail

What follows is a description of steps that are ordinarily followed in the working out of a PCL. Some steps may be given a full meeting, while others can be combined in a single session. Each gathering should begin and end with a prayer prepared beforehand by a member of the community. It is also beneficial to conclude each gathering with a celebration (this could be the celebration of the Eucharist or just a simple *Gaudeamus*).

Preparation

For the initial meeting, it may be useful to provide a brief questionnaire to be used in preparation. Each should ponder the following questions beforehand:

1. What has been your experience of community life during the last year?
2. What personal needs and goals have not been met?
3. What would you like to ask of the community as it begins to write its PCL?

4. What specific points or issues ought to be discussed by the community?

The community should look for a place to meet with the minimum of disturbances. The physical layout of the place should be prepared so that it will be conducive to community sharing.

Each session or gathering of the community should have a coordinator who keeps the community discussion on track. Another is asked to take notes. This secretary should carefully record particularly the consensus points, agreements and decisions. He should also coordinate the final draft of the PCL.

If the community is large, it may be advisable to divide it into smaller groups that come together at several moments to share their results. The details of the way to do this should be established beforehand.

- *Description of the community: who are we?*

The members come together to get to know each other better. They share their experience of community life during the last year or so. They communicate the positive elements as well as what did not work. Then they proceed to state what each expects from this community.

The community will write down a statement that (a) gives the name of each member, with a brief description of who he is; (b) describes the community, making explicit the needs and expectations of its members. Ordinarily the details of the community sharing at this stage are not recorded in the PCL. The description given is meant to be like a photograph, giving the general details that begin to identify the community.

- *An analysis of the community: how do we see ourselves?*

The community proceeds to look at itself as a whole, that is, indicating its strengths and limitations, its needs and expectations, the

difficulties and problems foreseen, etc. Three dimensions of our life are taken into account here: the living out of *Religious Life*, *Fraternal Community* and *Apostolate*. The purpose of this is to present in writing a description of the concrete situation of the community which will form the basis for the steps that follow.

The community writes a description of how it sees itself. It should state what characterizes the community. It ordinarily will include the specific challenges and dangers it faces, any relationship problems that have to be dealt with (*ad extra* as well as *ad intra*), relevant facts which affect the community such as age differences, a description of responsibilities a member may have outside the community (for example, Provincial tasks or assignments given by the (Vice) Provincial Government), etc.

- *Values and ideals: what principles guide us?*

In this step the community focuses on the fundamental principles that will become their common criteria for judging what they do. The source of these principles is, obviously, the *Word of God*, our *Constitutions and Statutes*, as well as the *experience* of each in living out the charism of the Congregation.

These questions can be used in preparation for this sharing:

1. What Gospel text or theme should form the basis for our PCL?
2. What Constitutions/Statutes speak directly to our community situation?
3. What values have been fundamental in living the Redemptorist vocation in the history of our unit?

The community sharpens its focus on those fundamental values which at the present moment become more significant because of *who* they are and *how* they see themselves as a community. Therefore, it's not a question, for example, of restating the Gospels. The

community seeks, rather, to discern what the Spirit of Christ is saying to them here and now in their concrete situation. Once again, the community considers specifically the three dimensions of *Religious Life*, *Fraternal Community* and *Apostolate*.

At the end of the sharing, the community draws up a written statement that expresses concisely those values and ideals that they share as community. It should be the fruit of consensus after listening to each other and dialoguing the various perspectives.

- *General objective: what do we want to achieve?*

The following step follows logically: what is the Lord calling us to be? The community proceeds to determine a specific objective for the year. What kind of community do we want to become? At this moment the community puts together a vision of what it is called to be.

The confreres write down what they understand ought to be the general objective of their community life. Through dialogue they seek to arrive at a consensus statement that expresses a call to commitment for each. This general objective contains usually specific goals with regard to the areas of *Religious Life*, *Fraternal Life* and *Apostolate*.

- *Strategies: how do we arrive there?*

At this point the community establishes concrete strategies that will help it achieve its General Objective and any specific goals agreed upon previously. They now determine the *how*. These strategies should be thoroughly realistic and capable of being carried out by all. Each specific goal contained in the objective should also have at least one corresponding strategy.

It is at this point that the community establishes the outlines of its internal organization: how it will live its commitment to the common vision.

- *Commitments: programming the strategies and personal responsibilities*

The strategies, then, are fleshed out in a concrete programming. The community reaches a consensus as to the concrete schedules that will help it live its *Religious Life, Fraternal Community* and *Apostolates*. Details, such as common prayer, community meetings, common recreation, etc., should take into account (Vice) Provincial statues, policies and priorities. The order of the day should reflect a commitment to a life style that opens up opportunities for personal and community growth.

To achieve a viable community organization and workable community plan, each member should understand his responsibilities within the community. Each puts his gifts at the service of the community and expresses his willingness to make the necessary sacrifices in order to achieve the goals of the community.

The community also discusses and distributes the various tasks and jobs that they determine are necessary for the working out of the PCL. A brief job description should be written for each task. As these tasks are distributed among the members, each should have a clear understanding of what is expected.

- *Evaluation: how and when do we revise the PCL?*

No PCL will be complete without establishing a way of periodically evaluating the PCL and how the community is living it. Usually there should be a yearly evaluation that provides the opportunity for a community revision of their life together. In some cases, the community will judge that this should be done more frequently.

The community should also decide general guidelines as to how it will carry out this evaluation. These should be flexible but, at the same time, provide a concrete outline. It is useful to determine how the community will prepare for this evaluation.

- *Resources*

It is also useful for the community to consider any outside resources that they may count on as they live out the PCL throughout a given year. These resources include persons, places and activities that will contribute to a richer community life and a more effective community ministry.

- *Final steps*

The final product of this process should be a document that expresses the consensus of the members of the community. The results of the previous steps are brought together into a coherent document. The members should agree on its final redaction. They all sign it as an indication of their commitment to it. The document is presented to the (Vice) Provincial Government for its approval. If the (Vice) Provincial Government suggests modifications, then the community should again gather together to consider and implement the necessary changes in dialogue with the (Vice) Provincial Government.