

MESSAGE TO CONFRERES BETWEEN 1 AND 10 YEARS OF RELIGIOUS PROFESSION AND ORDINATION

Dear Confreres,

1. It is a joy to meet with you today. I would have liked to do it in person, but it is impossible. Of course, many of you I have already met in person, and others I will meet in the course of the six-year term. The General Council is present with me at this meeting and will leave a greeting for each of you. This is the first time that we are meeting with all the confreres of the Congregation in this period of 1 to 10 years of profession and so Thank you very much for your presence!
2. This meeting is a very simple initiative, but its aim is to offer a few words of encouragement for your mission. Some of you are in your first years of profession and ordination, others have already completed 10 years. For this reason, the Congregation cares for you, values your consecration and your ministry, and encourages you to so that together we may form one missionary body. Little by little, we are gradually establishing a dialogue with the different groups: formandi, formators, (vice) provincial secretaries, lay Redemptorists, to journey together in view of our mission.
3. We are in era of change: of time, space, culture and language. This is very visible in our missionary reality. These transformations give rise to and a sense of helplessness, they make our hearts tighten and we feel that we do not know where we are going. These transformations are taking place at the level of the Church and Congregation, albeit more slowly. This is the scenario and this is where we Redemptorist Missionaries, Brothers and Priests, who are professed in a Congregation are called to announce Plentiful Redemption to the poorest and most abandoned.
4. As Redemptorist Missionaries, we must not see this moment in our history through the prism of fear and negativity, but rather as a gift. This is the time that the Spirit has in store for us. How are we to respond to this time? I believe the Apostle Paul encourages us: "Dearly beloved, be steadfast, always going forward in the work of the Lord, being confident that your efforts for the Lord will not be in vain" (1 Cor 15:58).
5. It is important to consider that today the Church is no longer as visible as it used to be and that we are increasingly becoming a smaller and smaller flock. But this should not be a cause for discouragement, especially in those difficult mission realities, in frontier situations or where we are not listened to or where there is indifference. The words of encouragement to the Corinthian community are certainly useful to help us: "On every side we are pressed, but not crushed; we are troubled, but not in despair; we are persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not annihilated" (2 Cor 4:8-9).
6. Dear confreres, how are you animating the charism, the gift of God that is in you? (cf. 2 Tim 1:6). In these first years you have experienced so many realities: joys, fruits of missionary work, sorrows, crises, conflicts in the community, the desire to give up. All these elements are part of our life. There is no vocation or religious life that does not have its difficult moments. Life is like that. A formandi or a religious who is not tested by moments of difficulty or who does not confront himself may be living in a bubble. In our life, difficulties we encounter and our mistakes should be opportunities to grow. We have to become more and more resilient, because society and relationships are becoming more and more complex.
7. In this context, how can we let the gift that God has given us die in our hearts and in our missionary life? If we allow this gift of God to die in us, we are bodies that walk without soul, without spirit, without enthusiasm, without the horizon of meaning. Do not forget to rekindle the gift of God in you. Don't give up at the first crisis. don't give up when you have a demanding missionary work!

Don't give up when you have a community superior or a provincial with whom you are unable to dialogue! Rekindle in yourself the gift of God and move forward in the footsteps of the Redeemer.

8. A large number of confreres leave the Congregation between 40 and 55 years of age. But last year we had cases of confreres who, after two years of ordination, asked to leave the Congregation or to go to a diocese. Many fell into activism, distancing themselves from prayer and community life. They soon ceased to see the meaning of their consecration. That is why it is important for us to be very attentive to the activism that kills our community, prayer and vocational life. Vocation is a gift that God gives us, but we must cultivate it. It is like a jewel that we always have to clean so that it shines ever brighter.
9. In Redemptorist life we must not forget these realities: cultivating our spirituality and prayer life. If this does not happen, we remain empty and we proclaim ourselves and not the Redeemer. Let us take care of our community life. Our mission is carried out in community; not forgetting ongoing formation; being a presence of the Redeemer, the light of the world (cf. Jn 8:12; Mt 5:14), among the poorest and most abandoned, giving witness to Him with our simple, joyful, welcoming and merciful way of life.
10. I would like to end this message with the words of St. Paul: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom 15:13). "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Phil 1,4-6). May Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help, Mother of perseverance and our Redemptorist Saints, Blessed and Martyrs, protect you and enlighten each one of you so that you may always be Missionaries of Hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer.

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Superior General
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