

**Called into Communion For Mission:
*Redemptorists and Lay People Together Proclaiming the
Good News of Jesus Christ to the Most Abandoned –
a Step Forward***



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As we begin

Throughout the course of this document, you will find notes such as this one, usually following major sections of the text, providing suggested questions that individuals and groups might use as they work through this text, plumbing its depth for meaning and relevance. We trust that you will find these “process notes” helpful, and that they enable you and the groups with which you are engaged in partnership in the Redemptorist mission to grow in relationship, understanding and collaboration.

If you are working through this document as an individual, please feel free to use the questions as invitations to reflect, journal and talk with mentors and friends about them.

If you are working through this document with a group of Partners in Mission, we encourage you to use the process notes as opportunities to “remain here a while,” and engage in communal reflection, conversation, dreaming and perhaps even transformation. A suggested methodology might be to use the questions posed for individuals for private or personal reflection, and then to focus on the questions posed for groups for discussion.

Introduction

Our Congregation from the beginning has always been close to the people, particularly the poor and abandoned, and has always sought collaboration with the laity in its apostolic work. It will be sufficient to recall, for example, what Alphonsus accomplished with the ‘evening chapels’ in Naples to realize how much he had at heart this nearness to and sharing with the abandoned ... St. Clement, especially during his period in Vienna, always sought to associate with the laity and

to involve them in his multiple apostolic work so as to have a more profound and lasting effect on the European society of his time. (*Communicanda 4* [1995], 3)

This is the hour of the laity in the Church; it is a moment which we cannot throw away. (*Lasso*, 2)

Part of our History

Redemptorists have a long history of inviting the co-operation of lay people in carrying out the mission to follow Jesus by preaching the gospel to the most abandoned. More recently, in the light of various movements in the Church as well as developments in Catholic theology, Redemptorists have recognised a need to focus more deliberately on their co-operation with lay people – in both theory and practice.

During the 2003-2009 sexennium the General Secretariat dealing with collaboration became aware of the great interest among members of the Congregation in sharing our mission and our life with others. Many provinces and units have lay persons working alongside confreres – from parochial ministry, to mission activity, to dedicated commitments as Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer. Provinces and units (especially through their chapters) have formulated a variety of documents to deal with this new reality. Some of these documents provide theological reflection, while others take a much more practical approach and develop guidelines, norms or statutes. Much of this work has been in response to the publication of *Communicanda 4* (1995), entitled “Collaboration Between the Redemptorist Community and the Laity.”

A Step Along the Way

The Secretariat as a consultative body for the General Government is aware of the rich variety of association with lay persons that exists among us. We have also heard the need and desire of many for greater clarity about the theological underpinnings of a Redemptorist partnership with lay men and women, for models of how this partnership can happen, for resources for formation. The present document is the result of the Secretariat's reflections and deliberations. These are presented to the wider Congregation in the hope that they will spur further discussion and feedback for the General Government in its task of giving leadership to the Congregation in sharing our life and mission with lay people. We regard this document as a step along the way, and we hope that others will take further steps.

The Structure of the Document

*Jesus went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, **to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message and to have authority to cast out demons.** (Mark 3:13-15)*

This line from the Gospel according to Mark is a paradigm for all who share in the task of evangelization. It names some essential factors for a full Christian life: to experience an invitation or call (Vocation), to be with Jesus (Communion), and to be sent out (Mission). Jesus first "called to him those whom he wanted." This document will not focus specifically on vocation as a theme, since it falls more easily in the brief of other Secretariats. We will concentrate on the other two fundamental principles – Communion and Mission. Both Communion and Mission depend on one other, even more fundamental reality: we are first called

by God. It is the vocation of each baptized person to be with Jesus and to be sent out. Since all the baptized are “called into communion for mission,” Redemptorists too are challenged to live by these principles. The first two parts of this document will reflect on the two foundational principles of every Christian vocation and of Redemptorist partnership in mission: Communion and Mission. A third part will consider some practical implications of living out these principles in the Congregation; and we will conclude in Part 4 by raising a variety of questions, issues and challenges that continue to face us as we move forward in Partnership in Mission.

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. How have you experienced Jesus’ invitation to relationship (communion) and mission in your life?
2. The author Parker Palmer writes about vocation as “letting your life speak.” How has your life led you to seek connection with the Redemptorist community? How do you understand this connection as providing some context for the ministry in which you are engaged?

For Groups:

This first section of the document names two factors as necessary for a full Christian life: to be with Jesus (Communion), and to be sent out (Mission).

1. How does your connection within the Redemptorist family assist you to grow more in love with the Person of Jesus Christ?
2. How does your connection within the Redemptorist family help you to understand yourself as sent out in mission?

Part I:

Called into Life-Giving Communion

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

A Theology of Communion

One of the richest concepts to come out of the Second Vatican Council was the idea of “*communio*”. Of course it did not emerge as a fully-fledged notion but rather as a hint or suggestion of a way of speaking about the mystery of the Church, the mystery of our union with Christ and with one another in the Church. Taken up by theologians in the years after the Council, it is now seen to be one of the great theological fruits of the Council.

Pause for Reflection...

For Individuals and Groups

1. What comes to mind for you when you hear the word “*communio*”?
2. As a way of understanding Church, how might this notion of “*communio*” help you to see your own place and value?

***Communio* has always and everywhere to do first with God**

It may be said that *communio* is the guiding ecclesiological idea of the Second Vatican Council. In the first instance Christian *communio* refers to fellowship/communion with God. The call to share in the divine nature is the purpose of all human life. Whether it is called ‘deification’ (as in Byzantine theology), or ‘fellowship’, or ‘personal community with God’, or ‘peace and communion’, *communio* has always and everywhere to do first with God. “The

longing of the human heart is so immense and so profound that only God is great enough to fulfill it. God alone is the final answer to the question which the human being is.” (Kasper, 153)

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. If “communio” has first and foremost to do with God, how am I attentive to my prayer life and growth in relationship with God? What steps do I take to feed and nurture my life of union with God?

For Groups:

1. How can we assist each other to grow in “communio” with God?
2. If “God alone is the final answer to the question which the human being is,” how are we helping each other to become more attuned and attentive to the questions of the human hearts around us, that they might more readily turn to God?

Communio as participation in word and sacrament

For the early Christians, *communio* with God was expressed and celebrated in a *communio* or participation in holy things: word and sacrament. This communion in holy things could not be separated from a communion with holy people. It is not difficult to see why and how the word for sharing the Risen Lord in the Eucharist became ‘communion’.

From Eucharistic *communio* immediately springs the notion of communion among those sharing in the Eucharist. This brings us to the popular understanding of *communio* in a horizontal sense, fellowship with one another. The goal of the Eucharist is “communion of humankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit.” (EDE, 22)

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. How does the Eucharist connect me to other people and to the world?

For Groups:

1. How is our celebration of the Eucharist a gift for us and for the world?
2. Share some examples of ways in which a growing sense of the Church as 'communion' has enabled you or people you know to be more aware of or more generous toward sisters and brothers far and near.

***Communio* and lay responsibility within the Christian community**

In terms of lay responsibility within the Christian community we can say that the community of the faithful is rooted in the common priesthood of all the baptized. By definition the people of God constitute a *communio* held together by the Holy Spirit, a *communio* which is more radical and more basic than any later distinctions of hierarchy may suggest.

Since the Second Vatican Council many lay people have begun to celebrate their baptismal priesthood more fully. No longer perceived as an extension of the hierarchy, many lay people have begun to accept greater responsibility for their Christian vocation and personal spiritual development *because it is theirs by baptism*. Reminded by the Second Vatican Council that lay people are called not only to holiness but to mission, Pope John Paul II further clarified the role of lay people in *Christifideles Laici*, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on 'The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People'. John Paul wrote:

"Vatican Council II has invited us to contemplate the mystery of the Church through biblical images which bring to light the reality of the

Church as a communion with its inseparable dimensions: the communion of each Christian with Christ and the communion of all Christians with one another.” (19)

In his homily at the close of that Synod which reflected especially on the ‘Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People’, the Pope said that a member of the lay faithful “can never remain in isolation from the community, but must live in a continual interaction with others, with a lively sense of fellowship, rejoicing in an equal dignity and common commitment to bring to fruition the immense treasure that each has inherited”. This vision of Church and lay people is in accord with insights and movements we find in society in general.

In the years since the Council and more particularly since that Synod, recognition of the dignity of lay life and respect for the rights of lay people in the Church has grown. Whatever the New Code of Canon Law describes as the rights of lay people in the Church, it is acknowledged that these come not from ecclesial decision but from baptism and from the obligations of discipleship. In recent years there has been a more obvious celebration of the interdependence and mutuality of all vocations and an acknowledgement of ministries specific to lay life. Always sensitive to what flows directly from the sacrament of Orders and what comes from baptism as such, Church documents such as *Christifideles laici* are nervous of the word “ministries” when applied to lay people. In Part 2 of this document we will note further challenges in terminology, and in Part 3 we will identify some ways in which lay people and Redemptorists are in fact working together.

Looking to the future, it is obvious that new structures will be needed for a Church in which lay people more actively exercise their responsibility. Clergy will have to learn to trust lay people, to listen to them and learn from them, and to avoid divisiveness and polarization. In short, clergy must remember that their

role is one of service. Perhaps the most important task is the articulation of an effective spirituality for lay people. It will have to deal with issues like marriage, sexuality, work, social criticism and the like, in a language and with role models with which lay people can resonate.

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

Make a list of the elements which you might use as the “building blocks” of an effective spirituality for lay people.

For Groups:

Together, brainstorm on paper some of the issues that we would consider to be essential “building blocks” of a spirituality for lay life in the Church. When the list is complete for the time being, discuss the items that have been placed there. What picture seems to be emerging?

Communio and Religious Institutes

One of the great fruits of the theology of *communio* is the sharing of gifts for the sake of mission. Thinking of the Church as *communio* can promote waves of generosity as people from all walks of life share their insights and skills and enthusiasms to build up the Body of Christ. In a special way, many religious institutes have re-discovered an awareness of how their charism can be shared with lay people. Many long established Religious Orders had already discovered this reality in their “Third Orders”, and the monastic communities have always been familiar with various ways of sharing the monastic experience. More recently, the apostolic Congregations, often founded for a very specific purpose, have found ways of sharing their charism with lay people. *Vita Consecrata*, the 1996 Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, in paragraph 55 encourages this trend in the contemporary Church because:

- It can give rise to the spread of a fruitful spirituality beyond the confines of the Institute.
- It facilitates more intense cooperation between consecrated persons and lay people in view of the Institute's mission.
- The participation of lay people often brings unexpected and rich insights into certain aspects of the charism.

Of course, every charism is given by the Holy Spirit to the whole Church; Institutes of Consecrated Life exercise these charisms in particular ways to respond to needs in the Church. Not surprisingly, lay people are often drawn by the charism of a particular institute because it resonates with their own. Clearly, lay partnership with religious demands proper formation both for lay people and for religious; new initiatives coming from such partnerships are carried out under the responsibility of the Institute and adequate directives are needed for the good ordering of such partnerships. (See VC, 56)

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

What examples do you know of, or have you seen in action, of the sharing of lay people in the charism and life of a religious community? What excites you or gives you energy as you reflect on these examples?

For Groups:

Share some examples that you know of, or have seen in action, of the sharing of lay people in the charism and life of a religious community. As you share the examples, name what excites you or gives you energy as you reflect on these.

Communio and Redemptorists

The language of *communio* has taken root in the self-understanding of Redemptorists, as the Constitutions and Statutes make clear. Constitution 21 states it most boldly: “An essential law of life for the members is this: that they live in community and carry out their apostolic work through community.” Such a communion creates genuine brotherhood and fosters “gospel friendship.” (Const. 34) At the heart of Redemptorist communities is the presence of Christ and his Spirit of love so that Redemptorists may live in intimate relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The closer the communion of Redemptorists with Christ, the stronger will become their communion with each other.

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. For Redemptorists, *communio* is at the heart of all life, mission and ministry. How might this awareness enrich your own understanding of the work that you do or the ministry in which you are engaged?

For Groups:

1. What does “gospel friendship” mean to us?
2. What means can this group suggest to help us to grow in “gospel friendship?”

The Shared Search for God

If *communio* is taken as the foundational value on which to build imaginative partnership, then Redemptorists and lay people will each respect the calling of the other. A stress on communion will mean that the primary experience of partnership will be in the shared search for God. Every Christian is part of this search and in the Redemptorist context such a search takes a certain shape, moulded by the Redemptorist tradition. Thus the primacy of prayer and the tradition of meditation/contemplation will be evident in the lives of Redemptorists and those who share their charism. Redemptorists and Redemptorist associates will be in communion with one another in longing for the face of God. St. Alphonsus has bequeathed to those following in his footsteps a particular passion for prayer and contemplation which in his time he himself also offered to the lay people who attended the 'evening chapels' and later to those who attended the popular missions.

To those drawn to share the Redemptorist charism is offered not only Alphonsus' own devotional warmth but also the distinctive Redemptorist spirituality which continues to develop and take shape in and through so many different cultures. It is the experience of many Redemptorists that lay partners in mission have very often brought to the Congregation an enthusiasm for both the things of God and for the Redemptorist tradition which has rekindled the sometimes jaded spirits of Redemptorists themselves. It is not hard to imagine Redemptorist community prayer being deepened by the presence of lay people grateful for the opportunity for regular prayer in a community setting.

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. What aspects of the Redemptorist tradition draw me, inspire me, or give me energy and life?

For Groups:

1. As a group, make a list of the aspects of Redemptorist heritage (prayer forms, Alphonsian meditation, passion for people, emphasis on partnership in mission, etc.) that continue to draw us today.
2. Do we know of any examples of how vowed Redemptorists have been inspired by the enthusiasm of lay partners for aspects of the Redemptorist tradition?
3. Is this group moved to take any concrete action regarding our ownership or joint reclaiming of some aspect of the Redemptorist tradition?

Redemptorist Brothers, Redemptorist(ine) Sisters, and Others

In the context of lay partnership with Redemptorists, it is of great significance that many Redemptorists are themselves 'lay'. From the beginning, Redemptorist Brothers brought that lay dimension to the Congregation, and the Redemptorist way of life always allows for lay participation in the fullest sense. The life of St. Gerard shows how lay Redemptorists were able to exercise many ministries, both within the community and outside the community.

Since they share the same vocation as the clerical members, Redemptorist Brothers "must be more intimately conformed to the mystery of Christ and share in the life of the Congregation, since all work together in the same missionary vocation, each contributing the service that is proper to himself." (Const. 89)

The important conclusion is that Redemptorist *communio* can be lived fully as a lay person. The implications of this understanding of Redemptorist *communio* have not been rigorously thought through in terms of the Canon Law of the Church. Most of our confreres in formation are lay men and all our Redemptorist(ine) Sisters belong to the lay state.

In 2003, the Redemptorist Secretariat for Spirituality published a book entitled *Redemptorist Family* which drew attention to the very many other religious communities inspired by the charism of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In that book 40 communities were mentioned. Most of the members of these communities are lay religious and not clerics. Whenever possible, Redemptorists are called to work in partnership in a special way with these communities. However, what needs to be explored at this time in our history is how the Redemptorist charism can be lived without the profession of vows.

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. How aware was I of the history of lay participation in the Redemptorist charism?
2. How does this awareness enrich my understanding of the scope of the Redemptorist family?

For Groups:

1. Knowing that lay people have been involved from the very earliest stages of the development of the Redemptorist charism, what new insights emerge?
2. What glimpses do we now get as to how this charism might be lived by those who do not profess the evangelical counsels (vows)? Share these with the group, and record them on paper.

Some Principles of Redemptorist Communio

An “ecclesiology of communion” underlies all association and partnership between Redemptorists and lay people. As Redemptorists strive to share their charism with others, the principles of Redemptorist life extend to those others as well; what is elaborated in the *Constitutions and Statutes* about the life and work of professed Redemptorists also has implications for those associated with them. The differing contexts in which the Congregation finds itself will often determine the kinds of association and partnership possible between Redemptorists and lay people, but those involved will always need to explore how the principles of Redemptorist Apostolic Life can be ‘translated’ to apply to their particular situations.

In this context, it is especially helpful to consider Articles 4 – 8 in Chapter 2 of the Redemptorist Constitutions and Statutes. Chapter 2 is entitled “The Apostolic Community” and the five articles refer to a Community of Persons, a Community of Work, a Community of Conversion, an Open Community, and an Organized Community. It should be noted that previous articles in the Constitutions have already spoken of the centrality of Christ and the importance of prayer for both *communio* in general and Redemptorist *communio* in particular.

Under the heading *A COMMUNITY OF PERSONS* (Const 34-38) the Redemptorist Constitutions and Statutes speak of the “Gospel friendship which gives life to the apostolic community.” (Const. 34) A similar Gospel friendship will also inform and enliven the relationships between Redemptorists and their associates and partners in mission. The Constitutions and Statutes emphasize the importance of personal growth, a wide circle of personal relationships, esteem for persons with their values and qualities, mutual respect, and concern for the common good.

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. How might I live the Redemptorist principle of “gospel friendship” in my particular situation?
2. How do I live the values of esteem for persons with their values and qualities, mutual respect, and concern for the common good in my day-to-day life?

For Groups:

1. In concrete terms, how might we as a group live the Redemptorist principle of “gospel friendship” in our particular situation? What would this mean for us?

The Constitutions and Statutes reflect on what it means to be *A COMMUNITY OF WORK* (Const.39). Since Redemptorist community is for the sake of mission, those who share the charism and collaborate with us are “partners in mission.” They are not simply “helpers”; rather they exercise their baptismal responsibility in co-operation with professed Redemptorists. Constitution 19 has already called for “missionary dialogue with the world,” encouraging a spirit of concern that seeks to “understand people’s anxious questionings.” Creating missionary communities of Redemptorists and lay people can be an authentic way of listening and learning and of going forward together. The vision of the Redemptorist General Statutes about the people to be evangelized includes many to whom lay partners would often have more immediate and direct access: emigrants, exiles and refugees, those who suffer harm because of division in the Church, those in need of catechesis, those discriminated against because of race, colour, or sexual orientation and the multitude of those who have ceased to practice the Catholic faith. Lay people generally have more immediate access to the worlds of work, leisure, politics, economics, education, and so on. In

cooperation with lay people the Redemptorist vision of mission can be hugely expanded.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. How do I live the Redemptorist principle of participating in a “community of work” in my particular situation?
2. As I go about my day-to-day life, do I envision myself as “helper” or as “partner” to the Redemptorists with and among whom I share life and mission?

For Groups:

1. In concrete terms, how might we as a group live the Redemptorist principle of “a community of work” in our particular situation?
2. What steps can we take to further the notion of collaboration on the basis of real partnership, rather than laity as “helpers” in the Redemptorist apostolate?

Considering Redemptorists and those associated with them as *A COMMUNITY OF CONVERSION* (Const. 40-42) can introduce an important and insightful shift in thinking about conversion. Conversion is in the first place a call to turn continually to God. It is also a call to tend to the neighbour – especially the most abandoned. Conversion is a call to Redemptorists to work with lay people at the service of the most abandoned; it is also a call to those associated with Redemptorists to work with Redemptorists in service of the most abandoned. Indeed, the more radical one’s conversion to God, the more apparent will be conversion to one another in partnership as well as to the poor and abandoned.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. Where in my life am I being called to turn more toward a neighbour in love and compassion?
2. As I go about my day-to-day life, how am I becoming more aware of and responsive to the needs of the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor?

For Groups:

1. As we go about our day-to-day life, how are we becoming more aware of and responsive to the needs of the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor?
2. How is this journey of partnership in mission bringing about in me/us a greater awareness of and respect for others who share the Redemptorist charism and spirituality? Do we name this as “conversion”?

Thinking about *AN OPEN COMMUNITY* (Const. 43) is one factor that has led Redemptorists to desire to share their spirit and charism with others and to be open to partnering with others in mission. Now those who are thus associated with Redemptorists must also remain “open to the world in such a way that, through contact with people, [they] may learn to understand the signs of the times and of places and adapt [themselves] more fittingly to the demands of evangelization.”

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

- I. How is my connection to Redemptorists and the Redemptorist charism opening me more to other people, the world and the action of the Holy Spirit?

For Groups:

- I. What signs do we see that our partnership in mission and the Redemptorist charism is making us more aware of and responsive to other people, the world and the action of the Holy Spirit?

As AN ORGANIZED COMMUNITY Redemptorists have learned much about putting into practice the theology of communion. That learning, expressed especially in the constitutions and statutes regarding governance, can also be applied to Redemptorist partnership with lay people. We find six organizational principles enshrined in the Constitutions and Statutes:

- *The Principle of Co-responsibility*

Constitution 92 calls on all members and communities to play an active and responsible role and reminds us that to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (See 1 Cor. 12:7). This principle of co-responsibility recurs frequently throughout the Redemptorist Constitutions and Statutes, and there is a fuller reflection on it in Constitution 73 which speaks of “mutual dependence” in carrying out the apostolic mission of the Congregation and calls for “dialogue and fraternal discussion.” Constitution 18 speaks of “fraternal co-operation” while Constitution 38 states that co-responsibility is not only about decision-making but also means that everyone “contributes all that is in them to the actual carrying out of whatever has been decided.”

It seems quite obvious that the principle of co-responsibility applies not only in internal Redemptorist matters but also in matters that involve others in partnership with Redemptorists. Among Redemptorists, co-responsibility has often remained an elusive goal. Perhaps entering into dialogue with lay partners in mission can be more successful – both for discerning the way for the sake of the mission and for actually following that way.

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. In my life as a Christian, do I take ownership of and responsibility for any aspect of the life of the community?

For Groups:

1. How do we model the principle of co-responsibility?
2. Are our decision-making processes and follow-up reflective of and conducive to the building-up of community ownership?
3. How do we live “mutual dependence?” What does this mean to us?

- *The Principle of Decentralization*

Decentralization as described in Constitution 93 means that “each section...conducts its own affairs...by co-ordinating the life of the members [and partners in mission], in communion with the other parts of the Institute, with the local Church, and with civil society of which it is a part.” Putting this principle into practice would mean that not all decisions are made at the highest level (General Government) and from there conveyed to the rest; rather, authority is more widely disbursed so that many decisions can be made at the local level ([V]Province or local community).

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. Do I look to those in positions of power or authority to make decisions, or do I use my voice and take an active role in communal decision-making?

For Groups:

1. How do we make decisions about our life and shared ministry roles and responsibilities?
2. How do we respect the principle of decentralization?

- *The Principle of Collegiality*

‘Collegiality’ is a word that has emerged in Catholic theology in the last fifty years or so and it gathers together many of the insights and desires of a theology and ecclesiology of communion. Not actually used in the documents of Vatican II, the word collegiality has come to express and summarize much of what that Council taught. Collegiality describes both an attitude and a way of acting that is communal, consultative and collaborative. Decisions are made together rather than arbitrarily; the voices of all (or at least many) are heard.

The Redemptorist *Constitutions and Statutes* breathe the spirit of collegiality. Even among Redemptorists, the practice of collegiality, however, may vary considerably. In partnership with lay people, that spirit of collegiality faces new challenges; however, if we are to reflect the true nature of the Church, then Redemptorists and their partners in mission must manifest collegiality in their relationships with one another. This would influence how common projects or joint communities would be run, once again respecting the tradition which has been inherited.

Pause for reflection...

For Individuals:

1. Do I appreciate being consulted on decisions that affect me?
2. In my own dealings with people, whether at home or at work or in ministry, is my attitude one of collegiality? Do I consult and include people in decisions, especially those which directly affect them or the work they do?

For Groups:

1. Can our basic attitude and way of acting be characterized as communal, consultative and collaborative?
2. Are people in our group consulted on those decisions that directly affect them and their ministries?
3. Do we seek to gain a sense of shared ownership in decisions?

- *The Principle of Subsidiarity*

Usually perceived as a principle of good government, the principle of subsidiarity underlines the concept of respect for all levels of membership and all ways of sharing in the Mission of the Congregation. Where the principle of subsidiarity is applied, decisions are made at the lowest level possible and higher authority intervenes only when necessary.

“This is achieved,” says Constitution 94, “when all the members [and partners] and structures at lower level take their part in deciding matters which relate to themselves, and which they can implement with the means at their own disposal.” Subsidiarity is built on mutual respect, which is the focus of the section in the Constitutions called “A Community of Persons” to which we have already referred.

The danger in collaborative projects might be that Redemptorist superiors would be too quick to intervene; mutual respect would help to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity be honoured.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals and Groups:

1. How do I witness the principle of subsidiarity being lived out in the collaborative projects in which I am involved in the Redemptorist context?
2. Do I feel listened to, respected and involved in decision-making concerning those collaborative projects in which I am involved?
3. Is mutual respect a foundational feature of our partnership in mission?

- *The Principle of Solidarity*

“The principle of solidarity...ensures real co-operation among institutions of the same level and among the members [and partners] themselves.” (Const. 95) In his encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* Pope John Paul II spoke of the “virtue of solidarity,” which he defined as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all responsible for all.” (SRS 38)

The implications of solidarity and the common good are manifold for Redemptorists in their life together and for Redemptorists together with their partners in mission, as well as for the carrying out of the mission. Furthermore, it is the Redemptorist mission to evangelize the poor *and to be evangelized by the poor*. That is certainly one implication of the principle of solidarity in the context of Redemptorist *communio*.

This principle of co-operation asks the questions: What can be done together which cannot be done apart? What can be done better together than apart?

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. What does “solidarity” mean for me in my life and ministry?

For groups:

1. In the realm of partnership in mission between vowed Redemptorists and laity, what areas or tasks might we identify which can be done together which cannot be done apart?
2. What might we identify as things that can be better done together than apart?

- *The Principle of Adaptability*

Adaptability of structure and institutions for the sake of the mission, “always in fidelity to the charism of the Congregation,” (Const. 96) can keep the mission vital, relevant and effective in changing times and circumstances.

The Redemptorist Congregation has embarked on a worldwide process of restructuring for the sake of Mission. This is a vivid example of the principle of adaptability in practice. Adapting to new structures of working with partners in ministry and in community is a vital part of this wider restructuring process which will lead well beyond notions of simple co-operation or collaboration into the very heart of the Congregation.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. Adaptability and openness to change go hand-in-hand. How open am I to change in my personal life?

For groups:

1. What structures, currently in place in the Redemptorist world, lend themselves to partnership in mission?
2. What structures might we explore that we envision furthering partnership in mission?

Communio between Redemptorists and Lay People in Practice

Communio is not just a theological term; it is a practical reality which Redemptorists have long striven to put into practice. The Redemptorist Congregation is not coming cold to the question of association and partnership with lay people. Redemptorist history shows that partnership in mission (collaboration with others) has consistently marked Redemptorist Apostolic Life (e.g. evening chapels, sharing prayer with the people, Vienna Circle). Also in recent history there are many examples to be found of fruitful collaboration between Redemptorists and lay people and many experiments in lay partnership. Collaboration with lay people has been on the agenda of all recent Redemptorist General Chapters. A common feature of many recent Redemptorist experiences of lay collaboration is that they are based not on convenience or utility but on shared faith and spirituality.

As the foundational principle of *COMMUNIO* informs Redemptorist *thinking* about sharing the charism with lay people, so the foundational principle of *MISSION* informs its *practice*. We go on in the second part of this document to reflect on Mission as a foundational principle underlying Redemptorist association and partnership with lay people.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. As I come to the end of this section of the document, what have I learned?
2. How can I more fully incorporate the reality of *communio* into my daily living?
3. What inspires me, energizes me or gives me hope?

For groups:

1. What have we learned as we have read and reflected together on this portion of the document?
2. What are our lingering questions or concerns?
3. What energizes us or gives us hope?
4. The foundational principle of *communio* informs Redemptorist thinking about sharing the charism with lay people. How is this group called to a deeper sharing of faith and spirituality as a result of our reflection on *communio*?

Part 2:

Called to Effective Mission

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Mt 28:19-20)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Lk 4:18-19)

A Theology of Mission

The Redemptorist community was founded precisely to be sent out; a hallmark of Redemptorist life and spirituality is the primacy of mission; everything is viewed through the lens of *mission* and evaluated in terms of its contribution to evangelizing the poor and being evangelized by the poor.

The first chapter of the Redemptorist *Constitutions and Statutes* describes and defines the Redemptorist mission and provides the framework of our missionary spirituality. This chapter is entitled “The Missionary Work of the Congregation”; and already the first Constitution says that the purpose of the Congregation is “to follow the example of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor, as he declared of himself: ‘He sent me to preach the Good News to the poor.’”

However it is clear that the Redemptorist mission is only one expression of a much greater reality, rooted in the very beginnings of God's dealings with people in Salvation History. In fact, we can say, "In the beginning was God's mission." Entrusted first to the people of Israel, then to God's son Jesus Christ, this mission is now entrusted to the Church. Redemptorists and their co-workers give a particular flavour to the mission of the Church.

Out of *communion* with God and Jesus in the Holy Spirit flows the mission to evangelize the nations. As individual disciples and as a community of disciples, baptized in the Lord, we are called into communion with Jesus and sent to share in the ongoing mission of Jesus.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

The mission of the Church, given in Matthew 28, is to "Go... make disciples..." and Redemptorists do this through following "the example of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor."

1. How do I see myself participating in this mission of the Church and the Redemptorist family?
2. What are my gifts, talents and skills for evangelization?

For groups:

Redemptorists and their co-workers give a particular flavour to the mission of the Church. That flavour comes from the call to proclaim Good News to the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor.

1. How do we hear the cry of the most abandoned?
2. How have we responded in partnership, in our particular time and place?

Salvation History: God's Mission → The Mission of Jesus Christ → The Mission of the Church

God's Mission, the Mission of Jesus Christ, the Mission of the Church is ever old and ever new. It is rooted in the reality of the Holy Trinity before Creation and is alive in the world of today.

Scripture records that God made a covenant with all people. The Old Covenant with Moses was such that God's face shone on all people so that salvation might be known "among all nations" (Ps 67:2). This is the basis for the messianic mission of the people of Israel which found its completion in the sending of Jesus in the New covenant (See Jer 31:31; Heb 8:8).

Mission originated in the Trinity. God's mission took historical form in Jesus Christ and was inspired by God's Spirit. This mission emanating from God aims to establish the Kingdom of God.

Jesus announced his mission as one of proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God. He said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Lk 4:18-19)

The mission of Jesus is now entrusted to the Church. As we consider the mission of the Church we note three important characteristics:

- The mission of the Church is *CHRIST'S MISSION*, since Jesus said to the disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (Jn 20:21) After his resurrection, Christ gave this mission to his apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:18–20).
- The mission of the Church is a *UNIVERSAL MISSION*. At Pentecost, which is the Church's day of birth, everyone heard the disciples speaking in their own language. From the first moment of her existence the Church speaks all languages and is united in the same spirit; the Spirit leads the Church beyond cultural and political borders. The Church has a universal mission because God intended salvation for all nations. From the very beginning, Christians' recognition of this fact has moved them to give public witness to their faith in Jesus Christ and to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). According to the Second Vatican Council, Jesus Christ is the "light of the nations" and this light is to be brought to all people (See LG, 1). God desires that all people should have fullness of life in Jesus (See Jn 10:10).
- The mission of the Church is still very *FAR FROM COMPLETION*. In many ways, this mission is still only beginning and the Church must still commit wholeheartedly to its service (RM 1). The reign of God, (that is, the situation or way of life, where God's values reign supreme) inaugurated by Jesus. Is both "already and not yet".

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

Implicit in this section of the document is a sense of the abundance of God's love and redemption.

1. Do I believe wholeheartedly in this wondrous hope, offered to me and all humanity?
2. How do I see my role in God's continuing work of redemption, being accomplished in and through the Church?

For groups:

1. How are we a sign to the world of God's abundant love and plentiful redemption?

The Mission of the Church: Some Words

The use and meaning of the word 'mission' has evolved and changed over time. The following may be of some help as we think about a theology of mission:

- **“Mission” and “Missions”**

Ad Gentes tends to speak of the “mission” of the whole Church and of “missions and missionary activity” for work among those who are not Christian. (We will follow *Ad Gentes* in this document.)

- **“Mission” and “Evangelization”**

It has often been said that the mission of the Church is “evangelization”. However, evangelization is a complex reality. The *General Directory for Catechesis* in paragraph 49 presents with great clarity the three “moments” in the Church's mission of evangelization:

1. *MISSIONARY ACTIVITY*, directed to those who have not heard the Good News, have rejected it or live in indifference to it;
2. *CATECHETICAL ACTIVITY*, addressed to those who, having been introduced to the Person of Jesus Christ now seek to deepen that relationship in and through the Church;
3. *PASTORAL ACTIVITY*, sustaining and nourishing the committed believer.

The *General Directory* calls for greater emphasis on adult faith formation and for the formation of catechists to minister with and among adults.

We also note that the term “mission” is used in ecumenical discussions, but Protestant theologians and WCC documents tend to prefer the word “evangelism.”

- **“Mission” and “Ministry”**

Mission and ministry are two closely related characteristics of the people of God; however, it seems best to distinguish between the one “mission” which pertains to the very essence of the Church and the many “ministries” which are part of the Church’s mission. Despite all the diversity of ministry, there is a “oneness of mission.” (AA, 2)

- **“Laity” / “Lay people” / “Christ’s lay faithful”**

It is worth noting that *Christifideles Laici* and other recent Church documents tend to refer to “the lay faithful” or to “lay people.” The adjective “lay” is now normally more used than the noun (substantive) “laity”.

- **“Partnership in Mission”**

In some current Catholic theological discourse the expression “partnership in mission” is commonplace, and we have chosen to use this terminology; however, we realize its limitations, e.g. translating to other languages, connotations, etc.

As we continue to reflect on Redemptorists and lay people in co-operation we hope to find new and more adequate terminology that is both respectful and able to express the meaning in various languages.

The Mission of the Church: Some Documents

Ad Gentes (1965)

This document of the Second Vatican Council sees ecclesial mission as rooted in the Trinitarian missions (AG, 2-4). It gives the basis for mission in both Scripture and in Tradition and states:

The mission of the Church, therefore, is fulfilled through an activity by which, obedient to the command of Christ and moved by the grace and charity of the Holy Spirit, it makes itself fully present to all people and nations, so that by the example of its life and by preaching, by the sacraments and other means of grace, it may lead them to the faith, to the freedom and peace of Christ. Its goal is to open to them a free and reliable way to full sharing in the mystery of Christ (AG 5).

The insight of *Ad Gentes* about the missionary character of the Church becomes more explicit in subsequent documents. It is developed in the 1983 Code of Canon Law which under the title “Missionary Activity of the Church” insists on the missionary responsibility of the whole Church (CIC, 781–792).

Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975)

This Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI gives examples of “non-ordained ministries”, “which are able to offer a particular service to the Church”: catechists, directors of prayer and chant, Christians devoted to the service of God’s word or to assisting those in need, heads of small communities or other persons charged with the responsibility of apostolic movements. Also mentioned are all those lay people “who accept to consecrate a part of their time, their energies and sometimes their entire lives, to the service of the mission” (EN 73).

Redemptoris Missio (1990)

Many issues of modern missiology are addressed in the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*. This document focuses on Christ the Redeemer and on salvation. Its primary emphasis is not so much on the Church as on the Reign of God (RM, 12-19). Witnessing, evangelization, inculturation, the formation of local churches, dialogue and charity are the paths of mission (RM, 41– 60). The agents of mission are those of *Ad Gentes* (23–27) and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (59–73) with a very strong emphasis on the missionary call of baptism.

Mission and Redemptorists

Each religious institute shares in the mission of Christ and the Church according to its particular charism. As Fr. Joseph Tobin, Superior General of the Redemptorists, reminded us in *Communicanda 2* (1999), the Redemptorist mission in the Church is to respond with missionary thrust to the pressing needs of the most abandoned, especially the poor. This missionary spirituality finds an echo in the hearts of many lay people, who in communion with Redemptorists strive to preach good news to the poor. It is this missionary thrust or spirit that most closely unites Redemptorists with their partners in mission.

Fr. Juan Manuel Lasso de la Vega (former Superior General) has said that present day Redemptorists are being called to build a new model of the Congregation, which corresponds to the new model of the Church that has been emerging in the post-Vatican II years. He says that this call is to build a Congregation which promotes much more than participation of lay people, it involves animating them and giving them a good formation so that they may find new ways to make the Redemptorist mission and charism and Alphonsian spirituality present in the world. (See Lasso, Hour, 14)

St. Alphonsus Liguori, founder of the Redemptorists, believed that mission gives unity to Redemptorist life. Constitution I of the Redemptorist Constitutions and Statutes calls this unifying force the “vita apostolica” (apostolic life): comprising “at one and the same time a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work.” Constitution I continues: “The Congregation shares the mandate given to the Church ... which is missionary of its very nature.” The origin and source of Redemptorist spirituality is found precisely in the Redemptorist mission, hence Redemptorist spirituality is a truly missionary spirituality. Redemptorist spirituality is not only for Redemptorists; it is shared by many lay people who are connected to Redemptorists in various ways. Redemptorists do not journey alone. The Redemptorist charism is a treasure to be shared with others.

FR. Samuel J. Boland has written that most of Clement Hofbauer’s “life as a Redemptorist was devoted to work with lay people. He depended on them for most of what he tried to achieve, and he encouraged initiatives among them that usually proved effective. Some of those who worked most zealously for the cause of religion in the Congress of Vienna in 1815 were his disciples. Even in Warsaw, with a growing community about him he needed lay helpers for his various projects, and in Vienna, where he was on his own, it could only have

been through his contacts that he could have done all that he succeeded in achieving. His was the precious gift of being able to work with and through others.” (Boland, 298-99)

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. How does the Redemptorist mission in the Church – to respond with missionary thrust to the pressing needs of the most abandoned, especially the poor – find an echo in my own heart?
2. How do I experience myself, in the day-to-day reality of my life, as called “at one and the same time to a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work”?

For groups:

1. We read that “the origin and source of Redemptorist spirituality is found precisely in the Redemptorist mission, hence Redemptorist spirituality is a truly missionary spirituality.” How do we live out this missionary spirituality in our daily lives?
2. How are the lay faithful in this Redemptorist family being formed “so that they may find new ways to make the Redemptorist mission and charism and Alphonsian spirituality present in the world”?

The Redemptorist Missionary: Nourished and Challenged at the Table of the Lord

Since Redemptorist spirituality is missionary and apostolic, it is intimately connected with the mission of Jesus Christ – the very reason why both the Congregation and the Church exist. St. Alphonsus was fed and inspired by the Eucharist, and as co-workers in the vineyard, Redemptorist missionaries and

their co-workers continue to be both nourished and challenged at the table of the Lord. Pope John Paul II put it this way:

The encounter with Christ, constantly intensified and deepened in the Eucharist, issues in the Church and in every Christian an urgent summons to testimony and evangelization ...entering into communion with Christ in the memorial of his Pasch also means sensing the duty to be a missionary of the event made present in that rite. (MND 24)

There is a duty to be a missionary of the Paschal Event. Redemptorists and their partners in mission respond to that challenge by their concern for those most in need, for those most marginalized (See Mt 25:31-46).

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. Am I fed by the Eucharist?
2. Do I allow the Eucharist to challenge me? By what am I challenged by my sharing at the Table of the Lord?

For groups:

1. If we were truly to live out the “urgent summons to testimony and evangelization” that Pope John Paul II saw in the Eucharist, how would our lives as individuals and as community have to change?
2. What would we name as the elements of a missionary spirituality for our time and place?
3. How does this call us to respond?

Redemptorist Missionary Spirituality

Redemptorist missionary spirituality can be articulated in the cry of Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians: “I am ruined if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1Cor. 9:16). This is the title of *Communicanda 2* (1999), which is a reflection by Redemptorist Superior General Fr. Joseph Tobin on Redemptorist missionary spirituality. What are some of the attributes of this “missionary spirituality”?

1. Mission as Vocation

Jesus Christ has called Redemptorists and those who share the Redemptorist charism to be sent as his “helpers, companions and ministers in the great work of Redemption...to preach the Word of God to the poor” (Const. 2).

Evangelization is both God’s work and ours, through the action of the Holy Spirit – the same Spirit who descended upon Jesus at the moment of his baptism, rested upon him, anointed him and sent him forth to “bring good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). St. Alphonsus made frequent reference to Luke 4:18-19 declaring that the mission of Christ is the mission of the Congregation. Thus we are called to “proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”: release to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and freedom for the oppressed.

2. The Person of Christ is at the centre of Redemptorist Missionary Life

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 centre of their life, and strive day by day to enter ever more intimately into personal union with him”. For Redemptorists, and for all those who share the Redemptorist mission in the Church, an essential characteristic of this missionary spirituality is an intimate communion with Christ.

3. Missionary Conversion

The proclamation of the Word of God has conversion as its goal. Those who share the Redemptorist mission in the Church cannot preach conversion unless they themselves are converted every day (RM 47; Const. 40-42). Redemptorist spirituality cannot remain a theory: it must be lived; it must have some practical consequences in the lives of Redemptorists and those who share in the Redemptorist charism. Thus they become witnesses to and apostles of conversion.

4. The First Means of Evangelization is Witness

Pope Paul VI said, "Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness." (EN 21) The communion found among Redemptorists and Redemptorist co-workers can of itself "stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live...Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News." (EN 21) The communion among Redemptorists and their partners in mission is itself an effective presence of the Reign of God, so creating community between Redemptorists and lay co-workers is a primary evangelical sign.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. Is the Person of Christ the centre of my life?
2. How do I "bring good news to the poor" in my daily life?
3. How am I "good news to the poor?"

For groups:

1. How is our very collaboration, our partnership, a witness and proclamation of "good news?"

2. How are we witnesses to and apostles of conversion in and through our communal life?

5. Missionary Courage

From the first encounters of Redemptorists with the poor of the Kingdom of Naples, the history of the Congregation has been marked by the valour of many of its members and of even greater numbers of others who have shared in the charism of the Congregation. This heritage of courage is not only the source for future missionary initiatives; it is also the fruit offered to us by the “cloud of witnesses” that surrounds the Congregation: all the Redemptorists and Redemptorist co-workers of the past and present who have “emptied themselves” for the sake of the person and mission of Christ.

6. Missionary Contemplation

Experience has taught us that the spirit of contemplation both leads to more effective evangelizing activity and flows from that activity. Adapting a statement of the Second Vatican Council about liturgy, we can say that the spirit of contemplation is the summit and source of the Redemptorist mission. Unless the missionary, Redemptorist or co-worker, is a contemplative, that missionary cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way. The traditional maxim about Redemptorists being “Carthusians at home and apostles abroad” reminds all who share the Redemptorist charism that we are active people with contemplative hearts.

7. Missionary Patience

One biblical image for the work of evangelization is that of the sower and the seed. The seed sown is the Word of God. The Word carried by Redemptorist missionaries counsels patience when immediate results cannot be seen (Jas 5:7). It is God who gives the growth (1 Cor 3:6).

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. How do I experience the need for missionary courage, contemplation and patience in my own life?
2. Where in my life do I find signs of that courage, contemplation and patience?

For groups:

1. How do we give witness, in an often frenetic world, to the Redemptorist value of a vital balance of contemplation and action?

Structures within the Redemptorist Congregation must change in order that the Mission of Christ continue

When decisions need to be made about the Redemptorist mission, like whether to remain in a place or move on, who decides? When do Redemptorists and their co-workers say, “There are other towns and villages” (Mk 1:38)? When does “new wine” demand “new wineskins” (Lk 5:38)? These questions touch not only on missionary methods but also on the way the Redemptorist Congregation is structured. Redemptorist structures of government and administration are always at the service of the mission. This mission is not carried out by professed Redemptorists alone, but in partnership with many others. The ongoing restructuring of the Congregation must take this insight into account if the mission is to continue to bear fruit.

“Were not our hearts burning?” (Lk 24:32)

At the end of the Gospel of Luke two disciples of Jesus are to be found “on the road” to Emmaus. They are full of grief and confusion. The resurrected Christ joins them and accompanies them along the way. They do not recognize him. Only when Jesus explains to them the reason for the events that have taken place and breaks bread with them do the scales fall from their eyes.

As Church, as Redemptorists and Redemptorist Co-Workers, we are on such a pilgrim journey (See LG 14 and AG 2).

- We invite Jesus to “stay with us” on our journey.
- We are invited to encounter Jesus in the grief and confusion of our own lives and in the lives of others.
- We are invited to allow our hearts to burn within us as we have the scriptures opened for us and as we open them for others.
- We are invited to be nourished by the bread broken for us and to become the bread broken for others.
- We are invited to continue to share with other brothers and sisters the remarkable events that have touched our lives.
- As individual disciples and as a community of disciples, baptized in the Lord, we are called into communion with Jesus and we are also sent to share in the ongoing mission of Jesus.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. Where do I recognize a “burning” in my heart as I read and reflect on this document?
2. To what might this “burning” be pointing me? To what might I be called?

For groups:

1. What did we hear as we read Part 2 of this document together?
Where did our hearts burn?
2. To what does the Lord seem to be inviting us or calling us? What prevents us from responding? What encourages us?

Part 3:

Praxis – The Association of Lay People with the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer

The principles of *Communion* and *mission* have had an increasingly strong influence on both thought and action in the Church and Institutes of Consecrated Life in the years since the Second Vatican Council. Inspired by the words of *Lumen Gentium* that “all of Christ’s followers...are invited and bound to pursue holiness and the perfect fulfillment of their proper state,” (LG 40) many Institutes of Consecrated Life have made more deliberate and planned efforts to share their life and mission with lay people.

The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer has also been part of this movement. Like other institutes, the Redemptorists have experienced some confusion in terminology and in understanding what it means to invite lay people to share their spirituality and to collaborate with them in carrying out the Redemptorist mission. The Redemptorist General Secretariat for Partnership in Mission has adopted a three-fold structure that we have found helpful. (Dolan) That structure will be described in this section.

Background

From the beginning of the Church the Holy Spirit has brought into existence a wide range of movements, groups, and associations of men and women, each with their own charism, e.g. widows, virgins, hermits, penitents and monks. There were also “third orders” which were established in the Middle Ages (especially in connection with the Franciscans and Dominicans), and a wide range of confraternities. In the twentieth century there were secular institutes and

New Ecclesial Movements like the Charismatic Renewal, the Neo-Catechumenate, Focolare and Basic Christian Communities. As well, there is the growing incidence of lay associate membership with religious institutes.

In his 1996 apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* Pope John Paul II specifically addresses the form of associate membership with religious institutes. In the second chapter of the exhortation he notes with approval how lay people have come to recognize the value of religious life and want to attach themselves to particular religious institutes to share their spirituality and/or participate in their apostolates. John Paul II states that such associations should be fostered and the lay people so formed that they appreciate their lay vocation and give themselves to the mission of Jesus Christ. Echoing his 1996 comments, Pope John Paul II said in his address to the delegates of the 23rd Redemptorist General Chapter in 2003: “Share your charism with the laity, because they are also ready to ‘give their lives for plentiful redemption’.” (10)

Pause for reflection...

For individuals and groups:

1. As you ponder the long history and variety of forms of partnership between vowed religious and lay members of Christ’s faithful, what stirs within you?
2. What is your deepest hope for partnership between Redemptorists and the lay members of Christ’s faithful?

Variety in Association

As we examine the association of lay persons with Redemptorists we discover a great variety of categories, levels and degrees in this relationship. The most familiar categories of association with Redemptorists seem to be “benefactors” and “oblates.” “Benefactors” are men and women who support the Redemptorists, their mission and their ministries through financial contributions and prayer. Some benefactors are part of well organized groups and programs like the *Obra Vocacional Redentorista* in Peru; others pray and raise funds for our itinerant missionaries; and still others make an essential contribution to the day to day operation of certain Redemptorist Provinces, Vice-Provinces or Missions. “Oblates” of the Congregation have a long and varied history. Today the title of Oblate is mostly honorary, given to individuals in recognition of their long term service or special relationship with the Redemptorists. Oblates include lay people from all walks of life, religious men and women, priests and bishops. The norms of each Province or Vice-Province indicate the kind of relationship the oblate has with the unit. In some units oblates become an integral part of the Redemptorist life and mission – for example, in Lipa in the Philippines, oblates are key parish helpers and raise funds for special projects.

Today we find increasing numbers of lay people who desire to share the spirituality and mission of the Redemptorists. These men and women are willing to enter into formation programs and devote themselves to developing their spirituality and engaging in apostolic work. For our purposes here we will describe what we know best as members of the General Secretariat for Partnership in Mission or from reports of official visits by the General Government. This is not an exclusive or complete listing, and it remains open to other possibilities or developments.

Three categories of Association

In our analysis we see that the more developed forms of association of lay people with the Congregation occur in three categories:

1. Sharing of Redemptorist spirituality
2. Association for mission
3. Deeper Sharing in the Redemptorist Apostolic Life of prayer, community and mission as lay persons.

In each of these categories we find varying degrees of “intensity” – from loose connection such as praying for the Congregation and its mission to building Christian communities; from working side by side with Redemptorists to living in community or making a commitment as Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer. Appropriate formation also varies depending on both the category of association and the degree of intensity.

Some elements common to each category of association:

1. Desire and motivation to be associated,
2. A selection process by the Redemptorists,
3. A desire to share the Redemptorist charism of concern for the most abandoned, especially the poor – and outreach to them,
4. A spirituality that motivates and informs the association,
5. Some form of community with Redemptorists,
6. Sharing in the Redemptorist mission,
7. Formation.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. What forms of association among Redemptorists and the lay members of Christ's faithful have you witnessed emerging in your area or in your context?
2. What kind of evolution have you been aware of in these forms of partnership?
3. What is your own connection to Redemptorists and the Redemptorist charism?

For groups:

1. What forms of association among Redemptorists and the lay members of Christ's faithful have you witnessed emerging in your area or in your context?
2. What kind of evolution have you been aware of in these forms of partnership?
3. If you are a group that is connected with Redemptorists and sees itself sharing the Redemptorist charism, how do you live this in daily life? What structures have you put in place to foster growth and vitality?

The formation depends on the kind of participation in the Redemptorist life and mission, the culture of the individuals, their gifts and education, and their understanding of the Catholic faith. Formation for association with Redemptorists is an interdisciplinary task that touches on various aspects of Redemptorist life and overlaps with the responsibilities of several General Secretariats: Partnership in Mission, Spirituality, Formation and Evangelization. (See the website www.cssr.com for information about each of these Secretariats.)

Formation for each category must be:

1. *FLEXIBLE* – geared to the needs of the participants,
2. *HOLISTIC* – formation for the whole person,
3. *ALPHONSIAN AND REDEMPTORISTIC* – based on the spiritual heritage of St. Alphonsus and the history/tradition of the Congregation,
4. *MUTUAL* – involving commitment from both Redemptorists and lay people,
5. *CO-RESPONSIBLE* – both Redemptorists and those associated taking initiative and responsibility appropriate to the level of association.

(See the website www.cssrpim.com for examples of formation for lay people in various parts of the Congregation.)

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. What formation have you received for the kind of partnership that you live within the Redemptorist family?
2. Have you taken advantage of formation opportunities that are available to you? Why or why not?
3. What needs for your own formation for ongoing partnership do you identify within yourself?

For groups:

1. What formation has your group received for the kind of partnership that you live within the Redemptorist family?
2. Have you, as a group, taken advantage of formation opportunities that are available to you? Why or why not?
3. What needs for formation for ongoing partnership do you identify as a group? How might you go about meeting these needs?

Redemptorist apostolic spirituality/charism is like a three-legged stool, the legs being Prayer, Community and Mission. The three forms of association described below and shown on the following table highlight these three elements in different ways and degrees.

- *SHARING PRAYER & REFLECTION IN A REDEMPTORIST SETTING.* A first form of association with Redemptorists is to be inspired and supported in one's active Christian life by prayer and reflection in a Redemptorist setting. At this level of association the emphasis is on prayer and reflection, and not on active mission. These associates find a welcome with Redemptorists.
- *SHARING MISSION IN A REDEMPTORIST SETTING.* A second form of association between Redemptorists and lay believers emphasizes a shared commitment to and involvement in mission.
- *DEEPER SHARING IN THE REDEMPTORIST APOSTOLIC LIFE OF PRAYER, COMMUNITY AND MISSION.* This third form of association always involves commitment to the Redemptorist mission in a substantial and formal way as well as some planned sharing in a community life of prayer, study and recreation with Redemptorists. Generally this is a long term relationship.

(See the website www.cssrpim.com for examples of different forms of association from around the Redemptorist world)

Form of Association I

Sharing Prayer and Reflection in a Redemptorist Setting

A first form of association with Redemptorists is to be inspired and supported in one's active Christian life by prayer and reflection in a Redemptorist setting. The emphasis is on prayer and reflection and not on active mission .

IN GENERAL	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	FORMATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayer apostolate • Circle of Friends • Confraternities • Circle of Redemptorist Associates • Some Oblates and Benefactors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alphonsuskreis – Munich • Redemptorist Associates of Edmonton-Toronto, Yorkton, Dublin • Former Redemptorist Seminarians Association – São Paulo (UNESER) • Effata – Ghent, Flanders • Copiosa Redenção – Bahia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreats • Regular gatherings • Reflections on topics of spirituality and Redemptorist heritage • Prayer • Study of the Redemptorist charism, apostolic work, Constitutions and publications • Developing a relationship with local Redemptorists.

Form of Association 2

Sharing Mission in a Redemptorist Setting

A second form of association between Redemptorist and lay believers emphasizes a shared commitment and involvement in mission

IN GENERAL	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	FORMATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itinerant mission team members • Redemptorist lay missionaries • Pastoral workers • Catechists • Leaders of Basic Ecclesial Communities • Retreat Ministers • Teachers in a Redemptorist School • Co-workers in Redemptorist ministries, e.g. publishing, shrines, and youth ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMIJURE – Equipo de Misiones Juveniles Redentoristas – Dominican Rep • Redemptorist Lay Missionaries in Cebu / Manila, Mexico, Peru Norte/Peru Sur, Bahia (Hofbauerianum) • IMSA (Instituto Misionero Seclar Alfonsiano) in Bogotá • Scala – The Netherlands • Some Oblates – Lipa, Aparacida, Buga • SERVE – Dublin • Collegio Josephinum Bonn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic theology • Basic biblical studies • Inculturated liturgy • Evangelization • Skills for mission • Communication • Pastoral counseling • Human/personal/spiritual development

Form of Association 3

Deeper sharing in the Redemptorist Apostolic Life of Prayer, Community and Mission

This third form of association always involves commitment to the Redemptorist mission in a substantial and formal way as well as some planned sharing in a community life of prayer, study and recreation with Redemptorists.

IN GENERAL	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES	FORMATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living and working with Redemptorists for a specific term and purpose. • Living and working with Redemptorists for a prolonged period of time with possible promises. • Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scala Cork – Dublin • Welcome Home – Yorkton • Sarnelli House, Baltimore • Youth ministry team – Caracas • New Song – Warsaw • Jugen Kloster Kirchellen – St. Klemens • RELCA – Cebu • SERVE – Edmonton-Toronto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive program over several years including formation in the human, spiritual, community, intellectual/theological and pastoral dimensions. • Specialized training for particular ministries.

Part 4:

Some Challenges and Questions as We Journey Forward

When the General Secretariat for Partnership in Mission first gathered, it seemed to us that one of the greatest needs with regard to the collaboration between Redemptorists and lay people was to convince Redemptorists and others that such collaboration is not only valuable but necessary. It is necessary if we are to be faithful to what it means to be Church. So we began a theological reflection on the foundations for the association between Redemptorists and lay people, hoping it would deepen our conviction about such association, as well as awaken enthusiasm in us and others to engage in it.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals and groups:

1. How do you respond to the insight of the General Secretariat, that collaboration between Redemptorists and the lay members of Christ's faithful "is not only valuable but necessary?"
2. What stirs in you as you read this statement?
3. What aspects of this document and of the vision of partnership give you energy and enthusiasm as you move forward?

This foundational document which examines communion and mission as two theological principles underpinning the association and co-operation between Redemptorists and lay people is the result of our reflection. In the process of preparing it we became aware of several challenges and questions that face us if we are to move forward in the project of Redemptorist collaboration with lay people.

Clearly, the Spirit is working in the Church and in the Congregation, and we have been gathering information from all parts of the Redemptorist world about experiences of association and partnership. This information, as well as conversations with Redemptorists and those who share the Redemptorist charism, has inspired us as we see the progress already made. However, that information and our conversations have also added to our awareness of some of the challenges and questions that face us as we try to live out the call to partnership in mission. We are in the midst of an evolutionary process that calls for ongoing analysis and evaluation.

We therefore wish to conclude by naming some of the challenges and questions that have already come to our attention. We wish to encourage further discussion and reflection on them, and we wish to encourage continuing experiments with lay association throughout the Congregation. We hope the discussion and the experience will help Redemptorists and those who share the Redemptorist charism to meet the challenges and respond to the questions.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals and groups:

1. What are the challenges and questions that face you, in your own particular place, culture and context? Note these on paper, and compare them with those that are articulated in the section below.
2. Are there similarities? Differences?

Challenges & Questions for Both Redemptorists and Those Associated with Them

The primary challenge to Redemptorists and those who share their spirituality and mission is to “translate” the values of Redemptorist Apostolic Life as expressed in the Constitutions and Statutes into a lay context. The challenge is to deepen lay spirituality in light of the Redemptorist charism and so to discover how the Redemptorist charism can be lived out without the profession of vows. That overarching task has many aspects and dimensions.

We name here some particular challenges

- *TO ACHIEVE A COMMON TERMINOLOGY* regarding the various ways of being associated with Redemptorists, so that everybody means more or less the same thing when they say “Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer” or “Oblate” etc.
- *TO DEVELOP PROGRAMS OF FORMATION* appropriate for the different kinds of association with Redemptorists. These formation programs would need to ensure a proper mix and balance among the elements of Redemptorist spirituality: formation in/for prayer, mission and community. Is it possible or desirable in this complex context to have a kind of General Ratio for the formation of those who share the Redemptorist charism?
- *TO RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENT LEVELS, DEGREES AND KINDS OF COMMITMENT* from lay people to Redemptorist spirituality and mission.
- *TO BE OPEN TO DIALOGUE, LEARNING AND CHANGE*, indeed to the whole idea of partnership in spirituality and mission. This might include learning from those outside the “Redemptorist family” or the Catholic Church.
- *TO RESPOND TO THOSE WHO FEEL OUT-OF-COMMUNION* (the marginalized/most abandoned) because of race, gender or orientation.

- *TO APPLY ALL THE GIFTS AND SKILLS* needed in any human interaction: communication, empathic listening, conflict management, trust. Conflict is inevitable within professed Redemptorist life, and that will also be the case in association between Redemptorists and lay people.
- *TO REMEMBER THAT WE ARE STILL IN THE EARLY STAGES* of developing different kinds of association between Redemptorists and lay people, especially partnership in mission. Is it time for structures and statutes? Or is it more a time for trying things and gathering experience?
- *TO SHARE THE FRUITS OF ONGOING REFLECTION AND EXPERIENCE* with the General Secretariat for Partnership in Mission. (The website can be a useful tool.)
- *TO GUARD AGAINST BOTH CLERICALISM AND ANTI-CLERICALISM* as well as any forms of discrimination.
- *TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT TOO QUICKLY CLAIMING “CULTURE” AS A JUSTIFICATION FOR PARTICULAR ACTIONS OR APPROACHES*; there is also a *Redemptorist culture* and a *Gospel culture* which might have a stronger claim in some circumstances.
- *TO LIVE AND WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF CHURCH.*

The General Chapter of 1991 (which established the category of Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer) urged our Redemptorist communities to open themselves to lay people, so that they might have a greater share in the experience of Redemptorist life, work and spirituality. (60b) The Chapter used the expression “equal partnership”; however *Communicanda 4* (1995), which promulgated guidelines for collaboration and norms for Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, avoids that expression. Was that deliberate? What are the problems associated with the term “equal partnership”?

That raises further questions about what *expectations* both Redemptorists and their associates or partners in mission might have. There is a challenge to clarify

points of agreement and disagreement around expectations between the two groups. What are the appropriate boundaries that need to be acknowledged and respected? Are there inappropriate expectations on the part of some Redemptorists or some Partners in Mission?

Pause for reflection...

For individuals and groups:

1. What is your response to this list of challenges and questions?
2. What are your hopes in the face of them? *Your* dreams?
3. To what are you willing to commit yourself as a partner in mission?
4. How will you be sustained for the journey?

Challenges and Questions for Redemptorists

- *TO BE TRULY OPEN* to sharing the Redemptorist spirituality, charism and mission with lay people.
- *TO MAKE APPOINTMENTS OF REDEMPTORISTS* in a way that furthers and nurtures whatever efforts have been made toward deeper communion and greater partnership in mission. It is clear that Redemptorist confreres have varying abilities to work in partnership: some delight in it and are thriving in this context – they seem ready to learn from mistakes and are prepared to overcome obstacles; some find it difficult, but are willing to struggle; others seem to just balk at the first fence – to them difficulties become insurmountable in no time. Is the lesson that not all confreres are/will be able to engage in collaborative ministry with lay people?
- *TO INCLUDE SKILLS FOR WORKING WITH LAY PEOPLE IN THE PROGRAM OF INITIAL FORMATION.* The Redemptorist Ratio Formationis (2003) says: “Thus formation is...to nurture the capacity to work with others as an apostolic team in keeping with one’s vocation as priest, deacon or brother, and of being able to evaluate honestly one’s performance and to change when the discernment of the community indicates this is necessary.” (48) Should the inability or unwillingness to work in partnership with lay people be grounds for refusing admission to perpetual profession?
- *TO DEVELOP NORMS AND PROCEDURES FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF PARTNERS IN MISSION* – remembering that discernment is always a two-way street. To what extent should the wisdom of the confreres in local communities be relied upon? (We note that this concern does not apply to all forms of association between Redemptorists and lay people.)
- *TO TAKE SERIOUSLY THE NEED AND REQUIREMENT FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS* when engaging people as Partners in Mission. Just as

Redemptorist leadership has structures in place for screening candidates for professed Redemptorist life, so are such structures necessary for screening those who would participate actively in the Redemptorist mission.

- *TO BE ATTENTIVE TO JUSTICE AND MORALITY* (not to mention local labor laws) in hiring lay people and making contractual arrangements with them. When Partners in Mission are employed (paid) by the Redemptorists, what are the implications in terms of how much work is expected, how long they will remain employed, benefits in times of sickness and/or retirement?
- *TO CONTINUE TO GRAPPLE WITH QUESTIONS* that arise concerning the roles/identities of priests, brothers and lay people and their interrelationships in the “Redemptorist family.”
- Should the *INITIAL FORMATION* of lay people in Redemptorist spirituality take place together with candidates and students for life as professed Redemptorists, when this is possible?
- *WHAT STRUCTURES FOR DECISION-MAKING NEED TO BE DEVELOPED* that are inclusive of Partners in Mission who are affected by particular decisions?

Pause for reflection...

For individuals and groups:

1. Which of these questions strike a chord within you?
2. What is your response?
3. What might you be invited to do in response to this tug at your heart?

Challenges for Those Associated with Redemptorists

- *TO LEARN ABOUT REDEMPTORIST SPIRITUALITY* and use the elements of that spirituality to develop a spirituality appropriate for lay people.
- *TO REMEMBER THAT REDEMPTORIST SPIRITUALITY IS AN APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY*, so partnership with Redemptorists includes (in various ways and degrees) both sharing the spirituality AND outreach in service (especially to the most abandoned).
- *TO BE PREPARED FOR TENSION* between volunteers and paid co-workers. Just as Redemptorists have varying capacities for collaboration, so will their co-workers; dialogue and conflict management will be called for.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals and groups:

1. Which of these questions strike a chord within you?
2. What is your response?
3. What might you be invited to do in response to this tug at your heart?

Conclusion

No doubt there are other challenges and questions to be faced as Redemptorists and lay people continue to deepen their communion with each other and explore new ways of partnership in mission. We hope our insights, reflections and comments in this document have provided a more solid foundation for the vision of Redemptorist partnership in mission and made a contribution to the ongoing effort to realize the vision.

We recognize that it is the vocation of every *christian* to participate in the mission of Jesus Christ to announce the Reign of God by proclaiming good news to the poor. To evangelize the poor and be evangelized by them is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the whole Church – a charism which St. Alphonsus and the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer incarnate in a distinctive way. Many lay people have discovered that the Redemptorist charism and spirituality resonate in their own hearts too. Through their association and partnership with Redemptorists, these lay people are supported and encouraged in their vocation as members of Christ's faithful people; they are finding ways to participate in the mission of Christ and the Church, as lay people, in the spirit of St. Alphonsus. At the same time, this partnership with lay people strengthens and supports Redemptorists in their vocation and offers new possibilities for the Redemptorist mission in the Church.

The challenge of collaboration lies in bringing together the gifts and insights of all who find a spiritual home in the *Redemptorist* family. The goal and desire of all who share the Redemptorist charism is to work together to proclaim good news to the most abandoned, especially the materially poor. If we succeed in this partnership in mission, we will be a new witness in the Church and the world of the power of the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth.

Called into communion for mission, members of the *Redemptorist* family give their lives for plentiful redemption.

Pause for reflection...

For individuals:

1. What within you would have to change if you were to respond wholeheartedly to the invitation of Christ and the *Redemptorist* family to be a new witness in the Church and the world of the power of the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth?
2. What would be the benefits?
3. What might be the costs?

For groups:

1. How can we be more intentional about “bringing together the gifts and insights of all who find a spiritual home in the *Redemptorist* family?”
2. How can we strengthen and support each other, remaining conscious that it is Christ’s work, rather than ours, that we are about here?
3. Who are the most abandoned who long for the fruit of our collaboration?
4. What can we do better together as a *Redemptorist* family than we could do if we remained in our current mindset or way of doing things?

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- AA Apostolicam Actuositatem (1965, Vatican II)
- AG Ad Gentes (1965, Vatican II)
- CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992)
- CIC Code of Canon Law (1983)
- CL Christifideles Laici (1988, John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation)
- CT Catechesi Tradendae (1979, John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation)
- EDE Ecclesia de Eucharistia (2003, John Paul II, Encyclical)
- EN Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975, Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation)
- GDC General Directory for Catechesis (1997, Congr. for the Clergy)
- LG Lumen Gentium (1964, Vatican II)
- MND Mane Nobiscum Domine (2004, John Paul II, Apostolic Letter)
- RM Redemptoris Missio (1990, John Paul II, Encyclical)
- SC Sacrosanctum Concilium (1963, Vatican II)
- SRS Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987, John Paul II, Encyclical)
- VC Vita Consecrata (1996, John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation)

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