

November 15, 2009

Preach the Gospel Anew!

(St. Clement Hofbauer)

Renewed Hope, Renewed Hearts, Renewed Structures for Mission

To the Members and Co-Workers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer:

Dear Confreres, Sisters, and Partners in Mission,

As the XXIV General Chapter draws to a close in Rome, I want to greet you all and thank you for your prayers, support, messages and engagement in the process of this important event in the life of our Congregation. I also want to briefly share with you what we have accomplished. In the next months, you will receive much more complete communications from the General Chapter itself, along with the decisions we have made to renew our *Vita apostolica* and our mission to the abandoned and the poor.

In the past four weeks, we have accomplished a great deal. We carefully examined our present situation across the world. This examination was greatly assisted by the Regional Presentations, the Report of Fr. Tobin – Superior General, the Economic Reports, and the presence and participation of two lay associates (Anne Walsh and Ageeth Potma). We then grappled with the *Instrumentum laboris*, which is the fruit of six years of study and reflection. And we made decisions.

We approved the principles which will guide the ongoing discernment and implementation of our restructuring for mission. These principles are important for the whole Congregation in this process, but they are also important for each Unit, each local community and for each confrere and co-worker as the Spirit of Jesus and the cry of the poor call us to conversion and the ‘restructuring’ of our lives.

We have decided to restructure the Congregation into five Conferences. On Wednesday, November 11th, these five Conferences met as Conferences for the first time. One of the most moving exchanges of the Chapter took place when the coordinators of each meeting of the Conferences shared the experience with the entire assembly of the Chapter! It was obvious that the Holy Spirit is at work among us as we heard the generosity and hope, the excitement and enthusiasm, as well as the challenges and opportunities shared in those meetings. We are giving birth to something new, and this labor will have its share of pain – as well as joy.

We became excited by the possibilities of new opportunities for Congregational Networking on an international level to respond to the real needs of the abandoned and the poor in a globalized world. We celebrated the wonderful resources with which God has blessed us – aware that from those to whom much has been given, much more will be demanded!

In order to more effectively engage the whole Congregation in the work and service of General Chapters, we adopted a new process of celebrating the General Chapter in three phases – an Assembly of the Conference to begin the process, analyze and prepare; a canonical

Chapter to elect, decide and motivate; and an Assembly of the Conference to communicate, implement and evaluate.

In addition, we mandated that an economic commission be established to seriously examine our present resources and financial situation so that we can make wise decisions for the sake of the mission. This is a huge step – and we have committed ourselves to transparency and accountability so that we can grow in mutual solidarity. This commitment to transparency and accountability is a commitment to one another rather than an obligation to superiors. As with restructuring, I believe we will only come to realize the implications of this commitment once we are engaged in the process.

We reaffirmed our commitment to the best formation of Redemptorist Missionaries – both in the initial stages and in the ongoing process of conversion and growth to which we are all invited and called. We recognized the important place of the Alphonsian Academy and of moral theology as important apostolic works and pastoral formation for the Congregation.

Once again, we stated clearly that the Conference of Africa and Madagascar is a priority for the whole Congregation. The General Council has been mandated to help develop structures which will assist the growth of this Conference and the Units within it. As well, we decided to establish a special Fund for Africa in order to address the unique challenges of this Conference.

Among other practical decisions, the Chapter has also voted to change the General Statutes so that Provincial, Vice-Province, Regional and Local Superiors will be appointed for four-year terms. This will begin with elections and appointments in 2011. It is our hope that this change will provide greater stability, which in turn will promote our mission throughout the world.

In this short letter I cannot adequately communicate all that happened. I want to give you a taste of what we have experienced. Imagine our joy at the historic election of a Brother to the General Council for the first time! The spirit of cooperation, prayer, dialogue and conversion permeated our assemblies and small groups, our times of worship and our meals. At times, it overflowed in unbounded and spontaneous joy during the moments of *gaudeamus*! We also experienced moments of tension and conflict, pain and sacrifice, compromise and struggle. A General Chapter is hard work. Through all of this, there was a remarkable sense of the presence of God, the action of the Spirit, and the support of Jesus and Alphonsus. This experience of the General Chapter was an authentic experience of our Apostolic Life. The Chapter members lived an extraordinary experience of apostolic community.

On a personal note, I want to thank you for your prayerful support and interest.

As soon as we complete the final redaction of the Chapter texts, the official versions will be sent to each Province. In the meantime, let us go forward with hope and courage. May Our Mother of Perpetual Help continue to accompany us as our co-worker in the Mission of her Son, Christ the Redeemer!

In the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.
Superior General