

ONE BODY (Eph 4,4)

UN SOLO CORPO (Ef 4,4)

UN SEUL CORPS (Eph 4,4)

UN SOLO CUERPO (Eph 4,4)

JEDNA WSPÓLNOTA (Ef 4,4)

UM SÓ CORPO (Ef 4,4)

EIN LEIB (Eph 4,4)



C.Ss.R

PIRITUALITY



ONE BODY

St. Clement and the Redemptorist Vita Apostolica

The *Vita Apostolica* of a Redemptorist characterizes his entire life as a Missionary. The Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation are entitled the *Vita Apostolica* of the Congregation. In his *Communicanda 2* Cardinal Joseph Tobin, C.Ss.R writing as Superior General underscores the relationship between the Spirituality of a Redemptorist and his Vita Apostolica. He explains the link between both Consecration and Mission, cautioning that the conjunction “and” can adulterate the sense of the relationship (*Communicanda 2*, nr. 9). He stresses that *our spirituality is intimately related to Mission*, to the end or purpose of the Congregation:

“The genius of Alphonsus, an intuition that has been recovered in our renewed Constitutions, is his belief that Mission gives unity to our whole life as Redemptorists. This unifying force is called the ‘vita apostolica’: our way of understanding what it means to be a Redemptorist, comprising ‘at one and the same time a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work’ (Constitution 1). Spirituality is vitally connected to our ‘preference for situations of pastoral need, that is, for evangelization in the strict sense, together with our choice for the poor’. Therefore, strictly speaking, the origin and source of spirituality is found precisely in our Mission, defining it consequently as truly Missionary spirituality (cf. *Ad Gentes*, 23-27).” (*Communicanda 2*, nr. 13)

This relationship between our Consecration and Mission is underscored by St. Alphonsus himself:

“He who is called to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer will never be a true follower of Jesus Christ nor will he ever become a saint if he does not tend towards the objective of his vocation and does not have the Spirit of the Institute, which consists in saving souls, the souls most destitute of spiritual assistance, such as the poor in the countryside.” (Sant’Alfonso de Liguori, *Opuscolo III, Considerazione XIII in Opuscoli relativi allo stato religioso*, Roma: Tip. della S.C. De Propaganda Fide, 1868, p. 94-95)

Yes, we are called to be saints, nothing less. Our vocation demands our own total consecration and transformation in Christ and is lived concretely in the missionary endeavors of the Congregation. It is a gift of God’s love that drives us to love as God has loved us. Through our consecration we join and participate in the continuing Redemptive presence and action of Jesus Christ in the world, and this is precisely the meaning of our Vita Apostolica. The missionary nature of our vocation is not based on specific apostolates but on our insertion into the very Mission of Christ. Our participation in his Mission to bring the good news to the poor transforms our lives and constantly leads us to find new ways to bring others to Christ’s love. Constitutions 52 – 55.

Clement The Apostle - A Mystic of Action

St. Clement Maria Hofbauer in his life was the perfect example of a Consecrated Missionary. There was not dichotomy between Consecration and Mission or Spirituality and Mission. His was a Missionary Spirituality, he lived the Vita Apostolica to the full: "at one and the same time a life specially dedicated to God and a life of missionary work" (Constitution 1).

The great project which God had entrusted to Clement was to establish the Congregation beyond the Alps; he would consecrate his whole life to this, all his activity in Warsaw, his journeys in southern Germany, and in Vienna in the midst of police harassment. Great personal effort marks both the life and spirituality of Clement.

Clement gave himself with immense energy at the disposal of people. He tried in the situation of his time, to achieve the best he could – with the means at his disposal and within the possibilities available to him. The perpetual mission at St. Benno's in Warsaw is a clear example of the dynamism of Clement. This consisted of morning and evening prayer, Masses, sermons in many languages, devotions, meditations on the Way of the cross, Visits to the Blessed Sacrament. This went on from six in the morning till late evening. All this in a day at St. Benno's, then there was the pastoral activity outside the church, school, etc. Clement involved his students in the preparation of the divine services. He handed over to them the catechetical instruction and, to some extent also, the preaching.

Clement could not, of course, think of introducing the pastoral methods of the traditional popular missions into Poland and Austria – they were forbidden in those countries at the time. He had to follow other paths. He attached great importance to proclamation. In St. Benno's in Warsaw, in his foundations in Germany and also in Vienna, the pastoral activity he preferred himself was preaching. He was the most remarkable preacher in Vienna, - regarded by the faithful, noted by the State police, who once withdrew his permission to preach for a year.

"The Gospel must be preached anew", he used to say in relation to the religious situation of his time. He preached simply and popularly. "Today I'll preach a sermon so simple that even the most stupid of you and every little child can understand." – he is supposed to have said, according to a police report. One might almost be listening to Alphonsus!

It is worth noting that there was a large social-concern component in Clement's pastoral activity: In Warsaw he took over an orphanage, set up schools and went begging for his children. In Vienna he used often trudge out to the suburbs to help the poor. Clement had, of course, no idea of the possibility and necessity of improving structures and changing situations. But, within his possibilities, he was concerned with the salvation of the whole person.

With regard to Clement's pastoral activity in general, one can make the following assertions:

First, Clement strove with his broad vision not only for the salvation of the individual's soul, but he was also concerned with the well-being of the entire person. He regarded education as a missionary service with broad and long-term effects.

Second, he blazed new ground in that he took laypeople and their honest work for the sake of the Church seriously. Clement and his confreres systematically formed laypeople for an active role. He called them to collaboration, and bound them together in communities.

Third, Clement believed in the international character and the union of all people. He was a man with a catholic heart who felt and lived with the whole world. His homeland was a border country where blood was mixed and peoples of different nations encountered one another. Their key was to reach all people irrespective of nationality, race, or language.

Fourth, A striking feature of Clement's pastoral activity is his work among the great and powerful in Vienna: among the students, artists in the circle of Viennese Romantics that gathered around Dorothea and Friedrich Schlegel; in aristocratic circles. Hofbauer, the simple working man and farmer's son gained access to these people. A significant number of them were to find their way into the Catholic Church through him.

Fifth, there is one other characteristic of his pastoral dynamism: his thinking was European, indeed global. The confessor of the Ursulines in Vienna makes plans for the Church in Germany, knows about religious needs in Romania, is concerned about the pastoral situation of the people of Poland – and does what he can. One gets the impression that his apostolic charity knew almost no geographical bounds.

Clement's Missionary life rooted in Prayer

Unlike St. Alphonsus, Clement did not write a treatise on prayer. However, prayer has an important place in his life and spirituality. We must, first of all, note the place that liturgical prayer had at St. Benno's and with the Ursulines of Vienna, celebrated in a manner peculiar to the northern countries, with special emphasis on Masses with music; we are in the age of Mozart and Beethoven. Hofbauer looked for the best musicians for Mass in Vienna. What attracted him in a special way was devotion to the Eucharist, whether in processions linked to benediction or in a silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharist was truly the centre of the service of praise which is due to God. One of the sayings of Clement showed the meaning he attached to divine worship, "God does not need our adoration nor our service, it's true, but we need it."

Don Pajalich, a close confidant of Clement states that, "Clement led a very active life in Vienna...He had only one room which was open to all... There he created in his heart a desert, a solitary cell, a little oratory. Into this loneliness of the heart he would withdraw whenever he wanted to, at any time, wherever he found himself, even when he wandered through the most crowded streets, he immersed himself in himself. He willingly sought out this solitude, at any moment, no matter where, in spite of difficulties and anguish and in no matter what kind of occupation or society. Withdrawing into himself in this way, he devoted himself to his reflections and meditations in this interior solitude. Even when he passed through crowded streets, he made aspirations of faith, hope, love of God and neighbour, acts of adoration, thanksgiving, humility, contrition and total offering of himself."

Those who knew Clement well claimed that Hofbauer was a great man of prayer "because prayer was the nourishment and refreshment of his heart." Among his favourite prayers was the recitation of the Rosary. "In his comings and goings in the streets, as well as in his free moments at home, he almost always had the rosary in his hands."

Conclusion

We list some of the Characteristics of the Mystique of Clement, of his living of the Vita Apostolica.

- A very vivid awareness of his own responsibility and of a special mission for the particular age being experienced by the world, the Church, and the Congregation.
- A sense of evangelisation as a normative criterion for the apostolic community.
- Incarnation in the periphery of the world, the nations, and the Church, so that the Gospel may be preached to the most abandoned in a more adequate way.
- Urgency of communion and of an apostolic Redemptorist community in both the apostolate and ordinary life.
- Harmony between the active and the contemplative life.
- Authentic creativity and radical fidelity to the world in which we live and in which we have been called to work, to the Church, to the Spirit, to Christ, to the Congregation, to the foundational charism incarnated by Alphonsus, and to the personal call through which these fidelities invite us to serve the poor.

Questions for Reflection

1. What would it mean for me and for us (in our Unit) to live today in a Congregation that has an Apostle of such stature as Clement who was an example of living our Vita Apostolica as presented in Constitution #1?
2. How does Clement challenge me and us (our own Unit) to root our apostolic activity in our consecration to the Redeemer through our Vows and our prayer life?
3. How does Clement speak to us about being innovative as a Missionary in the context of a changing world, especially as Redemptorists embarking on Reconfiguration for Mission?

Prayer

God our Heavenly and loving Father, we thank you for gifting our Congregation with the life and example of St. Clement Maria Hofbauer. In his life and spirituality, we see a perfect model and example of what St. Alphonsus wished for every Redemptorist to be, one who follows the example of your Son Jesus our Redeemer in proclaiming Good news to the poor and abandoned. We pray for the grace of your Holy Spirit on each of us in the Congregation and on all our lay associates and collaborators, on our sisters and Redemptorist family that we may be always be true to the Vita Apostolica, a life of Missionary Consecration to your Son Jesus our Redeemer. We make our prayer in his name, Jesus Christ Our Redeemer, Amen.



ONE BODY is a monthly prayer text proposed by the Center for Redemptorist Spirituality.

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