

Homily on the Occasion of the Inauguration of the Federation of North-West Europe

Dears Fr. Brendan O'Rourke, Provincial Superior of the Province of Dublin,

Fr. Richard Reid, Provincial Superior of the Province of London,

Fr. Jürgen Langer, the official representative of the Provincial Superior of the Province of Sanctus Clemens,

Fr. Martin Leitgöb, Provincial Superior of the Province of Vienna-Munich,

Fr. Piotr Chyla, Coordinator of the European Conference,

Fr. Ciaran O'Callaghan, Moderator of the Federation of North-West Europe

Through you, I extend my greetings to all the confreres, Sisters, Redemptorist youth, and faithful participating in this celebration.

1. Today we celebrate St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, our founder and master of mercy. He was a man of remarkable courage who devoted all his talents to the service of the Gospel, bringing it to the most abandoned of his time. Alphonsus was a tireless and zealous missionary of Copious Redemption. His example challenges us to leave our comfort zones and reach out to the men and women of today who lack voice and status in society and, often, even in the Church.
2. The first reading, from the prophet Isaiah (61:1-3), serves as a true manifesto of the Redemptorist charism: to proclaim the Good News to the poor, comfort the afflicted, free the captives, and heal broken hearts. Is this not the reality of our own time? We encounter disoriented youth, fragile families, marginalised individuals, and a weary Europe that is increasingly sceptical and reluctant to commit to God. In this context, what is our Redemptorist mission? What opportunities does this challenging time present for us to evangelise? How does this moment stir our faith and deepen our consecration to the Lord?
3. In the second reading (2 Timothy 2:1-7), Paul exhorts us with powerful words: "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus [...] Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." The mission demands courage, perseverance, discernment, and humility. It is not a secure career path, but a passionate vocation that encompasses one's entire life. Like St. Alphonsus, we too are called to unite holiness and competence, vibrant faith and pastoral creativity, sound doctrine and a merciful heart. Abundant Redemption must be proclaimed with a renewed language, with evangelical boldness, and with the fervour of the Redemptorist spirit.

4. We must not allow our consecrated and missionary life to fade within us. If the Redemptorist charism does not resonate in our hearts, if we lack faith in our own consecration, in our Redemptorist life and mission then what is the meaning of our existence today? What authority do we have to proclaim anything to the world? Do we believe in the Spirit who continues to anoint us for the mission of the Redeemer? Which spirit anoints us? That of the Redeemer, or that of discouragement and pessimism? The same Spirit that anointed Jesus, Alphonsus, and so many other missionaries is present here, anointing and sending us forth in this celebration.
5. Today's Gospel (Matthew 9:35-38; 10:1) reveals the heart of the Redeemer: merciful, compassionate, and close to the poor and wounded. Compassion is not merely a pious sentiment it is the driving force behind mission. It was this compassion that moved Jesus to send out his disciples, granting them authority to heal, liberate, and save.
6. From the Redeemer, we receive our identity: we are sent with his authority of merciful love. The Redemptorist mission is precisely this: to go to the peripheries, to be present where the Church often does not reach, to bring redemption to the weary and oppressed multitudes of our time. This includes today's 'digital continent', disconnected youth, migrants, and the existential peripheries of human life.
7. It is deeply meaningful that we mark our Founder's feast with two significant events: the inauguration of the Federation of the Redemptorist Provinces of London, Dublin, Vienna-Munich, and St Clement; and the vibrant presence of young people, the hope of the Redemptorist mission, who are actively engaged in this process. What is the Holy Spirit saying to us through these events? Is the Spirit not challenging us to listen anew to the heart of our charism and to courageously embrace the future that lies before us?
8. "A Federation is made up of Units that intend to eventually become one Unit in the future. Each Unit maintains its own identity as an autonomous Unit that continues to be governed by its major superior and council until a new Unit is formed through union." (*Guidelines for Union, Fusion...* II a; dec. 16, *XXVI General Chapter*).
9. In this light, the Federation inaugurated today is not merely a canonical structure; it must be a prophetic sign of communion and shared mission, of missionary readiness, of continuity in the process of restructuring for the sake of the mission and ultimately, of becoming a new Province: a renewed "yes" to the anointing of the Spirit who sends each confrere to the most abandoned. The Federation offers us a valuable opportunity to revitalise apostolic life, share resources, transcend boundaries, renew consecrated life, and together cultivate a more daring mission.

10. We know that the path you begin today as a Federation will not be without its challenges. In our communities, many of our older confreres have generously given their lives to the proclamation of the Gospel, and for many of our young people, they are a powerful witness of faith. Some now carry the weight of fatigue, of change, and of uncertainty. At times, the heart can close itself to processes that seem to dilute our identity or impose something new without roots. The Federation is not about losing who we are, but about recovering with new strength the essence of our Redemptorist vocation: to be witnesses of hope, especially in those places and moments where hope seems to fade. This moment invites us to a creative fidelity, not to surrender to nostalgia or paralysis, but to walk forward in faith, trusting that the Spirit continues to work within us, even in our fragility. Hope is not born from our own strength, but from the certainty that the Redeemer walks with us.
11. May St. Alphonsus continue to inspire us with his steadfast fidelity to God's merciful love and his spirit of detachment. May he, together with Our Mother of Perpetual Help, our Saints, the Blessed, and the Martyrs, intercede for this new stage in the life of the Congregation in Europe, for each young person present, and for all of us so that we may truly be *Missionaries of Hope in the footsteps of the Redeemer*.

Fr. Rogério Gomes, C.Ss.R.

Superior General

Limerick, 1 August 2025