

St. Stephen's College

TO BE REDEMPTORIST TODAY:
THE EMERGING VOCATION
OF THE LAY MISSIONARY
OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER
WITHIN THE REDEMPTORIST FAMILY

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of St. Stephen's
College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Fall 2016
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Anne M. Walsh, 2016

“To be Redemptorist Today: The Emerging Vocation of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer Within the Redemptorist Family”

“Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer (LMMHR) are those lay people engaged in the closest form of partnership in mission with Redemptorists. The category of LMMHR was created by the 1991 General Chapter of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. My dissertation addresses the question, ‘What is the vocation of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer within the Redemptorist family?’ I enter into exploration of this question first through a review of documents of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Roman Catholic Church. Next, I propose a theology of partnership in mission rooted in Scripture and Redemptorist history. The project portion of this work takes the form of a series of ethnographic interviews with LMMHRs. This is followed by the presentation and analysis of the results. One outcome is that unclear expectations of LMMHR and Redemptorist members resulted in a number of problems and difficulties in shared life and mission. More significantly, emerging from the analysis is a clear need for effective formation in and for partnership. Therefore, in the final chapter, I develop a model for a formation process for Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, and also for professed Redemptorists. This model is based on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, adapting the catechumenal model for formation in this specific context.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My words of thanks must begin with my research committee members, Margaret B. Clark, DMin, Heather Jamieson, PhD, and Gerard Whitty, DMin. Their patience and wisdom, encouragement and insight were invaluable. They shepherded me through the stages of this work, from beginning to end, with endless cups of tea and coffee, helpful nudges and pointers, refining and laughter—thank you! My thanks also go to A. Edward Connolly, who offered his services as proof-reader. His keen eyes were of invaluable assistance. I extend my deep gratitude to Fr. David Louch, CSsR, ThD, for his support, patience and encouragement, and for agreeing to serve as external reader.

I owe a debt of love and gratitude to the people who first encouraged me to pursue the dream of advanced study, growth, and research. To Fr. Michael Brehl, CSsR, thank you. I could not have done this without you. To Fr. Raymond Corriveau, CSsR, PhD, now gone home to God—you knew all along how much I love you and value your incalculable role in and impact on my life.

I offer my thanks to the members of the Partnership in Mission Commission of the Edmonton-Toronto Province and of the Redemptorist North American Secretariat for Partnership in Mission, and every Redemptorist Associate in Canada, for being the sounding boards and guinea pigs for so many of my ideas and plans. Thank you for never saying, “That’s a bad idea, Anne.”

And last, but never least, I reiterate my gratitude to my family, friends, and co-workers at the Archdiocese of St. John’s.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Literature Review: Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer	11
Chapter 2: Theological Foundations for the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer	47
Chapter 3: Methodology	79
Chapter 4: Results of the Ethnographic Research Project on Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer	93
Chapter 5: From Theology to Praxis	124
Conclusion	168
Bibliography	174
Appendix A: Letter of Consent	180
Appendix B: Sample Questions Used in the Ethnographic Interviews.....	183
Appendix C: Key Terms in the Research Question	185
Appendix D: Comparative Chart of the RCIA and the Proposed Model of Formation for LMMHRs—Growing into Mission	188
Appendix E: Current Norms for LMMHRs of the Edmonton-Toronto Province, Approved 2004	189
Appendix F: Current Formation Process for LMMHRs, Approved 2006.....	194
Appendix G: Proposed Revised Process of Formation for LMMHRs— Growing into Mission	201
Appendix H: Concentric Circles of Belonging in the C.Ss.R. Family	209
Appendix I: Prayer for Vocations to the Redemptorist Family.....	210

INTRODUCTION

This project/dissertation attempts to explore and answer the question, “What is the vocation of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer within the Redemptorist ‘family’?”¹

Since patristic times, religious life has offered an alternative and often prophetic way of living the Christian faith. Some communities were born and then died, as the need around which they were founded ceased to exist or was met by other agencies or individuals. Other communities have continued to thrive and develop. Each religious community is said to have a distinctive “charism,” or spirit and manner of being. Members of religious communities make vows,² most commonly the three vows of evangelical poverty, celibate chastity, and obedience. Some communities or institutes add distinctive vows or promises. The Redemptorists, for example, take a vow and oath of perseverance.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, in recent years, both monastic and active communities have begun to form relationships with “associates,” or “partners in mission.” Associates may be lay people or ordained diocesan priests who are drawn to the charism of the community, or its distinctive spirituality, prayer, way of interpreting the Gospel, or way of looking at the world and its needs. Some are drawn to and gifted for sharing in the apostolic work by which the charism of an institute takes flesh.

1. At this first use of the term “family,” I place it in quotation marks. A religious community is not a family. The community of vowed religious, with affiliated lay people, is not a family. However, this is the closest analogy to the reality being explored in this project/dissertation, and it is the term used in Redemptorist documents to explore the reality. Therefore, I will continue to use the term but from this point forward will rarely use the quotation marks.

2. These vows are also known as the “evangelical counsels.”

In 2015, over fifty thousand lay people in North America are identified as “associates.”³ This constitutes a major movement in the Church; however, there has been little study of the phenomenon. In many cases, associates are prayer partners. They may also bear other titles or designations and are active participants in the mission and ministry of their religious communities.

My Story

This move toward greater involvement of laity in the spirit, mission, and ministry once viewed as the exclusive domain of the vowed members of apostolic religious communities fascinates me. I have been involved in partnership in mission with Redemptorists since 1991, the year that the Congregation established the category of Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer.⁴ I “grew up” or grew into a relationship and a sense of identity in my affiliation with the Redemptorists and their charism. As this was happening, I was always aware that I might one day become an LMMHR in fact, as well as in spirit. I am therefore one of the first people to enter into relationship with the Redemptorists knowing that such a formal relationship and designation might be possible.

After twelve years of connection and immersion in Redemptorist apostolic community, I was invited to become an LMMHR. In those years, my connection was sometimes more explicit and at other times less direct, as I pursued other avenues of

3. This number was given in conversation with the author in June 2015 by Conni Dubick, president of the North American Conference of Associates and Religious, hereafter referred to as NACAR.

4. Hereafter referred to, in most cases, as LMMHRs.

ministry outside the traditional Redemptorist context but always in the Redemptorist spirit. I have co-chaired the Commission for Partnership in Mission for the Edmonton-Toronto Province since its inception in 2001 and served on several precursors to this commission.

Since 2003, I have co-chaired the Commission (later the Secretariat) for Partnership in Mission for the combined Redemptorist units in North America. I have witnessed the emergence of collaborative endeavours at this level, as well as the interest and enthusiasm of a number of lay people who became attracted to the spirit of St. Alphonsus Liguori and his followers. Some professed Redemptorists have met this enthusiasm with joy and active support. I have also witnessed the lack of support of many Redemptorists, who seem to view the move toward partnership in mission simply as more work for themselves or, more often, who respond with indifference.

I believe that the variety and duration of my involvement gives me a unique perspective, and makes mine one of the voices that needs to be heard as we live our way into a new phase of being a Redemptorist family.

Areas and Issues for Exploration

“Family” is a metaphor for a complex network of relationships, a descriptive tool, rather than a formal term. It is inadequate, but the best metaphor available to us at present. All families are characterized by varieties, forms, and degrees of belonging. Many families have members who belong by blood, by marriage, by choice, and by adoption, whether formal and legal or not. Most families consist of people who do not

live under the same roof, in the same town, or even in the same country. Many families have experienced periods of closeness interspersed with periods of distance, discord, and misunderstanding. Therefore, despite the poverty of language, I choose the analogy of family to capture the essence of a religious community characterized by varied forms of membership and belonging.

I am interested in exploring the factors that must coalesce to sustain life-giving and transformative partnerships of this kind, and the situations where such partnerships fail. In the ethnographic interviews that comprise the project portion of the current work, I set out to study the factors that contribute to success and those that lead to stagnation or failure.

One of the principal issues in need of exploration is the vocation of the LMMHR. I entered into commitment as an LMMHR thinking that collaboration itself was the goal. Through experience I learned that in a Redemptorist understanding of mission, collaboration is an unsuitable foundation. Partnership in mission in the Redemptorist context can never be an end in itself. In order to be effective in the Christian sense and faithful to the Alphonsian charism, collaboration must always serve the mission.

A second related issue I address is whether and how a suitable formation for partners in mission can be designed. “Formation” is the process by which new members of a community are incorporated, take on the culture and stories of the institute, and are apprenticed into their way of life, spirituality, ministries, and mission. Such a formation must respect the principle that collaboration exists for mission. The goal of formation must be clear: to facilitate effective and creative engagement in the mission of Christ as

this is incarnated in and by the institute. This formation must be a formation *in* collaboration as well as *for* collaboration.

A third issue in need of exploration is how to engage the vowed members in appreciating and exploring the possibilities that open up once lay partners in mission are involved. The spheres of activity and influence of vowed Redemptorists and lay partners in mission can be quite different but also complementary. The engagement of lay people in the Redemptorist mission has the potential to extend the community's outreach into new places and to extend the mission of proclaiming the Good News to the most abandoned in ways limited only by our imaginations.

The project portion of this work takes the form of a series of ethnographic interviews with the first three individuals who became Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer in the Edmonton-Toronto Province of the Redemptorists. A review of the literature pertaining to the lay apostolate in the Roman Catholic Church in general, and to partnership in mission in the Redemptorist context in particular, sets the context for the presentation of the results of these ethnographic interviews. After describing the methodology used to conduct and analyze the interviews, I offer a theological reflection on partnership in mission within this Redemptorist context. After presenting the results of the ethnographic interviews, I explore a path forward, developing a model for a formation process for Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer based on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, which is the means by which the Church forms missionary disciples.

Assumptions and Beliefs

I come to this task holding certain assumptions and beliefs. I believe that God is generous. I believe that charisms are gifts of God poured out abundantly into the world and the Church. Each person is endowed by God with charisms, or gifts, for the service of their sisters and brothers. I assume that there are charismatic families or constellations in the Church and in the world. Because all are members of the Body of Christ, endowed with gifts to be used in the building of the Reign of God, I understand that charisms are not the property of the members of apostolic communities.

I assume that, because charisms are gifts of God to the Church, lay men and women share charismatic gifts and affinities with vowed and ordained people.

I assume that true complementarity and partnership are possible. I assume that women and men are equal: equally called, equally gifted, and equally sent into the world as disciples. I believe that all are capable of collaboration, and that collaboration is an interconnected web of skills that can be taught and practiced.

I am certain that equality does not mean mere uniformity. I believe diversity is good and essential, and that it can strengthen and enrich a community or group.

I know myself to be gifted for ministries of evangelization and catechesis and to be drawn especially to the service of the poor. Throughout my life, I have continuously pursued and been offered education and training for this service. I have actively sought out people abandoned by Church and society, people in great economic or educational need, and offered myself to them in dedicated service.

I am convinced that a Redemptorist family exists and that it comprises concentric circles of belonging. It is to this concept that I turn next.

The Redemptorist Family

The story of the Redemptorist family begins with a Neapolitan nobleman, Alphonsus de Liguori, who was born in 1696. He was intellectually and artistically gifted, earning a double doctorate in civil and canon law by the time he was sixteen years old. He practiced law for six years, remarkably never losing a case in the convoluted and often corrupt courts of the Kingdom of Naples. In 1723, however, he lost his first case because of corruption. In despair and disillusionment, he turned to God and experienced a moment of conversion. Against his father's wishes, he began studies for the priesthood and was ordained in 1726. Alphonsus dropped the "de" in his surname as a sign of his new direction in life.

As a young lawyer, Alphonsus had volunteered at the Hospital for the Incurables in Naples. When they were clerical students, Alphonsus and some like-minded friends began a catechetical ministry among the destitute poor of Naples. They enlisted lay men and women, often unlettered, and trained them as catechists. These teams held evening catechetical sessions in the alleys, storefronts, and back rooms of the poorest neighbourhoods, calling them the "Evening Chapels." Some of the names of the leaders have been preserved in the writings of Alphonsus and his early biographers.⁵ Thus, we now recall Pietro Barbarese, Luca Nardone, Bernardino the cowherd, and Leonardo, who

5. The names of only men are recalled by the early biographers of St. Alphonsus. We can assume that there were women who served as catechists in the Evening Chapels as well, but the voices of women in history are often unheard. Their lack of voice should not be misinterpreted as absence.

sold chestnuts on the streets, as early partners in mission. Before there were professed Redemptorists, there existed partners in mission.

Once ordained, Alphonsus began a preaching ministry in Naples. His powerful and captivating style made him a very popular preacher, constantly in demand. He used common language to help the people grasp the wonder of God and God's personal invitation to relationship. After a few years of constant ministry, on the brink of exhaustion, Alphonsus retreated to the mountain village of Scala, on the scenic and peaceful Amalfi Coast.

At Scala, seeking rest, Alphonsus once again had an encounter with God through the poor, one that changed the direction of his life. Alphonsus met the shepherds and goatherds of Scala, who were not only poor and uneducated, but also abandoned by Church and society. In the countryside of the Kingdom of Naples, churches had been closed because the congregations could not afford to pay their parish priests. Large swaths of countryside were left without clergy and therefore without catechesis and pastoral service. Meanwhile, it is estimated that in the city of Naples there was one priest for every hundred people. Moved by compassion, Alphonsus began to introduce the poor to the God of love. He drew a small band of priests and lay men around him to share this ministry. In 1732 they formed a new family in the Church: the Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour, later renamed the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Their mission of evangelization came to be marked by vibrant preaching and calls to conversion. The goal was to move people to conversion, fostering reconciliation

between feuding families and factions using simple, approachable language. They also drew on the interpretive power of music and art.

At present, the Redemptorist family includes about five thousand professed members on six continents. This makes it the seventh-largest male apostolic community in the world. Several other religious communities trace their roots to the Redemptorists, including the Paulists, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Redemptoristines, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Sisters of Service, and others.

Vowed members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer include ordained priests, brothers, clerical students (those preparing for priesthood), and candidates for brotherhood. Today, along with the vowed members, we find lay people connected to the community in a variety of ways. These partnerships exist in every corner of the worldwide Redemptorist community and take on different faces in different cultures. In English-speaking Canada, lay partners are most often engaged as Redemptorist Associates and Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer. The umbrella term for these varied forms of collaboration is “partners in mission.” In varying ways and to varying degrees, these people describe themselves as finding a spiritual home in their connection to the vowed members and their charism.

The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer⁶ is a male religious community in the Church. Their *Constitutions and Statutes* describe them as “a clerical missionary

6. Also known as the “Redemptorists,” or by the abbreviation C.Ss.R., shorthand for the Latin name: Congregatio Sanctissimi Redemptoris. I will use these terms interchangeably in this dissertation.

institute”⁷ founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori to “follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor.”⁸

Through the circumstances of my life, I discovered my vocation to be a catechist, and a love for facilitating adult faith development. I believe that I shared the spirit and the charism of the Redemptorists, that inner imperative to proclaim the Good News to the poor, before I even knew who the Redemptorists were. In this way, I believe lay people can experience God’s call to serve the poor, to evangelize the poor, and to be evangelized by the poor. I hold this to be true because I have experienced it in my own life and witnessed the power of this call and response in the lives of others.

I hope the ethnographic interviews will show that other lay people share this experience of call to the Redemptorist charism. I believe these interviews will reveal that it is possible for lay people to live apostolic lives in the midst of a busy world and constellation of commitments to family, work, social life, and outreach. I believe the experience of these first LMMHRs will show that this is a vocation within the Church; their witness provides a basis for the possibility of a life-giving way forward as a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer.

7. Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Constitutions and Statutes* (Rome: General Curia C.Ss.R., 1988), Constitution 1.

8. Ibid.

CHAPTER ONE
LITERATURE REVIEW:
LAY MISSIONARY OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER

A survey of the documents relating to Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer reveals two significant major sources. First, in this chapter I will explore a number of internal Redemptorist documents from all levels: the General Curia in Rome, the North American Commission for Partnership in Mission, and the Edmonton-Toronto Province. Each document has advanced the development of thought regarding partnership in mission between vowed Redemptorists and laity. Through them, a vision of the identity and purpose of the LMMHR is emerging. Second, I will review several seminal documents of the universal Church that pertain to the research questions at hand.

The category of LMMHR was established in the CSsR by the XXI General Chapter in 1991.⁹ The delegates to that Chapter directed as follows, in their *Final Document*:

The General Chapter establishes in the Congregation the category of Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer as an active co-worker and participant in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist Congregation.¹⁰

This decree from the Chapter delegates was inspiring for lay partners the world over. It created opportunities and gave birth to great hope. As evidence of this, in 2003 the Edmonton-Toronto Province (English-speaking Canada) invited the first three LMMHRs into commitment. Subsequently, initial and ongoing formation was developed

9. The XXI General Chapter took place in Itaici, Brazil, in October 1991.

10. XXI General Chapter, *Final Document* (Rome: General Curia, 1991), #60a.

for others who would follow. The province also began to identify, create, and explore other forms of partnership.¹¹

In 1996, the Edmonton-Toronto Province¹² established a secretariat and later a Commission for Partnership in Mission to offer direction and coordination for all forms of partnership in mission. In 2003, the Redemptorist North American Commission for Partnership in Mission¹³ (RNACPIM) was created. This body included representatives of the provinces, vice-provinces, and regions of North America and the Caribbean. It functioned fruitfully until 2009. After a five-year hiatus, RNACPIM was reconstituted in 2014.¹⁴ RNACPIM and the Edmonton-Toronto Commission for Partnership in Mission are the sources of most of the literature that has been developed around the topic of LMMHRs.

Internal Redemptorist Documents, 1991–2009

A General Chapter, when it is sitting, is the highest authority in any religious community. In Canon Law,¹⁵ it is clear that a General Chapter has the right to establish

11. One of the stipulations of the General Curia had been that when units formalized commitments with LMMHRs, the General Curia should be informed and a record of such commitments be kept there. In 2003, when the Edmonton-Toronto Province formalized a commitment with the first three LMMHRs, a notice was sent to the General Curia, and the province was told that it was the first to make such a notification.

12. The Toronto Province and the Edmonton Province merged in 1996. This created the Edmonton-Toronto Province, which covers all of English-speaking Canada.

13. Hereafter referred to as RNACPIM.

14. This body is now called the Redemptorist North American Secretariat for Partnership in Mission.

15. Canon Law is that body of law which governs the Roman Catholic Church.

new partnerships, associations, and “categories.”¹⁶ However, it is not clear what it means, in practical terms, to “establish” a category in a religious congregation. In the twenty-two years that have elapsed since the establishment of the category of LMMHR, the Redemptorists have never moved to include this form of “membership in the evangelical family”¹⁷ in their *Constitutions and Statutes*. Some clarity has been achieved through internal Redemptorist documents and the establishment of offices, secretariats, and commissions dealing with partnership in mission.

These internal documents evolved between 1991 and 2009 at the levels of various Redemptorist provinces, regions, and conferences, as well as at the level of the CSsR General Government. Along with the *Constitutions and Statutes* of the CSsR and a number of Church documents and ritual texts,¹⁸ they constitute the body of literature. Together, these documents articulate a theology of communion for the sake of mission and deal either specifically or tangentially with LMMHRs. They articulate a consistent path toward ever greater clarity and development of thought and action.

The publication of these documents stands in contrast to the theology articulated in a number of other Church documents later in the twentieth century, which attempted to situate lay ministry as participation in the ministry of the priest. This can lead to attempts

16. A. James Coriden, *Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), Canon #725. This canon reads: “An institute can associate to itself by some bond determined in the constitutions other members of the Christian faithful who are to strive for evangelical perfection according to the spirit of the institute and are to participate in its mission.”

17. This image and phrase is drawn from the work of Canadian Franciscan Laurent Boisvert, O.F.M. (Cap.).

18. “Lex orandi, lex credendi” is an ancient Church saying (“the law of prayer is the law of belief,” or more freely translated, “if you seek to know what Christians believe, look to their prayers”).

to define lay people by what they are not, rather than who they are, as in the 1997 *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Priest*.

The description of the LMMHR articulated in the *Final Document of the XXI General Chapter* is reminiscent of that of “oblates” in the *General Statutes* of the CSsR:

The Congregation may take as associates “oblates” both cleric and lay. In doing so, it should envisage and seek to recruit helpers for our apostolate. They may be either permanent or temporary.¹⁹

We also read, in another Statute:

Oblates who share the spirit and missionary zeal of the Congregation must have the benefit of proper initiation and constant contact with the Congregation.²⁰

It is generally acknowledged that by 1991 the category of oblate within the Edmonton-Toronto Province of the Redemptorists had evolved into an honorific. This form of membership is sometimes identified in casual parlance as “the Redemptorist equivalent of the Order of Canada.” Few people today think of oblats as active partners in the Redemptorist mission. Rather, one might be designated an oblate upon retirement from long employment or service with Redemptorists. It is clear that this current practice was not the original vision of Statute 02.

Nevertheless, Statute 02 points to an important reality. It indicates that there are varied forms of connection and belonging within the Redemptorist family. This echoes a consistent thread in Redemptorist history of vowed members inviting lay people into

19. Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, *Constitutions and Statutes* (Rome: General Curia C.Ss.R., 1988), Statute 02.

20. *Ibid.*, Statute 085.

partnership in mission. I will explore this thread later. Furthermore, there is diversity in the forms of vowed membership. Vowed Redemptorists may be ordained clerics (priests or deacons), vowed clerical students, or vowed brothers. In canonical terms, brothers are actually considered lay people, as they are not ordained. In addition, as we have seen, oblates are described in the *Constitutions and Statutes* as lay people who share mission with vowed members.

Responding to the call in the *Final Document of the XXI General Chapter*, in 1992 the General Government of the Redemptorists established a General Secretariat for Lay Collaboration. In 1995 this secretariat prepared and released a seminal document entitled *Communicanda 4: Collaboration between the Redemptorist Community and the Laity*.²¹ The first part of this document presents general directives and norms for the broad spectrum of collaboration between Redemptorists and the laity. The second part puts forward general norms specifically addressing LMMHRs. These were intended to assist units of the Congregation in establishing the category of LMMHR and in drawing up norms and guidelines at the local, Provincial/Vice-Provincial,²² regional, or, later, conference level.

21. A *Communicanda* is a letter circulated throughout the worldwide Redemptorist community to address some pressing issue or concern.

22. Within the CSsR a “Province” is a geographic or culturally determined unit. A Vice-Province is one which, on its way toward status as a full-fledged Province, remains connected to or under the sponsorship of a larger unit or Province. Normally, these levels of governance are referred to as “V/Provinces.” Hereafter, this term will be written as V/Provincial or V/Province. A new structure emerging in the CSsR since the XXIV General Chapter (2009) is that of the Continental Conference, of which there are five: North America and the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, Africa and Madagascar, and Asia-Oceania.

Communicanda 4 advanced our understanding of the type and depth of collaboration that the delegates to the XXI General Chapter envisioned for the LMMHR and the community of professed Redemptorists. Firstly, it stated that

Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer constitute the fullest expression of collaboration and participation (i.e. partnership) of the laity in the apostolic life of the Congregation.²³

In a similar vein, it went on to say that

the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer must be seen in the context of a more ample and more positive lay promotion and collaboration which already exists in a multiplicity of forms in the Congregation. They wish to be the strongest expression of it.²⁴

The terms used here are significant early attempts to articulate the identity of the LMMHR by comparing the LMMHR to other known forms of partnership of lay people in the Redemptorist mission. The superlative form is used twice,²⁵ emphasizing the closeness with which the General Government envisioned their sharing of the life, prayer, community, and mission that is the “apostolic life” of Redemptorists.

The second clarifying statement contained in *Communicanda 4* reads:

The Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, though not juridically part of the Redemptorist community in the strict sense, participate actively in its life. Together we try to realise the “Redemptorist family” which in different degrees of belonging and commitment, “follow” today “the

23. *Communicanda 4*, #39.

24. *Ibid.*, #40.

25. Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer are described as the “fullest expression” possible for lay people in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community and “the strongest expression” of the many forms of collaboration between Redemptorists and lay people.

example” of the Redeemer in the evangelization of the poor (see Constitution #1).²⁶

The vision of the Redemptorist family presented in *Communicanda 4* is a new and inspiring one. The document goes on to describe this family as characterized by “different degrees of belonging and commitment,”²⁷ and by “concentric circles of belonging.”²⁸

The work of Canadian Franciscan theologian Laurent Boisvert, who explores the emerging concept of an “evangelical family,”²⁹ offers a clue as to what this might look like in practice. He sees the concept of the “evangelical family” as a window through which some religious institutes are developing a language to express the partnership of laity in the charism, mission, ministry, and common life of the vowed members. Boisvert writes:

The evangelical family constitutes a community of belonging, not in the sense of a life under the same roof, but in that of interdependent proximity which is rooted in the welcoming and implementation of a particular aspect of the Gospel, of a certain face of Jesus Christ ... What drives the different ways of living the privileged evangelical aspect is to witness, to participate in the same mission.³⁰

26. *Communicanda 4*, #42.

27. *Ibid.*, #12.

28. *Ibid.*

29. This is Boisvert’s terminology. The words “evangelical family” are problematic for some within the Redemptorist “family.” There is some resistance in Roman Catholic circles to the word *evangelical*, as it conjures up negative associations with evangelical Christians, strident forms of evangelization, and literal interpretations of Biblical and other foundational texts.

30. Laurent Boisvert, *Charism: An Evangelical Visage to Incarnate and Manifest* (Quebec: Éditions Franciscaines, 2004), 44.

Using Boisvert's model, we might say that members of the Redemptorist family are drawn to one specific and inspiring aspect of the Gospel, one distinctive aspect of the face of Jesus. That face is the proclamation of Good News (evangelization) to the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor. This is the Jesus who, in Luke 4:16-20, proclaims, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He sent me to bring good news to the poor."³¹ The professed, ordained, and lay members of the family share the same attraction. All are moved by the need of the most abandoned to experience "Good News." With the professed members, LMMHRs might cry out, "I am ruined if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).³² Like the professed members, LMMHRs consider this to be a constitutive element of their very identity and see their participation in the Church through this lens. Redemptorists do not use such language of any other form of partnership of laity in the work of redemption. Boisvert goes on to say:

But it is not enough to belong to the evangelical family; it is also and especially necessary that this belonging has meaning for the persons and groups who live it.³³

Thus we can appropriately return to and build upon the insight contained within *Communicanda 4*—that there are varying degrees of connection, or "concentric circles of belonging,"³⁴ in the Redemptorist family. This family might be understood as including

31. This Gospel passage is the one which St. Alphonsus and all subsequent Redemptorists use to identify the charism of Redemptorists.

32. This is actually the title of a later *communicanda*.

33. Boisvert, 45.

34. See Appendix H for a depiction of these concentric circles of belonging in the Redemptorist context.

in its innermost circle the vowed members, both priests and brothers; in the next circle one might find LMMHRs; in a third circle the Redemptorist Associates; and in a fourth circle we might locate other forms of association or partnership in mission. It is important to note that Boisvert and the authors of *Communicanda 4* use the term “belonging” rather more freely than would many Canon lawyers.³⁵

On the question of identity, *Communicanda 4* identifies as LMMHRs those who have the following characteristics:

- decide to share the spirituality and mission of the Redemptorist community
- choose a stable form of partnership that is of collaboration and of participation in its apostolic life
- commit themselves to carry out the Redemptorist mission as lay people.³⁶

The word *stable* here might be understood as *long-term*. The subsequent paragraph allows for the partnership to be either temporary or permanent and leaves it to be governed by norms to be included in the Provincial or Vice-Provincial Statutes.³⁷

The remaining paragraphs of the section on identity in *Communicanda 4* describe how LMMHRs, duly admitted into the category by the V/Provincial Superior with the consent of his Ordinary Provincial Council,³⁸ are to share the mission of the Redemptorists. This is to be accomplished in the following ways:

35. In canonical terms, the word *belonging* denotes the granting of certain rights, privileges, and obligations that can appropriately be used only in relation to professed members of an institute of consecrated life or a secular institute.

36. *Communicanda 4*, #43.

37. *Communicanda 4*, #44.

38. *Ibid.*, #45.

- according to the pastoral priorities of the unit³⁹
- by explicitly proclaiming the Gospel to the most abandoned⁴⁰
- as a “stimulus and support to the other baptized”⁴¹ and
- with the support of the professed Redemptorist community⁴²

Section 2.3 of *Communicanda 4* defers “the concrete ways and means of collaboration and participation of the LMMHRs in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community”⁴³ to V/Provincial Statutes. The document then calls for the following:

- participation of the LMMHR, at least sometimes, in the prayer life and Gospel reflection of the vowed community
- participation of the LMMHR in the family life of the community itself
- a recognized role for the LMMHR in the pastoral projects of the community
- the collaboration of the LMMHR in the pastoral priorities of the V/Province⁴⁴

This section points once again to the vision of the LMMHR as deeply embedded in the apostolic community of the Redemptorists. It calls for the LMMHR to have a role in establishing, making decisions about, and evaluating the pastoral priorities of the local community and the V/Province.⁴⁵ LMMHRs are to have a voice in those decisions and priorities that directly affect their life and ministry.

Paragraphs 56 and 57 of *Communicanda 4* deal with the commitment of the Congregation to the LMMHR on economic and social security issues. There is particular

39. Ibid., #46.

40. Ibid., #48.

41. Ibid., #49.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., #51.

44. Ibid., #53.

45. Ibid., #54.

reference to the obligation of the Redemptorists in the case of old age and illness; however, no specifics are given. This is, in a way, quite understandable in a religious congregation scattered throughout the globe; such specifics would necessarily have to be fleshed out in particular contexts. However, it is vital that this discussion takes place. The resolution or deferral of these issues affects the emotional and economic security of the LMMHR. It may also impact the availability and mobility of the person for mission.

Section 2.4 deals with formation. It calls on each unit to develop a “systematic plan for initial and ongoing formation.”⁴⁶ This refers to the “more stable form” of partnership identified earlier. If long-term partnership is envisioned, then a more intensive formation is called for.

Specific Writings Following the XXII General Chapter

The XXII General Chapter was held in 1997.⁴⁷ Six years had passed since the XXI General Chapter, and the delegates came to this General Chapter with questions arising from reflection and discussion, and with lived experiences of sharing life and ministry with LMMHRs. Even a cursory reading of the final document of this General Chapter leaves one with the sense that confusion had developed among the Chapter delegates, and quite possibly within the community at large.

During the Chapter we were made very conscious of the many lay collaborators who give generously of their time and talents in the service of the Kingdom, and without whom many of our apostolic undertakings

46. Ibid., #60.

47. The XXII General Chapter of the CSsR took place in West End, New Jersey, USA, in October 1997.

would be difficult. But we must ask: what relationship is there between Redemptorist spirituality and collaboration with the laity?⁴⁸

The XXII General Chapter clarified a number of issues, some of which have to do with participation in and formation for apostolic community by partners in mission. This probably reflects the discussion that took place on the Chapter floor, and points to the needs that were articulated there. Orientation 6.1 proposes

that each unit, within the parameters of its own culture, continue to clarify and intensify the different levels of lay collaboration essential to the effective fulfillment of our mission, and in particular that of “Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer.”⁴⁹

It is interesting and revealing that the *Final Document of the XXII General Chapter* takes up the foundational importance of the Sacraments of Initiation. It asks:

What relationship is there between Redemptorist spirituality and collaboration with the laity? Do we have a genuine appreciation of the missionary vocation given to all in Baptism, or are we simply concerned about getting helpers for our work? We need to develop partnership with the laity, not just on the basis of shared responsibility, but also on the basis of shared faith and spirituality.⁵⁰

Later, in 2003, the XXIII General Chapter⁵¹ recommended

that all Units value the presence of lay people as an element which enriches and gives new dimensions to our task of proclaiming plentiful Redemption to the most abandoned. We see this presence as a sign of our times that opens us up more and more to experience the Church as People of God and a mystery of communion. It is from this positive perspective that the Chapter asks that steps continue to be taken in the formation and

48. XXII General Chapter: *Message, Orientations, Postulata*, Message #9.

49. Ibid., Orientation #6.1.

50. Ibid., Message #9.

51. The XXIII General Chapter of the CSsR was held in Rome, Italy, in October 2003.

cooperation with lay people until we reach true co-responsibility in the proclamation of plentiful Redemption.⁵²

It is clear from this passage that the delegates to the XXIII General Chapter did not yet have a sense that the Congregation had arrived at true co-responsibility. They therefore recommended

that each Unit draw up adequate guidelines and orientations which foster the co-responsibility of the laity in the mission of the Congregation. These guidelines and practical orientations should guarantee that those who collaborate with us will take part in the decisions which directly affect them and their ministry.⁵³

Voice and structures are closely related. If the establishment of the category of LMMHR is to become reality, the Congregation must deal with the voice of the LMMHR, particularly with reference to the establishment of pastoral priorities that directly affect their lives and ministries.

In 1996, in order to address some of the pressing questions discussed above and to further the project of partnership, the Edmonton-Toronto Province of the Redemptorists established a “Lay Collaboration Secretariat,” which is now known as the “Commission for Partnership in Mission.” This group created guidelines and resources for the initial and ongoing formation of Redemptorist Associates within the Province.⁵⁴ Beginning in 2001, circles of Redemptorist Associates were formed across Canada, and the

52. *XXIII General Chapter: Orientations*, #7.4.

53. *Ibid.*, #14.

54. Redemptorist Associates form another of the concentric circles of lay partners in mission gathered around local Redemptorist communities. These share the spirit of the institute and seek a spiritual home within the Redemptorist charism but do not necessarily undertake ministry within a Redemptorist context. Their connection is envisioned as providing grounding for their life and labour in the world of family, employment or retirement, recreation, and social networks.

Commission for Partnership in Mission was given the responsibility of developing resources for formation and faith-sharing for them.

The Commission for Partnership in Mission then turned its attention to drawing up Provincial norms and guidelines for LMMHRs. The section of the Provincial norms dealing with the identity of the Most Holy Redeemer describes the LMMHR in the words of *Communicanda 4*:

Established by the XXI General Chapter, the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer constitute the fullest expression of collaboration and participation (i.e. partnership) of the laity in the apostolic life of the Congregation.⁵⁵

The mission of the LMMHR is described thus:

Specific to Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is a “closer collaboration in the *apostolic* life of the Redemptorist community.” (*Communicanda 4*, #30) The very purpose of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is to participate in the Redemptorist mission “to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor...” (Constitution 1) “Their service to the church proceeds from their relationship to the Congregation.” (1992 Report of the General Secretariat for Lay Collaboration)⁵⁶

The inclusion of a quotation from the 1992 Report of the General Secretariat for Lay Collaboration marks a significant development in thinking on the identity, role, and vocation of the Lay Missionary. It envisions the LMMHRs’ relationship to the CSsR as the lens through which they view their service to the Church. This relationship has come to be understood as the element that distinguishes the LMMHR from the Redemptorist

55. Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, Edmonton-Toronto Province, *Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer: Norms* (Toronto, ON, 2004), I.A.

56. Ibid., I.B.

Associate, who experiences an affinity with the Redemptorist community or the charism, and wishes to share some aspects of its prayer life and spirituality, but may not see his or her contribution to the Church in light of this Redemptorist connection. The Redemptorist lens is, in fact, the distinguishing characteristic of the LMMHR's missionary vocation, from which all else proceeds.⁵⁷ Thus, we might count this 1992 description as the first explicit reference to an emerging understanding of the LMMHR's vocation.

Insights from the *Constitutions and Statutes*

The *Constitutions and Statutes* of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer elaborate a distinctively Redemptorist notion of apostolic community. While the *Constitutions and Statutes* do not govern, prescribe, or even describe the life of the LMMHR, it might be said that they inspire the apostolic life of the LMMHR.

Constitutions 1 and 2 of the Redemptorist *Constitutions and Statutes* establish the identity, charism, and mission of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Only these two constitutions are specifically referenced in Redemptorist documents shedding light on LMMHRs. Through them we can easily glimpse how *Communicanda 4* can say with such assurance:

The Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, though not juridically part of the Redemptorist community in the strict sense, participate actively in its life. Together we try to realise the “Redemptorist family” which in different degrees of belonging and commitment, “follow” today “the example” of the Redeemer in the evangelization of the poor (see

57. Of course, the Sacraments of Initiation, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, are the foundation and source of all subsequent development of the Christian vocation. However, vocation is to be understood as an ontological reality rooted in the person through Christian Initiation—a reality to be uncovered and lived.

Constitution #1).⁵⁸

This situates the identity of the LMMHR in relation to Constitution 1, which reads:

The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, founded by Saint Alphonsus . . . 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’.”

In this way the Congregation shares the mandate given to the Church, which, since it is the universal sacrament of salvation, is missionary of its very nature. It does so by responding with missionary thrust to the pressing pastoral needs of the most abandoned, especially the poor, and by devoting itself entirely to evangelization.⁵⁹

Constitution 1 also describes charisms as gifts from Christ to the Church.⁶⁰ This description opens an avenue for understanding how lay people can and do share in the charisms expressed by various religious communities, a notion that will be developed later.

In his commentary on Constitution 1, Santino Raponi wrote, “All are missionaries because all are committed to the same mission.”⁶¹ It is the Roman Catholic understanding of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) that all belong by virtue of the reception and efficacy of these Sacraments of Initiation. Through them, we are not only called but strengthened, fed, sustained, and sent to be food, hope, and Good

58. *Communicanda* 4, #42.

59. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 1.

60. Constitution 1 states that, in following the example of Christ the Redeemer by proclaiming Good News to the poor, the CSsR shares the missionary mandate given by Christ to the Church.

61. Santino Raponi, CSsR, *The Charism of the Redemptorists in the Church: A Commentary on the Constitutions* (Rome: The Center for Redemptorist Spirituality, 2003), 163.

News for the world. Fully initiated Christians share a common missionary mandate conferred by Jesus Christ. Thus all are missionaries.

All are called in and through the Sacraments of Initiation. All initiated Christians are called to relationship with Christ in and through the Church. All are called to holiness. All are called into mission. Indeed, all are impelled forth into mission through their participation in the Eucharist, sent out each time to feed a hungry world by witness and word.

The profession of the evangelical counsels binds Redemptorists to one another and gives them their individual and communal identity. Through the Sacraments of Initiation, Christians are bonded to Christ and to one another as the Mystical Body of Christ. This understanding, which will be explored further, sheds light on the persistent questions as to what binds the LMMHR to the Congregation.

The assertion that there is a universal call to holiness is found in *Lumen Gentium* (*The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*).⁶² One of the great contributions of this document of the Second Vatican Council is that it offers a comprehensive vision for a spirituality and way of life for the Christian lay person. Perhaps for the first time, we see a well-articulated spirituality that is not contingent upon life in a convent or monastery, with its discipline, rules, and rhythm of life. This document describes a union of a life dedicated to God and a life of active missionary service, wherever and however one exercises that missionary service.

62. Chapter II, “The People of God,” establishes this concept, and Chapter VI is entitled “The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church.”

Constitution 1 “makes very clear the ecclesial character of the Redemptorist Congregation’s mission.”⁶³ This Constitution asserts that “our missionary vocation lives by the heartbeat of the Church’s own missionary vocation, the call to evangelize the poor. The Conciliar texts return repeatedly to the primacy of this demand at various levels for the Church itself.”⁶⁴ Thus, from its inauguration, the CSsR was not turned in on itself but open to the vast horizon of the Church in the world.⁶⁵ In this light, it must welcome and depend upon the dynamism of life-giving evangelical partnership with the laity as a necessary element of its drive to evangelize and be evangelized by those on the margins of Church and society.

Here, once again, we gain a glimpse of the complementarity of the vowed and lay members of the Redemptorist family. The two forms share one missionary vocation and one lens of charism. The two concentric circles exhibit complementary incarnations and primary arenas of missionary activity. The ordained vowed members have a particular role in the cultic, liturgical, sacramental, and pastoral arena. It should not be inferred, however, that their role is or should be solely in these areas. The lay members of the family are called to be leaven in the world of family, or work, of social networks and secular life.⁶⁶ A path toward complementarity thus opens up. Here, for the sake of clarity,

63. Raponi, 164.

64. Ibid., 165.

65. Ibid., 166.

66. I recognize, of course, that there is considerable overlap in participation of laity in ecclesial activity and vowed Redemptorists in the life of the world.

I have proposed too strict a division in spheres of influence and activity, but I will continue to examine it in Chapter 2 and later soften the dichotomy.

The vision of apostolic life that is articulated in the *Constitutions and Statutes* is a blend of a life specially dedicated to God and one of missionary outreach. This is a distinctively Redemptorist insight. Community exists for mission. Community does not mean living under one roof, but truly sharing minds, hearts, and priorities.

The LMMHR is to share this apostolic life, aiming to bring together and incarnate dedication to God and missionary activity in a different manner than does the vowed Redemptorist. The Redemptorist documents see the LMMHR as a missionary. To be a missionary is to be sent. Both professed Redemptorists and LMMHRs are incorporated into community through the Sacraments of Initiation and sent forth into the world as missionaries through the commissioning renewed at each celebration of the Eucharist. The professed Redemptorist is sent forth in mission by the CSsR. The CSsR also sends forth or commissions LMMHRs when it accepts and ratifies their commitment and engages them as active partners in mission.

Constitution 2 carries the description of the purpose of the Congregation further:

In carrying out its mission in the Church the Congregation unites members who live together and form one missionary body. These dedicate themselves to God by profession, and so devote themselves to their mission as a living unit, each contributing through the ministry that belongs to him.⁶⁷

In his reflection on Constitution 2, Raponi writes, “The first paragraph of Constitution 2 affirms that the community character of evangelization is an essential

67. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 2.

element. The second paragraph recalls the guiding criteria of the mission, namely, fidelity to tradition and attention to the signs of the times.”⁶⁸

In Raponi’s eyes, the core of Constitution 2 is the communal or collaborative character in which Redemptorists enter into the mission of evangelization, always endeavouring to be faithful to and read the Spirit’s activity in the signs of the times. We may discern a sign of the times in both the interest and self-offering of lay partners in mission and the attentiveness and openness among vowed Redemptorists to this movement toward new expressions of partnership.

The *Code of Canon Law* is the compilation of all Church law. It governs the establishment and proper functioning of structures within the Church. In Book II of the Code we find the canons that deal with mission. These clearly situate the mission of the lay members in the Sacraments of Initiation.⁶⁹ Canon 225 states:

§1. Since, like all the Christian faithful, lay persons are designated by God for the apostolate through baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and possess the right as individuals, or joined in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world. This obligation is even more compelling in those circumstances in which only through them can people hear the gospel and know Christ.⁷⁰

68. Raponi, 167.

69. Diane L. Barr. “Commentary on Canons 224-231.” In *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, ed. Beal, John P., James A. Coriden, and Thomas J. Green (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 291.

70. *Code of Canon Law* (hereafter referred to as CIC), #225, §1.

That mission—“to work so that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world”—is what we more commonly call *evangelization*.⁷¹ Evangelization is really a process that takes place in three “moments”:

1. Missionary Proclamation of the Good News: This involves the proclamation of Good News in and through the daily circumstances of secular life—through which those who have not heard the Good News or who have not heard it as a message of hope and joy, hear it and see it proclaimed in word and witness by their peers. The individual is introduced to the Person of Jesus Christ and the life of the Christian community, and is also invited into relationship.
2. Catechetical Activity: This means deepening the relationship through apprenticeship and immersion in the catechetical, social, liturgical life of the Christian Community, as well as its social and missionary outreach.
3. Pastoral Activity: This involves any means by which the Church nurtures the faith of committed believers and includes formation for ministry.⁷²

This model is presented in the seminal 1997 document from the Congregation for the Clergy, the *General Directory for Catechesis*.

The Vatican II *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* describes the means by which people meet and are drawn to Jesus Christ as the “ministry of like toward like.”

The apostolate in the social milieu, that is, the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in

71. Ibid.

72. This description of the three “moments” in the process of evangelization is essentially a summary of Part I of the *General Directory for Catechesis*. See reference below.

which one lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others. In this area the laity can exercise the apostolate of like toward like. It is here that they complement the testimony of life with the testimony of the word. It is here where they work or practice their profession or study or reside or spend their leisure time or have their companionship that they are more capable of helping their brethren.⁷³

This spirit and sense is echoed in Canon 225.

§2. According to each one's own condition, they are also bound by a particular duty to imbue and perfect the order of temporal affairs with the spirit of the gospel and thus to give witness to Christ, especially in carrying out these same affairs and in exercising secular functions.⁷⁴

The lay faithful are impelled to spread the Good News by witness and word, to transform the world from within, as leaven by the way in which they live the Gospel.⁷⁵

Diane Barr points out that “the secular role of the individual lay person [forms] the basis for these actions, although lay people may associate themselves with others to accomplish the same goals.”⁷⁶

Rosemary Smith comments that “the law is concerned that institutes form... associates in the true spirit of the religious family without sacrificing the identity of the institute.”⁷⁷ This seems to echo the concern, expressed in *Communicanda 4*, that the specific characters of both the professed Redemptorists and the lay faithful who are

73. Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana), 1997.

74. CIC, #225, §2.

75. Second Vatican Council. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* [Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People], #2. November 18, 1965. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, Vol. I*, ed. Austin Flannery, OP (New York: Costello Publishing Company), 1998.

76. Barr, 293.

77. Rosemary Smith, SC. “The Governance of Institutes.” In Beal, Coriden and Green, 845.

partners in mission be preserved and celebrated: “The objective to be attained is ‘the Redemptorist family’ demonstrated at different concentric levels of belonging.”⁷⁸

Communicanda 4 also cautions that

complementarity and reciprocity between the charisms in that communion proper to the Church should constitute the basis of all collaboration. It is imperative, however, to ensure that the Redemptorist community does not become laicized and that the lay people do not become clericalized or sacralized, but that a real reciprocal enrichment is attained.⁷⁹

Formation of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer

In continuity with the series of documents promulgated by the Redemptorists at the level of the General Curia, the Edmonton-Toronto Province has developed norms and a process of formation for LMMHRs.⁸⁰ A team of formation directors has been appointed and resources developed.

Once admitted, each prospective LMMHR is offered a process of initial formation adapted to the experience, needs, and strengths of the individual. After a commitment is made, the individual is offered a process of ongoing formation, often in conjunction with the formation of the vowed members of the community. A Formation Team is appointed to oversee these complementary formation processes. This team should include both professed Redemptorists and LMMHRs.

The norms recognize that each adult Christian is responsible for his or her own formation. In dialogue with the individual, the CSsR has a responsibility to offer an

78. *Communicanda 4*, #10.

79. *Ibid.*, #12

80. *Ibid.*, #11.

integrated human and Christian formation in the spirit of the institute, which must be adapted for each prospective LMMHR and must respect the person's "specific vocational choices and professional responsibility."⁸¹ Elements include "personal spiritual formation, formation in the Redemptorist charism, and apostolic formation and integration."⁸²

Ongoing formation is a lifelong process, and it must respond to needs as they arise. The norms provide for two dimensions of this lifelong formation:

Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will find opportunities to continue their own formation and will avail themselves of opportunities provided by the Redemptorists.⁸³

The norms recognize that formation of the Redemptorist community for the purpose of collaboration is essential:

since the Redemptorist community itself needs to be formed for this new style of collaboration with the laity on a basis of equal partnership, Redemptorists will be afforded opportunities to assist them in this collaboration.⁸⁴

The Provincial norms for LMMHRs also deal with commitment and renewal of commitments. They provide for the following structure:

1. Having completed the initial formation program, the candidate makes application in writing to the Provincial Superior to be received as a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer.
2. After consulting with the Lay Missionary Formation Team, the Provincial Superior responds to the application.

81. See Appendix E.

82. *Communicanda* 4, #59, and Edmonton-Toronto Norms for Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, section concerning "Formation."

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

3. The Commitment Rite takes place during a Liturgy of the Eucharist when Redemptorists are gathered.
4. The Provincial Superior or his Delegate accepts the commitment.
5. A certificate of commitment will be signed by the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer and by the Provincial Superior or his Delegate.
6. A copy of the commitment document will be sent to the Redemptorist General Government.
7. The initial commitment is for one year.⁸⁵

The norms provide for the possibility of the renewal of commitment. A renewal ritual is provided as follows:

1. Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer who wish to renew their commitment make application in writing to the Provincial Superior. After consultation with the Program Director, the Local Redemptorist Superior, and the Provincial Council, the Provincial responds.
2. At first, commitment is renewed annually; later, in individual cases, commitment might be renewed for a longer period.
3. The renewal of commitment is accepted by the Local Redemptorist Superior or his Delegate.
4. The Redemptorist General Government is informed of the renewal.⁸⁶

The norms of the Edmonton-Toronto Province state that a person may cease to be an LMMHR simply by choosing not to renew the commitment, or by mutual agreement between the LMMHR and the Redemptorists at any time.⁸⁷

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid., section concerning “Commitment and Renewal of Commitment.”

87. Ibid.

Both *Communicanda 4* and the Edmonton-Toronto norms require that the Redemptorist General Government be informed of the commitment of an LMMHR and her/his departure.⁸⁸ This is also required of oblates, but not of any other form of partnership in mission, and so has particular significance.

The norms offer the following rights and privileges for LMMHRs:

1. The Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer and the members of the local Redemptorist community, through dialogue, will determine the concrete ways in which the lay missionaries will participate in the life of the local community. The discussion will include such matters as common prayer, sharing in significant occasions of the “family life” of the community, and recreational activities.
2. A similar discussion will take place about the role of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer in the pastoral projects of the community.⁸⁹

In terms of their relationship to and participation in the apostolic life of the wider Edmonton-Toronto Province, LMMHRs are assured the following:

1. Generally, Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will be invited to join in Provincial retreats and assemblies, and they may be invited to appropriate parts of Provincial Chapters.
2. Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will be appropriately involved in discernment, decision-making and evaluation regarding the realization of the Pastoral Plan of the Province.⁹⁰

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

This section of the norms is promising in that it opens avenues of involvement for LMMHRs in such internal community events and activities as retreats, assemblies, and Provincial Chapters. However, the vowed members issue the actual invitations to these events. This does not support a vision of partnership based on equality. It opens up the real possibility that the voice of the LMMHR might not be heard at this level of the life of the Redemptorist family if the vowed members choose not to issue the invitation.

The norms also provide that “Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer shall periodically hold meetings among themselves for mutual help, sharing of experiences and exchange of information.”⁹¹ It illustrates the importance of developing relationships, support structures and avenues for ongoing formation among the LMMHRs themselves. Thus, the particular needs of the LMMHRs might be addressed, and the distinctively lay character of this form of partnership in mission fostered.

In conclusion, the norms of the Edmonton-Toronto Province offer an inspiring vision, structure, and variety of possibilities for establishing and fostering connections between LMMHRs and the various levels of the Redemptorist community. There are possibilities for new forms of involvement and the exercise of new voices at the Provincial and inter-Provincial levels, in the local Redemptorist community, and in the network of relationships with individual Redemptorists and other LMMHRs.

91. Ibid.

Exploring Collaboration in Mission

Juan Lasso de la Vega, CSsR, the architect of *Communicanda 4* and Superior

General at the time of the XXI General Chapter, wrote:

The person who lives amid the issues of society and work has a very special evangelizing mission that only he or she can fulfill. What is important is that the mission be fulfilled in the Alphonsian spirit, with pastoral sensitivity to the poor and excluded in society and in communion with other Redemptorists.⁹²

Fr. Lasso envisioned LMMHRs and other members of the Redemptorist family co-existing and ministering together, not for the sake of collaboration itself but for mission—the ever more effective proclamation of the Good News of plentiful redemption. In his vision, each offers something to the other and to the family dynamic that the other cannot. Together they can accomplish something that neither can do alone. Once again, the analogy is to the Church itself, the Body of Christ. Thus, partnership in mission, in the Redemptorist context, offers an ecclesiology of collegiality and collaboration that might offer hope to the larger Church.

The awareness that LMMHRs are called to and inspired by, or that they live apostolic community is very new in Redemptorist circles. The word *charism* is often used to refer to the distinctive gift that a religious community or institute offers to the Church and the world. It might be more accurate to say that there is only one charism: the Charism of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation means that in Jesus Christ, God became flesh, showing the face of God to the world. In his life and ministry, Jesus exhibited many

92. Ibid, quoting *Communicanda 4*, #61.

capacities, qualities, and gifts; these are *God's* gifts; therefore, each gift reveals an aspect of God. These aspects of God might be compared to the facets of a diamond. Each religious community exhibits one facet to the world.

Constitutions 3, 4, and 5 spell out the specifics of the Redemptorist mission to evangelize the poor and most abandoned.

The most abandoned, to whom in particular the Congregation is sent, are those for whom the Church has not yet been able to provide sufficient means of salvation, those who have never heard the Church's message, or at least do not receive it as the "Good News", and finally those who suffer harm because of division in the Church.⁹³

With this vision in mind, Constitution 19 opens up a place in which lay partners in mission might be creatively and appropriately engaged:

In order that missionary work may develop and be really successful, adequate knowledge and practical familiarity with conditions in the world are essential as well as co-operation within the Church. For this reason the members of the Congregation confidently engage in missionary dialogue with the world. In a spirit of . . . concern they should try to understand people's anxious questionings and try to discover in these how God is truly revealing himself and making his plan known.⁹⁴

One of the signs of "plentiful redemption," in our age and our Church, may be this very collaboration in life, mission, and ministry. In a Church too often characterized by polarization between lay and ordained, conservative and liberal, orthodox and progressive, this reality bears witness to a hopeful ecclesiology. Constitution 9 states:

93. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 3.

94. *Ibid.*, #19.

Should circumstances make it impossible for them at times to proclaim the Gospel directly and immediately or to preach it fully, then the missionaries, with patience and prudence, but at the same time with great confidence, must give witness to the charity of Christ and do all in their power to make themselves neighbours to everybody.⁹⁵

The congregational documents that speak of LMMHRs urge the Congregation to allow them to have a voice in connection with those congregational, V/Provincial, and local priorities that directly affect them. This is an impetus to ever more extensive and meaningful dialogue. It is also an invitation to develop processes and structures that will allow LMMHRs to exercise that voice meaningfully beyond informal structures based on goodwill. It is not enough that the involvement of lay partners in mission takes place at the invitation of the vowed members. This makes the ability of lay partners to exercise their voice contingent on the initiative of the professed members. It leaves too much to chance (and to the possibility of exclusion) when collaboration becomes difficult or painful, and is too vulnerable to oversight or neglect. A prophetic move for the Redemptorist family at this point would be to explore and experiment with structures of collaboration and equal partnership that are based on models other than the juridical.

For a hint as to what “collaboration on the basis of partnership” might actually mean, we turn again to *Communicanda 4*:

The participation of the LMMHRs shall help the Redemptorist community to proclaim the Gospel in a way which shall be effectively perceived and lived as a liberation and salvation of the whole person. The evangelical promotion of the fundamental rights of the poor to justice and freedom shall constitute therefore a continual preoccupation of the LMMHRs.⁹⁶

95. Ibid., #9.

96. *Communicanda 4*, #50.

Redemptorists seem to be looking toward LMMHRs in the same way that the Church, in its documents treating the new evangelization, looks at lay people—as having an *entre* where the vowed and ordained may not or dare not go. Thus, lay people have a vital role in the Redemptorist family and in the Redemptorist mission, just as lay people play an essential role in the Church of evangelization. The laity are like the “leaven” spoken of in *Lumen Gentium* and the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*. Redemptorist documents show that the Congregation envisions LMMHRs playing a key role in evangelization. This is accomplished by uniting their social networks, their contexts, their work, their family life, their skills, and their ministries with the networks, skills, and resources of professed Redemptorists in the one mission of proclaiming plentiful redemption.

Former Superior General Juan Lasso de la Vega wrote:

Lay Missionaries belong to the Congregation with a degree that is different from those who have made a religious profession. Nevertheless, they are members of the Redemptorist family. This is a fact to which we all must become accustomed.⁹⁷

The lay person can exercise an important evangelizing mission in the world today. In fact, only the lay person can fulfill it. Some lay people perceive the needs of the world through the same lens of mutual evangelization of the poor and by the poor as do vowed Redemptorists. “It is important that the mission be fulfilled in the Alphonsian spirit, with

97. Juan Lasso de la Vega, CSsR, “Collaboration Between Laity and Redemptorists.” In *Partnership with the Laity: Our Heritage and the Way Forward*, ed. Emmanuel Cabjar, CSsR (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2003), 124.

pastoral sensitivity to the poor and excluded, in communion with other Redemptorists.”⁹⁸

Redemptorist documents clearly state that there is a role for the LMMHR as a vital partner in the evangelization of the most abandoned. The Redemptorists acknowledge their own need and recognize that the path forward is life-giving partnership with lay people who share the charism of evangelization in the Alphonsian spirit.

Moving Toward a Consideration of Vocation

Lay people may certainly live lives inspired by the call of the *Constitutions and Statutes* to a particular way of living apostolic community, though not necessarily in celibate chastity. How this will be concretely achieved remains unclear.

Fr. Lasso wrote: “To be a Lay Missionary is a call from the Spirit.”⁹⁹ The Spirit seems to be calling people today. The Spirit’s prompting is commonly referred to as a vocation. The Spirit speaks in and through the concrete situations of people’s lives, through their gifts and talents, limitations and networks of relationships, training and education, and patterns of experiences.

I have spoken of degrees or concentric circles of belonging in the Redemptorist context. The question that remains is whether we can validly speak of the lay members of the “family” as having a calling or vocation to the Redemptorist way of life. I have not yet used this language in speaking of the lay partners in mission. However, speaking of LMMHRs in the language of family and raising the possibility of commitment being

98. Ibid., 125.

99. Ibid.

either temporary or permanent¹⁰⁰ invokes the realm of vocation, a calling from the Holy Spirit to proclaim Good News to the poor. This is a call to the mission and way of life of the Redemptorist Congregation, lived out in rather different circumstances from those that might have been foreseen by St. Alphonsus in 1732.

Redemptorists hold that “profession is deeply rooted in baptismal consecration, and is a fuller expression of it. Consequently, by this act, the members are incorporated in a particular way into the mission of Christ as ministers of the Gospel, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰¹

Fr. Juan Lasso de la Vega wrote of his belief that the hopes and expectations of lay partners in mission offer three specific challenges to the professed members:

1. To respect and empower the apostolic identity of the lay person, helping him or her to reach true maturity in his/her ecclesial vocation.
2. To open our charism to the laity . . . Many of us still have not integrated the laity into our way of thinking and our way of living. . . . We see lay people merely as helpers or collaborators in our missionary activities.
3. To share our life and our Redemptorist mission with the laity.¹⁰²

The Redemptorist family, a new entity in the CSsR and the Church, must develop ways and means of achieving true co-responsibility. Redemptorist

Brother Dave Werthmann wrote:

It is not the institute that is opening its doors to the laity so they can participate in our missionary charism, it is the Spirit who is giving the gift

100. *Communicanda* 4, #44.

101. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 47.

102. Lasso, 110.

to certain laypeople, so they can share it with us.¹⁰³

This underlines the mutuality of partnership in mission. It is usually conceived as the sharing of laity in the Redemptorist mission, but it might appropriately be described as involving the partnership of Redemptorists in the mission of the laity.

Questions To Be Explored

The internal Redemptorist documents offer great hope. Alphonsian ecclesiology speaks to the Church of today, and Alphonsian Christology and soteriology find a home in the twenty-first-century heart. However, many questions remain unanswered, and it is to some of those questions that we now turn.

The *Final Document of the XXI General Chapter* urges

[that the units experiment with] new models of community. This search must be done with creative fidelity: fidelity to the genuine Redemptorist tradition and a spirit of openness to the signs of the times.¹⁰⁴

The XXII General Chapter also encouraged Redemptorists to

ensure that there are support systems and structures in every community which promote community and personal prayer, common celebration of the Eucharist, community recreation, community meetings for faith-sharing and pastoral planning.¹⁰⁵

We also read, in an ensuing section of the final message from the XXII General Chapter, that Redemptorist communities are encouraged to be

103. Ibid, 121.

104. XXI General Chapter, *Final Document*, #28.

105. Ibid, #3.2.

more open to welcome and integrate lay people in our lives, while respecting the identities of both lay people and Redemptorists.¹⁰⁶

It is clear that the LMMHR cannot be an outsider. In order for this dream to become reality, there must be a commitment to building open communities that provide for and foster the distinctive character of lay and ordained, vowed and otherwise committed, men and women. The possibility of creating a new entity in the Church is being offered once again to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Perhaps it is possible now to articulate an understanding of the unity and complementarity of vowed and lay members, and thus renew the Redemptorist family. It is a family, sharing one missionary vocation and one lens of charism, but with complementary gifts, skills, incarnations, and primary arenas of missionary activity.

In 2008, in an effort to clarify thought on communion and mission, the General Secretariat for Partnership in Mission published a working document in English and Spanish entitled *Called into Communion for Mission*.¹⁰⁷ Two lay partners in mission were invited to the XXIII General Chapter in 2009 to present this document to the delegates and to facilitate a study session.

I have explored a steady trickle of documents from two major sources: documents of the universal Church that impact on the questions at hand, and internal Redemptorist documents from all levels (the General Curia in Rome, the North American Commission for Partnership in Mission, and the Edmonton-Toronto Province). Each of these

106. Ibid, #3.

107. General Secretariat for Partnership in Mission, CSsR, *Called into Communion for Mission: Redemptorists and Lay People Together Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Most Abandoned—A Step Forward* (Rome, Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, 2008).

documents advanced the development of thought with regard to partnership in mission between vowed Redemptorists and laity. The trajectory is clear, though action has been slow and sporadic.

CHAPTER TWO THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE LAY MISSIONARY OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER

Historical Understanding

Over the centuries, religious life has evolved so that, in the modern Church and in various faith traditions, we find hermits, ascetics, monks, and nuns who live a contemplative form of religious life. We also see active apostolic communities, which typically arose in response to particular needs in society, such as educating and feeding the poor, offering shelter and aid to children, or nursing terminal cancer patients. Members of religious communities profess vows,¹⁰⁸ most commonly the vows of evangelical poverty, celibate chastity, and obedience. Some communities or institutes add distinctive vows or promises.

Recent Developments: Associates and Partners in Mission

In recent years, Roman Catholic communities both monastic and active have begun to take on associates. Associates may be lay people or ordained “secular” or diocesan priests who are attracted to the charism or spirit of the religious institute and drawn to share in the spirituality, prayer, or apostolic work of the vowed members. Given that over fifty thousand lay people in North America are now identified as associates,¹⁰⁹ this constitutes a major movement in the Church. In many cases, associates are prayer

108. These vows are also known as the “evangelical counsels.”

109. Figure obtained on April 10, 2016 from the North American Conference of Associates and Religious website, www.nacar.org.

partners; in some cases, they are active participants in the mission and ministry of their religious communities.

In the Redemptorist context, associates are connected to a local Redemptorist community and meet monthly in “circles of associates.” Associates seek a connection to the charism that brings coherence to their lives. They do not necessarily seek more apostolic involvement; rather, they wish to find a spiritual “home.” In contrast, Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer see the world through Redemptorist lenses; they understand that their apostolic involvement flows from their Redemptorist connection. They wish to collaborate with the vowed members, and therefore seek a deeper community connection. To this end, LMMHRs make individual commitments with a Redemptorist Province.

In the Redemptorist context, Associates and LMMHRs are two forms of partnership in mission. Others include oblates and co-workers. In different areas of the Redemptorist world, there may be other forms of partnership in mission.

I have explored the body of literature that pertains to the Redemptorist category of Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer. In this chapter I will attempt to articulate and explore the theological insights that might shed some light on the vocation of the LMMHR and the significance of this exciting development in the Redemptorist family and the Church.

Redemptorist History and Insights Arising from That History

Over their 280-year history, Redemptorists have joined with lay partners in various times and places. As far back as the 1720s, in the streets of Naples, before St. Alphonsus Liguori founded the Redemptorists, he recruited and trained lay people as catechists in the Evening Chapels.¹¹⁰ St. Clement Hofbauer, CSsR, often referred to as the “second founder” of the Redemptorists, formed circles of lay partners for evangelization of the academy in Enlightenment-era Vienna. St. John Neumann, CSsR, as Bishop of Philadelphia, engaged lay partners as catechists in the founding years of the parochial school system in the United States.

After World War II, as soldiers returned to Canada and started lives anew, Redemptorists were at the forefront of the cooperative credit union movement, engaging lay partners in this work. Credit unions were established in Redemptorist parishes in Edmonton, Saskatoon, Sudbury, Saint John, and other parts of Canada. This was a creative way of meeting the needs of the times and helping people to have more control over their own finances. In so doing, they built and strengthened bonds of community.

In Canada, lay people have also been involved in explicit proclamation of the Word.¹¹¹ Since 1975, when Bob and Joan Williston were hired as members of the Mission Team of the former Edmonton Province, lay people have often been engaged as preachers, catechists, youth ministers and music ministers. More recently, lay people

110. The Evening Chapels, described in Chapter One, were catechetical gatherings led by lay people in storefronts, back rooms, alleys, and sheds. Alphonsus trained the catechists and then empowered them for this ministry.

111. The preaching of “missions,” extended revivals, or retreats in a contained location is a distinctive work of the Redemptorists. It typically combines dynamic preaching leading to conversion and celebration of reconciliation, in Sacramental and other forms.

have preached and offered reflections or witness talks on the Redemptorist-produced and -sponsored televised devotions to Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

The emphasis on youth ministry, engaged in with a Redemptorist flavour, involved collaboration between Redemptorists and lay people. Examples include the founding of S.E.R.V.E.,¹¹² the establishment of the Redemptorist Youth Mission Team, and the hiring of lay people as youth ministry coordinators in Redemptorist parishes in the 1980s and 1990s. Through this history, the groundwork was laid for the apostolate of Redemptorists in coordinating the Canadian Certificate in Youth Ministry Studies from 2004 to 2015.

After the Second Vatican Council, Redemptorists in Canada were among the pioneers in creating partnerships with laity in parishes. A significant initiative involved recognizing the gifts of lay people, calling them into service, and hiring them as Lay Ecclesial Ministers or empowering them for other forms of ministry.

Redemptorists and lay people the world over have collaborated in the “apostolate of the pen,” continuing the literary mission of their founder. In the eighteenth century, Alphonsus Liguori wrote 111 volumes on theological and devotional topics. The publication of magazines, articles, books and digital media remains a significant feature of the life of the Redemptorist family.

Based on this historical tapestry, it would be fair to say that Redemptorists have always had an insight that some sort of partnership with lay people is essential to the mission of evangelization. Redemptorists have attempted various forms of partnership,

112. S.E.R.V.E. is an acronym for Summer Endeavour in a Redemptorist Volunteer Experience, founded in Toronto in 1988.

just as the wider worldwide Church has struggled with the role of the laity and with a fruitful collaboration of laity and clergy.

In the incorporation of the Redemptorist brother as a vowed form of membership in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, lay people are at the very heart of the institute, clearly “belonging.” Canonically, a brother is a lay man who professes the vows but is not a cleric. In the foundational inclusion of brothers, in the incorporation of oblates in the *General Statutes*, and in the more recent establishment of the category of LMMHR, we can discern an ongoing acknowledgement that certain lay people have, throughout their history, shared the Redemptorist charism. They live this to such a depth that the CSsR feels impelled to identify and include them as members of the Redemptorist family, active co-workers and participants in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist Congregation.¹¹³

The new vision of the Redemptorist family presented in *Communicanda 4* comprises people with “different degrees of belonging and commitment,” and “concentric circles of belonging.”¹¹⁴ Boisvert has explored in some depth this emerging concept of an evangelical family. He sees this concept as a window through which some religious institutes are developing a language to express the partnership of laity in the charism, mission, ministry, and common life of the vowed members. Boisvert writes:

The evangelical family constitutes a community of belonging, not in the sense of a life under the same roof, but in that of interdependent proximity which is rooted in the welcoming and implementation of a particular aspect of the Gospel, of a certain face of Jesus Christ. . . . What drives the

113. XXI General Chapter, *Final Document*, #60a.

114. *Ibid.*, #12.

different ways of living the privileged evangelical aspect is to witness, to participate in the same mission.¹¹⁵

Using Boisvert's model, we might say that members of the Redemptorist family are drawn to the mission of proclamation of Good News (evangelization) to the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor. They are drawn to and motivated by the Jesus who, in Luke 4:16-20, proclaims, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He sent me to bring good news to the poor." All are moved by the need of the most abandoned to experience Good News. With the professed members, LMMHRs might cry out, "I am ruined if I do not preach the Gospel" (1Cor. 9:16).¹¹⁶ Like the professed members, LMMHRs consider this to be a constitutive element of their very identity. Boisvert goes on to say:

But it is not enough to belong to the evangelical family; it is also and especially necessary that this belonging has meaning for the persons and groups who live it.¹¹⁷

Thus we can appropriately use the image, first offered in *Communicanda 4*, of the varying degrees or concentric circles in the Redemptorist family. Boisvert uses the term *belonging* rather more freely than would many Canon lawyers. For them, the word has connotations proper only to the professed members of a religious community. Other language must be developed to describe this new reality, which has real meaning for those living it.

115. Boisvert, 44.

116. *I am Ruined if I do not Preach the Gospel* is the title of a later *communicanda*.

117. Boisvert, 45.

In any event, in these early days of exploration, the Redemptorist family might be understood to include, at its heart or innermost circle, the vowed members including priests, brothers, and clerical students; in the next circle one might find LMMHRs; in a third circle one might find Redemptorist Associates or partners in mission; and in a fourth circle, we might place other forms of association.¹¹⁸

Roots in Christian Initiation

As a lay person and a woman in the Church today, I sometimes feel alienated. My voice is often unheard in the venues where decisions are made and power exercised. But I have experienced, within the Redemptorist family, openness to new possibilities and involvement in mission and ministry that I have not found elsewhere in the Church. Examples drawn from my own experience include being invited to preach on parish mission teams and given the opportunity to offer pastoral counselling at Reconciliation Services as an alternative to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This has kept me involved, active, and hopeful. On the other hand, the vision of a Gospel family incarnate in concentric circles also raises interesting questions.

It is certainly appropriate for professed Redemptorists to speak of belonging to the institute as their primary experience of connection and belonging, as Redemptorists do in the *Constitutions and Statutes*. Indeed, they understand that they are bound to the Congregation and to one another by their profession of vows, including their vow and

118. Appendix B offers a graphic which depicts concentric circles of belonging.

oath of perseverance.¹¹⁹ If the Redemptorist family is to move forward as partners in mission, we must explore what it is that binds the LMMHRs to one another and to the CSsR.

For an answer to this question, we must explore our theology of the Sacraments of Initiation. The foundational connection for every Christian is incorporation into Christ in and through these Sacraments. In the Sacrament of Baptism, the person is claimed for Christ and sent out into the world on Christ's mission. This incorporation into Christ is sealed in the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Sacrament of Eucharist nourishes Christians, as individuals and as community, to be sent forth in mission as Christ for the world.

A later Redemptorist document, the *Final Document of the XXII General Chapter*, takes up the foundational importance of the Sacraments of Initiation.

We must ask: what relationship is there between Redemptorist spirituality and collaboration with the laity? Do we have a genuine appreciation of the missionary vocation given to all in Baptism, or are we simply concerned about getting helpers for our work? We need to develop partnership with the laity, not just on the basis of shared responsibility, but also on the basis of shared faith and spirituality.¹²⁰

This view of partnership based on a solid foundation of shared faith and spirituality points to an area that will need to be explored by the Redemptorist family as it moves forward. Partnership is not the goal, and shared responsibility not the mission. The goal of partnership is the ever more effective proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the most abandoned. This implies that all partners have and share faith

119. This is the distinctive "fourth vow" taken by members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

120. *XXII General Chapter: Message, Orientations, Postulata*, Message #9.

rooted in a deep personal and communal relationship with the Redeemer. Thus, sharing of faith and spirituality is a vital aspect of partnership in mission.

***The Constitutions and Statutes and “Apostolic Community”
as These Might Pertain to the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer***

We have seen that Constitutions 1 and 2 of the Redemptorist *Constitutions and Statutes* establish the identity, charism, and mission of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Significantly, these two constitutions are the only ones specifically referenced in Redemptorist documents shedding light on LMMHRs. This fact opens a door for further exploration of the LMMHR under the same rubrics of identity, charism, and mission.

Charisms are gifts of the Holy Spirit manifest in Jesus Christ. He embodied and offered these gifts to the world in his earthly life and ministry. The Church, as the Body of Christ, shows forth these same gifts to the world. Individuals, whether male or female, vowed or ordained or lay, receive these gifts, express them, and can be agents by which these gifts are continuously poured forth into the world.

No one person possesses the fullness of the gifts of Christ; these gifts are bestowed upon the entire Body of Christ, which, as a community, a whole body, manifests them. People are drawn to others who have a similar spirit, a similar way of manifesting Christ, and therefore people with similar gifts or affinities are drawn together for mission.

It is the Redemptorist understanding that “all are missionaries because all are committed to the same mission.”¹²¹ In the Roman Catholic understanding of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist), all belong by virtue of the reception and efficacy of these Sacraments. All are missionaries by virtue of their having been fully initiated, fully incorporated into the Body of Christ in and through the Sacraments of Initiation. In a very real way, it is Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist that bind the Lay Missionary to the Church, to the Congregation, to other LMMHRs, and to one’s brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. It is Christ Himself who binds the LMMHR to the Congregation. It is Christ who calls, seals, sustains, and sends the Lay Missionary.

The notion of a universal call to holiness described in *Lumen Gentium* provides another way of describing the union of a life dedicated to God and a life of missionary service, wherever and however one exercises that missionary service. In this vision, every person is called to holiness and to missionary service (or evangelization) through celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. The charism of evangelization of the most abandoned—one aspect of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ in the world—is a gift and a mandate given to the entire Church. It is welcomed and expressed in a particular way by all members of the Redemptorist family, whether they are professed, ordained, or lay. They exist to proclaim the Good News, to evangelize by witness and by the explicit proclamation of the Gospel.

121. Raponi, 163.

Constitution 1 “makes very clear the ecclesial character of the Redemptorist Congregation’s mission.”¹²² This Constitution means that “our missionary vocation lives by the heartbeat of the Church’s own missionary vocation, that of evangelizing the poor. The Conciliar texts return repeatedly to the primacy of this demand at various levels for the Church itself.”¹²³ Thus, from its inauguration, the Congregation is not turned in on itself but is open to the vast horizon of the Church in the world.¹²⁴ In this light, it must welcome and depend upon the dynamism of life-giving evangelical partnership with the laity as a necessary element of its drive to evangelize and be evangelized by those on the margins of Church and society.

In the Redemptorist family, it might then be said that vowed and lay partners share one call to holiness, one missionary vocation, and one lens of charism. The two concentric circles exhibit two complementary incarnations and primary arenas of missionary activity. The ordained vowed members have a particular role in the cultic, liturgical, sacramental, and pastoral arena. It should not be inferred, however, that their role is or should be solely in these areas. The lay members of the family are to be leaven in the world of family, or work, of social networks and secular life.¹²⁵ A path toward complementarity opens up.

122. Ibid., 164.

123. Ibid., 165.

124. Ibid., 166.

125. I recognize, of course, that there is considerable overlap in participation of laity in ecclesial activity and vowed Redemptorists in the life of the world.

It may be said that the *Constitutions and Statutes* govern the life of the professed Redemptorist and inspire the life of the LMMHR.

The LMMHR is to share the apostolic life of the CSsR, aiming to unify dedication to God and missionary orientation. The Redemptorist documents see the LMMHR as a missionary. To be a missionary is to be sent. Each LMMHR becomes a member of the Christian community through the Sacraments of Initiation and is sent forth into the world as a missionary through the commissioning renewed at each celebration of the Eucharist. Who “sends” the LMMHR? Through the Sacraments of Initiation, God sends the LMMHR, and so does the Church, the ecclesial community. In the mutual ratification and celebration of commitment, the Redemptorist family also sends the LMMHR into the world.

Vowed Redemptorists dedicate themselves to God by profession. Through a new reading of Constitution 1, I propose that Christian people—whether single, married, lay, vowed, or ordained—are dedicated to God first and foundationally in and through the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist). Constitution 2 carries the description of the purpose of the Congregation further:

In carrying out its mission in the Church the Congregation unites members who live together and form one missionary body. These dedicate themselves to God by profession, and so devote themselves to their mission as a living unit, each contributing through the ministry that belongs to him.¹²⁶

In his reflection on Constitution 2, Raponi writes, “The first paragraph of Constitution 2 affirms that the community character of evangelization is an essential element. It is the Church that evangelizes and catechizes, and in an analogous way, it is

126. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 2.

the Redemptorist family that evangelizes. The second paragraph of Constitution 2 recalls the guiding criteria of the mission, namely, fidelity to tradition and attention to the signs of the times.”¹²⁷

Thus, in Raponi’s eyes, the core of Constitution 2 is the communal or collaborative character in which the Redemptorist family enters into its mission of evangelization, always endeavouring to be faithful to and read the Spirit’s activity in the signs of the times. In our era, through both the interest and self-offering of lay partners in mission and the attentiveness and openness of vowed Redemptorists to this movement toward new expressions of partnership, we may discern a “sign of the times.”

The specific contribution that the laity make in the Redemptorist charism and to the Redemptorist mission might be through the very circumstances of their lives and their immersion in the everyday world of ordinary life, economic concerns, the raising of family, and so on. Lay partners can give voice to these realities in the midst of the Redemptorist family, raising greater awareness among vowed Redemptorists. Dialogue may open new avenues of missionary activity. A new understanding may be that the *Constitutions and Statutes* govern the life of the vowed Redemptorist, while they inspire the life of the LMMHR.

The vision of complementarity raises issues in the realm of Canon Law, to which I now turn.

127. Raponi, 167.

Ecclesiological Considerations Concerning Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer

The *Code of Canon Law* governs or guides the establishment and proper functioning of structures within the Church. The canons that deal with mission clearly situate the mission of the lay members of the faithful as rooted in the Sacraments of Initiation.¹²⁸ Of particular importance is Canon 225 which states:

§1. [Lay persons] are bound by the general obligation and possess the right as individuals, or joined in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation is made known and accepted by all persons everywhere in the world. This obligation is even more compelling in those circumstances in which only through them can people hear the gospel and know Christ.¹²⁹

That mission is what the Church understands as evangelization.¹³⁰ Raponi considers that the mission of evangelization, entered into by the Redemptorists in a communal manner, is the essential distinguishing character of Redemptorist life, to which everything else is directed. The three “moments” of evangelization are not watertight compartments; there is some fluidity among them. This model was first presented in the ground-breaking 1997 document from the Congregation for the Clergy, the *General Directory for Catechesis*.¹³¹

The missionary proclamation of the Good News is not an activity restricted to the ordained or professional minister. Rather, the missionary proclamation of the Gospel is a

128. Barr, 291.

129. CIC, #225, §1.

130. Ibid.

131. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana), 1997. This is my own summary of the material presented in Part One of this document.

constitutive element of the Christian life for every baptized person. As we have seen, all are missionaries because all are called in Baptism and sent forth from the Eucharistic table each Sunday to be leaven in their everyday world and relationships. This is echoed in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and in Canon 225, which goes on to say:

§2. According to each one's own condition, they are also bound by a particular duty to imbue and perfect the order of temporal affairs with the spirit of the gospel and thus to give witness to Christ, especially in carrying out these same affairs and in exercising secular functions.¹³²

The lay faithful are called to spread the Good News by witness and word, to transform the world from within, as leaven,¹³³ by the way in which they live the Gospel.¹³⁴ Barr points out that it is “the secular role of the individual lay person [that forms] the basis for these actions.”¹³⁵

It is the distinctive role, right, and obligation of the lay faithful to *be* the Good News, to proclaim the power of the Good News through the witness of our lives and by our words. Thus we evangelize and transform the worlds in which we move, imbuing these worlds with Christ and his liberating message of hope and new life. Because the lay faithful accomplish this mission in and through everyday life circumstances—in family,

132. CIC, #225, §2.

133. Second Vatican Council. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* [Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People]. November 18, 1965. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, Vol.1.* ed. Austin Flannery, OP (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1998) #2.

134. Barr, 293.

135. Ibid.

workplace, social interaction, and the political sphere—our role is different from that of clergy, though obviously related and necessarily complementary.

Redemptorists believe that community exists not for its own sake but for the sake of mission. In a similar spirit, the establishment of the category of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer cannot be for its own sake but must further the mission of the Church and the essential work of evangelization.

Formation for Partnership in Mission

The Sacraments of Initiation signify the beginning of responding to the action of God in one's life and in the life of the community. They also signify the beginning of engagement in the mission of Christ in and through the Church. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults presents a model of catechesis, or formation, for mission. Such a formation is a lifelong process within and of the community for mission.

Formation for the LMMHR has two dimensions. It is both a beginning of the Redemptorist journey, as the Sacraments of Initiation are a beginning of the Christian journey, and is an ongoing process.

The norms for formation approved by the Edmonton-Toronto Province for LMMHRs provide for these two dimensions of the analogous formation that apply equally suitably for professed Redemptorists and LMMHRs' "personal spiritual formation, formation in the Redemptorist charism, and apostolic formation and integration."¹³⁶

136. *Communicanda* 4, #59.

In this context, the encouragement is offered that

Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will find opportunities to continue their own formation and will avail themselves of opportunities provided by the Redemptorists.¹³⁷

The norms recognize that formation of the Redemptorist community for collaboration is essential, “since the Redemptorist community itself needs to be formed for this new style of collaboration with the laity on a basis of equal partnership, Redemptorists will be afforded opportunities to assist them in this collaboration.”¹³⁸

Insights Drawn from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

It was never foreseen that there would be more than one or possibly two candidates at any given time. It necessarily follows that initial formation would be highly individualized, tailored to the experience, strengths, needs, and desires of the individual. I think the most suitable model for such formation would be one adapted from the catechumenate.¹³⁹

The catechumenate is the process by which prospective new Christians are catechized and brought to fullness of faith and to initiation into the Christian community. The catechumenal process is best described as one of apprenticeship. In this model, it is the entire community that catechizes and into which the candidate is initiated.

137. Ibid.

138. Ibid.

139. See Appendix D, which offers a chart comparing the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults to a proposed model of formation for LMMHRs.

In an analogous way, the entire Redemptorist community apprentices the prospective LMMHR into its way of life, its way of responding to the common call. Any formation other than this one runs the risk of becoming a solely intellectual exercise. Mentors from the vowed community, therefore, are invited to take on particular tasks and periods of accompaniment for the candidates. Directors of the process simply oversee its implementation. They ensure, through informal means, that the candidate's needs and questions are addressed and that opportunities for growth, learning, and theological reflection upon experience are provided.

The Christian community as a whole, and each local Christian community in particular, has its own culture, language, idioms, stories, and practices. Through catechumenal catechesis, the vast storehouse of this culture is laid open to the apprentice Christian. The community walks with the catechumen, introducing them to elements of this culture as the journey toward initiation progresses.

Every catechumen has a different history and background, training, gifts, and needs. Because of this, the experience of no two catechumen should be identical. Likewise, the formation offered to each prospective LMMHR should be unique, introducing the individual, over time, to the culture of the Redemptorist family—its stories, prayers, idioms, practices, songs, joys, and difficulties.

In the journey toward Christian initiation, the catechumen is transformed and formed into a new Christian; the community is also transformed as it encounters and welcomes the new member. In welcoming LMMHRs, the community of professed

Redemptorists is transformed and formed into a new being. This is exciting. It is also challenging.

Ecclesiology of Communion

The invitation to proclaim the Good News to the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor, is heard by the individual in and through the experiences of his or her life, and is lived out in manifold ways even before the person comes into contact with the Redemptorists. Then, heart speaks to heart, and both the LMMHR and the Redemptorists acknowledge a “fit.” This has been borne out in my own vocation story.

A relatively new and expansive notion of the Redemptorist family is emerging as a way through which this common call may be lived out creatively. This family is a communion in which vowed and lay partners complement each other. In and through diverse lifestyles, circumstances, and ministries, they participate in a common mission. The model of concentric circles of belonging offers a hopeful vision of unity, and of diversity and strength, in communion. In the process of reaching outward vowed and lay partners discover that they are themselves evangelized by the poor. Their lives are changed, and they are converted ever more completely to Christ. The relationship of evangelization, as they incarnate it, is built on an attitude of radical mutuality.¹⁴⁰

140. In *Communicanda 4*, #48, we read that the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer shall commit themselves to make clearer and more effective the dimension of incarnation and sharing with the people, especially the most abandoned, which is characteristic of the Redemptorist community for the explicit proclamation of the Gospel.

This is a much needed creative witness in a Church that some people experience as being polarized between left and right, women and men, ordained and lay, old and new. Indeed, this may be a means by which the Church itself is evangelized. The Redemptorist family incarnates a reconciling and unifying presence in a Church where lay people (and women in particular) are often excluded from participation in decisions that directly affect them, where lay and ordained often cannot share ministry based on equal partnership, and where lay women and men struggle for equality when certain ministries and roles are reserved for ordained males.

The Redemptorist vision of partnership based on complementarity, explored in Chapter 1, is rooted in history, validated by recent experience, and expressed in a number of internal Redemptorist documents. The practical work of incarnating the vision, however, has its challenges.

My own insight is that these issues in the worldwide Church are the same as those that challenge the Redemptorist family as it seeks to move further along the path of partnership in mission. The Redemptorist communion offers an ecclesiology that is creative, prophetic, and hopeful

Mission and Ministry

This spirituality and theology of communion is predicated upon an expansive insight: although the ministries exercised by the various members may be diverse, there is one mission. Just as there are many gifts within the body so, too, many ministries may be exercised in concert and fit together under the banner of the “mission of the Church” or

the “Redemptorist mission.” Mission is a larger reality than any single ministry or group of ministries. The mission of the Redemptorist family is not to animate parishes, to preach missions, or to effect reconciliation. The mission of the Redemptorist family is to proclaim plentiful redemption to the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor. This mission must be accomplished through whichever ministries, gifts, and tasks are required or effective. The ecclesiology of communion thus animates mission.

Alphonsian Christology and Soteriology in Dialogue with Mission and Ministry

St. Alphonsus is often cited as a guiding light in the field of moral theology. I discussed how the vision of St. Alphonsus and the Redemptorists offers an ecclesiology that may prove surprisingly relevant for our contemporary Church and our current ecclesial context.

Just as Alphonsus’s ecclesiology is profoundly incarnational, so too is his Christology. Alphonsian Christology is built on the foundational insight that the love of God for humanity is a passionate, even crazy love.¹⁴¹ This great love is revealed in the Incarnation. In the person of Jesus Christ, God became human as a baby in Bethlehem. Alphonsus proclaimed a God who deliberately chose to come among humanity as a child, defenceless and poor, because few could fail to love a child. God came among us to love and be loved. Jesus gave his life in loving service; he suffered and died to express this same overflowing love. In Alphonsus’s view, Jesus continues to be incarnate in the world

141. Alphonsus did, in fact, refer to the “crazy” love of God for humanity.

in and through His Body, the Church. In Jesus and now in the Church, God offers to every person a life-giving and life-changing relationship of love.

For Alphonsus, the heart of the matter is love. Alphonsus's God is a passionate lover of humankind. Alphonsus was famed and beloved for his preaching of a God who was "pazzo per amore" (crazy in love) with humanity. The reason God became human was to express this crazy love for us. Alphonsus wrote that God, after giving humanity the gifts of creation, gave the greatest gift in Jesus Christ: "In order to win us totally, the Eternal Father has gone so far as to give us His one and only Son. 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son' (John 3:16)."¹⁴² This proclamation of God's great love and invitation to ever deeper relationship was the focus of Alphonsus's preaching.

When he lost his "preacher's voice" in his early fifties, Alphonsus turned to writing. To continue to proclaim the Good News, he wrote theological tomes, spiritual guidebooks, and even popular Christmas carols and hymns, such as "Tu Scende Della Stelle" and "O God of Loveliness." Several of Alphonsus's most enduring literary works offer practical tools to help ordinary individuals develop and grow in a relationship of love with Jesus Christ.¹⁴³ In the forty years left to him, Alphonsus penned 111 works. He is the only author whose works exist in more editions than Shakespeare's and he is credited with developing the written form of the modern Italian language. Clearly, his motivation to proclaim the love of God was compelling.

142. Alphonsus Liguori. "The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ." In *Alphonsus de Liguori: Selected Writings*, ed. Frederick M. Jones, CSSR (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 113.

143. These include *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, *How to converse continually and familiarly with God as a friend*, *Visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin*, and *The Glories of Mary*.

In the first draft of his *Rule*, written in 1732, Alphonsus wrote that the purpose of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer is to “continue Christ.” Later versions of the *Rule* state the purpose as to “follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor.”¹⁴⁴ There is a subtle difference in the two versions. Alphonsus’s own wording conveys what I believe to be the more accurate expression of his Christology: members of the Redemptorist family today do more than *imitate* Christ; the Redemptorist Family *continues* Christ and serves as His hands, feet, and presence in the world. Why, then, does the Redemptorist family exist? It exists to love. It exists to continue the redemptive and practical love of Jesus Christ in the world.

Christology encompasses soteriology, the study of how Jesus saves. Over the centuries, many theologians have proposed theories of soteriology that include atonement, substitution, satisfaction, and revelation. These theories attempt to explore, describe, or explain the saving action of Jesus Christ. Alphonsus’s contribution to the field of soteriology lies in his concept of redemption. His is a soteriology rooted in love. Alphonsus first named his Congregation the “Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour.” In 1749, he renamed it the “Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.” This nomenclature has profound significance for today. Alphonsus proclaimed a Christ who saved by redeeming, by reaching into human experience and drawing humanity to God’s heart by bonds of love. The redemption offered at the end of earthly life (or at the end of time) is foreshadowed by Christ’s practical earthly ministry of reconciling and healing broken lives, broken relationships, and broken communities.

144. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 1.

One Biblical understanding of the role of the Redeemer is rooted in the Book of Job, chapter 19. The go'el, or Redeemer, depicted there is a character drawn from Jewish law. The go'el is the nearest blood relative, one who would speak for the individual in court, lend their voice to a voiceless relative, or defend the unjustly accused before a judge.¹⁴⁵ It is easy to see Jesus, in his earthly life and ministry, as this sort of advocate, this kind of relative, this type of redemptive figure. This image of Jesus as the Redeemer, the nearest blood relative, might be just as moving and evocative for many people today. It has a practical and incarnational dimension as well. Members of the Church, the Body of Christ here and now, and members of the Redemptorist family in particular, are called to continue this mission of redemption among the most abandoned. They are ministers of redemption.

Alphonsus served as a minister of reconciliation and redemption, intervening in the lives of individuals, families, and communities to effect meaningful healing and restoration of relationships. Early Redemptorist missions were lengthy projects, sometimes lasting as long as several months. The early Redemptorists would go to an area and begin to get to know it, discovering which families or groups of people were feuding or at odds. Then they would work with these groups to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation. The preached dimension of the mission came at the end of this process. It celebrated and solidified the reconciliation that God had already accomplished in the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Therefore, through Alphonsus and the

145. Michael Brehl, CSsR, "Biblical Reflections on the Redeemer." In *Readings on Redemption*, eds. Raymond Corriveau, CSsR, and Alberto de Mingo Kaminouchi, CSsR (Rome: The General Secretariat for Redemptorist Spirituality, 2006), 37.

early Redemptorists, lives were touched and transformed by God. People were brought from sin to grace, from pain to hope, from enmity to community, from feuding to peace, from darkness to light. This is Alphonsus's redemptive soteriology at work. It is about love—not the emotion, but its hard work and transforming power.

Over time, missions were truncated until they became four-day events featuring powerful preaching aimed at stirring hearts to repentance and conversion. At the same time, there have always been creative expressions of this practice. These have included St. Clement Hofbauer's vision of the parish as a "perpetual mission," and the constant reconciling presence and ministry offered by Redemptorists at shrines and sanctuaries.

Over twenty-four years of ecclesial ministry, my experience has been that *redemption* and *sin* are most often preached as concepts or theological propositions that have little relevance or practical application in people's daily lives. Many homilists speak of sin in vague terms as "offences against God," with little specificity about *how* one offends God, and whether offences against brothers and sisters, or against earth, are sins. Sin is most often preached and discussed as an individual reality (usually sexual) and rarely as a communal or social reality. The realities and complexities of social sin, the challenge of the Church's social teaching, and the question of where the earth fits into the whole picture are largely ignored. Little or no attention is paid to the victims and real implications and effects of sin, and little explicit account is taken of the experience of women and other marginalized persons and populations.

When I have explored these experiences with women and other marginalized people, the experiences that come to the fore are the pain of the effects of sin, the sense of

the injustice and oppression of being more sinned against than sinning, and the need for a redemption that is both present-day hope and eschatological promise. Although I cannot posit a unified “women’s experience,” it is important to acknowledge that many women know first-hand the effects of sin, injustice, and oppression in our lives. It is more than an academic concept.

Women and other marginalized people long to experience a proclamation of hope, of redemption in which God reaches out of eternity to touch and transform their temporal experience. Their longing expresses a need in Alphonsus’s view of soteriology. With Job, many women and other marginalized people can then cry out, “I know that my Redeemer lives” (Job 19:25). A meeting of feminist theology and Redemptorist/Alphonsian Christology might thus offer creative possibilities for proclaiming the love of God in a new time and place.

In the current ecclesial situation I have repeatedly seen that the redemption offered to many women is a next-worldly or other-worldly hope, as if the salvation offered by Jesus is completely a future eschatological reality. While I do not deny that this is one dimension of redemption, my intuition is that if we take seriously the interaction of Jesus’s liberating proclamation of the Reign of God and the Redemptorist mission to continue Christ in our broken world, then there is a “this-worldly” and “here-and-now” aspect of redemption. The redemption that many women and other marginalized people seek and need is not only to be experienced in the hereafter; the Christian community’s embrace of Christ’s liberating truth holds out hope for the present. Any preaching on redemption with and among women must balance hope, forgiveness,

and justice for the present life with eschatological hope. It is not one or the other—the need is for both-and.

Women need to hear this message, and it must be proclaimed in a woman’s voice and from a woman’s experience. This message of hope cannot be proclaimed with or heard through a male voice. The expansive notion of a Redemptorist family encompassing men and women together proclaiming plentiful redemption offers possibility and hope for the accomplishment of this mission.

In Alphonsian/Redemptorist ecclesiology, Christology, and soteriology, I discern hopeful possibilities for pastoral action today. I see possibilities and complementary roles for teams of professed and lay members of the Redemptorist family in proclaiming the hope offered by Jesus Christ. This reconciliation affects lives and relationships and communities here and now, as well as in the communion of saints yet to come.

**Synthesis of Theology, Ecclesiology, Soteriology,
and the *Constitutions and Statutes*
as These May Apply to Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer**

I have explored themes from Redemptorist history and theology that might shed light on the path walked by members of the Redemptorist family today. The coherent blending of communion and mission is captured in the Redemptorist term *apostolic community*. A series of pertinent documents promulgated since 1991 contain numerous references to LMMHRs sharing the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community.

The awareness of the apostolic community that LMMHRs are called to, inspired by, or live is very new in Redemptorist circles. We learn in the *Constitutions and Statutes* the four distinctive characteristics of this Redemptorist concept of apostolic life:

- Sharing the charism, the gift, of proclaiming Good News to the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor
- Actively participating in the missionary labours of the Congregation (missionary outreach, catechetical activity and pastoral activity)
- Living Apostolic Community—the “how” we live is as valid a form of missionary proclamation as the “what” we proclaim
- “Continuing Christ”—not merely imitating him; a profoundly incarnational stance in which, together as professed and laity, we exemplify the Body of Christ, present in the world, still calling and offering plentiful redemption to all.

Constitutions 3, 4, and 5 spell out the specifics of the Redemptorist mission to evangelize the poor and most abandoned, “those for whom the Church has not yet been able to provide sufficient means of salvation, those who have never heard the Church's message, or at least do not receive it as the “Good News”, and finally those who suffer harm because of division in the Church.”¹⁴⁶

In today’s Church, there is a growing understanding that evangelization is needed not only in distant lands but also at home. The field into which the Word is sown can now be seen as our own backyard: the neighbourhood laundry, the grocery store, the arena, or our own kitchen table. In light of this new understanding of evangelization, the secular nature of the LMMHR might prove to be an advantage for the CSsR. Lay partners in mission may prove to serve a vital role in identifying and reaching out to the abandoned; beginning the conversations; and naming their realities, hopes, and dreams. If we listen attentively to the longing implicit in the Redemptorist documents dealing with lay

146. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 3.

collaboration, we hear an invitation to complementarity and mutual enrichment, an impetus to collaboration in life and mission.

With this vision in mind, Constitution 19 opens up a place in which lay partners in mission might be creatively and appropriately engaged:

In order that missionary work may develop and be really successful, adequate knowledge and practical familiarity with conditions in the world are essential as well as co-operation within the Church. For this reason the members of the Congregation confidently engage in missionary dialogue with the world.

In a spirit of . . . concern they should try to understand people's anxious questionings and try to discover in these how God is truly revealing himself and making his plan known.¹⁴⁷

In light of the Church's emphasis on the new evangelization, a new role for lay partners in the Redemptorist family is emerging. These people are immersed in the everyday life of their sisters and brothers. They are their neighbours. They pump gas at the same gas stations. Their children ride the same school buses. The lay faithful know and experience cultures from a distinctive vantage point, and being immersed in the social milieu opens a role for them as interpreters of the experiences, the cries, and the hopes of other laity.

Therefore, lay partners may share the Redemptorist mission of evangelization by serving as interpreters, assisting the Congregation in identifying the language and methods best suited to the context of other laity in accomplishing the mission of evangelization. Lay people meet other lay people where they are—in hockey arenas, in gyms, in waiting rooms, in clubs and organizations, in clinics and classrooms. Lay partners in mission hear the stories of their brothers and sisters, who open up to them

147. Ibid., 19.

because they are there, because they listen, because they share the fellowship of those who bear the mark of pain.¹⁴⁸ They witness by the way they live their lives. They proclaim Good News by witness. They offer words of comfort and encouragement, words of challenge and enlightenment.

Constitution 6 describes the attitude of the Redemptorist missionary:

All Redemptorists, ever following the magisterium of the Church, must be humble and courageous servants among people of the Gospel of Christ, the Redeemer and Lord, who is the head and model of the new humanity. This message has for its special object plentiful redemption; it proclaims the love of God the Father “who first loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10) and through the Holy Spirit gives life to all who believe in him.¹⁴⁹

One of the signs of plentiful redemption, in our age and our Church, could be the collaboration of laity and professed and ordained religious in life, mission, and ministry.

In a Church too often characterized by division and suspicion, this reality bears witness to a hopeful ecclesiology.

Constitution 9 states:

Should circumstances make it impossible for them at times to proclaim the Gospel directly and immediately or to preach it fully, then the missionaries, with patience and prudence, but at the same time with great confidence, must give witness to the charity of Christ and do all in their power to make themselves neighbours to everybody.¹⁵⁰

This constitution is clearly intended to describe how the Redemptorist missionary is directed to proceed in the event that explicit proclamation of the Gospel is impossible. It

148. This was a phrase used by Albert Schweitzer, and cited by Dr. Thomas A. Dooley, to describe the universality of the human condition.

149. Ibid., 6.

150. Ibid., 9.

could just as validly be used to describe the world today, and the need for a new evangelization. Listening, witnessing, and offering compassionate presence are important activities of the laity who are partners in mission. Lay partners can interpret the voices of other lay people for the vowed Redemptorist community. Similarly, lay partners can have roles in interpreting the message of plentiful redemption for people today.

Constitution 17 urges Redemptorists to

periodically ask themselves whether the means of evangelization employed in their region answer to what is expected of them by the Church and the world. They should examine, too, whether their missionary methods need to be renewed and how this should be done. They should then retain whatever methods have proved successful and modify those which are inadequate and abandon those no longer useful.¹⁵¹

Perhaps the engagement of LMMHRs as partners in the mission of proclaiming plentiful redemption is one of the means by which Redemptorists today are living Constitution 17. By incorporating this new figure in the Redemptorist family, fresh means and methods are being sought and offered for the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer to proclaim the Gospel anew in today's world.

Conclusion

The person who lives amid the issues of society and work has a very special evangelizing mission that only the lay person can fulfill. Some of them perceive the needs of the world through the same lens of mutual evangelization of the poor and by the poor as do vowed Redemptorists. To reiterate Juan Lasso de la Vega in *Communicanda* 4, #61 "It is important that the mission be fulfilled in the Alphonsian spirit, with pastoral

151. Ibid., 17.

sensitivity to the poor and excluded in society, and in communion with other Redemptorists.”¹⁵²

It is clear from the preceding exploration of the relevant internal Redemptorist documents and our elucidation of a theology of and for collaboration, that there is a role for the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer as a vital partner in the evangelization of the most abandoned. It is likewise clear that the Redemptorists acknowledge their own need and recognize that life-giving partnership with lay people who share the charism of evangelization in the Alphonsian spirit is the path forward. It is also clear that lay people may certainly live lives inspired by the call of the *Constitutions and Statutes* to a very particular way of living apostolic community, though not to the expression of dedication in celibate chastity, evangelical poverty, and obedience. What remains unclear is how this will be concretely achieved. Vowed and lay partners must work together to put structures in place that will ensure the survival and vibrancy of this new category in the Congregation. Each must evangelize the other and be evangelized by the other.

152. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 125.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

Research Question

The research question that passionately interested me throughout my work on this project/dissertation was: What is the vocation of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer within the Redemptorist family? I needed to arrive at a deeper understanding of the lives of LMMHRs within the Edmonton-Toronto Province and to articulate an answer to the research question. I determined that the methodology of ethnographic research—in particular, a combination of the modalities of participant observation and ethnographic interviews—would best meet my needs. Therefore, I set out to conduct a series of ethnographic interviews with the three original LMMHRs. Following these interviews, I collated, analyzed, and structured the data that emerged so that an answer to the research question could emerge.

Methodology

Merriam and Simpson (2000) defined ethnographic research as “sociocultural analysis of a single social unit or phenomenon.”¹⁵³ The ethnographic research conducted in the project portion of this project/dissertation attempts to describe and interpret the culture of the LMMHR as a social unit and as a phenomenon, a community of practice and site for transformational learning. Redemptorists, vowed members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, are immersed in a particular culture. They

153. S. Merriam, and E. Simpson, *A Guide to Research for Educators and Trainers of Adults* (Malabar, FL: Krieger, 2000), 109.

have their own customs, language, terms of reference, and shared history. They have received a certain formation¹⁵⁴ aimed at preparing them to live this life. This formation comprises intentional and also informal experiences designed to make them feel at home and live creatively within that Redemptorist culture. To be an LMMHR is to be immersed in this existing culture in some way. At the same time, through incorporating LMMHRs, the family is involved in building or creating something new. This new culture exists in relationship to the wider Redemptorist culture, but it has some significant differences because the participants are not vowed but live within another kind and range of commitment. For the purpose of this study, culture is described as a complex reality “embodied in the signs, symbols, and language” as well as the “knowledge people have acquired that in turn structures their worldview and their behavior.”¹⁵⁵ The intent of ethnography is to offer an understanding of “a situation that incorporates the participants’ symbolic meanings and ongoing patterns of social interactions.”¹⁵⁶

Ethnographic research is the qualitative and systematic study of a culture.

LMMHRs constitute a small culture within the larger culture of the Redemptorists within the Edmonton-Toronto Province, within the family that is Redemptorists in Canada, and also within the much wider culture of Redemptorists worldwide.

154. Formation, in the Redemptorist context, has an initial element aimed at assisting young men in discerning whether the vowed life within the CSsR is the direction which they ought to follow and then equipping them with some of the knowledge, skills, and orientations through which they might begin to walk the path. The period of Initial Formation, a process usually lasting between seven and nine years, ends with the profession of final vows. Ongoing formation is lifelong. All members are encouraged to be responsible for their own human, academic, and spiritual growth, and to seek out modalities that foster growth. The CSsR also aids members by offering communal experiences such as courses, workshops, institutes, and retreats.

155. S. Merriam & Associates. *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 236.

156. Merriam and Simpson, *A Guide*, 108.

I collected data through a series of ethnographic interviews and focused observation. Through these modalities, I attempted to gain insight into the experience of being an LMMHR. This experience encompasses difficulties, inherent challenges, sorrows, and hopes. Through participant observation and ethnographic interviews, I sought to understand the experience of the LMMHRs with greater quality and clarity than I could achieve through conducting surveys, questionnaires, or observation alone. Interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed. Following transcription, the tape recordings were destroyed.

Three people were interviewed in the course of my research, two women and one man (I was one of the three). They are chosen because they comprise the entire first group of LMMHRs to make formal commitments within the Edmonton-Toronto Province. They were the first people invited into formalized relationship in 2003. I am the only current LMMHR. The other two have moved away from active commitment as LMMHRs with the Edmonton-Toronto Province of the CSsR. In subsequent years, one other woman was invited to become an LMMHR. She later moved away from commitment and declined to be interviewed for this project. Therefore, those included in the process were restricted to the initial three people invited into relationship and covenant with the Edmonton-Toronto Province of the Redemptorists as LMMHRs.

I chose ethnography because I needed an inductive investigative strategy that allowed me to understand how the participants made meaning of their experiences, their transformative learning, and their growth as LMMHRs. Data was collected through two related methodologies: participant-observer notations and ethnographic interviews. In

ethnographic research, the researcher is a major instrument of data collection through his or her observing and questioning.

Becoming immersed in a study requires passion for people, for understanding them, and for communication. As an LMMHR myself, I had considerable passion for the topic and the process. I had a strong desire to consider my own involvement and experience with greater clarity and insight. I had a similarly strong desire to understand the experience of the other two LMMHRs. My period of informal observation lasted about ten years. Over that time, relationships and ministry contexts changed radically for all of us. The other two “first” LMMHRs moved away from formal relationship with the Redemptorists, for reasons which will be discussed in the next chapter. I am now the only one of the group to remain in formal relationship with the Edmonton-Toronto Province.

I embarked on a structured and overt observation of these three LMMHRs, and of the process of their formation and incorporation into the Redemptorist family, as soon as I began studies toward the Doctor of Ministry degree. The actual ethnographic interview process took place over eight months between May 2014 and January 2015. The discipline of the interview process allowed me to step back from my own experience and focus on comprehending the perspectives of others. Being the primary instrument of data collection and analysis allowed me to explore the experiences of the initial group of LMMHRs from an open and nonlinear perspective. It allowed me to record the experiences, and subsequent reflection upon those experiences, of the entire initial cadre of those who formally made a commitment as LMMHRs with the Edmonton-Toronto Province in 2003, when the category was first opened up in the Province.

In this case, I identify myself as a participant observer because I am one of the LMMHRs. I believe that my experience needs to be reflected upon as we seek to name current experience and articulate paths to an uncharted future.

As I could not interview myself, I invited a trusted colleague familiar with the art and skill of conducting ethnographic research to interview me. He used the same starting questions, and the same technique of returning later for further detail or clarification, as I had used with the other respondents.

In prior conversation, and in the letter of consent,¹⁵⁷ participants were told that in the course of the interview process, I would explore with them their world (or culture) as LMMHRs associated with the Edmonton-Toronto Province.

My Hopes in Entering This Qualitative Research Process

My primary hope in embarking on this journey was that I would be successful in encouraging former and current LMMHRs to share their experiences and their stories, reflect on them, and illuminate themes that emerge from these stories.

My secondary hope was that, through the research, I would come to envisage what a suitable, life-giving, and appropriate invitation and formation process might look like as the Redemptorist family looks to the future and toward the engagement and incorporation of new LMMHRs.

My tertiary hope was that I would gain insight into how the community of professed Redemptorists might best be formed for this emerging expression of collaboration with laity as partners in mission.

157. A copy of the letter of consent is included in this current work as Appendix A.

Ethical Concerns

Because of the small population being studied in this project, it is conceivable that participants could easily perceive themselves as psychologically or socially vulnerable. In addition, participants could be rendered vulnerable because the details of their stories might make it easy to identify who said what. Thus, every effort was made, as described below, to foster and practice empathic listening; safeguard anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality; foster respect; enhance dignity; and act with integrity, compassion, and justice. Participants were assured, verbally and through the details of the letter of consent, the following:

respecting the trust that you have placed in me as a researcher in agreeing to be part of this process, and fully recognizing your vulnerability, given the small number of LMMHRs in this study, I will do my utmost to cause no harm to you. I will be pulling out threads of experience that arise from the interviews. I will be highlighting the transcripts for common experiences or insights, key areas of learning, of joy and disillusionment. No direct quotes will be used. I will share with you my summaries, synopses, analysis and recommendations. I will seek your responses, insights and feedback on these before the final draft of the project/dissertation is complete.¹⁵⁸

Participants were further assured that

during the period of research, audio files will be kept in a locked cabinet. These will be destroyed after the project/dissertation has been published. There will be one digital file, one back-up digital file, and one printed copy of each transcript. Digital files will be stored in an electronic file on a password-protected computer which is in my private possession. No other person has access to this computer. The printed copies of transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in my personal office.¹⁵⁹

158. From the letter of consent signed by each participant. A copy is included in Appendix A of this work.

159. Ibid.

Participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the process at any time, without penalty or prejudice. Also, because the relationships among the three of us were long-standing, I made a particular point of this, assuring them verbally that if they were to withdraw, this would in no way jeopardize our relationship.

Methodology: The Interview Process Described

I intended to gather data through two interviews with each participant. The first interview was to be conducted face-to-face and would be recorded in audio format only. I anticipated that the interview would take about ninety minutes. In fact, the initial interview took place by Skype. Two of the respondents live in Western Canada, whereas I live in Newfoundland. I was interviewed by another experienced researcher, who put the same questions to me as I did to the other participants, thus maintaining the integrity of the interview process.

The second interview, if necessary, was to be conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone. The purpose was to pursue some point not followed in the initial interview, or to seek greater detail, explanation, or clarification on some point. In each case, a number of follow-up interviews did occur, which offered valuable clarification and additional detail. In fact, I returned to each participant several times. On a number of occasions, they also returned to me offering additional clarifying detail or insight that occurred to them upon further reflection on the interview. These follow-up conversations happened over the telephone, by Skype, and by email. The posing of certain questions prompted each respondent, on at least one occasion, to ask for some time to ponder their

answer. Given this time, and having gathered their thoughts, each returned to the conversation with reflections and insights. This interpersonal process deepened my engagement with the participants. It also gave an added dimension to the written data from which the themes would be drawn.

Following each interview, I transcribed the questions and the answers. I emailed a copy of the transcript of each interview to each participant for their review. I printed copies of the three interviews, including my own, and read each one through completely. In the next step, I began to move through the three transcripts, with names removed, highlighting and coding the transcripts for themes and for outstanding moments, insights, and experiences. I did not hold my own interview aside but made every effort to consider the three interviews together and look as objectively as possible at the data.

I respect the trust that participants have placed in me as a researcher in agreeing to be part of this process, and I fully recognize their vulnerability, given the small number of LMMHRs in this study. I attempted to pull out themes that arose from the interviews. I then coded the transcripts for common experiences or insights, of joy and disillusionment, and key areas of learning. Through their honest and open sharing of experiences, I began to discern common elements in the experiences of the first LMMHRs.

Later, I began to identify a process of formation for future LMMHRs that might build on the experiences of the pioneers. No identifying quotes from the respondents were to be used in this project/dissertation; however, I sought permission from the other

two respondents to use one quote from each as summary comments. They agreed. Nothing that would identify any individual appears in the project/dissertation.

During the period of research, audio files were kept in a locked cabinet, to be destroyed after five years. There is now one digital file, one back-up digital file, and one printed copy of each transcript. The transcripts will serve only as raw data and will not be shared with others in that form.

I shared with participants my summaries, synopses, analyses, and recommendations. They saw the transcripts of their own ethnographic interviews. I also shared with them the completed texts of Chapters 4 and 5 of the completed project/dissertation, in which their experiences are echoed, collated, coded, and interpreted. I sought their insights and feedback on these before the final draft was completed.

I foresee that, subsequent to the publication of this project/dissertation, I might be asked to share my findings in presentations, particularly within the Redemptorist family. Indeed, this has already proven to be the case. In that event, I have assured participants that the same ethical standards stated in their letter of consent will apply.

Data Collection

I have already stated that the data were collected using two qualitative methods: participant-observer notations integrated with in-depth ethnographic interviews. As a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer and Co-Director of Formation for other LMMHRs, I have an intimate knowledge of the world of the LMMHR within the

Redemptorist family. However, there is no singular way to be an LMMHR, no one manner of immersion into the relationship, no best way to live the commitment. Forms and expressions vary according to the gifts and weaknesses of the individuals, the ministries in which they are involved, and the needs of the Edmonton-Toronto Province and of the local Redemptorist community. Thus, there is considerable variety and scope possible in the ways that LMMHRs participate in the mission and the daily activities of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Therefore, assuming the role of a participant-observer in this research was a natural fit because I had already committed to a prolonged period of engagement in the setting and established an environment of trust and rapport with the other current and former LMMHRs. Indeed, I had been party to the development of the guidelines and formation processes used by the Edmonton-Toronto Province of the Redemptorists, and so had intimate knowledge of the vision and hopes held by the Province for LMMHRs as individuals and for the evolution of the category. This offered me insights into their lives and experiences within the family, though of course I did not know their own inner realities.

One challenge I encountered in the methodology of participant observation was that, I was to be “an observer, remaining as objective as possible while collecting information.”¹⁶⁰ I was also more than an observer in this process; I was fully engaged in the stories I heard from the two former LMMHRs, and their experiences often echoed my own. Nevertheless, I also heard and noted significant differences.

160. Merriam and Simpson, *A Guide*, p.105.

The in-depth interviews lasted approximately ninety minutes, or longer when the interviewee wished to continue. They were semi-structured, with open-ended questions¹⁶¹ regarding participants' experiences in the Redemptorist family as LMMHRs. The interviews provided opportunities for interviewer and respondent to better understand the experiences of the LMMHRs: how they viewed their relationships within the Redemptorist family, how these relationships and their ministerial involvements evolved, and how the meaning they attached to their experiences developed over time.

I was moved by the willingness and trust that the participants in the study vested in me. I was impressed that they shared very personal and emotionally charged matter. They responded with thoughtfulness and seemed to enjoy the focused attention and the opportunity to reflect aloud on their experiences.

I believe the extent and variety of our shared experiences as LMMHRs, our network of common relationships, and my involvement in their history and the lives of their families over a period of some twenty years permitted an ease and trust between us. This greatly added to the richness of my data collection and analysis.

As in many long-standing relationships, our shared journey as LMMHRs included moments of misunderstanding or lack of understanding, physical and experiential distance, and reconciliation.

Communication is a dynamic interplay of sound and silence. As I listened during the oral interviews, I was particularly attentive to the silences, the spaces between words, the halting starts, the re-phrasings and the times when a participant asked for time to consider a response. Silence can be as revealing as words, but it often requires probing to

161. See Appendix B for examples.

gain access to hidden meaning. I sometimes had to ask clarifying questions, such as, “What did that mean for you? Why was that so significant? What do you think that was about?” I learned a great deal about the art of ethnographic interviewing as I moved through this process. In particular, I learned the value of respect and compassion as tools for empathic listening, leading to greater understanding.

Data Analysis

Ethnographic study often involves a fluid, intrinsic relationship between data collection and data analysis. A creative interplay of data collection and data analysis constantly took place, causing on-the-spot adjustments in interview questions and observational strategies as new information emerged and was incorporated into the interview process. I constantly asked myself, “How has this person understood and lived the vocation of the LMMHR? How has this person been transformed by the experiences they have had as an LMMHR? How did they interact with others and navigate within the Redemptorist world? What factors conspired to keep this person active as an LMMHR or to lead them away from the formalized relationship?”

It is important to note here that themes, patterns, and recognizable categories did not lie only in the data itself. Consistent patterns in my own understanding of the LMMHRs’ stories emerged as I collected data, analyzed it, reflected on it, collected more data, and further analyzed and contemplated the data with even more reflection.

I believe that the technique by which I analyzed the data for this study is best captured by the five-phase analytical approach described by Moustakas: immersion in the

setting; “incubation of thoughts; illumination of awareness and understanding; explication of participants’ experiences through description and explanation; and creative synthesis of the whole.”¹⁶²

The purpose of this study is to establish a framework for dialogue about a phenomenon. In this case, the phenomenon is that of lay partners intimately involved in the life and mission of the Redemptorist family as LMMHRs, those lay people most closely affiliated to the apostolic community and life of the professed members. In desiring to educate readers about this culture, I recount the words of the respondents, and also offer an interpretation.

Descriptive and imaginative literary techniques are ordinarily used in qualitative analysis, and later, in the recounting of the researcher’s findings. In the next chapter, I interpret the data that emerged from the interviews in which I participated as a participant-observer and weave a narrative that will serve three purposes: to arrive at an understanding of past experiences, to illumine present reality, and to point the way to a life-giving future for partners in mission.

Conclusion

Anyone who has ever kept a journal knows that the process of writing can become a way of knowing. As I listened to and participated in the series of ethnographic interviews that form the basis of the next chapter, I grew in awareness. As I analyzed, wrote, and synthesized, I grew in knowledge of the experiences of the individuals and of

162. C. Moustakas. *Heuristic Research Design, Methodology, and Applications* (Sage: Newbury Park, CA, 1990).

the culture in which they were embedded. I hope that the reader, participating in this narrative process, will also grow in knowledge.

As I immersed myself in the study, I learned more about the experiences, joys, and sorrows of LMMHRs, and in particular of the first three LMMHRs of the Edmonton-Toronto Province. I also came to a clearer sense of the Redemptorist culture in which they were embedded and the one which they, and others, were attempting to shape and re-shape.

Let us move forward now to their stories. May this journey into the lives, dreams, disappointments, and experiences of the first three LMMHRs of the Edmonton-Toronto Province be for the reader an experience of learning, insight, and transformation, as it has been for me.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWS

In light of the Redemptorist documents providing guidelines for Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, and the theology which has developed around this new category within the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, I was curious to explore the experience of the first LMMHRs in Canada. I wanted to discover whether I could discern elements in their early formative and life experiences within the Redemptorist family that might lead to more effective formation for LMMHRs in the future. In particular, I wanted to explore whether the experiences the two who moved away from this commitment might reveal effective praxis for both initial and ongoing formation.

Since I am one of those three, I interviewed the other two and allowed myself to be interviewed by a trusted and experienced colleague. Two women and one man comprised this group of interviewees.

In this presentation of the results of the ethnographic interviews, I will explore the early experiences that were common to all three LMMHRs, experiences that establish a foundation upon which they would later experience a sense of “home” when they grew in relationship with vowed Redemptorists. I will explore the common elements of the early, informal Redemptorist and ministerial formation of the three LMMHRs, which in each case solidified their sense of vocation and of having found a home within the Redemptorist family. Then, I will draw out the experiences of collaborative ministry on Redemptorist teams and in CSsR settings, some of which were full-time or even live-in, and others of which were part-time or periodic. Interpreting the respondents’ own words,

I will describe the joys and rewards of these experiences through which bonds were created and familiarity grew. I will also explore the experiences of pain and disillusionment, of drawing apart, and of endings. In entering into these deep, rich descriptions, I attempt to understand the experiences of these first LMMHRs and learn from them.

Early Experiences

I first asked the respondents about their early family experiences. I was particularly interested in any early and formative encounters that the LMMHRs had with marginalized people or groups, in particular the materially poor.

Both female respondents readily told stories of how, within their families and circles of influential adults, they experienced at a very early age the invitation to engage in the corporal works of mercy.¹⁶³ In addition, both female LMMHRs were introduced to service and mentored in this Christian way of life by their parents.

Both women spoke of the formative influence of their fathers. One said,

I would see the men who lived on the fringes of society and hung around our cathedral parish, my home parish. I watched my father's kindness to them, and then the social action that eventually developed on their behalf. I was always drawn to work with the immigrants who came in small waves—the Vietnamese “boat people” of the late 1970s.

163. The corporal works of mercy, as described in Matthew 25:35-40, are to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, ransom the captive, and bury the dead.

Similarly, the other female LMMHR also told stories of her father reaching out to people on the fringes of society.

Both women articulated a preferential love for immigrants, particularly women. They spoke of an affinity for women on the margins of society and identified this as an aspect of the Redemptorist charism. Both also expressed an awareness that many male Redemptorists might not have the identical affinity for immigrant women, but might also be drawn to ministry within certain sectors of immigrant populations. One said that in this area of her life she identified with an early Redemptorist missionary, Gennaro Sarnelli, who worked with women on the streets in eighteenth-century Naples. These two LMMHRs thought that this connection with marginalized women might be one area in which the incorporation of women into the Redemptorist family might offer greater scope and avenues for outreach and meaningful encounter.

One woman pointed out how the modelling initiated in her family eventually was taken up by other influential adults within the Christian community:

I worked with my music teacher, who had a special love for women and a drive toward assisting women on the margins. When I was in high school, she would take me with her on home visits to some families struggling with poverty. She taught them life skills. Later, I found myself thinking back on that experience, and being so grateful.

The other female LMMHR spoke of how her parents had a special love for widows and elders. In the interviews, she articulated how this particular calling and attraction, born in her family, shaped and coloured her own sense of vocation later on. She reflected that her parents had taught her to be compassionate, to listen to her heart, and to be willing to share her time and talents. When she met the Redemptorists, she

experienced the encounter as an echo of what had begun in her family. She had just become more aware. No one experience stood out for her—it was a gradual, almost evolutionary process.

The women spoke much more readily than the man about the early formative influences experienced in families. Their storytelling revealed the seeds that would later bloom into adult attractions to ministry with the most abandoned.

Early Redemptorist Experiences

Later, in early adulthood, both female LMMHRs were introduced to Redemptorists. In these experiences, they recognized echoes of their earlier experiences of attraction to the marginalized. One said:

I taught in an isolated community, and the people were no strangers to poverty and hardship. I deliberately chose to go there to teach. I felt called there. In those early days, I met a senior Redemptorist . . . There were occasions when a priest was not present in that area and, knowing this man, I would call upon him to anoint the sick, preside at funerals and provide other sacramental ministry. We worked well together and I felt a sense that I could rely on him. When he responded to my calls for help, it meant a three-hour drive for him, but he came—every time. I marvelled at his selflessness. It struck a chord in me.

The other woman related how, at the social sessions after the preaching of a parish mission, she would scan the room for someone standing alone, and then intentionally engage this person in conversation. She noted that she was often drawn to people who suffered from mental illnesses or physical disabilities. She was aware that she seemed to attract vulnerable people, and was attracted to them.

The third LMMHR was the only one of the initial three to grow up in a Redemptorist parish. His was therefore the earliest encounter with vowed Redemptorists. He had no memory of a life in which Redemptorists did not play a significant part. In fact, in his early life, he did not know that there were priests other than Redemptorists. Later, in his teen years, the Redemptorists invited him to live in their community and minister collaboratively with them.

Both females encountered Redemptorists in their later teen or young adult years, and both reported being impressed by the sense of community they encountered among Redemptorists. They were impressed by how the Redemptorists seemed to live and minister from their sense of community, which they opened to youth and young adults.

One recounted:

I attended youth events which were hosted by the Redemptorists. I was drawn to their sense of community and the genuine humour and vitality among them.

Recalling their earliest memories of Redemptorists, each reported being impressed by the friendliness, openness, and hospitality of the vowed members. At some point on their journey, each interviewee lived in Redemptorist communities, in addition to ministering collaboratively with Redemptorists. They were drawn by the strong value placed on common life and the Redemptorist ideal that community exists not for itself but for mission. One said, “I was impressed by the lack of competition among them. They seemed to like each other!” For two of the three, both musicians, the inclusion of music as an element of Redemptorist proclamation of the Word of God was a drawing card.

Each of the initial LMMHRs came into Redemptorist mission through youth and young adult ministry programs offered by the CSsR.

In all cases, the formation offered was invitational, a “come and see” or apprenticeship type of experience. This seems to have been a highly successful means of inviting and including new lay missionaries. A noteworthy problem arises in that this was the only type of Redemptorist formation offered to two of the three. It seems to have been a less than successful means of providing ongoing formation, or formation after the initial stages.

Call to Mission and Ministry

The respondents unanimously expressed deep appreciation for how the Redemptorists recognized, acknowledged, and called forth their gifts in ministry. One said, “I saw for the first time a place for me on a vital and exciting team; I saw that there was a place for me in a meaningful and exciting project.” Although the relationship at first involved individual Redemptorists, the respondents sensed that collaboration between vowed Redemptorists and lay partners in mission was a priority of the entire community.

As evidence of this, one expressed a deep appreciation for how she saw the Congregation’s commitment to partnership in ministry expressed in documents that were being promulgated by the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in the early 1990s when she began to be deeply involved. This reinforced her sense that her own

involvement was not an isolated experience but perhaps part of a bigger movement. She said,

I read with excitement the documents, like the *Final Document of the XXI General Chapter* and *Communicanda 4*, that put words around the experience of partnership in mission between lay people and vowed Redemptorists. It was like they were talking directly to me! These documents were inspiring, because in them I could see possibilities and ways forward. To me, they seemed to be symbols of an expanding world, a growing awareness.

Invitation to Mission and Ministry

For these apprentice missionaries, the explicit invitation into ministry came in and through relationships. They felt that their gifts were recognized by Redemptorists, who pointed out opportunities for them to use these gifts collaboratively with Redemptorists and others in the ministry for the explicit proclamation of the Good News. In their early stages of affiliation, they were offered significant accompaniment and mentorship. These growing relationships included informal accompaniment and explicit “on-the-job training,” as well as other forms of education, training, and spiritual formation. One respondent spoke of a road trip from Toronto to the shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, undertaken with several Redemptorists. This stood out in her memory as a significant formational experience. She reflected,

It opened up a whole new experience of Redemptorist mission and the diversity of the community and its works. It was also an opportunity for me to get to know these men better, to have fun and hear their stories. When you’re trapped in a van for nine hours together, you do get to know each other!

All respondents were aware that the invitation to Redemptorist mission and ministry was an invitation into an adventure; it required risk and daring. One recalled,

with some humour, that her response to the invitation involved selling a car, leaving home, and setting off on an epic adventure that took her across the country. Another said that she was impelled to leave a well-paid position and move a great distance to work with Redemptorists for one-third of the salary she had been making.

This invitation into a daring adventure was accompanied by the presentation of a bigger project or work, encompassing a variety of options and a widening of possibilities. It was also accompanied by a promise of a new vision of apostolic community that reassured the neophyte missionaries they were not alone, but fellow pilgrims sharing a common spirit. One wrote,

I guess my point is that the relationship was both ministry-based and personal relationship based. . . . I was excited to be able to add my gifts and bring a new dimension to the preaching of parish missions. This would not have happened without these prior relationships.

All were predisposed to embark on epic adventures, and responded positively to invitations to do so. They indicated that the deciding factor for them was the invitation, issued to them personally, to be part of a bigger reality that connected them to a worldwide community of those reaching out to the most abandoned. They could see where their gifts could be joined with those of the vowed Redemptorists.

Beginning with Short-term Commitments

Each of the early LMMHRs perceived their initial commitments as short-term realities. Two made an initial commitment to a one-year experiment, while the other committed to a six-week project. In all cases, these short-term experiences led to decades-long commitments. One wrote, “None of us were sure what this meant, because at that

time there was no definitive role attached to lay missionaries in Canada.”

Each LMMHR recalled explicit conversations between Redemptorists and lay partners in mission concerning how these new collaborative ventures might grow and develop. Each reported feeling that a promise was made, certain that they and the vowed members had committed to shaping a shared future.

Asked about this in the interviews, every LMMHR replied that no explicit promises were made by the Redemptorists. Nevertheless, all felt that significant mutual commitments had been made. This lack of clarity was to become one of the building blocks for a later misunderstanding. One said, “Fuzzy expectations make for fuzzy outcomes.”

Evolving Experiences

For a number of years after the initial phases of affiliation, the respondents’ experiences seemed to centre on building a growing network of relationships within the Redemptorist family. They shared the assessment that as their commitment and involvement continued, they grew in relationships with more and more vowed Redemptorists within the Edmonton-Toronto Province. One reported that

this continued to extend, eventually even beyond the Edmonton-Toronto Province to work with the General Government, the Irish Province, Yorkton (Ukrainian) Province, the English Province and the CSsR Conference of North America and the Caribbean.

The same individual went on to add,

I have been very conscious of exploring various opportunities and widening the scope of the relationships, consciously seeking to be involved with a larger number of Redemptorists and with the province and

the Congregation. I didn't want this reality to just be something that happened to me or around me; I wanted to be an active player in the drama. I wanted to build this "family."

In light of later developments, this last is an important insight. CSsR documents describe the LMMHR as affiliated with the Redemptorist Province, rather than with any one local community or with any one ministry.

The Sharing of Stories

A significant feature of the early formation of LMMHRs, which was primarily informal, was the sharing of stories by the vowed Redemptorists. Sometimes these were simple stories of their own experiences, which fostered a certain binding and deepening of relationship. The LMMHRs recounted stories that were often humorous, but also contained elements of pathos, even tragedy. Trust grew as the LMMHR was drawn into the confidence of the community, or of the Redemptorists with whom they were most intimately connected, and the character of the stories transformed to admit a deeper sharing.

Other stories were tales of Redemptorist history or the history of the Edmonton-Toronto Province. Through such stories, the LMMHRs were introduced to St. Alphonsus Liguori and the other Redemptorist saints and blessed, as well as the foundational tales of the Congregation. The prospective LMMHRs all experienced being captivated by the stories they heard about St. Alphonsus. Three stories in particular stood out as formative for the lay partners.

The first was the story of how, in the 1720s, St. Alphonsus identified, recruited, trained, and drew lay people into ministry in the Evening Chapel movement in Naples. One female LMMHR wondered aloud whether any of these were women and what their roles might have been.¹⁶⁴

The second story of St. Alphonsus shared unanimously by the LMMHRs concerned his conscious choice to focus the early ministry of the Redemptorist community on the hill country of the Kingdom of Naples, away from the cities, among the shepherds and goatherds of the rural areas. The diocesan clergy had abandoned these areas in favour of more lucrative engagements in the urban areas. St. Alphonsus heard the cries of the poor and focused on evangelization and reconciliation between people, families, and communities in the countryside. This was a powerful story that either shaped or reflected the respondents' attraction to and love for the people of rural Canada. One said,

I feel most at home in rural communities. I love nothing better than meeting people in their homes, or facilitating faith-development sessions in rural churches or parish halls. I am very conscious of how St. Alphonsus desired that Redemptorist foundations be outside the cities, in the countryside. I recognize that these days, people in the cities can be just as abandoned as those in the countryside, but I still see a kind of abandonment in our rural communities that is heartbreaking. I think that the heart of Alphonsus would reach out to these people. I sometimes imagine that Alphonsus would feel very much at home in the rural areas with me. Those small communities are just one of the “peripheries” to which Alphonsus might feel called today. Today, there are many abandoned people in the cities. Alphonsus only left the city because it was well-served by clergy and outreach workers. That is no longer the case.

164. Biographers of St. Alphonsus, including Tannoia and Rey-Mermet, recorded only the names of a few men recruited to serve as leaders in the Evening Chapels. The names of most are lost to history. One might safely assume that there were at least a few women among these leaders. However, none of their names are remembered. In the commitment ritual for Redemptorist Associates in the Edmonton-Toronto Province, the four men and those “nameless women” are recalled in prayerful thanks.

Today, in what Pope Francis calls a “throwaway culture,” there are abandoned people everywhere.

The LMMHRs interviewed experienced this Redemptorist imperative to reach out to the most abandoned as radically moving. One commented,

I have always felt drawn to rural communities and to people who are somehow abandoned. I do a lot of work now with survivors of sexual abuse by clergy. And I see this ministry as something in which Alphonsus would probably have been involved.

This LMMHR also said,

If I preach a mission, or take on a project outside of my usual job, I usually consciously choose that it be in a rural place, a place where people feel abandoned or a place where people have suffered in some significant way. I always think of and usually talk to St. Alphonsus in these times and around these decisions.

A third inspiring Redemptorist story was Alphonsus’ own experience of conversion—not as a once-in-a-lifetime event, but as the dynamic of life itself.

Alphonsus’s model of lifelong conversion resonated with the LMMHRs’ own experience.

All spoke of his conversion as a significant aspect of their proclamation of the Good News. One said,

Alphonsus found himself turning again and again more completely to God. Conversion didn’t just happen once and then it was complete; for him conversion was a lifelong process, and it was a journey into ever-deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. I think that this is an experience and vision of conversion that is shared by many of us.

Only one LMMHR reported consciously seeking out a more explicitly “Redemptorist” formation. She sought out three professed Redemptorists who were known to be steeped in the history and spirituality of the Congregation. With each of them, she engaged in directed reading and formal study; and of the three, it is this

LMMHR who chose to enter into an intensive study of the Redemptorist documents around partnership in mission and to find ways of sharing this knowledge with other lay people. This immersion in and study of the charism and history of the CSsR, in particular of partnership in mission, may have been one factor contributing to her perseverance as an LMMHR.

Explicit Formation for Redemptorist Life and Mission

In the early years of connection, even before they were officially designated as LMMHRs, the respondents were invited to periodically take part in community formation events. These took the forms of retreats, assemblies, talks, workshops, and the three-week “Vision for Mission” experience in 1997. All respondents commented on the value of these longer periods spent in community, sharing prayer and fellowship, celebrating, relaxing, learning, and growing together.

Invitation to be an LMMHR

The invitation to be a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer came after long association; twenty-five years in two cases, and eleven years in the other case. The respondents reflected that they had responded positively to the invitation because it seemed like a natural fit. They described how in accepting the invitation they were really affirming a reality that already existed, for they already felt a sense of being at home.

The respondents interpreted the initial ritual, in which their commitment was received, as very meaningful. It took place in January 2003 in the context of a Eucharistic

liturgy celebrated during a Provincial Chapter, which was attended by a large number of professed Redemptorists as well as some family members of each new LMMHR.

They shared a sense that, although the title of LMMHR was only bestowed on them after many years of collaborative ministry with professed Redemptorists, they had the opportunity to really grow into the role. They worked hard in ministry and developed long-lasting relationships with many Redemptorist priests and brothers along the way. One said, “We actually lived it long before the role, the description, or the relationship ever was conceptualized by the Redemptorists. We all conceptualized it because we saw it lived out in our midst.”

The importance placed on this ritual led me to inquire about other rituals that may have solidified a sense of belonging or have expressed the commissioning or sending of the LMMHR out on mission in the name of the community. Indeed, there were many such rituals that dotted the years leading up to the definitive commitment ritual. These included the blessings, which traditionally begin every parish mission, and the commissioning rituals that conclude these missions. To these were added the sacramental rituals, anointings, and reconciliations that are characteristic of parish missions. There were the commissioning rituals that marked the beginning of each new season of the life of the Redemptorist Youth Mission Team; and, indeed, the marriages, baptisms, first Communions, Confirmations, graduations, celebrations of profession of vows, ordinations, and funerals that marked the moments and stages of the lives of collaborative teams.

Ongoing Formation

The LMMHRs came to the Redemptorists holding a degree or diploma, skills, and experience, which formed the basis of the contribution that they could and would make within the Redemptorist community. One described the experience this way:

I was not initially offered any long-term training by the Redemptorists as I had already completed a background of education as a teacher, particularly in religious education, and had a lot of experience in working with youth. I felt unprepared for preaching. . . . However, I did end up taking that role during those years. Due to my increasing involvement in the work and mission of the Redemptorists I was invited to conferences, workshops, and information sessions that were being offered to the mission priests. It helped me to keep abreast of new ideas and methodologies being employed in the preaching of missions. I was also invited to Chapter meetings to participate in discussions there.

In two cases, the Redemptorists offered funding for ongoing training for ministry. Redemptorists also commonly covered the cost of participating in ongoing formation events and opportunities offered for the vowed members. There were many cases where the LMMHRs were invited to workshops, courses, retreats and other events, the costs of which were assumed by the Redemptorists.

This group of LMMHRs tended to be very self-directed, and there was open and productive dialogue regarding specific formation needed or sought. The Redemptorists typically recognized the need and desire for further training, and responded positively and with generosity.

Deepening Commitment and Immersion in Community

Following designation as LMMHRs, each became pivotal figures in different areas of Redemptorist life.

Two LMMHRs continued to focus on preaching parish missions. Initially, there were a number of mission teams actively involved in preaching parish missions, and this was a major focus of Redemptorist ministry in Canada. The initial experience of these LMMHRs was of a meaningful connection with a large number of vowed Redemptorists. The LMMHRs and their family members were welcomed in Redemptorist homes, and vice versa, and they felt deeply connected to many Redemptorists.

The initial experience of expansion eventually changed. As fewer and fewer professed Redemptorists were drawn to the itinerant life of the mission preacher, the once-vibrant teams became one team, and the membership contracted to four, and then three, before there were no longer mission teams on any regular circuit or schedule.

The third LMMHR began to focus a great deal of time and energy at the organizational level, coordinating projects and initiatives that would bring structure to partnership in mission across the Edmonton-Toronto Province. This eventually led to the formation of a provincial Commission for Partnership in Mission, which formed and coordinated circles of Redemptorist Associates attached to most CSsR communities, and then developed formation resources for each. It also developed a structure and resources for formation and commitment for LMMHRs. The respondent then worked collaboratively with a number of Redemptorists and other partners in mission at the North American level to bring together each unit in a North American Commission for Partnership in Mission. This respondent has also worked to support and resource the General Secretariat for Partnership in Mission and several other units in the Redemptorist world.

At all three levels, these enterprises were radically collaborative. The respondent met many new Redemptorist colleagues and formed new and valued bonds. Thus, the experience proved to be one of expansion as she encountered more and more vowed Redemptorists, worked closely with them, and moved various projects forward. She said,

I was energized by the experiences of encounter with so many Redemptorists from so many cultures and units. I love the learning opportunities, the social times, and the chance to delve more deeply into what makes us, as members of the Redemptorist family, tick.

She reported that she consciously sought out opportunities to explore a few different ministerial environments in the Redemptorist setting. A trained teacher and youth minister, she was first invited into service in several youth ministry initiatives, first in short-term engagements and subsequently in much longer initiatives. When the opportunity to preach occasional parish missions was presented, she eagerly responded and sought ways to use her training in adult faith formation by incorporating opportunities for catechesis and faith-sharing into the traditional structure of parish missions. While there have been a few vowed Redemptorists with whom collaboration has been long-standing, she has collaborated with many by deliberately seeking out opportunities to broaden her connections. She reflected,

I have always been very conscious that, while I may have friends who are Redemptorists, my relationship as an LMMHR is with the entire Edmonton-Toronto Province. I have always been conscious of seizing opportunities to work with, support, and even socialize with as many as possible. Those relationships are different than friendship.

The experience of being involved in more than one ministry within the mission of the Redemptorist family may have been one of the factors contributing to the perseverance of the one remaining LMMHR.

Over the years, each LMMHR experienced an ebb and flow to their connections and relationships with local Redemptorist communities, and with individual Redemptorists. In some cases, they were given a key to the local Redemptorist house and told to feel welcome to come and go. They all have fond memories of being invited to Christmas dinner, which meant a great deal to them, particularly when they were away from home, or becoming members of itinerant mission teams. One was a regular participant in morning and evening prayer with the Redemptorist community. In this case, she experienced a bonding through common prayer.

Each respondent reflected with some sadness that the forms of connection seemed to depend on who the professed Redemptorists in the local community were. While they recognized that this reality is somewhat natural and very human, they also expressed a longing for a little more consistency to what level of connection to the local community was considered optimal for LMMHRs and for the vowed Redemptorists.

An underlying theme in these reflections has been the importance of formation for the LMMHR and for the professed Redemptorists. This formation must not only be a formation in “things Redemptorist,” but also an integral human formation and a formation for collaboration in life and ministry.

Experience of Paid Employment with the Redemptorists

At one time or another, each of the LMMHRs was a paid employee of the Redemptorists. Two were engaged as members of a Redemptorist Parish Mission Team for about thirty years. The other spent three years as an employee of the Redemptorists on

the Redemptorist Youth Mission Team, and a further six years as a Lay Pastoral Associate in a Redemptorist parish, employed by the parish but not the Redemptorists.

When asked why they chose to move away from the employer-employee relationship, all expressed some sense that there can be no truly equal partnership in this arrangement. One said,

It sounds very definitive, but I have decided that I will most likely never work for Redemptorists again. Never is a very long time, I realize that. I am very willing to engage in ongoing voluntary commitments and to use my ministerial involvements to foster partnership. But the employer-employee relationship is not what the LMMHR relationship is about. That just muddies the waters.

She feels strongly that the employer-employee relationship obscures the effort to achieve true partnership in mission:

I think that, after two attempts to live as LMMHR as an employee, I now believe that there is no way that this can be an experience of equal partnership. If one is supervisor, or evaluator, the relationship is unbalanced.

This LMMHR went on to offer the following reflection on her experience:

My current work is as Adult Faith Formation Director in an Archdiocese, and as Executive Assistant to the Archbishop there. I am called to a great diversity of ministry in that position and see it as a real expression of the spirit of Redemptorist Mission. While I no longer work directly for the Redemptorists, I am still closely connected to the congregation on the provincial and the international level. I have been invited to participate in Chapters in Canada and in Ireland and have also been part of an international gathering of Redemptorists in Rome to speak on the topic of partnership in mission.

The other two respondents both used the phrase (in reference to the employer-employee relationship), “Redemptorists hold all the cards.” All respondents expressed some variation on the theme—that the vision they held for the flowering of partnership in

mission may not be equally shared by the Redemptorists of the Edmonton-Toronto Province. They explained that options for movement from one ministry to another or one venue to another are not the same for LMMHRs as they are for vowed Redemptorists. This view is substantiated by stories of what one respondent termed “messy endings.” These occurred when no new niche could be considered when an LMMHR felt the need to move on, or when the illness (and, later, death) of a CSsR team member closed one door, and it appeared that no alternative possibilities could be contemplated.

“Messy Endings”

The experience of two of the initial LMMHRs was almost completely in the context of the preaching of parish missions, which was historically a major focus of Redemptorist ministry in Canada. This is true across the world; wherever Redemptorists were found, they were usually involved in the preaching of popular missions.

In the former Edmonton Province, a number of lay people were hired and engaged in this ministry from 1977 to 2003, working side by side with professed Redemptorists as preachers, musicians, dramatists, and doing background organizing and logistical work. This once-vibrant ministry gradually declined. Lay people served for short periods of time and moved on, and over the years the itinerant lifestyle seemed less and less attractive to professed Redemptorists. In the end, after thirty years of mission preaching, the teams had gradually diminished to the point where they were no longer viable. Those remaining expressed sorrow and regret that the partnership—and in fact the ministry of preaching parish missions in a team context—had come to an end.

The loss of a valued and meaningful ministry was just one aspect of the total loss that was experienced by the two LMMHRs. They also grieved the loss of the friends who had died and of the deep and long-term relationships they had enjoyed with these men, whom they described as being like brothers.

The third LMMHR worked on the Redemptorist Youth Mission Team from 1996 to 1999. At the end of that period, she had little energy for that itinerant lifestyle and did not want to be in full-time youth ministry any longer. She spoke with Provincial leadership, but there were no other options available. She experienced deep disappointment at this, because she had hoped, as her commitment deepened, that other options for involvement might open up. That did not happen. She sought employment elsewhere but continued to nurture the relationship with the CSsR.

When asked to pursue the roots of this feeling of disappointment, she answered that when she agreed to join the team, she had asked whether there was openness to inviting her into other areas of Redemptorist ministry when her time on the Youth Mission Team ended. She had been assured that there was such openness. This was the reason for her feeling of betrayal when she found that there was, in fact, no other opening for her for paid ministry in the Redemptorist context. She acknowledged that the expression of openness did not constitute a promise, and that she knew she had allowed hope to become promise. Nevertheless, she was disappointed.

In 2002, she was invited to apply for a position as a Lay Pastoral Associate in a Redemptorist parish far from her home. She did so, and was given the job. The actual employer was the parish. At the end of six years, the bishop withdrew the pension fund

for lay employees. The LMMHR felt that this was unjust; she asked the Redemptorists to advocate for her and to explore other options, such as enrolling her under the Redemptorist pension plan but with the parish funding the position. The CSsR Provincial leadership was not willing to explore either option, and no other options were presented.

Once again, she sought employment elsewhere. She felt keen disappointment that the Redemptorists were not able to advocate for her and other lay employees in this situation. It took a long time for her to arrive at any sense of peace, although she did maintain the network of Redemptorist relationships as best as she knew how. As the years passed, she came to the conviction that, for her own sanity and security, she would not seek or accept employment with Redemptorists again but would continue as an LMMHR on a voluntary basis.

Formation of Vowed Redemptorists for Collaboration

All respondents expressed the view that the formation of vowed Redemptorists is the most important area to focus on if the Partnership in Mission movement is to move forward. One expressed it in these words:

I still feel like a Lay Missionary of the Redemptorists and hope that they would invite more lay people to mission as equal partners who are equally invested and equally valued as the vowed members. In the end, I think that the congregation would be well advised to do some serious reflection with their lay partners about what the Redemptorists are asking, what Lay Missionaries are asking for, what each has to offer, and to discover what they might be missing. The Redemptorists need to pay attention to the human development of individual Redemptorists and the collective community.

The respondents identified essential elements of formation for collaborative ministry and true, effective partnership in mission. These elements include

- attention to healthy human development
- importance of good self-image and self-esteem
- awareness of and ability to use and share one's gifts
- development of effective communication
- expansive or at least open view of the Redemptorist "family"
- development of a spirituality underlying collaborative ministry

Aspects of this spirituality might include

- engagement in mission
- acknowledgement that God is the source of all gifts
- recognition that every person is gifted
- affirmation that gifts are intended to help achieve personal spiritual growth
- affirmation that gifts are intended to support the spiritual growth of others
- acceptance that collaborative living and working is about being open to and aware of the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in oneself, in others, and in the circumstances of daily life

There was a strong sense among the LMMHRs that there has to be a solid foundation of openness, willingness, skill, and mutual respect in order for collaboration to be effective.

In terms of leadership within a collaborative model, all respondents raised concerns, arising from their experience, about the willingness and capacity of Redemptorists within the Edmonton-Toronto Province to enter into partnerships in mission on a basis of equality. One wondered aloud whether Redemptorists truly believe there is a legitimate role for lay partners in mission within the current offering of ministries, programs, projects, and placements. This LMMHR felt that if there truly were a role for lay people, the Redemptorists would be more intentional about promoting it, praying for it, enlisting the interest of others, and placing lay people in leadership roles, giving them both responsibility and accountability.

The lack of interest on the part of vowed Redemptorists has led this respondent to believe Redemptorists think of collaboration with lay people only when lay people can

temporarily fill roles that vowed Redemptorists cannot. Consequently, the vision that lay partners have hung onto and promoted for so many years, according to this respondent, may not be shared among the Redemptorists themselves.

What is the Vocation of the LMMHR?

One LMMHR expressed her thoughts about the vocation of the LMMHR in this way:

Through all of my work with the Redemptorists I was able to articulate a greater sense of the vocation of a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer—to proclaim the Good News to the poor in the context of an ordinary life. This would be the same as a vowed member of the community, but a lay person can bring the message to places that might not be accessible to the ordained. Today, I would see the work of the Lay Missionary as being complementary to that of the vowed Redemptorists.

Another phrased the sense of vocation as follows:

It is a lifestyle, an immersion in the spirit of St. Alphonsus that compels me to reach out to the poor and abandoned in the areas of my life where I find them.

Yet a third said,

Reaching out to the poor and most abandoned. That's the hook. When I heard that, it really spoke to me.

Each LMMHR expressed a strong belief in a vocation to life and mission. Pressed on this, one explained,

Parker Palmer [sic] defined a vocation as “where your passion meets the world’s hunger.”¹⁶⁵ I spend many of my waking hours as an employee and official minister of the Roman Catholic Church, but I see this role through the lens of my commitment and network of relationships within the Redemptorist family. This is where I get the strength and the nourishment

165. The actual reference is from Frederick Buechner, and should read, “Vocation is where our greatest passion meets the world's greatest need.”

to do what I do as a catechist, as spokesperson for the diocese, and as a leader within the Church.

She went on to say,

In my diocesan work, I meet many lay people who are disillusioned and disenfranchised by the Roman Catholic Church. Even though I have been hurt and felt betrayed within the Redemptorist “family,” I still hang onto the dream and the ideal of partnership on a basis of equality that was envisioned and, I understood, promised, in *Communicanda 4*. I still believe that it is possible. I still believe that this is what I am called to. I am still committed to making it work.

Last Words

In the final moments of each interview, the LMMHRs were invited to think carefully about their experience and to offer a summative comment. The LMMHR who is still active said,

In the end I am tremendously grateful to the Redemptorist congregation for all that I have learned and the ways in which I have grown through my life with them in the past twenty-four years. I am still able to work with numerous good people among the Redemptorists. I still find it a privilege to be accepted by them, especially as a woman, and generally feel valued by them and still value them in my life as well. I’ve seen a lot of change, and I want to make it easier for other lay people, and particularly women, to follow after us.

Another respondent, one no longer active as an LMMHR, summarized their thoughts as follows:

Having said all that, and having moved on in my life, it still is a feature of our ministry to reach out to the most abandoned. We are presently serving seven rural parishes. . . . They are small and very far away from the “hub” of the diocese. This brings to mind the rural areas where St. Alphonsus reached out to the sheep herders away from the city of Naples. There is a sadness in me that this particular ministry of conducting parish missions is no longer a priority for the Redemptorists in Canada. I still receive requests for parish missions, and there is such a huge need for that kind of

extraordinary preaching of the Gospel. I still pray that God will raise up new missionaries to take up this vital role in our church. And I am truly thankful that the Redemptorists gave me thirty years of fruitful ministry in the vineyard!

And the third respondent, also no longer active as an LMMHR, said, “It’s a call, not just a job.”

Conclusion

There is marked similarity in the experiences that led each respondent to be attracted to the Redemptorist/Alphonsian charism. There is also a marked similarity in their experiences of long connection and partnership in mission prior to the invitation—and the acceptance of the invitation—to make a commitment as LMMHRs. They share a sense of vocation as LMMHRs within the Redemptorist family. In addition, all respondents shared similar experiences of hurt and rejection within and by the community of professed Redemptorists.

What experiences and factors, then, led to the choice made by two to move away from the commitment, relationships, and role of the LMMHR (still situating their involvement within the Redemptorist/Alphonsian charism but no longer identifying or being identified as LMMHRs)? What experiences and factors led the other LMMHR to remain within the Redemptorist family?

The keys to understanding this difference lie in two distinct differences of experience. The first key lies in the network of ministerial relationships built by each LMMHR, and whether this expanded or contracted with time. The second key, I believe,

has to do with how each LMMHR dealt with hurt, disillusionment, and even abandonment.

The one LMMHR who has continued to be identified as such described her network of relationships as expanding because of her continued partnership with vowed Redemptorists. She spoke of having made conscious efforts to develop a wide network of connections within the Redemptorist family. She also spoke of consciously seeking out opportunities to explore new forms of ministry.

The experiences of the other two LMMHRs were markedly different. Their ministerial involvement was almost entirely in the context of the preaching of parish missions. At first, many vowed Redemptorists were involved in this ministry; many eventually moved on. A limited number of relationships were deep, profound, and formative, but they were not sufficient to maintain a connection to the entire community. As the network contracted, so did the possibilities. In the end, these LMMHRs found other areas of God's vineyard in which to labour.

How each LMMHR worked through painful experiences might be another key to whether and how the relationship was sustained. The LMMHR who has remained active experienced two significant instances of disillusionment. Each time, she made a telling choice to walk away from paid employment with or by Redemptorists, but to maintain a connection and even to deepen it. She said that she came to feel strongly that conflating employment and vocation "muddies the waters." She came close to saying that she would never work with or for Redemptorists again in an employer-employee relationship, but she stepped back from this statement and seemed to re-evaluate her former certitude.

Though deeply hurt, she continued to nurture her connection with the CSsR and to work through the pain, learn from it, and grow because of it. In the end, her network of relationships and forms of involvement grew and expanded.

The other two LMMHRs also worked through many experiences of pain, disillusionment, and hurt. They seemed to have negotiated many such experiences in their long years of connection. In the end, no employment opportunities remained for them within the Redemptorist context, and they found employment and fulfillment elsewhere. Although both have found rich avenues of ministerial involvement in fields other than preaching parish missions, there are still lingering hints of pain and regret in their reflections. They both think of the Redemptorist context as belonging to their past, not to their present or their future.

A partial answer to the question of why there are significant differences in present involvement might lie in the conflation of vocation and employment. Another partial answer might lie in the importance of having a variety of ministerial experiences with a wide network of vowed Redemptorists. Yet a third might lie in formation. Each of these LMMHRs served long apprenticeships; they were invited into commitments after long-standing partnerships. But length of time does not ensure that adequate formation has been given or received. As I have already noted, formation must be a mutual formation for collaboration. In addition, one must ask what is the goal and object of formation for both professed Redemptorists and LMMHRs. In the Redemptorist family, community always exists for mission. Collaboration, likewise, must never exist for its own sake but always for the sake of mission. Formation offered to each person must truly be formation

for mission and ministry, respectful of the spirituality, circumstances of life, and commitments of lay women and men. It must be both adequate to the ministry to be undertaken and appropriate to the life to be lived.

The stories told by the LMMHRs were rich narratives of the action of God in their lives, and of their responses traced, in every case, back to childhood. Shared storytelling must be an element of any formation process. The interviews allowed me to see that vocation is truly rooted in identity.

In future identification of potential partners in mission, Redemptorists might be well advised to actively seek potential partners in mission from those who have been drawn to the most abandoned from their earliest days. It is not uncommon for God to begin to speak to hearts in childhood, and through loving encounters. Of course, this does not mean that such experiences should be considered normative, or the only soil in which to seek such vocations.

Youth and young adult ministry played a vital role in attracting and engaging these long-term partners in mission. Redemptorists might wisely consider their youth and young adult programs as fertile soil through which they are introduced to those seeking paths for their life's work.

The interviews revealed that the partners in mission were drawn by the proposal of an epic adventure and were willing to leave much behind and undertake considerable risk to follow the invitation. Future praxis might benefit from continuing to offer this bigger picture, and the continued invitation of an epic adventure, in which one person can see possibilities for their contribution to the whole.

The experience of the respondents shows how unclear expectations can be the source of much pain and disappointment. An insight to be retained for future praxis is that all involved would benefit from clear expectations and commitments at the outset.

The Redemptorist family might do well to consider incorporating LMMHRs into various ministries over time, so that they might be offered the opportunity to come to know and minister alongside a number of community members. This is the model of inclusion offered to professed members, and has been found effective. There is reason to believe that it could be just as effective for lay partners.

Some formal study of Redemptorist history and spirituality, ordinarily a major feature of the formation of professed Redemptorists, might be of benefit for prospective LMMHRs as well. But the formation that is offered must suitably equip them for mission and ministry, and for effective collaboration in proclaiming plentiful redemption.

The ethnographic interviews contained strong and repeated affirmation for the participation of LMMHRs in large, longer-term gatherings of the community. This leads me to recommend such gatherings as a means of ongoing formation in the future.

It may well prove true that, once again, the experience of professed Redemptorists, who are expected to serve in any number of works of the Congregation over their lifetime, should also be the norm for LMMHRs. Incorporation into varied ministries might be an effective means of building a Redemptorist identity and expanding relationships within the family.

The experiences of the three respondents point to the salient question of whether or not LMMHRs should be employed by the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

This most certainly requires a great deal more reflection and consideration. While employment relationships do offer a rich field for partnership in mission, there is no equality in the employer-employee relationship.

These themes, drawn from the ethnographic interviews and coalescing around the area of effective formation for mission and partnership in mission, move us now into an exploration of what the elements, processes, and movements of such formation might be, and how these might best be implemented.

The ethnographic interviews are entry points for exploring what a suitable formation process—one rooted in the wisdom of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults—might offer to the Redemptorist family. I will turn to this exploration in the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE FROM THEOLOGY TO PRAXIS

Introduction

Communicanda 4 and other guiding texts envision Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer as full and active partners with professed Redemptorists in the mission of proclaiming plentiful redemption to the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor. The challenge faced by the Redemptorist family as it endeavours to realize this vision mirrors the one faced by the entire Church. The ecclesiology articulated at the Second Vatican Council¹⁶⁶ envisions lay people as missionary disciples actively engaged in the mission to “go, make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Still, the Church struggles in its efforts to achieve co-responsibility and mutuality. So, too, does the Redemptorist family.

The transcripts of the ethnographic interviews presented in Chapter 4 illustrate how the establishment of LMMHRs within the Edmonton-Toronto Province, a prophetic practice that began with enthusiasm and hope in 2003, had by 2015 come to a standstill. This trajectory mirrors what was happening in the Church at large during the same time period. Across Canada, many diocesan lay formation programs, begun with hope and vigour in the years following Vatican II, had atrophied or died by the late twentieth century. Parish and diocesan employment of lay people in positions of pastoral leadership, burgeoning after the Second Vatican Council, was being reduced through the implementation of austerity measures. The Church’s commitment to the apostolate of the

166. This vision is articulated most explicitly in *Lumen Gentium*; *Gaudium et Spes*; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*; and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

laity seemed to have dwindled. In the Redemptorist context in Canada, some parishes that had previously employed pastoral ministers and youth ministers no longer did so. Itinerant mission teams and the Redemptorist Youth Mission Team, on which lay people served, no longer existed. The Redemptorist experience, in many ways, echoes the experience of the wider Church.

The Question at the Heart of It All

The experience of the first LMMHRs points to one important question: for what purpose does the Redemptorist family recruit, invite, and engage LMMHRs? Only when we can answer this question with clarity will the Redemptorist family be able to design appropriate formation processes by which both professed Redemptorists and LMMHRs become true partners in mission.

This lack of clarity lies at the heart of the difficulties experienced in the realization of the dream. The formation of the first LMMHRs was largely informal, owing to their prior lengthy engagements. The roles of the first LMMHRs, at the time of commitment, were clear. All were employed by or with Redemptorists in the Redemptorist ministries of mission preaching or parish pastoral animation. The assumption, held by all parties, seemed to be that nothing would change as a result of the designation. In fact, there seems to have been no thought given to change, either the actuality or inevitability of change, or the management of it. This proved to be a faulty assumption and a dangerous omission.

One important change occurred immediately. With their commitment, the LMMHRs understood that their relationship with the CSsR had changed profoundly. The LMMHRs viewed their commitment as a new beginning, a significant step in a developmental process. However, this understanding seems not to have been shared by the professed Redemptorists, who apparently viewed the commitment more as an affirmation of a relationship that already was, a ratification, rather than a beginning or a step forward.

The ethnographic interviews reveal that the focus of discussion leading up to the implementation of LMMHRs within the Edmonton-Toronto Province tended to be around collaboration, rather than mission. There were conversations about the specificities of the ministries in which each was involved, but none around larger issues of participation in the wider mission of the Redemptorists. There was no indication in the ethnographic interviews that the specific means by which LMMHRs and vowed Redemptorists would share in apostolic community life, as well as possibilities and directions for growth, was ever discussed.

In addition, the Edmonton-Toronto Province placed an emphasis on the connection of the LMMHR to the Province, rather than the local community. This was intended to distinguish the LMMHR from the Redemptorist Associate, whose connection exists primarily at the local level. However, it left the local connection of the LMMHR vague. Greater clarity could be achieved through focused conversation around the day-to-day participation of the LMMHR in the life of the local Redemptorist community, now

re-envisioned as a support for that person's provincial involvement and connection. This is already the ordinary practice and model of connection for professed Redemptorists.

This lack of communication points to another key issue that must be addressed in light of formation. Collaboration is not the goal of partnership in mission. Collaboration is not an end in itself. In Redemptorist self-understanding, collaboration is oriented toward and exists for the sake of mission. That mission is the ever more effective proclamation of the Good News of plentiful redemption to the poor.

Based upon the ethnographic interviews, it seems that neither professed Redemptorists nor prospective LMMHRs understood the necessity for an appropriate formation to assist with the management of this change. Certainly, none was offered or requested. All seem to have assumed that any necessary formation had already taken place over the long years of connection. This long connection—though invaluable—had not prepared either the lay people or the professed community for the change in relationship that was wrought through the ritualization of the commitment.

Following from this realization, it seems appropriate to consider radically redirecting the focus of formation so that the goal becomes the gradually more complete engagement of the LMMHR in the mission of the CSsR, and the incorporation of the LMMHR into this Redemptorist family, a community of missionary apostles with Redemptorist hearts. In order to accomplish this goal, both LMMHRs and professed Redemptorists need formation. Formation must prepare the soil for this deeper engagement. Formation must also equip the LMMHR to exercise his or her role amid the realities of everyday life as a lay person, married or single, within myriad commitments

and spheres of activity and influence. All of these dimensions may be very different from those of the professed Redemptorist.

I have alluded to the fact that the ethnographic interviews point to the need for the formation of the community of professed Redemptorists for this new kind of collaboration in the mission. Formation must equip professed Redemptorists to minister shoulder-to-shoulder with lay people on a basis of equality and complementarity, a model foreseen in *Communicanda 4* and other Redemptorist documents. For a model of what such a mutual formation might look like, we can look to the wider Church for guidance.

The Church forms missionary disciples chiefly through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Through the Sacraments of Initiation—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—Christians are bound to one another and to Christ, and called into the life and mission of the community of missionary apostles. The Church tells us that the inspiration for all catechesis is found in the Rite of Christian Initiation. For these reasons, I would posit that the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults likewise contains the inspiration for, and elements of, a suitable formation for Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Formation of Missionary Disciples: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as a Model for the Formation of LMMHRs

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (hereafter referred to as the RCIA) is a process through which new Christians are gradually incorporated into the People of God. Various Church documents hold up the RCIA as the model for all catechesis.¹⁶⁷

167. *General Directory for Catechesis*, 67.

Therefore, I will examine this process and explore what it might have to offer to enlighten the questions at hand.

The characteristics of the initiatory catechesis offered through the RCIA are the following:

1. It is a comprehensive and systematic formation in the faith . . . a vital deepening of the mystery of Christ.
2. This comprehensive formation includes more than instruction: it is an apprenticeship of the entire Christian life, it is a “complete Christian initiation”, which promotes an authentic following of Christ, focused on his Person; it implies education in knowledge of the faith and in the life of faith.
3. It is a basic and essential formation, centered on what constitutes the nucleus of Christian experience.¹⁶⁸

In paragraph 75 of the ritual text¹⁶⁹ of the RCIA, the catechumenate is described as having four dimensions:

1. It is gradual and complete in its coverage . . . and solidly supported by celebrations of the word.¹⁷⁰
2. The candidates become familiar with the way of life and are helped by the example and support of sponsors, godparents and the entire community, and their conversion to Christ is deepened.¹⁷¹
3. The Church celebrates rituals which mark significant steps on the journey, and strengthen the candidates.¹⁷²
4. The candidates are apprenticed into the apostolic work of the community, learning how to collaborate with others and participate in the mission by witness and word.¹⁷³

168. Ibid., 90.

169. This text includes both the rituals and the catechetical notes, which describe and prescribe the process of the RCIA.

170. RCIA, 75.1.

171. Ibid., 75.2.

172. Ibid., 75.3.

173. Ibid., 75.4.

This formation is accomplished through four periods, and the movement from one to the next is marked by a ritual. I will describe how these periods and steps might be adapted for the Redemptorist setting in the next section.

In the RCIA, the Period of Evangelization and Pre-Catechumenate (hereafter termed the Period of Inquiry) is of indeterminate length, suited to the spiritual journey of adults; it allows the individuals to share and explore stories and begin to recognize and name God's action in their life. During this time, conversion begins to take root in the inquirer, as he or she starts to call on God in prayer and to seek out the company of members of the Christian community. At this stage, the community, through companions and guides, offers some preliminary instruction or formation.¹⁷⁴

The celebration of the Rite of Acceptance marks a transition into the Period of the Catechumenate. This period, like the Period of Inquiry, is of no fixed duration. It is a time of apprenticeship to the Christian community. This apprenticeship and deepening of call and belonging is brought about through a formation that is catechetical, communal, liturgical, and apostolic.¹⁷⁵ The candidate is "given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life."¹⁷⁶ This formation "should be of a kind that while presenting Catholic teaching in its entirety also enlightens faith, directs the heart toward God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ."¹⁷⁷

174. Ibid., 36–40, 42.

175. Ibid., 75.

176. Ibid.

177. Ibid., 78.

During this period, the candidate chooses sponsors or godparents who serve as guides and mentors, representing the support of the entire Christian community. In addition, “provision should also be made for the entire community to be involved in the formation of the catechumens.”¹⁷⁸ It is very significant that, while one or two mentors and guides are offered and chosen, their role is to represent the wider community of faith. It is the entire community that welcomes, the entire community that catechizes, the entire community that accompanies the catechumens. The ultimate goal of the process is for the catechumen to be immersed and included in the community and the mission of the Church, and to be sent out in mission to the world.

The Rite of Election marks the transition from the Catechumenate into the Period of Enlightenment, which is the only period in the entire process that is of a predetermined length. This period “customarily coincides with Lent.”¹⁷⁹ It is, essentially, a forty-day retreat, a “period of . . . intense spiritual preparation,”¹⁸⁰ for reception into the Church through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist during the Easter Vigil.

One piece of wisdom contained in the Rite of Election is its recognition that the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation opens a fresh chapter in the lives of Church and neophyte alike. Respecting and honouring this, the Church walks with the newly initiated through the period of Post-Baptismal Catechesis, or Mystagogy, which is

178. Ibid., 80.

179. Ibid., 125.

180. Ibid., 126.

a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery through meditation on the Gospel, sharing in the Eucharist, and doing the works of mercy.¹⁸¹

The instruction in the ritual text goes on to say that “to strengthen the neophytes as they begin to walk in newness of life, the community of the faithful, their godparents, and their parish priests (pastors) should give them thoughtful and friendly help.”¹⁸² The Church envisions the Period of Mystagogy as a highly significant and formative period for both the neophytes and the community at large:

Through it, the neophytes, with the help of their godparents, should experience a full and joyful welcome into the community and enter into closer ties with the other faithful. The faithful, in turn, should derive from it a renewal of inspiration and of outlook.¹⁸³

Connecting the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults to the Formation of LMMHRs: Growing in Mission

The ethnographic interviews indicated what a suitable formation process, one rooted in the wisdom of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, might offer to the Redemptorist family.

Constitutions 46 to 55 of the *Constitutions and Statutes* of the CSsR contain a rich description of how the profession of the vows of evangelical poverty, celibate chastity, and obedience binds the members to one another, to the work of the Gospel, and to the practice of apostolic charity.¹⁸⁴ These constitutions state that the profession of vows is

181. Ibid., 234.

182. Ibid.

183. Ibid., 236.

184. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 46.

“deeply rooted in baptismal consecration, and . . . a fuller expression of it.”¹⁸⁵ The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer exists within the Body of Christ, into which each Christian is incorporated through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Through these Sacraments, all become missionaries, sent out into the world to share the Good News. The profession of vows is essentially a deeper way of living out one’s baptismal commitment within a community gathered around a charism, a gift of the Holy Spirit to which all have some affinity.

In engaging partners in mission in the concentric circles of belonging described in *Communicanda 4*, a Redemptorist family is created, with connections to one another and to the world that must respect and be inspired by, yet not restricted to, the bonds of profession. In the spirit, but not the letter, of Constitutions 46 to 55, professed and lay members form one missionary body, and all continue Christ in the world according to their gifts, talents, skills, limitations, circumstances, involvements, training, and spheres of activity and influence. Religious profession is rightly understood as deepening the commitments made in Baptism, through which all become missionary disciples. Thus, Redemptorists can attest that “profession makes all Redemptorists truly missionaries.”¹⁸⁶

It is clear in the *Constitutions and Statutes* that Redemptorists are bound to the mission, the community, and one another through the profession of vows, and that these vows are understood as a deepening of baptismal commitment. What, then, binds the LMMHRs to one another, to the Redemptorist family, and to the mission?

185. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 47.

186. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 55.

The answer to this question is found in the incorporation into the Body of Christ celebrated in the Sacraments of Initiation. The call of God placed in the human heart in Baptism, sealed in Confirmation, and given a renewable and renewing missionary impetus through the Eucharist, is the bond that unites all members of the Redemptorist family. The commitment of the LMMHR is a deepening of this baptismal commitment. It is analogous to, but not the same as, religious profession. Likewise, the vows of marriage, the commitments of friendship, and the commissioning for various ministries also deepen baptismal commitments and ties made within and for the life of the Christian community—and, in fact, beyond. The *Constitutions and Statutes* may be understood as governing the life of the professed members of the CSsR. They do not govern the LMMHR, but they inspire and enlighten the life and role of the LMMHR.

The *Final Document of the XXII General Chapter* addresses the foundational importance of the Sacraments of Initiation.

We must ask: what relationship is there between Redemptorist spirituality and collaboration with the laity? Do we have a genuine appreciation of the missionary vocation given to all in Baptism, or are we simply concerned about getting helpers for our work? We need to develop partnership with the laity, not just on the basis of shared responsibility, but also on the basis of shared faith and spirituality.¹⁸⁷

We see, then, that the Sacraments of Christian initiation and other subsequent commitments bind LMMHRs to one another, to professed Redemptorists, and to the Church. Through these Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, Christians (formed into the Body of Christ) are sent out on mission to be that Body of Christ for the world. That

187. *XXII General Chapter: Message, Orientations, Postulata*, Message #9.

mission may be expressed in many ways, but is essentially the commission of Christ to “go and proclaim the Gospel.”¹⁸⁸ It would be wise and appropriate, then, to turn to the baptismal catechumenate as the model for formation of LMMHRs.

Recruitment for a Collaborative Vision of Evangelization

Where does the Church attract new disciples? And what is the dynamic by which this occurs?

The Church attracts new members by the witness of committed believers. The Church attracts new disciples wherever Christians are engaged with joy in the works of mercy,¹⁸⁹ serving their sisters and brothers in need. Sometimes this is done with explicit reference to Jesus Christ. Often there is no explicit proclamation, save the witness of service. Doing works of mercy is the first proclamation of the Gospel, the means by which most people are drawn to Christians and to the Christian way of life. These works of mercy are offered everywhere Christians live and work.

To this point, Redemptorists have recruited prospective LMMHRs from within circles of preachers and catechists. These two circles might certainly be viewed as fertile areas to search for people who might have skills for evangelization; that is, the explicit proclamation of the Gospel. However, evangelization is broader than the explicit

188. These are the words of one option for the Missioning Rite from the Roman Missal, sending the faithful out on mission after each liturgy.

189. There are seven corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to free those in prison, to shelter the homeless, and to bury the dead. And there are seven spiritual works of mercy: to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to admonish sinners, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive offences willingly, to comfort the afflicted, and to pray for the living and the dead.

proclamation of the Word. Most people are called to evangelize through witness rather than word.

If we delve into the experience revealed through the ethnographic interviews, we see that the early LMMHRs were first drawn to the Redemptorists through youth and young adult ministry programs. They were not actively engaged as partners, but as recipients and observers. Their imaginations were ignited by Redemptorists at young ages, and they were invited into short-term, age-appropriate commitments early on. This capturing of the imagination is a key element of invitation. If Redemptorists in Canada were to revitalize their historic commitment to youth and young adult ministry, they might rediscover that it could prove today, as in the past, to be a fertile ground for cultivating vocations to the Redemptorist way of life, in both its professed and lay forms.

Potential for growth might be found in expanding the traditional understanding of evangelization. The 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis* offered a fresh picture of evangelization, describing it as an “umbrella” term for a process that occurs in three “moments”: Missionary Activity, Catechetical Activity, and Pastoral Activity.

Missionary Activity is the moment of initial proclamation where people are introduced to Jesus Christ, most often through the witness of ordinary Christians engaged in extraordinary activities that are the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It occurs wherever Christians live, work, move, and encounter neighbours who are seeking, asking, despairing, hoping, loving, and living. These seekers are often drawn to people who seem to possess something for which they long. Seekers can be found in hospital waiting rooms, in gyms and yoga classes, in supermarkets and on buses. These are the ordinary

settings in which the lay faithful can also be found. Evangelization happens wherever ordinary life is lived.

In the 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI wrote, “Modern man [sic] listens more willingly to witnesses than teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are first witnesses.”¹⁹⁰ Where might Redemptorists be most likely to find these witnesses, lay people who might easily be those who share the charism?

Witnesses drawn to the charism of proclaiming Good News to the most abandoned might potentially be found among social workers; child protection workers; police officers; immigration workers; those who work with refugees; ESL instructors; those who work in the field of human trafficking, shelters for the homeless or abused women; first responders; nurses; receptionists. . . the list goes on and on. Once we begin to expand our definition of evangelization to include those who bring Good News by their witness and by their liberating action, the field of potential partners in evangelization also opens up.

The role of these lay partners, in a Redemptorist context, would be to complement and extend the work of the professed Redemptorists by reaching into areas and lives where ordained men might not ordinarily go, and by walking with people alongside whom professed Redemptorists might not ordinarily walk. When we begin to expand the understanding of evangelization, we also begin to expand our sense of who engages in the missionary proclamation of the Word.

190. Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, December 8, 1975), 41.

There are margins or peripheries in our lives, our communities, and our Church. Many people will never explicitly preach the word of God, yet people who walk on the margins, with those on the margins, are potential LMMHRs. This is an expansion of our understanding of the mission of proclaiming Christ, the “nearest blood relative,” the go’el,¹⁹¹ of those on the margins. This new interpretation opens the door to a new understanding of collaboration between lay and professed people as an essential frontier if the Good News is to be proclaimed effectively in new cultures and times.

Coordinators or Directors of Formation

In the RCIA, the entire community forms, catechizes, and engages the catechumens in mission. However, there are usually catechists and teams who guide the process and engage most directly with the catechumens. The Edmonton-Toronto Province has guidelines for the formation of LMMHRs that recommend the engagement of a team of Formation Directors—a professed Redemptorist and an LMMHR. This model of collaboration in mission would seem to be a model well-suited for this task. However, it is not enough to name two co-directors and leave the work to them. The entire community must be supportive of and engaged in the incorporation of new LMMHRs into the family. The guidelines also recommend that the prospective LMMHR choose a

191. In the Book of Job, chapter 19, Job expresses fervent hope that his go’el, or redeemer, exists and will come to his defense. The go’el of the Hebrew Scriptures is a figure drawn from the judicial system, the nearest blood relative who would stand with and defend the accused, ransom him or her if necessary, and restore liberty. In *Biblical Reflections on the Redeemer*, retreats and other works, Fr. Michael Brehl, CSSR has done significant exegetical work on this text, with the intent of exploring its significance for the members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In chapter 2, I explored this same concept as it might pertain to women and other groups on the peripheries today.

professed Redemptorist with whom to walk as a companion and guide. The role is analogous to that of the sponsor or godparent in the RCIA.

The model that follows is an attempt to respect and incarnate this principle of catechesis in and through community.

The Period of Inquiry, Re-imagined as a Period of Discovery

The stories told by the LMMHRs were rich narratives of the action of God in their lives. Their response, in every case, could be traced back to childhood. Within the RCIA, the Period of Inquiry is of indeterminate length; the inquirer is invited to observe, engage, and ask questions of the community of faith. The community of faith is also invited to ask questions of the inquirer and get to know them. Shared storytelling is the foundational element of any effective process of formation. It is through sharing stories of tradition (Scripture and the ongoing living memory of the Church) that inquirers discover whether they are, in fact, called into this community, drawn to its way of life, and attracted by the practices of the believers.

The stories of the early lives and experiences of the LMMHRs reveal a rich field of experience to be explored. In the family lives and experiences of service and outreach to the most abandoned, it is easy to see that a person's sense of vocation is integrally connected with identity. In only one case did any of the LMMHRs recount sharing these stories with professed Redemptorists, or that the professed community was aware of the threads of attraction linking childhood experience to adult longing and pastoral activity. It would seem that golden opportunities were missed, and therefore it is not surprising that

no discussion occurred that placed the first LMMHRs' engagement on a footing of vocational discernment. In each case, there was an articulation of a "fit" between the person and the Redemptorist family, but it was framed primarily as a ministerial connection, rather than as a vocational affinity.

A Period of Discovery would be characterized by the sharing of stories. Together, professed Redemptorists and inquiring LMMHRs would share stories of life experience, faith, and apostolic practice and reflect on these in light of the stories of Scripture and of Redemptorist history, saints, spirituality, and life.

The protagonist of this Period of Discovery is the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who animates. It is the Holy Spirit who gives gifts for mission and ministry and is the source of any vocation. In the Period of Discovery, the candidate and the accompanying professed Redemptorists and LMMHRs begin to discern whether the candidate is called to and suited for apostolic life in the Redemptorist family. This is a mutual discernment.

This Period of Discovery would most appropriately take place at the level of the local Redemptorist community, for easy and informal contact is most possible there. Where this is not possible, or where there is no local community, other arrangements could be made. Inquiry is an informal process, allowing plenty of time for transformative conversations, reflections, and questioning. It might happen over the dinner table, as Redemptorists invite lay people into their homes, or as Redemptorists visit the homes of prospective LMMHRs. It might happen over coffee, or through mission engagements. It could also happen in more structured "come and see" types of evenings, retreats, or outreach experiences.

It is important not only for LMMHRs to get to know the community of professed Redemptorists, but also for Redemptorists to become acquainted with the families and friends of the lay people. The important people in our lives are important chapters of the story—indeed, we come to know one another by knowing the company we keep.

At this early stage, mission is a very important element. I have already examined how potential LMMHRs might be sought and invited from among people already engaged in ministries with Redemptorists or in fields such as outreach ministries, shelters, prisons, and among immigrants. Thus the potential LMMHR is no stranger to mission. Such a person has been on a journey of faith, and now seeks to explore whether there is congruence between them and the Redemptorist way of apostolic life.

At an appropriate time, when the Redemptorists and inquirers discern a basic congruence between them, the transition into a period of quasi-catechumenate would be marked by some ritual of invitation. This equivalent of the Rite of Acceptance might take the form of a prayer service celebrated on a significant feast in the Redemptorist calendar. It could happen at the level of the local community, possibly in the midst of other partners in mission, such as Redemptorist Associates and oblates. In the Rite of Acceptance, a cross is often given and received as a symbol of having entered a new phase of the journey of discipleship, of a commitment made and received. Some symbol of the LMMHR's enrolment, such as a Redemptorist cross or a copy of the *Constitutions and Statutes* of the CSsR, might be an appropriate marker to be given within the Rite of Invitation. This would be appropriate because the *Constitutions and Statutes* inspire the life of the LMMHR as they govern the life of the professed members.

The Period of Quasi-Catechumenate, Re-imagined as a Period of Accompaniment

In the RCIA, “the Catechumenate is an extended period during which the candidates are given suitable pastoral formation and guidance, aimed at training them in the Christian life.”¹⁹² The duration of the catechumenate depends on many factors. The intent is to provide sufficient time, training, and immersion in the community and its way of life “for the conversion and faith of the catechumen to become strong.”¹⁹³

A formation process adapted from the catechumenate would build on the insight, gleaned from the ethnographic interviews, that prospective LMMHRs and the community of professed Redemptorists, need to be given sufficient time¹⁹⁴ for mutual discernment. Although the connection of the early LMMHRs with the professed community was certainly long enough, it lacked the character and dimension of discernment. The purpose would be to afford the candidates time to get to know the Redemptorists, their charism, their founder, and their way of life such that they become certain that it is the locus from which, once firmly rooted in this soil, they can go forth in mission, proclaiming Good News to the most abandoned.

This period is also a time for the Redemptorist community to get to know the potential LMMHR and discover and discern their gifts and talents, strengths and weaknesses, joys and sorrows. It will be important for the Redemptorist family to come

192. RCIA, 75.

193. Ibid., 76.

194. With two of the interviewees, the time before commitment was twenty-seven years, for the other it was twelve years.

to know the candidate's family and friends and thus, over time, discern whether and how they belong together in mission.

In the RCIA, the character of the catechumenate is described as “apprenticeship.” Traditionally, an apprentice is thought of as someone who walks behind and then beside a skilled labourer for an extended period of time, learning the skills of the trade, the fine points that lift the trade into an art, the skills for collaboration on the worksite, and the delicate intricacies of dealing with customers. The apprentice is constantly under the watchful eye of the master craftsperson, who teaches first by example, gradually allowing the apprentice to practice and then take on more and more complex jobs until the apprentice is sent out into the workforce as a skilled labourer. This image of apprenticeship is apt for describing candidate LMMHRs.

The catechesis proper to the catechumenate (this apprenticeship) has four dimensions. It is gradual and complete, immerses the candidate in the prayer and way of life of the community, is marked by liturgical rites and celebrations, and moves outward in apostolic service.¹⁹⁵

Dimensions of the Catechumenate: Gradual and Complete

The first dimension of catechumenal catechesis is

planned to be gradual and complete in its coverage, accommodated to the liturgical year, and solidly supported by celebrations of the word. This catechesis leads the catechumens not only to an appropriate acquaintance with dogmas and precepts but also to a profound sense of the mystery of salvation in which they desire to participate.¹⁹⁶

195. RCIA, 75.

196. Ibid., 75.1.

This description points to one particular strength in the formation of the first LMMHRs. Sufficient time was certainly available between their invitation into partnership and their commitment as LMMHRs for them to get to know Redemptorists, their way of life, community, prayers, history, holy ones, and guiding documents. Conversely, twelve to twenty-seven years is certainly enough time for the community to get to know the prospective LMMHRs.

However, time is not the only determining factor guaranteeing a successful formation process. In addition to being lengthy enough for real mutual discernment to take place, formation must be clear in its goals and intentional in its processes. This clarity was not present in the formation of the early LMMHRs.

If the goal of formation for prospective LMMHRs is the active engagement of partners in the work of evangelizing the poor and being evangelized by the poor, then the apprenticeship offered must be oriented toward the fulfillment of this goal. The apostolate or role of the laity in the Church may be somewhat different from the apostolate of the ordained priest. Although it is not always the case, the pastoral ministry of the priest can often be markedly different than that of the pastoral associate, the teacher, the administrative assistant, and so on. All share in the Church's mission of evangelization: all have a role to play, and their roles must be complementary if the Reign of God is to be built most effectively.

The Period of Accompaniment of the prospective LMMHR must provide enough time for that person to experience various expressions or ministries within the Redemptorist mission. It should open up a sense of possibility and allow those involved

to see and experience the reality that the mission encompasses many more fields than mission preaching and parish ministry.

If the Redemptorist family is to effectively realize the vision of a Gospel family galvanized for mission, the process of formation must find ways to equip the pastoral associate, shopkeeper, teacher, administrative assistant, etc., for full and equal partnership. This partnership will not mean that all do the same thing in the same way as the professed members. Rather, Redemptorists are being invited to find creative ways of empowering the secretary to be a missionary apostle in her place of work and in her fields of recreation or volunteer work, or empowering the CEO to be a missionary apostle in the fields of commerce, employee management, and engagement in professional associations. All must be empowered to see these and other areas of outreach as missionary fields, fields in which St. Alphonsus's charism of explicit proclamation of plentiful redemption might be much needed today. In this light, professed Redemptorists are being invited to see their lay partners in mission as exercising roles and functions complementary to theirs and extending the reach of the Church and the CSsR.

Formation has implicit and explicit, informal and formal, aspects. The formation of the first three LMMHRs was almost entirely implicit and informal, accomplished in the midst of full ministry schedules and busy personal lives. Little attention was paid by the CSsR community or the prospective LMMHRs to formal formation. Recognizing this in the early years of her connection, one of the respondents sought out professed Redemptorists who could direct her on roads of learning and exploration in the charism and history of the community. In this case, a number of professed Redemptorists offered

elements of a more formal formation to her as well. This LMMHR reported that this formal element was greatly beneficial and helped her to feel more comfortable within the Redemptorist culture and with its language. It also helped her build a number of solid relationships, and introduced her to people she could turn to at various moments in her life, as different needs arose.

This last is an important point. Every organization has its own culture. If new members are to be successfully incorporated into the organization, they must learn the language, customs, rhythms, calendars, songs, prayers, stories, behaviours, and mores that make up its culture. The formation of LMMHRs must offer a gradual orientation to the culture of the Redemptorist worldview if these lay people are to truly become partners in mission on a basis of equality.

Future formation for prospective LMMHRs would be strengthened by maintaining the indeterminate length of the formation process and combining it with more explicit formation in the charism, history, and “cloud of Redemptorist witnesses,”¹⁹⁷ both living and deceased.

Another strength of the formation received by the initial group of LMMHRs was that, early in their connection with the CSsR, each one was invited to take part in some of the ongoing formation events, retreats, workshops, institutes, and courses offered for professed Redemptorists. One participated in some of the formation events offered for novices, young Redemptorists preparing for religious profession. The LMMHRs benefitted from these invitations and valued them highly because not only did they

197. Hebrews 12:1.

provide valuable content and information, but they also provided access to that most vital element—the community itself.

The LMMHRs pointed out that they considered the social interaction at these events as formative as the content that was provided. Future formation might continue to include and strengthen opportunities for participation in ongoing formation events and learning opportunities offered to the professed community. Conversely, the inclusion of professed Redemptorists in some of the LMMHRs own family events or celebrations would solidify bonds, as was the case in the stories shared by two of the early LMMHRs.

Dimensions of the Catechumenate: Immersion in the Way of Life of the Community

The second dimension of catechumenal catechesis is an immersion in the life of the community, which leads to a change of mind and heart. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults describes it thus:

As they become familiar with the Christian way of life and are helped by the example and prayer of sponsors, godparents and the entire Christian community, the catechumens learn to turn more readily to God in prayer, to bear witness to the faith, in all things to keep their hopes set on Christ, to follow supernatural deeds, and also to practice love of neighbour, even at the cost of self-renunciation.¹⁹⁸

The immersion spoken of in this section of the RCIA is immersion into a spiritual journey into the heart of Jesus Christ the Redeemer. It must lead to conversion, the gradual and lifelong process of turning ever more completely to our “closest blood relative” and ever more fully taking on his own heart. It is accomplished within the

198. RCIA, 75.2.

community and requires the support of guides, mentors, role models, and companions. Most importantly, it requires the knowledge and support of the entire community.

In the Redemptorist understanding of itself as an apostolic community, it follows that the entire community must be not only the locus, but the very curriculum of the formation process for prospective LMMHRs. In this context, role models and mentors include St. Alphonsus and the other Redemptorist saints and blessed. It is difficult to imagine that every professed Redemptorist would be engaged in the mentoring and apprenticeship of prospective LMMHRs. However, it is essential that every professed member be supportive and somehow engaged, for it is into this family, this way of life and mission—and not into one friendship, local community, or single ministry—that the LMMHR seeks to be incorporated and must be apprenticed.

Since more than one person must be involved in the process of apprenticeship, there must also be more than one experience of ministerial exposure and involvement. Mission is a broader context and reality than any single ministry. The ministries in which Redemptorists are engaged—as communities, groups and individuals—when brought together, constitute the mission of the CSsR, although in many ways the mission of evangelization of the most abandoned is even broader than the sum total of the ministries of the members. Engagement in the mission of evangelization implies a radical openness to the dream of God, and so can never be circumscribed.

Prospective LMMHRs must be offered apprenticeship in more than one ministry so as to understand the breadth of the Redemptorist family's mission and their role in it. This would be analogous to the variety of ministerial experiences offered in the formation

of professed Redemptorists. If the process of formation lacks this feature, the formation of LMMHRs runs the risk of becoming a formation in and commitment for one ministry, rather than in the mission of the Congregation. Even if the person is primarily engaged in one field of endeavour, in order for them to be fully integrated into the mission, they must see the big picture and feel themselves to be part of the whole.

This is truly the heart of the brilliant insight that catechumenal formation is primarily an apprenticeship in a way of life. Formation for LMMHRs must also be an apprenticeship into a way of life. Being called into the Redemptorist family involves more than being drawn to a particular work or constellation of works, as noble as these works might be. In the ethnographic interviews, Redemptorists' closeness to people was named as a significant aspect of the way of life, the manner in which they not only speak to hearts in homilies, but connect with the life experience of ordinary people through the stories told and memories shared with humour and common touch. If LMMHRs are to share the Redemptorist way of life, it will be necessary for them to cultivate and practice this quality of presence. It is as important as ministerial skills and academic knowledge.

The vision of a Redemptorist family comprising people of varied callings, roles, fields of influence, and networks of relationship, has much to offer to the realities of evangelizing in the contexts of our Church and our world today. The realization of this vision, offered in the Redemptorist documents promulgated between 1991 and today, will require some conversion and an expansion of outlook on the part of professed Redemptorists. It will require a focused formation for partnership in mission for the professed members as well as for the lay partners. This formation must be a formation for

collaboration if it is to have a truly “Redemptorist flavour”—formation not for collaboration in and of itself but for mission.

The LMMHR and Employment

The ethnographic interviews reveal the danger of linking employment too closely with the LMMHR’s incorporation into the way of life, prayer, and apostolate of the Redemptorist family. In fact, there is something to be said for the value of extending the work of evangelization by engaging LMMHRs who live and walk in different circles than the professed members. More effective praxis might be achieved if, rather than looking among current employees, Redemptorists sought future LMMHRs among those who are drawn to the charism and show signs, in their daily living, of aspects of a Redemptorist way of life. Building on this, the community would offer a variety of experiences of insertion into a number of Redemptorist settings and ministerial opportunities before commitments are made and offered.

Moreover, the Redemptorist community seems to view formation as a process required only by the inquiring LMMHRs. In truth, the ethnographic interviews hint at the efficacy of a mutual process of formation wherein each participant, lay and professed, is being invited to conversion. An essential feature of that conversion must be that the parties are being convinced of the need for collaboration for the sake of mission. As lay people present themselves not only for employment but for true partnership in mission, professed Redemptorists are being invited to grow in awareness that the charism of proclaiming plentiful redemption belongs to the Church and is entrusted to the

Redemptorists. Thus, there are lay people called to this charism. They possess the heart of our nearest blood relative and are gifted for the mission of proclaiming the Good News to the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor, in the spirit of St. Alphonsus. Some of these might become LMMHRs.

This is a new awareness for the Church and for the Redemptorist family. It invites all involved to a renewed formation for life and mission. It points to the need for conversion, a turning more toward the Jesus who formed around himself a collaborative community of partners in mission, sent them out, and promised to be with them always. It points also to the necessity of a mutual formation for collaboration involving changed or transformed attitudes, skill-building, and praxis.

The ethnographic interviews reveal the danger of conflating employment and vocation. Each LMMHR interviewed suffered from this conflation. When the engagement of an LMMHR is in reality the engagement of an employee for a job, rather than the engagement of a partner for the mission (which is a much bigger reality than any one employment scenario), what happens when the job ends, or when partners change?

I explored through the ethnographic interviews what happened to two LMMHRs when a ministry setting (the ministry of preaching parish missions as established teams, constantly on the move) disappeared within the Edmonton-Toronto Province. This must prompt professed Redemptorists and lay partners in mission to a vigilant awareness that maintaining a connection in mission, rather than to any one ministry, is healthy. This wider connection is a crucial aspect of being an open community, a community that is also a curriculum, a school for all.

Formation is a lifelong process, and the ethnographic interviews acknowledge that the entire community must be engaged in ongoing discernment and open dialogue focused not on collaboration, but collaboration for the sake of mission.

The Lay Missionary and Retirement

What happens when an LMMHR retires from active ministry? Do they cease to be an LMMHR? The answer to this question might be pursued in a study of the *Constitutions and Statutes* of the CSsR. As we have already seen, the *Constitutions and Statutes* state that every Redemptorist is a missionary, whether they are active in ministry, or sick, or retired. The *Constitutions and Statutes* govern and describe the life of the professed Redemptorist; they may also be seen to inspire the life of the LMMHR. Therefore, in the spirit of the *Constitutions and Statutes*, the person might be understood to be an LMMHR even in sickness or retirement. The identity of the person, and their identification with the community and charism, need not change with retirement. Mission is a broader reality than any ministerial involvement.

Connection to the V/Province Rather Than to the Local CSsR Community

The documents of the Edmonton-Toronto Province envision an avenue of connection linking the LMMHR to the entire Province rather than to any one local community. This underlines the importance of partnership in mission for the Province. It is difficult to build such a connection, however. The question of how to incarnate the desired connection to the Province as a whole, while also providing these individuals

with a meaningful experience of home community, is an emerging area for reflection and consideration. The LMMHR may be connected to the entire CSsR and its mission, but, like any professed Redemptorist, experiences the connection in the day-to-day interaction with a local community. In this local community, support is given and received, ministry is carried out, meetings are held, and joys and sorrows are shared. It is at the local level that the practicalities of living family and social commitments must be balanced with commitments within the Redemptorist family.

I have discussed how connection with a local community is vital for a prospective LMMHRs, as it provides grounding and a sense of home. However, to keep the connection from being purely a local one, it will be important to involve the prospective LMMHR in some activities of the Province. These might include retreats, assemblies, meetings, parts of Chapter, jubilee celebrations, celebrations of religious profession, or other events.

The Guidelines for Formation of LMMHRs promulgated by the Edmonton-Toronto Province provide for two co-directors of formation. They also suggest that the LMMHR choose a companion from among the professed Redemptorists with whom they can explore experiences and insights, share stories, and learn. The guidelines could be strengthened if they were expanded to describe and recommend a more complete formation in the mission of the CSsR in a manner suited to the lives of lay people, allowing for mentorship and apprenticeship with a number of professed Redemptorists in a variety of settings.

Dimensions of the Catechumenate: Liturgical Rites and Celebrations

The third dimension of catechumenal catechesis is accomplished “by means of suitable liturgical rites, which purify the catechumens little by little and strengthen them with God’s blessing.”¹⁹⁹ This dimension speaks to the formative power of liturgy and common prayer. The participation of LMMHRs in the prayer life of the community has been a principle well-respected over the years in the formation and integration of lay partners in mission. The ethnographic interviews reveal a deep appreciation on the part of the LMMHRs for the shared prayer, particularly at larger gatherings of the community.

In the ethnographic interviews, all LMMHRs spoke with some sorrow about the difficulty of sharing prayer and faith with their local CSsR community. This difficulty is more than a scheduling issue. Once again, we are nudged to explore the impetus to conversion addressed to the whole Redemptorist community. The key issue is awareness and openness to sharing prayer with lay people. Beyond this, the prayer life of a religious community can all too easily come to revolve around the Liturgy of the Hours. The times and style of this prayer may not easily allow for the participation of lay people with varied schedules and commitments. It will thus be vital that all parties negotiate and come to agreement on times and platforms for sharing faith and prayer. This is a concrete way in which conversion can occur and community can be built in respectful and meaningful ways.

In the RCIA, presentations and frequent celebrations of the Word are valuable elements of the catechumenate. Thus, in the Period of Accompaniment of the LMMHR, reflecting on the word of God will be an important component of formation. This might

199. RCIA, 75.3.

be accomplished by reflecting as a community on the Gospel for the coming Sunday. Every preacher engages in this activity. This gathering around the Word, to share insights, reflections, and inspirations as a community of professed and lay people, might create and strengthen bonds of understanding. Bands of mission preachers most often reflect together on the Gospel passages around which a parish mission will revolve. Therefore, faith-sharing and Gospel reflection, already a feature of Redemptorist life, might be adapted for this new setting.

Presentations of symbols and significant prayers and other tangible items are a significant feature of the catechumenate. The prospective LMMHR might, at appropriate times, be presented with symbols such as volumes of the writings of St. Alphonsus, a good biography of St. Alphonsus or other Redemptorist holy ones, some traditional prayers of the community, an icon of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, icons of the Redemptorist saints, or copies of key documents of the Church or the CSsR. These presentations will differ depending on the particular experience of the prospective LMMHR and the local community, and might be celebrated to mark milestones on the journey toward commitment.

Dimensions of the Catechumenate: Apostolic Outreach and Engagement in Mission

The fourth dimension of catechumenal catechesis is apostolic outreach and service. This dimension is closely connected to the apprenticeship model discussed in detail above. The ritual text of the RCIA tells us that

since the Church's life is apostolic, catechumens should also learn how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith.²⁰⁰

As the life of the Church is apostolic, so is the life of the Redemptorist community. This certainly means that formation and focus must always be directed outward toward those on the peripheries. Paragraph 75.4 of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* depicts a formation for apostolic life that focuses not only on skills for outreach, but also on the motivation for any outreach undertaken by the community. This moving force is the lifelong task of ever more fully taking on the mind and heart of Jesus Christ or, in the words of St. Alphonsus, "continuing Christ." Paragraph 75.4 depicts the pulse of this heart as collaboration, learning "how to work actively with others to spread the Gospel and build up the Church by the witness of their lives and by professing their faith."²⁰¹ Collaboration is essentially an interconnected web of skills that can be taught and practised. Because Redemptorists view their mission of evangelization as a communal one, formation for collaboration is essential for Redemptorists and partners in mission.

This will be the key insight to reflect and build on as Redemptorists and lay partners moving forward in all forms of partnership in mission, and most especially in the continuing incorporation of LMMHRs into the Redemptorist family.

200. RCIA, 75.4.

201. Ibid.

Formation in and for Community Is a Mutual Formation

The four dimensions of catechumenal formation revolve around the community, and reflect the Church's respect for the formative power of community—not only for the catechumens but also for the community into which they are being initiated. As the Christian community forms and moulds catechumens over an extended period of time, it is also enlightened and changed by encounters with them.

This must also be true of the community of professed Redemptorists. Entering into collaboration will change the candidates. It will also change the community. The *Constitutions and Statutes* of the CSsR speak of a community of conversion: that a “conversion of heart and continual renewal of mind should characterize their whole daily life.”²⁰² Clearly, this is envisioned as more than a private, individual reality:

The community itself must similarly give expression to this same conversion, so that day by day it may give effective witness, and acquire a complete generosity which will be a worthy response to the word of God.²⁰³

The model of formation and of community that is proposed here will involve change and growth for each member of the family. Many are afraid of change, but fear is never from God.²⁰⁴ Inability to cope with change is also a major obstacle to collaboration. If Redemptorists are to forge a community capable of moving out to the peripheries together, all are called to move beyond fear and division, beyond the past to a future we create together.

202. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 41.

203. *Ibid.*

204. See 2 Timothy 1:7.

What might formation for collaboration look like in a Redemptorist context?

First, we must return to the insight that, in Redemptorist self-understanding, the concept of apostolic community means that community exists not for its own sake but for mission. Collaboration, then, similarly understood within the Redemptorist context, cannot exist for its own sake but for the sake of mission.

Second, at least some of the initial and ongoing formation *for* collaboration must be a formation *in* collaboration. We learn the skills for working with others by working with others. If we desire to form a new generation of Redemptorists and lay people who are truly partners in mission, it stands to reason that at least some of their formation, initial and ongoing, must take place together. This formation must take place not only in a classroom, but in the field as well. As the partners discover their gifts and talents together, and hone their skills, they also discover the gifts and talents of others. Through apprenticeship on the job, partners also have the opportunity to learn the skills of communication and dialogue, respect for diversity, respectful confrontation, and conflict management.

At least some of the formation of partners in mission (professed and lay) must take place together if collaboration is to become the norm. It is necessary that the formation of professed Redemptorists address issues of their distinctive vowed lifestyle, community life, and commitments. Likewise, lay partners in mission must also be offered an integral human and ministerial formation that respects and explores possibilities for creatively living their distinctive personal, family, and professional commitments with a Redemptorist flavour. The charism of evangelizing the poor and being evangelized by the

poor may be lived out as vibrantly by married or single people as by the professed religious. Differences in vocational and life choices can enrich and expand the possibilities for outreach. The vision of life-giving complementarity means that there is scope, and need, within this great mission for the gifts of members to be united, called forth, and used.

Formation for mission, then, must involve immersion and formation in at least some of the ministries that express the Redemptorist understanding of their mission in the heart of the Church. Thus, the Period of Accompaniment of the LMMHR would most appropriately involve some experience in at least a couple of the ministries and settings of Redemptorist apostolic outreach.

Diversity enriches. To welcome and celebrate diversity is also challenging. In opening itself to the incorporation of lay men and women of various ethnicities and cultures, backgrounds, ecclesiologies, preferences, gifts and capacities, the richness of a Redemptorist family is realized. However, some theological reflection and faith-sharing would be of benefit to all partners in this growth process.

The ethnographic interviews indicate that the respondents felt that LMMHRs should, at the bare minimum, be partners in discussions around those apostolic priorities set by the Congregation and in which they are personally engaged. If qualified, professional, dedicated lay partners are to be recruited and retained, they must be accorded the respect of being consulted in decisions that directly affect them.

The ethnographic interviews also reveal that a major stumbling block for the early LMMHRs was that no alternative was provided when they desired or required a change

in ministerial setting. This experience was shared by all three LMMHRs. In each situation, the unwillingness of the Redemptorist community to explore possibilities for future ministry resulted in unnecessary endings. Eventually, for this very reason, two LMMHRs walked away from the category, and the other worked through significant grief and feelings of betrayal. She remained in relationship with, though not employed by, the CSsR.

With respectful listening and open dialogue, and a more effective formation process, these experiences of grief and disillusionment might have been ameliorated. A more collaborative path forward lies within the insights of a number of internal Redemptorist documents—LMMHRs should be consulted on some of the apostolic priorities of the unit, particularly those which directly affect them. And, most certainly, there must be joint discernment around personal futures.

Another area for future reflection and action has to do with whether the LMMHR must be or should be employed by the CSsR. Early experiences focused on employment by the CSsR as normative. The ethnographic interviews, however, reveal that there may be many ways of living this form of partnership in mission. Perhaps a more fruitful vision is one in which there are varieties of scenarios. Some LMMHRs may be employed long-term with the CSsR. Others may move in and out of contractual arrangements. Yet others may be employed by other agencies but connected to the CSsR by their mutual sense of charism and commitment. Still others may be retired or otherwise not employed by the CSsR, but giving of their time and talent on a voluntary basis. It is also possible that a

formation more focused on mission than specific ministries and more focused on engagement in an apostolic community than employment might also be more fruitful.

Rite of Election: Re-envisioned as a Ritual or Indication of Affirmation

In the RCIA, discernment is ongoing throughout the catechumenate. Once a summary discernment has taken place and the community, in dialogue with the catechumen, has discerned that this person is called and suitably formed for discipleship, the Rite of Election is celebrated. From this point on, it is presumed that any necessary discernment has taken place. The character of this next period then shifts from discernment to retreat.

In the context of the Redemptorist family, some analogous celebration would signify that the community “elects” or chooses those who, having walked the path of the Period of Accompaniment, are acknowledged to have the dispositions that render them ready to make a commitment as LMMHRs.²⁰⁵ They are elected to be sent. In the RCIA, this celebration signifies that they

have undergone a conversion in mind and action and . . . have developed a sufficient acquaintance with Christian teaching as well as a spirit of faith and charity.²⁰⁶

With “deliberate will and enlightened faith,”²⁰⁷ they indicate their intent to make a commitment, and the community accepts this indication with affirmation of the

205. RCIA, 106.

206. Ibid., 107.

207. Ibid.

individual and of their willingness to walk with this person toward initiation. In the RCIA, the bishop or his delegate declares the Church's approval of the candidate.²⁰⁸ This represents the approval and support of the entire People of God. In the Redemptorist context, this points to the fact that the entire community must be aware of and support the incorporation of the new LMMHR into the family. At the analogous ritual, the Provincial Superior or his delegate might indicate approval.

Period of Enlightenment: Re-envisioned as a Retreat Prior to Commitment

The Period of Enlightenment is the only period within the RCIA that is of a prescribed length. It is to last for the Season of Lent and conclude with the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. The character of this period is that of "intense spiritual preparation," during which the community surrounds the elect with prayer, accompanies them intentionally, and walks with them toward initiation.²⁰⁹

The LMMHR's immediate preparation for commitment might take the form of a retreat, possibly undertaken in the company of the Redemptorist community. Undertaking such a spiritual preparation in the days or weeks immediately before the celebration of commitment mirrors the experience of professed Redemptorists who undertake a retreat in preparation for final profession of vows.

Once again, this retreat must respect the lay character of the LMMHR. For many religious, the retreat before final profession takes the form of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, and spans thirty days or more. For some professed Redemptorists,

208. Ibid., 109.

209. Ibid., 108.

this retreat takes the form of a pilgrimage to the holy sites associated with St. Alphonsus and the early Redemptorists.

However, many religious choose or are offered a shorter retreat before profession of vows. For lay people, a longer retreat may not be possible, but a shorter retreat is almost always possible. In these days of rapid technological advancement, a retreat could even be offered at home, linking the prospective LMMHR with others or with a director by Skype or other web-based technology.

Initiation: Re-envisioned as Celebration of Commitment

In the RCIA, the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation takes place at the Easter Vigil. Easter is the high point of the Church year and celebrates the event that Christians understand to be the decisive moment in salvation history, when Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The Edmonton-Toronto Province guidelines for LMMHRs recommend that the commitment of LMMHRs be celebrated in the context of a liturgy at a gathering of the Redemptorist community. This underlines the understanding that the LMMHR is related to the entire CSsR community, and thus the commitment is made by both the LMMHR and as many representatives of the province as possible.

Period of Mystagogy: Re-envisioned as a Period of Integration

There is a temptation to view initiation as the completion of the process, and it is, in many ways, for the person is now incorporated into Christ and becomes a missionary

disciple within a community of missionary disciples. However, the RCIA offers yet one final period through which the incorporation of the individual is accomplished.

During the Period of Mystagogy, the community accompanies and reflects with the neophyte²¹⁰ on the word of God. Though the Period of Mystagogy is to take as long as necessary, the seven weeks of Easter are a vital time to reflect on the experience of initiation or commitment and, together, ponder the meaning of this initiation and discern what the Holy Spirit has in store. The community reflects together on the movement of God in the new life that has been given to all. They also discern together the forms of apostolic outreach through which the needs of the world might meet the gifts and capacities of the neophyte.

Adapting the Period of Mystagogy might offer a great deal to the Redemptorist family in the process of forming members for mission and incorporating LMMHRs. Commitment changes things, as we saw in the experience of the early LMMHRs. This same dynamic happens with new Christians after celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation. The Redemptorist community, learning from this experience, might wisely incorporate a mystagogical catechesis as follow-up to commitment. This would be offered to both the LMMHRs and to the professed Redemptorists, for all are changed by the integration of new members into the family. In the Redemptorist context, mystagogical catechesis might take the form of weekly or biweekly theological reflection with the local community. This might include reflection on the word of God in light of the experience of celebrating commitment and now experiencing the realities of life

210. A term used in the RCIA to describe the newly initiated.

within that commitment. Together, the professed Redemptorists and LMMHRs might place their reflections on the Gospel in dialogue with their experiences of their daily living of apostolic community.

Summary

I began this chapter with one important question: for what purpose does the Redemptorist family recruit, invite, and engage Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer? Put more simply, what is the goal of formation? The CSsR recruits, invites and engages LMMHRs to be full and active partners in the mission of evangelization. Since the goal of the process is integration into mission, I have chosen to design a formation process entitled “Growing into Mission.” Lay partners extend the reach of the professed members of the community, empowering outreach to people and in places where professed members might not ordinarily walk. Lay partners sometimes follow vocational, employment, and recreational paths that open up new and exciting possibilities for extending the work of evangelization. The goal of formation, then, must be to equip and empower these missionary disciples to take up their mission in the spirit of St. Alphonsus.

The Church forms missionary disciples through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Through an adapted catechumenal process that is gradual and complete in its coverage, solidly supported by celebrations of the Word, aimed toward missionary conversion and characterized by apprenticeship, the RCIA offers a model for the formation of LMMHRs. Such a process might capitalize on the best experiences of the

early LMMHRs, as captured through the ethnographic interviews, and renew the process of formation with fresh insight and praxis rooted in the best tradition.

One element of wisdom the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults might offer is that formation and conversion affect and transform not only the candidate, but also the entire community. It is the vision of the RCIA that the entire community forms missionary disciples, and therefore the entire community must be engaged in the process of apprenticing them into the way of life, prayer, and mission of the community. Adopting such a model in the Redemptorist context offers the possibility of the entire community being more involved in the formation process and the engagement of committed LMMHRs in mission.

The strengths of this model lie in its fidelity to the wisdom of the tradition of the Church, the wisdom of its vision of formation in and for community through apprenticeship, and the way it allows sufficient time, discernment, and formation for all—lay and professed alike—to walk together into a new understanding of the prophetic work in which they are engaged.

Redemptorists, in their *Constitutions and Statutes*, affirm that they

hold in high esteem the different forms of missionary activity born of the missionary zeal of the members in the past, in their efforts to meet the needs of various places. Likewise, in time to come the Congregation will adopt any new form which, in its judgment, corresponds to its pastoral charity.²¹¹

I began with the question, “What is the goal of formation for the LMMHR?” I then saw the need to ask the companion question, “What are we forming the professed community for?” The answer, as elaborated through this project/ dissertation, is that we

211. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 16.

are forming all for collaboration in the great work of missionary outreach done in a Redemptorist key. If this is an insight to be pursued, then the Redemptorist family might most wisely turn for guidance to the manner in which the Church forms missionary disciples, growing into mission together.

CONCLUSION

The vocation of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer is to be a member of the Redemptorist family. The LMMHR is a lay member of the faithful who is called, gifted, and sent into the world to evangelize the poor and be evangelized by the poor in the spirit of St. Alphonsus Liguori. The LMMHR engages in ways that are complementary to, though not always the same as, those of the professed members of the family.

First, the answer emerges from experience. The ethnographic interviews analyzed in chapter 3 clearly point to the reality of a call from God, experienced in and through life experience and ratified by the Church and the Redemptorist communities. This call inexorably draws some individuals, both lay and ordained, toward the charism of the Redemptorist family and the mission of proclaiming Good News among the most abandoned.

Second, the answer arises from history. Throughout Redemptorist history, even before there were professed Redemptorists, lay people partnered with St. Alphonsus in the mission of evangelizing the poor in the streets of Naples. Throughout Redemptorist history, there has been a constant pattern of forms of lay partnership in this mission. Such forms have been born and died time and time again, and have arisen in countless places and times over the centuries. Redemptorists have almost always had difficulty sustaining these partnerships. However, the constant re-emergence of such partnerships may be interpreted as evidence of the persistence of God.

Third, the answer arises from reflection on Scripture. In particular, this reflection pertains to the Biblical images of the Jesus who proclaims, in Luke 4, “I came to bring Good News to the poor,” and the go’el, the Redeemer or the “nearest blood relative” of Job, chapter 19. The God who took human flesh in Bethlehem out of love for humanity continues to take on human form and chooses in a particular way to walk with the poor and most abandoned. “For God, Heaven is the human heart.”²¹²

Fourth, the answer arises from several fields of theological study. Charisms are properly understood not as the property of a religious community, but as gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out abundantly into the world and enfleshed in the lives of people who may be either lay or ordained. The ethnographic interviews reveal threads of charism that can be followed back to childhood in the lives of the early LMMHRs of the Edmonton-Toronto Province.

In this project/dissertation, I explored a practical understanding of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist, Sacraments of Initiation that bind Christians together and to Christ. Through them, all Christians are missionaries, sent forth as ambassadors of Good News into a world where God is already at work. We learn to be disciples and ambassadors for Christ through apprenticeship.

I have articulated a theology and ecclesiology to creatively express how the LMMHR is bound to the Redemptorist family, initiated, formed, and sent forth. I offered here a model of formation for LMMHRs rooted in and inspired by the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and the dynamics of the catechumenate. This model for more

212. Attributed to St. Alphonsus Liguori.

effective collaboration in mission must be provided for both the prospective LMMHRs and the professed Redemptorists.

The ethnographic interviews reveal that by 2015 the establishment of LMMHRs within the Edmonton-Toronto Province had come to a virtual standstill, with only one of the original LMMHRs still active, and no others involved. The interviews reveal the depths of their pain and disillusionment. The LMMHRs felt that they had been misled and let down. Their expectations of their relationship with, and their roles within, the community of professed Redemptorists were certainly unclear. Unclear expectations commonly lead to disappointment and often lead to inappropriate assessment and faulty evaluations.

The ethnographic interviews hint at the importance of formation for collaboration and a collaborative formation for mission. One of the identifiable sources of misunderstanding was the emphasis placed on collaboration as an end in itself, rather than on collaboration for the sake of mission. Thus, Chapter 5 focused on possibilities offered by a formation based on apprenticeship that would be offered to both professed Redemptorists and prospective LMMHRs.

The ethnographic interviews also reveal how commitment changes many things. Thus, any formation for mission must incorporate a mystagogical dimension, empowering all parties into enter into ongoing reflection on the experience of living in the light of commitments made, explored, lived, and honoured.

There is great hesitation in Redemptorist circles when it comes to speaking about the emerging vocation of the LMMHR within the Redemptorist family. I believe

we can discern in the ethnographic interviews a “sign of the times.” The specific contribution made by the laity in the Redemptorist charism and to the Redemptorist mission might be through their immersion in the everyday world of ordinary life, economic concerns, raising of family, and so on. Living and giving voice to this reality within the Redemptorist family might open up greater awareness of the need for complementarity between vowed Redemptorists and committed lay people. It might also open new possibilities for missionary activity.

A Way Forward

The *Final Document of the XXI General Chapter* urges

[that the units experiment with] new models of community. This search must be done with creative fidelity: fidelity to the genuine Redemptorist tradition and a spirit of openness to the signs of the times.²¹³

One direction to ponder is how open the Congregation is to experimenting with the possibilities of apostolic community life with the LMMHRs. In the creation of this new model in the Congregation, and in the relationships being forged between professed members and LMMHRs, a new and exciting face of evangelical life may be being born among us. Christians are urged, in every era, to discern the signs of the Holy Spirit, and to be ever more attentive to what may be happening in their midst.

The XXII General Chapter encouraged Redemptorists to

ensure that there are support systems and structures in every community which promote community and personal prayer, common celebration of

213. XXI General Chapter *Final Document*, #28.

the Eucharist, community recreation, community meetings for faith-sharing and pastoral planning.²¹⁴

This is the rhythm of Redemptorist apostolic life—prayer, ministry, work, solitude, review of life, rest, and relaxation. Members of the Redemptorist family learn to live as an apostolic community by living as an apostolic community. But all partners must be committed to walking together. As Redemptorists and lay partners in mission begin to experiment and move beyond the confines of comfortable employer-employee relationships and friendships, they may learn that what unites them is more important than what divides. In this, the Redemptorist family may offer hope and possibility to the wider Church.

We read in the final message from the XXII General Chapter that Redemptorist communities are encouraged to be “more open to welcome and integrate lay people in our lives, while respecting the identities of both lay people and Redemptorists.”²¹⁵ The LMMHR cannot be an outsider. In order for this dream to become reality, all parties must commit to building open communities that provide for and foster the distinctive character of lay and ordained, vowed and otherwise committed, men and women. Here we must, together, begin to articulate an understanding of the ways in which the vowed and lay members of the Redemptorist family share one missionary vocation and one lens of charism, but nonetheless embody complementary gifts, skills, incarnations, and primary arenas of missionary activity.

214. Ibid, #3.2.

215. Ibid, #3.

In the process of engaging in a renewed effort to live as an apostolic community together, professed Redemptorists and committed LMMHRs may quite possibly find that they are revitalized in their vocation and that the way they live it will continue to draw men and women of all ages to the Redemptorist way of life and mission.

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APPENDIX A

DRAFT LETTER OF CONSENT

XXX,
XXX,
XXX

April 28, 2013

Dear _____:

I am pursuing studies toward the Doctor of Ministry degree at St. Stephen's College, Edmonton. As part of my program, I am required to engage in a major research project which explores some area of ministry, and then to write a project/dissertation relating and interpreting the fruit of my research. I have chosen to enter into, reflect on, analyze, and interpret an ethnographic study of the former, current, and prospective Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer in the Edmonton-Toronto Province of the Redemptorists.

My purpose in entering into this research project, and the subsequent project/dissertation that I will write, is to explore, reflect on, come to greater understanding of, and make a contribution toward answering one fundamental research question:

What is the vocation of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer
Within the Redemptorist "Family"?

The Purpose for the Study

Using the research methodology of *Ethnography*, collecting data through a series of *Ethnographic Interviews* and *observation*, I hope to gain insight and understanding of the experience of being a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer, the difficulties, the inherent challenges and the hopes, in greater depth, and with greater quality and clarity than I could achieve by employing techniques such as questionnaires. Ethnography really is the study of a culture. LMMHRs constitute a small culture within the larger culture of the "family" of Redemptorists within the Edmonton-Toronto Province, within the "family" that is Redemptorists in Canada, and also within the much wider culture of Redemptorists in our world.

You are well aware, and I fully disclose here, that I am a current Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer and thus, for the purposes of this study, I identify myself as a "participant-observer." My insights, experiences, learnings, joys and challenges will be plumbed along with yours in the course of this study. In the course of the interview process, I will explore the world and the culture of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer associated with the Edmonton-Toronto Province. I will encourage former,

current and prospective LMMHRs to share their experiences and their stories, to reflect on these and illuminate themes that emerge from these stories. My secondary hope is that, in this process, I will gain some clarity as to what a formation process for future LMMHRs might look like. In addition, I hope to gain insight as to how the Redemptorist community might be formed for this emerging expression of collaboration.

The Method: How We Will Proceed

I intend to gather data through two interviews. The first interview will be conducted face-to-face, and will be recorded in audio format only. I anticipate that the interview will take about ninety (90) minutes. Though I anticipate our conversation ranging over a wide area, we will begin with one broad question. You will be asked to explore and respond to this question:

- When you reflect on your experience of being a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer, what comes to mind for you?

The second interview, which may or may not prove necessary, will be conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone. If this interview does prove necessary, its purpose would be to pursue some point which was not followed in the initial interview, or to seek greater detail, explanation or clarification on some point.

Following each interview, I will transcribe the questions and the answers. I will send you a printed copy of the transcript of each interview.

During the period of research, audio files will be kept in a locked cabinet. These will be destroyed after the project/dissertation has been published. There will be one digital file, one back-up digital file, and one printed copy of each transcript. Digital files will be stored in an electronic file on a password-protected computer which is in my private possession. No other person has access to this computer. The printed copies of transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in my personal office. The transcript will serve only as “raw data,” and will not be shared with others in that form. Tapes and transcripts will be kept for five (5) years, and then destroyed.

Respecting the trust that you have placed in me as a researcher in agreeing to be part of this process, and fully recognizing your vulnerability, given the small number of LMMHRs in this study, I will do my utmost to cause no harm to you. I will be pulling out threads of experience that arise from the interviews. I will be highlighting the transcripts for common experiences or insights, key areas of learning, of joy and disillusionment. No direct quotes will be attributed to any respondents. I will share with you my summaries, synopses, analysis and recommendations. I will seek your responses, insights, and feedback on these before the final draft of the project/dissertation is complete.

I foresee that, subsequent to the publication of this project/dissertation, I might be asked to share the findings in presentations, particularly within the Redemptorist “family.” In that event, I assure you that the same ethical standards stated earlier in this letter will apply.

Rights

As a participant in this research project, you have certain rights. These include:

- The right to confidentiality
- The right to opt out at any point in the process without penalty
- Should you opt out, you have the right to have data gleaned from your interview/s destroyed or returned and not included in the study
- The right to receive a copy of your interview transcript
- The right to be made aware of my summaries, synopses, analysis and recommendations, which will flow from our interview and my reflection upon it

Should you require further information

You may wish to speak with the Chair of my Project/Dissertation Committee, Margaret B. Clark, D. Min. Her e-mail is: mclark2@ualberta.ca.

I assure you that all research, analysis, distribution and publication of the data gleaned from this process will be carried out as stated in this letter. No deception is involved.

Please indicate your willingness to take part in the interview process by signing and dating this letter and the duplicate attached. You may retain one copy for your files. Please return one copy to me in the envelope provided.

Should you have any questions or require more information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me. I thank you for your generous assistance and willingness to take part in this project.

Sincerely,

Anne M. Walsh, B.A. (Ed.), Dip. F.A., M.R.E., D.Min. (cand.)

.....

Statement of Consent

I agree to participate in the research project outlined above, and signify my consent by placing my signature on this form.

Participant's Name: _____

Phone: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE ETHNOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS USED IN THE COURSE OF THE INTERVIEW

“Grand Tour” Questions

- As you reflect on your experience of being a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer, what comes up for you?
- What is the vocation of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer?
- What has been your experience of following the call of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer?
- How did you become a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer?
- To you, what is a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer?

“Mini Grand Tour” Questions

- What do you do as a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer?
- What formation did you receive in order to become a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer?
- What did your apprenticeship as an LMMHR look like?
- Describe the relationship between the vowed Redemptorists and yourself as an LMMHR.
- Describe a typical experience of a Parish Mission.
- Take me through a typical colloquium.
- Describe your most recent experience of a Parish Mission.
- Describe some of the ways of being involved as an LMMHR.
- What is the job of the Commission for Partnership in Mission?
- What happens in formation for LMMHRs?
- What happened in your own formation?
- Describe initial formation.
- What were some good aspects of the formation you received?
- What were some of the things that you think were missing from your formation?
- What ongoing formation did you receive as an LMMHR?
- Describe your most moving experience as an LMMHR.
- Describe an experience of pain or disillusionment as an LMMHR.
- When was your most recent colloquium with the Provincial? What happened?

“Guided Mini-Tour” Questions

- What happens at a Parish Mission?
- What happens at a Redemptorist Chapter?
- What happens at a Redemptorist Assembly?
- Take me through an experience of being at Chapter.
- Take me through how a Mission Team prepares the talks and activities of a

mission.

- Describe a moving experience you have had as a member of a Parish Mission Team.
- Walk me through an experience of formation you received.

“Native language” Questions

- What is an LMMHR?
- Describe the difference between you and a Redemptorist Associate.
- What did you do at the Second Novitiate?
- What is a Province?
- What do you do on the provincial Commission for Partnership in Mission?
- Describe what happens when you are part of a Provincial Visitation.
- What is the Grand Sermon?
- What happens at a visitation?
- How often do you have to deal with the Provincial Council?

“Hypothetical Interaction” Questions

- What would happen if the Provincial asked you to serve on the Commission for Partnership in Mission?
- What would happen if you were to be included as a member of a mission preaching band?
- Could the Redemptorists ask you to work in one of their parishes?

APPENDIX C

KEY TERMS IN THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer: Founded by St. Alphonsus, a clerical missionary religious institute of pontifical right, its purpose 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’.”²¹⁶

Charism: A gift of the Holy Spirit, given to the Church for the good of the People of God, often exercised in a particular and distinctive way by a community of professed religious and their lay partners, associates, or affiliates.

Commitment: The term used to describe both the affiliation of the LMMHR and the ritual through which they become an LMMHR.

Communicanda: A letter from a General Superior or General Council to the worldwide community of Redemptorists. These *Communicanda* are relatively rare and their pronouncements are considered significant, next in priority and perceived weight after the Final Documents or Statements of General Chapters.

Formation: The process of becoming a full and active member of any religious community. It is envisioned as having three distinct aspects: initial formation (leading to

216. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 1.

initial commitment, usually for a predetermined length of time); formation that leads to permanent or long-term commitment; and ongoing or lifelong formation, accommodated to the ongoing needs of the individual and the community.

General Chapter: A legislative and visioning body, comprising elected members representing each unit (Province, Vice-province, or region) of any religious community. Chapter meets for an agreed-upon period of time and, while it sits, is the highest authority within the order. In the Redemptorist context, the General Chapter is convoked every six years (a “sexennium”). Each unit also convokes a Chapter, usually for a six-year term. As communities diminish in number, Chapters sometimes morph from comprising elected representatives to inviting the entire membership to participate.

Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer: An active co-worker and participant in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist Congregation, a category established by the XXI General Chapter in 1991.

Partnership in Mission: A term usually preferred, in Redemptorist circles, to *collaboration*, although this is not a universal preference due to the diversity of languages used in the Congregation at the worldwide level. The word *collaboration* does not exist in some languages, and has negative connotations in others. Similarly, the word *partnership* may have varied meanings in different cultural contexts.

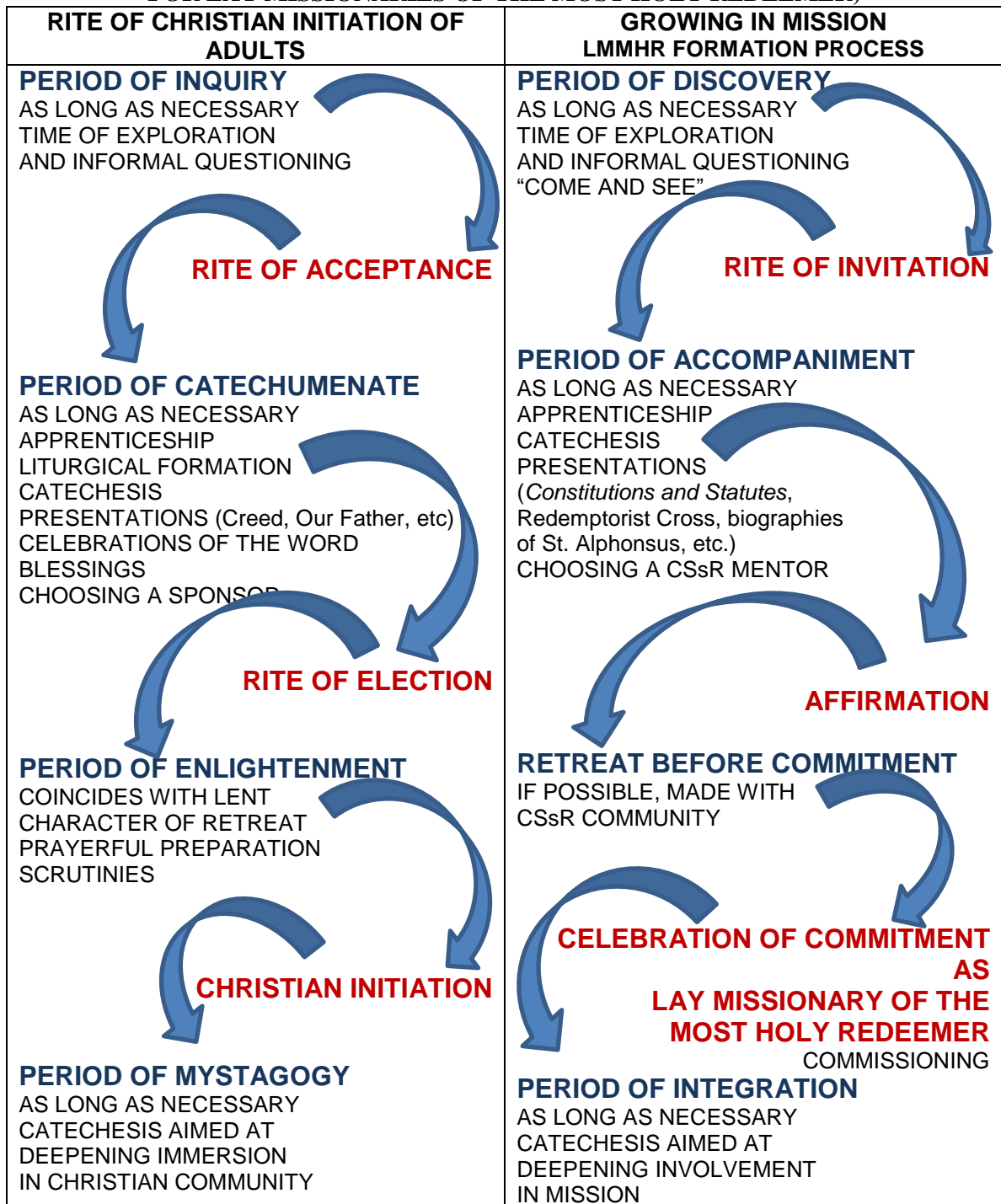
Redemptorist: A professed member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Redemptorist “family”: A way of describing the concentric circles of belonging unified by a vision of apostolic community sharing the charism of evangelization of the most abandoned, particularly the materially poor. This family might be understood to include professed Redemptorist priests and brother, LMMHRs, Redemptorist Associates, Redemptorist Oblates, and others, depending on the local reality.

Religious Profession (vows, evangelical counsels): The public profession of the traditional three vows (or “evangelical counsels”) of celibate chastity, poverty, and obedience. Redemptorists also profess a fourth vow: the vow and oath of perseverance.

Vocation: From the Latin meaning “to call.” The Roman Catholic understanding is that God calls each person to holiness and fullness of life. In earlier times, the basic forms of vocation were priesthood, religious life, married life, and committed single life. In recent times, nuance has been added to these four, and new understandings and forms are emerging.

APPENDIX D
COMPARATIVE CHART
RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS AND GROWING INTO MISSION
(PROPOSED PROCESS OF FORMATION
FOR LAY MISSIONARIES OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER)



**APPENDIX E
CURRENT NORMS
OF THE EDMONTON-TORONTO PROVINCE
LAY MISSIONARIES OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER**

Approved by EPC on June 22, 2004

PREAMBLE

The “Redemptorist family” includes people connected to the Redemptorists in a variety of ways. In the Edmonton-Toronto Province “we have engaged in many different models and forms of association and collaboration: Parish Mission Team, SERVE, Youth Mission Team, Dialogues, Liguori Circles, Saskatoon Associates, Centre for Growth, Bioethics Consultancy, and in our Parish Ministry.” (Vision Statement, Provincial Chapter, April 1997)

Descriptions of some forms of association:

Friends and Benefactors are those who support the Redemptorists, their mission and ministry through their friendship, their encouragement and/or their financial aid.

Co-workers are volunteers and salaried persons who minister or work in a Redemptorist environment, and who may or may not necessarily share the charism or feel drawn to pursue any deeper form of connection or association.

Redemptorist Associates are those who, having participated in a process of formation, are enrolled for a period of one year as Redemptorist Associates. This enrolment may be renewed annually. Associates meet regularly for faith-sharing and ongoing formation in areas of Redemptorist charism and spirituality, and may share in some aspect of the Redemptorist Mission.

Oblates are envisioned in the *Constitutions and Statutes* as “helpers for our apostolate... either temporary or permanent” (C&S #02), however over time this designation has come to mean an honour bestowed by the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer to recognize the longstanding service of an associate, co-worker or employee. In our Province, the term “Honourary Redemptorist” has been used as a designation within this category.

Employees are people employed by Redemptorists in some specific apostolate. They may or may not share the spirit of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Their contribution to the Redemptorist family lies in their willingness to contribute their professional expertise through Redemptorist agencies, ministries and services to the Church.

I. IDENTITY

A. Description of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer

“Established by the XXI General Chapter, the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer constitute the fullest expression of collaboration and participation (i.e. partnership) of the laity in the apostolic life of the Congregation.” (1995 *Communicanda* 4, #39)

B. Mission of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer

Specific to Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is a “closer collaboration in the *apostolic* life of the Redemptorist community.” (*Communicanda* 4, #30) The very purpose of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is to participate in the Redemptorist mission “to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor” (*Constitution* 1). “Their service to the church proceeds from their relationship to the Congregation.” (1992 Report of the General Secretariat for Lay Collaboration)

C. Eligible Candidates

Those who desire to become Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer are members of the faithful who

- are mature in the Christian life
- are at least twenty-five years of age
- are attracted to the charism of St. Alphonsus as it is lived out in the Redemptorist community
- have adequate previous experience and education for ministry
- have had a time of closer contact with Redemptorists
- are committed to carrying out the Redemptorist mission as lay people “whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives and through these very situations” (*Communicanda* 4, #43/*Lumen Gentium* #41)

D. Admission

1. Application is made to one of the chairs of the Lay Collaboration Commission, usually after consultation with the superior of a local Redemptorist community.
2. The Lay Missionary Formation Team, on the advice of the co-chairs of the Commission for Partnership in Mission, accepts candidates to begin their formation as Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer.

II. FORMATION

The Edmonton-Toronto Province in collaboration with the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer shall establish a team to be responsible for the formation of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer. This team will include both professed

Redemptorists and Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer.

A. Formation of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer

1. Initial Formation

a. “The first person responsible for formation is the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer himself or herself. They must above all be concerned about developing unceasingly their human and Christian formation according to their specific vocational choices and professional responsibility.” (*Communicanda* 4, #59)

b. The Lay Missionary Formation Team will develop a formation program which includes personal spiritual formation, formation in the Redemptorist charism, and apostolic formation and integration.

2. Ongoing Formation

Recognizing that formation is a life-long process, Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will find opportunities to continue their own formation and will avail themselves of opportunities provided by the Redemptorists.

B. Formation of the Redemptorist Community for Collaboration

Since the Redemptorist community itself needs to be formed for this new style of collaboration with the laity on a basis of equal partnership, Redemptorists will be afforded opportunities to assist them in this collaboration.

III. COMMITMENT AND RENEWAL

A. Commitment

1. Having completed the initial formation program, the candidate makes application in writing to the Provincial Superior to be received as a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer.
2. After consulting with the Lay Missionary Formation Team the Provincial Superior responds to the application.
3. The Commitment Rite takes place during a Liturgy of the Eucharist when Redemptorists are gathered.
4. The Provincial Superior or his Delegate accepts the commitment.
5. A certificate of commitment will be signed by the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer and by the Provincial or his Delegate.
6. A copy of the commitment document will be sent to the Redemptorist General Government.
7. The initial commitment is for one year.

B. Renewal

1. Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer who wish to renew their

commitment make application in writing to the Provincial Superior.

After consultation with the Program Director, the Local Redemptorist Superior, and the Provincial Council, the Provincial responds.

2. At first, commitment is renewed annually; after time, in individual cases, commitment might be renewed for a longer period.

3. The renewal of commitment is accepted by the Local Redemptorist Superior or his Delegate.

4. The Redemptorist General Government is informed of the renewal.

C. Departure

1. A person may cease to be a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer

- by not renewing the commitment
- by mutual agreement between the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Redemptorists at any time.

2. The Redemptorist General Government will be informed of the departure of a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer.

IV. PARTICIPATION IN REDEMPTORIST LIFE

“The concrete ways and means of collaboration and participation of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community... [will] be planned in such a way that they in fact respect and promote the religious character of the Redemptorist community and the lay condition of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer to their mutual enrichment.” (*Communicanda* 4, #51 & 52)

A. Local Community

1. The Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer and the members of the local Redemptorist community, through dialogue, will determine the concrete ways in which the lay missionaries will participate in the life of the local community. The discussion will include such matters as common prayer, sharing in significant occasions of the “family life” of the community, and recreational activities.

2. A similar discussion will take place about the role of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer in the pastoral projects of the community.

B. Province

Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer also participate in the apostolic community life of the Province.

1. Generally, Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will be invited to join in Provincial retreats and assemblies, and they may be invited to appropriate parts of Provincial Chapters.
2. Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will be appropriately involved in discernment, decision-making and evaluation regarding the realization of the Pastoral Plan of the Province.

C. Meetings of Lay Missionaries

“Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer shall periodically hold meetings among themselves for mutual help, sharing of experiences and exchange of information.”
(*Communicanda* 4, #61)

V. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SECURITY CONCERNS

When a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer actually ministers with and is employed by the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorists will ensure that there is also a contract in conformity with civil law to address economic and social security concerns (e.g. benefits, disability, pension...).

Appendix 1: Commitment Ritual and Formula

Appendix 2: Renewal Ritual and Formula

Note: *As these norms are further developed, especially under the aspect of formation, we will need to be sensitive to the fact that some Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will be married. The relationship of the Province to spouses who are not also Lay Missionaries will need to be clarified.*

APPENDIX F
CURRENT PROCESS OF THE
EDMONTON-TORONTO PROVINCE
FORMATION OF LAY MISSIONARIES OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER

PREAMBLE

Specific to Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is a “closer collaboration in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community” (*Communicanda* 4, #30) The very purpose of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is to participate in the Redemptorist mission “to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor...” (*Constitution* 1) “Their service to the church proceeds from their relationship to the Congregation.” (1992 Report of the General Secretariat for Lay Collaborators)

PHILOSOPHY OF FORMATION FOR LMMHR

Given that the very purpose of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is to participate in the Redemptorist mission “to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor...” (*Constitution* 1) and that “their service to the church proceeds from their relationship to the Congregation” (1992 Report of the General Secretariat for Lay Collaborators), the formation of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer has three principal facets:

1. Personal and spiritual formation
2. Formation within the Redemptorist charism and,
3. Formation for collaborative ministry.

The formation process of any prospective Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer is a dynamic interplay of the individual’s own responsibility, the action of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and the activity of the Holy Spirit, working in the person and in the CSsR Therefore, it is true that, by incorporating an individual into the Redemptorist family as a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer, the community acknowledges that it has something of value to share with these lay persons, and accepts the privilege and responsibility of forming them in the Redemptorist charism, spirituality and approach to apostolic community in order that they might be fruitful partners in Redemptorist life and ministry insofar as this is possible and desired by both parties.

FOSTERING THE VOCATION OF THE LMMHR

I. The role and involvement of RYVM

- Young Adult Ministry
- Vocation Ministry

RYVM has a key role to play in the discernment and fostering of all vocations to and within the Redemptorist family. Young people may meet Redemptorists and experience a call to their way of life and ministry through parish ministry, S.E.R.V.E, youth and young

adult retreats and missions, Liguori Circles and personal encounters. Time spent being formed in the Redemptorist charism and forming relationships with Redemptorists through Liguori Circles and S.E.R.V.E may form an element of the Inquiry Period.

II. The role and involvement of the Commission for Partnership in Mission

The role of the Commission for Partnership in Mission is to encourage and foster the many forms of connection between Redemptorists and lay people. The Commission for Partnership in Mission oversees the promotion of the LMMHR vocation. It is to one of the co-chairs of the province's Commission for Partnership in Mission that prospective LMMHRs make written application for admission to the formation process.

Adults may meet Redemptorists and experience a call to their way of life and ministry through parish ministry, missions, circles of Redemptorist Associates and personal encounters. Time spent being formed in the Redemptorist charism and forming relationships with Redemptorists through circles of Redemptorist Associates will ordinarily form an element of the Inquiry Period.

STAGES OF FORMATION OF LMMHRS

I. INQUIRY

1. Characteristics of potential Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer

Those who desire to become Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer are members of the faithful who

- are mature in the Christian life
- are in good standing in the Catholic Church
- are at least twenty-five years of age
- are attracted to the charism of St. Alphonsus as it is lived out in the Redemptorist community
- have adequate previous experience and education for ministry
- have had a time of closer contact with Redemptorists
- are committed to carrying out the Redemptorist mission as lay people "whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives and through these very situations" (*Communicanda* 4, #43/*Lumen Gentium* #41)

2. What does the Inquiry period involve?

The period of Inquiry involves informal contact between the prospective Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer and a local Redemptorist community. This period is of no fixed duration, and can take as long as desired or necessary. A Redemptorist or Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer in the local community may act as mentor for the inquirer. It would be important, however, for the entire local community to have opportunities to meet with the inquirer, begin to form relationships and even work together for limited terms or on short-

term projects or initiatives. The inquirer might be invited to meals with the local community, to meetings of the circle of Redemptorist Associates, to community days of reflection or retreat or to share in some experiences of ministry.

Time spent being formed in the Redemptorist charism and forming relationships with Redemptorists through Liguori Circles, S.E.R.V.E. and/or circles of Redemptorist Associates will ordinarily form an element of the Inquiry Period.

The agenda for the Inquiry Period should be very much needs-based, centred on the questions and learning needs of the inquirer and the apostolic needs of the local situation. It is entirely possible that the inquirer would be someone who has had a long connection with Redemptorists in life and ministry. The needs of such a person would be quite different from those of someone with limited experience or knowledge of Redemptorists.

3. Preparation for Initial Formation

A central aspect of the Inquiry Period is discernment. Discernment is two-sided. The inquirer takes the time, effort and prayer to discern a potential call to be a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer. The Redemptorist community also takes the time, effort and prayer to discern whether the inquirer is a suitable candidate for Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer. Some possible questions to use as a focus for discernment include:

- i. What gifts, skills, talents and strengths does the inquirer possess?
- ii. What formation or training for ministry has the inquirer received or taken advantage of?
- iii. How does the inquirer experience a call to apostolic community, given their character as lay person?
- iv. What draws the inquirer to the Redemptorists?
- v. What role does prayer play in the life of the inquirer?
- vi. Does the inquirer have the capacity to minister in a collaborative environment?
- vii. What are the hopes and expectations of the inquirer?
- viii. What needs regarding formation does the person articulate?
- ix. How healthy and well-developed is the person in terms of human maturity and their growth process?
- x. Is the inquirer able to form, build and sustain healthy relationships with persons of both genders?
- xi. What is the nature of the inquirer's family of origin? Are there family issues which have not been attended to and which, if left unresolved, would hamper healthy, wholistic development?

II. THE ADMISSION PROCESS

1. Application is made in writing to one of the co-chairs of the Commission for

Partnership in Mission, usually after consultation with the superior of a local Redemptorist community.

2. One of the co-chairs of the Commission for Partnership in Mission conducts an interview with the prospective LMMHR, focussing on the topics and questions listed above.

3. A criminal record check and child abuse registry check are conducted and received.

4. The prospective LMMHR names three persons who would be willing to give references or attest to his/her suitability as a LMMHR. These should include:

- i. A Redemptorist
- ii. Someone who can attest to the candidate's skills and capacity to engage in fruitful and collaborative ministry
- iii. Someone who can attest to the candidate's character and prayer life.

5. One of the co-chairs of the Commission for Partnership in Mission collates all pertinent material.

6. The Lay Missionary Formation Team, on the advice of the co-chairs of the Commission for Partnership in Mission, accepts candidates to begin their formation as Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer.

III. INITIAL FORMATION

1. "The Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer himself or herself... must above all be concerned about developing unceasingly their human and Christian formation according to their specific vocational choices and professional responsibility." (*Communicanda* 4, #59) There are three agents which interact in the formation of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer: the individual, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Holy Spirit.

2. Initial formation is normally two years in duration.

3. The first phase of initial formation is one of needs assessment. There are two facets to this process:

- i. What does the candidate need by way of personal, spiritual, psychological, theological, ministerial and Redemptorist formation?²¹⁷

217. Sometimes the use of inventories is helpful in needs assessment. For example, the Atlantic Association of Catholic Youth Ministry has developed a Theological Needs Assessment that is now used by the University of St. Michael's College and the Ontario Association of Catholic School Principals.

ii. What does the Redemptorist congregation think and feel is important to include in the initial formation process for LMMHRs? (See #4 below)

4. Topics for Initial Formation of LMMHRs

i. Redemptorist History, significant figures and pertinent writings

- The writings of Alphonsus
- The people— Alphonsus, Clement, etc.

ii. Redemptorist charism

- *Constitutions and Statutes*
 - Common life and Apostolic Community
- Final Documents of recent General Chapters
- *Communicanda* #4 (1994)

iii. Church Documents concerning evangelization and the nature of the Church:

- *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)
- *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997)
- *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Vatican II, 1965)
- *Christifideles Laici*

iv. Spiritual Traditions of the Redemptorists:

A. Prayer

- Mental Prayer
- Common Prayer
- Prayer of Petition

B. Jesus

- as Redeemer
- Incarnation
- Passion
- Visits to the Blessed Sacrament

C. Mary

- Rosary
- OLP Devotions

v. Personal, Human and Christian Development

- Discernment

vi. Collaborative ministry (theory, skills, etc.)

5. Processes and structures for Initial Formation for LMMHRs

Recognizing that not all potential LMMHRs will be employed by the Redemptorists, a flexible formation process would be offered, which would include:

i. A foundational intake seminar

- ii. Prayer, study, reflection, journaling, etc., based upon the topics listed above, which would be offered through distance-learning modules and internet
- iii. Personal, guided retreats
- iv. Contact with a mentor from the Redemptorist family
 - Colloquia
 - Spiritual Direction
- v. 1-or-2-week institutes which would gather from across the country all those in initial formation as LMMHRs,
- vi. Involvement in provincial activities, such as retreats, assemblies and conferences, where possible and appropriate,
- vii. Some apostolic involvement with Redemptorists.

IV. COMMITMENT

1. Having completed the initial formation program, the candidate makes application in writing to the Provincial Superior to be received as a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer.
2. After consulting with the Lay Missionary Formation Team the Provincial Superior responds to the application.
3. The Commitment Rite takes place during a Liturgy of the Eucharist on an occasion when Redemptorists are gathered.
4. The Provincial Superior or his Delegate accepts the commitment.
5. A certificate of commitment will be signed by the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer and by the Provincial or his Delegate.
6. A copy of the commitment document will be sent to the Redemptorist General Government.
7. The initial commitment is for one year.

V. ONGOING FORMATION

Recognizing that formation is a life-long process, Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will find opportunities to continue their own formation. The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer will also provide opportunities in which LMMHRs are expected to participate.

Ongoing formation may be:

- personal
- ministerial

- communal (with professed Redemptorists and groups of LMMHRs)

THE LMMHR FORMATION TEAM

The Edmonton-Toronto Province in collaboration with the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer establishes a team to be responsible for the admission of prospective LMMHRs into the initial formation process, and to facilitate the actual initial formation of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer. This team will include both professed Redemptorists and Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, and shall include one of the co-chairs of the Commission for Partnership in Mission.

APPENDIX G

GROWING INTO MISSION PROPOSED REVISED PROCESS OF FORMATION FOR LAY MISSIONARIES OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER

PREAMBLE

Specific to Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is a “closer collaboration in the apostolic life of the Redemptorist community.”²¹⁸ The very purpose of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is to participate in the Redemptorist mission “to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor.”²¹⁹ “Their service to the Church proceeds from their relationship to the Congregation.”²²⁰

PHILOSOPHY OF FORMATION FOR LMMHR

Given that the very purpose of the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer is to participate in the Redemptorist mission “to follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, by preaching the word of God to the poor...”²²¹ and that “their service to the Church proceeds from their relationship to the Congregation,”²²² the formation of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer has three principal facets:

1. Personal and spiritual formation
2. Formation within the Redemptorist charism
3. Formation for collaborative ministry

The formation process of any prospective Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer is a dynamic interplay of the individual’s own responsibility, the action of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and the activity of the Holy Spirit, working within the individual and in the CSsR.

The prospective LMMHR acknowledges that she/he has gifts, talents, skills, experiences and abilities through which he/she might make a contribution to the mission of proclaiming plentiful redemption among the most abandoned. The prospective LMMHR also acknowledges that she/he experiences an attraction to the spirit of St. Alphonsus as it

218. *Communicanda* 4, #30.

219. *Constitutions and Statutes*, 1.

220. 1992 Report of the General Secretariat for Lay Collaborators.

221. *Constitutions and Statutes*, #1.

222. 1992 Report of the General Secretariat for Lay Collaborators.

is lived out through the Redemptorist “family.”

By incorporating an individual into the Redemptorist family as a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorist community acknowledges that it has something of value to share with this person, and accepts the privilege and responsibility of offering an experience of formation in the Redemptorist charism, spirituality and vision of apostolic community.

The community of professed Redemptorists recognizes that the incorporation of lay partners in mission means growth and change for them. It involves new learnings and the development of new skills and capacities. They recognize that they, too, must be formed for this closer form of partnership in mission. Therefore, professed Redemptorists are offered opportunities for ongoing formation for mission and the development of skills for collaborative ministry.

Both parties enter into this mutual process of formation in order that they might become fruitful partners in Redemptorist life and ministry insofar as this is possible and desired by both parties.

FOSTERING THE VOCATION OF THE LMMHR

I. The role and involvement of Redemptorist Youth and Vocation Ministry (RYVM)

- Young Adult Ministry
- Vocation Ministry

RYVM has a key role to play in the discernment and fostering of all vocations to and within the Redemptorist family. Young people may meet Redemptorists and experience a call to their way of life and ministry through parish ministry, S.E.R.V.E, youth and young adult programs, retreats and missions, personal encounters. Time spent being formed in the Redemptorist charism and forming relationships with Redemptorists through Liguori Circles and S.E.R.V.E may form an element of the Period of Discovery.

II. The role and involvement of the Commission for Partnership in Mission

The role of the Commission for Partnership in Mission is to encourage and foster the many forms of connection between Redemptorists and lay people. The Commission for Partnership in Mission oversees the promotion of the LMMHR vocation. It is to one of the co-chairs of the province’s Commission for Partnership in Mission that prospective LMMHRs make written application for admission to the formation process.

Adults may meet Redemptorists and experience a call to their way of life and ministry through parish ministry, missions, circles of Redemptorist Associates and personal encounters. Time spent being formed in the Redemptorist charism and forming relationships with Redemptorists through circles of Redemptorist Associates will ordinarily form an element of the Period of Discovery.

PROCESS OF FORMATION OF LMMHRS

I. DISCOVERY

1. Characteristics of potential Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer
Those who desire to become Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer are members of the faithful who

- are mature in the Christian life
- are in good standing in the Catholic Church
- are at least twenty-five years of age
- are attracted to the charism of St. Alphonsus as it is lived out in the Redemptorist community
- have adequate previous experience and education for ministry
- have had a time of closer contact with Redemptorists
- are committed to carrying out the Redemptorist mission as lay people “whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives and through these very situations”²²³

2. What does the Period of Discovery involve?

The Period of Discovery involves informal contact between the prospective Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer and a local Redemptorist community. This period is of no fixed duration, and can take as long as desired or necessary. A Redemptorist or Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer in the local community may act as mentor for the inquirer.

It would be important, however, for the entire local community to have opportunities to meet with the inquirer, begin to form relationships and even work together for limited terms or on short-term projects or initiatives. The inquirer might be invited to meals with the local community, to meetings of the circle of Redemptorist Associates, to community days of reflection or retreat, or to share in some experiences of ministry.

Time spent being formed in the Redemptorist charism and forming relationships with Redemptorists through Liguori Circles, S.E.R.V.E. and/or circles of Redemptorist Associates will ordinarily form an element of the Period of Discovery.

The agenda for the Period of Discovery should be very much needs-based, centred on the questions and learning needs of the inquirer and the apostolic needs of the local situation. It is entirely possible that the inquirer would be someone who has had a long connection with Redemptorists in life and ministry. The needs of such a person would be quite different from those of someone with limited experience or knowledge of Redemptorists.

3. Preparation for the Period of Accompaniment (initial formation)

223. *Communicanda* 4, #43/*Lumen Gentium* #41.

A central aspect of the Period of Discovery is discernment. Discernment is a mutual process that necessarily takes place within the context of community. The inquirer takes the time, effort and prayer to discern a potential call to be a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer. The Redemptorist community also takes the time, effort and prayer to discern whether the inquirer is a suitable candidate for Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer. Some possible questions to use as a focus for discernment include:

- i. What gifts, skills, talents and strengths does the inquirer possess?
- ii. What formation or training for ministry has the inquirer received or taken advantage of?
- iii. How does the inquirer experience a call to apostolic community, given their character as lay person?
- iv. What draws the inquirer to the Redemptorists?
- v. What role does prayer play in the life of the inquirer?
- vi. Does the inquirer have the capacity to minister in a collaborative environment?
- vii. What are the hopes and expectations of the inquirer?
- viii. What needs regarding formation does the person articulate?
- ix. How healthy and well-developed is the person in terms of human maturity and their growth process?
- x. Is the inquirer able to form, build and sustain healthy relationships with persons of both genders?
- xi. What is the nature of the inquirer's family of origin? Are there family issues which have not been attended to and which, if left unresolved, would hamper healthy, wholistic development?

II. THE PROCESS OF INVITATION

1. Application is made in writing to one of the co-chairs of the Commission for Partnership in Mission, usually after consultation with the superior of a local Redemptorist community.
2. One of the co-chairs of the Commission for Partnership in Mission conducts an interview with the prospective LMMHR, focussing on the topics and questions listed above.
3. A criminal record check and child abuse registry check are conducted and received.
4. The prospective LMMHR names three persons who would be willing to give references or attest to his/her suitability as a LMMHR. These should include:
 - i. a Redemptorist
 - ii. someone who can attest to the candidate's skills and capacity to engage in fruitful and collaborative ministry
 - iii. someone who can attest to the candidate's character and prayer life.

5. One of the co-chairs of the Commission for Partnership in Mission collates all pertinent material.

6. The Lay Missionary Formation Team, on the advice of the co-chairs of the Commission for Partnership in Mission, accepts candidates to begin their formation as Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer.

III. PERIOD OF ACCOMPANIMENT

1. “The Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer himself or herself... must above all be concerned about developing unceasingly their human and Christian formation according to their specific vocational choices and professional responsibility.”²²⁴ There are three agents which interact in the formation of the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer: the individual, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Holy Spirit.

2. The Period of Accompaniment may take as long as necessary, but is normally two years in duration.

3. The first phase of the Period of Accompaniment is one of needs assessment. There are two facets to this process:

- i. What does the candidate need by way of personal, spiritual, psychological, theological, ministerial and Redemptorist formation?²²⁵
- ii. What does the Redemptorist congregation think and feel is important to include in the initial formation process for LMMHRs?

4. Possible topics for initial formation of LMMHRs in the Period of Accompaniment

- i. Redemptorist History, significant figures and pertinent writings
 - The writings of Alphonsus
 - The people—Alphonsus, Clement, saints and blessed, etc.
- ii. Redemptorist charism
 - *Constitutions and Statutes*
 - Common life and Apostolic Community
 - Final Documents of recent General Chapters
 - *Communicanda* #4 (1994)
 - *Called into Communion for Mission* (2009)
- iii. Church Documents concerning evangelization and the nature of the

224. *Communicanda* 4, #59.

225. Sometimes the use of inventories is helpful in needs assessment. The Atlantic Association of Catholic Youth Ministry has developed a Theological Needs Assessment that is now used by the University of St. Michael's College and the Ontario Association of Catholic School Principals. This might prove helpful in assessing the learning needs of potential LMMHRs.

Church:

- *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)
- *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997)
- *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Vatican II, 1965)
- *Christifideles Laici*
- *Evangelii Gaudium* (2014)
- *Laudato Si'* (2015)

iv. Spiritual Traditions of the Redemptorists:

A. Prayer

- Mental Prayer
- Common Prayer
- Prayer of Petition

B. Devotion to Mary under the title of Our Mother of Perpetual Help

v. Jesus

- as Redeemer
- Incarnation
- Passion
- Visits to the Blessed Sacrament

vi. Personal, Human and Christian Development

- Discernment

vii. Collaborative ministry (theory, skills, etc.)

5. Processes and structures for Growing in Mission

Since not all potential LMMHRs will be employed by the Redemptorists, a flexible formation process would be offered, which would include:

- i. A foundational intake seminar
- ii. Prayer, study, reflection, journaling, etc., based on the topics listed above, which would be offered through distance-learning modules and internet
- iii. Personal, guided retreats
- iv. Ongoing and regular contact with a mentor or mentors chosen from the community of professed Redemptorists
 - Colloquia
 - Spiritual Direction
- v. Contact with a mentor or mentors from among the committed LMMHRs
- vi. 1- or 2-week institutes which would gather from across the country all those involved in the Growing in Mission process
- vii. Involvement in provincial activities, such as retreats, assemblies and conferences, where possible and appropriate

- viii. Some apostolic involvement with Redemptorists

IV. AFFIRMATION OF THE CANDIDATE

1. Having completed the Period of Accompaniment, the candidate makes application in writing to the Provincial Superior to be received as a Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer.
2. After consulting with the Lay Missionary Formation Team, the Provincial Superior responds to the application, affirming that the candidate will become an active LMMHR.
3. The candidate is invited to take part in a retreat in preparation for commitment.

V. RETREAT IN PREPARATION FOR COMMITMENT

1. The retreat normally takes place in the context of a communal retreat, at which a number of members of the Redemptorist “family” are gathered for prayer and discernment.

VI. CELEBRATION OF COMMITMENT OF LAY MISSIONARIES OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER

1. The Commitment Ritual takes place during a Liturgy of the Eucharist on an occasion when Redemptorists are gathered, possibly at the conclusion of the aforementioned retreat or at a Provincial Assembly.
2. The Provincial Superior or his Delegate accepts the commitment.
3. A certificate of commitment will be signed by the Lay Missionary of the Most Holy Redeemer and by the Provincial or his Delegate.
4. A copy of the commitment document will be sent to the Redemptorist General Government.
5. The initial commitment is for one year.

VII. PERIOD OF INTEGRATION

Recognizing that formation is a life-long process, Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer will find opportunities to continue their own formation. The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer will also provide opportunities in which LMMHRs are expected to participate.

Ongoing formation and integration into mission and ministry may be:

- personal

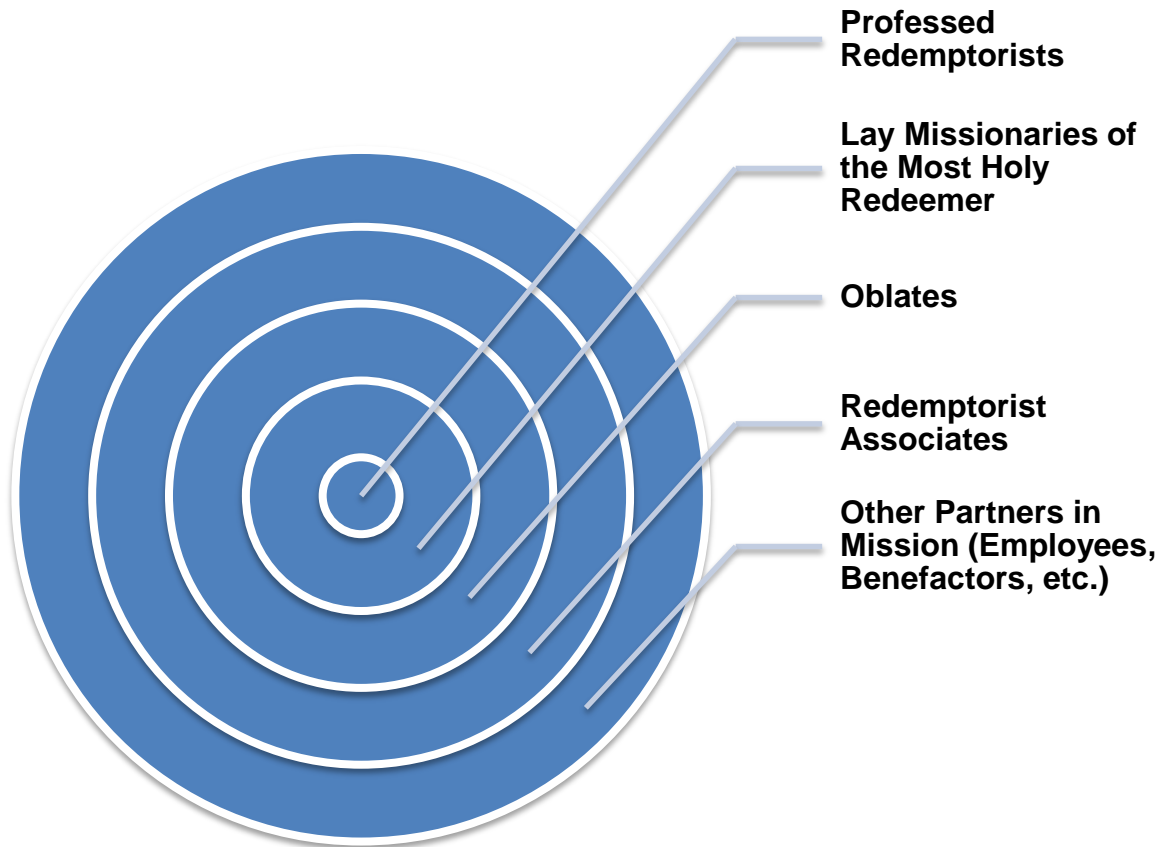
- ministerial
- communal (with professed Redemptorists and groups of LMMHRs)

THE LMMHR FORMATION TEAM

The Edmonton-Toronto Province in collaboration with the Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer establishes a team to be responsible for the admission of prospective LMMHRs into the initial formation process, and to facilitate the actual initial formation of Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer. This team will include both professed Redemptorists and Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, and shall include one of the co-chairs of the Provincial Commission for Partnership in Mission.

APPENDIX H

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF BELONGING IN THE REDEMPTORIST FAMILY



APPENDIX I

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS TO THE REDEMPTORIST FAMILY

Provident God,
You spoke your dream of plentiful redemption
in Jesus Christ.
Your Spirit ignited the heart of St. Alphonsus,
inspiring him to found a family in the Church,
dedicated to proclaiming the good news
of plentiful redemption to the most abandoned.
Raise up among us strong women and men of faith,
afire with love for you
and zeal for the mission of proclaiming your Word
among those who do not know you,
or who need to hear your Word proclaimed anew.
Guide men to respond with generosity
as vowed Redemptorists, priests and brothers,
and women and men to serve in joy and hope
as partners in the Redemptorist mission.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
Your Word, who is our Life.
Amen.