# THE MISSION OF THE CLARETIAN TODAY

## Document of

**the Nineteenth General Chapter of the Claretian Missionaries**

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#### Abbreviations Most Frequently Used

1. **Documents of the Church**

AA = Apostolicam Actuositatem (Vatican II: Apostolate of the Laity)

AG = Ad Gentes (Vatican II: Missions)

CD = Christus Dominus (Vatican II: Bishops) DP = Puebla Document (CELAM, 1979)

EN = Evangelii Nuntiandi (Paul Vl) ET = Evangelica Testificatio (Paul VI)

GS = Gaudium et Spes (Vatican II: The Church Today) LG = Lumen Gentium (Vatican II: The Church)

MR = Mutuae Relationes (Sacr. Cong. of Bishops and Religious)

PC = Perfectae Caritatis (Vatican II: Renewal of Religious Life) PO = Presbyterorum Ordinis (Vatican II: Priests)

PP = Populorum Progressio (Paul VI) RH = Redemptor Hominis (John Paul II)

SO 1971 = Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World SO 1974 = Synod of Bishops on Evangelization

SO 1977 = Synod of Bishops on Catechesis

#### Documents of the Congregation

1 AP - Apostolate: Gen. Chapter of 1967

2AP - The Apostolate of the Congregation: Gen. Chapter of 1973 AS - The Associates of the Congregation: Gen. Chapter of 1973 Aut - Autobiography of St. Anthony Mary Claret

CA - Open Letter: Gen. Chapter of 1973

CMT - Letter to the Missionary, Theophilus (Father Founder) Const.- Constitutions of the Congregation (1982)

DC - Declaration on our Charism: Gen. Chapter of 1967 Dir. - Directory of the Congregation (1982)

1F - Decree on Formation: Gen. Chapter of 1967

2F - Document on Formation: Gen. Chapter of 1973 IG - Decree on Government: Gen. Chapter of 1967

2G - Government of the Congregation: Gen. Chapter of 1973 GAT - Gen. Assembly of Los Teques (1983)

MCT - Mission of the Claretian Today: Gen. Chapter of 1979 MI - Decree on Missions to Non-Christians: Gen. Chapter of 1967 MLC - Message to Lay Claretians (1979)

OL - Open Letter: General Chapter of 1967 PE - Spiritual Heritage: Gen. Chapter of 1967

1RL - Decree on Religious Life: Gen. Chapter of 1967 2RL - Religious Life: Gen. Chapter of 1973

SH - Declaration on our Spiritual Heritage: Gen. Chapter of 1967 2VR - Document on Religious Life: Gen. Chapter of 1973

# The Mission of the Claretian Today

## Presentation

1. The Congregation has passed through one of the most intense moments in its life: the recently celebrated 19th General Chapter. Since December of 1977, virtually the entire Congregation has been in some way involved in the process of the Chapter, either by electing representatives to it or by contributing to its success through various forms of inquiry, shared reflection, planning, etc.

Participation reached a particularly significant level in the task of determining the objectives of the Chapter. No less than fifty-three percent of all Claretians expressed their mind in response to the questionnaire prepared by the General Gov- ernment. This inquiry gave rise to the proposal to study the theme of "The Mission of the Claretian Today": a forward looking study which would have to be carried out by the whole Congregation, and one for which the General Chapter would serve, in due course, as the natural interpreter.

The precapitular co-ordinating commission set a tight timetable for articulating the stages of the process of reflection on all levels of the Institute: local, provincial, interprovincial and general. It also adopted a methodological procedure of "observing-evaluating-acting," so as to insure a degree of unity in its work on all levels, while allowing itself enough leeway to provide for various kinds of pluralism in the Congregation.

This precapitular effort managed to achieve its twofold cycle within the allotted time, and with notable success although it suffered from some obvious limitations, both in it analyses and in its manner of posing the issues.

At the same time that it was attending to the crucially important business of definitively revising the Constitutions the Chapter had to dedicate a great deal of time and effort to formulating the position paper on the mission of the Claretian today. As things turned out, the inherent difficulties of the task as well as the shortness of the time allotted to it, prevented it completion, in the sense that various parts of the document in preparation did not make it through the entire capitular process foreseen in the planning stages of the Chapter. For this reason the Chapter decided to entrust the completion of the document to the General Government, placing in their hands a valuable set of materials in various stages of completion One useful tool for facilitating this task, at least in the direction of interpreting the thought of the Chapter, were the various "modi" proposed and voted on during the sessions of the Chapter.

The General Government, despite the many pressing tasks it has had to attend to during its first hectic months in office, has given the highest priority to carrying out this work entrusted to it by the Chapter, a work which has so much bearing on the near future of the Congregation. In view of the fact that several provincial chapters or assemblies were soon to take place, this work had to be accomplished within a very narrow margin of time. In fact, after spending some weeks in preparing the final text, the General Council completed its job a few days before Christmas and now presents it to the Congregation.

1. Clearly, this Chapter Document, which is the culmina- tion of a shared process of elaboration must, by that very fact, mark the beginning of a new phase in which the whole Congregation, on its various levels and in all its branches, should once more assume a protagonist's role.

It may rightly be said that this document, through its special structure and methodology, means to endorse a dynamics of discovery, reflection and decision as a form of community

growth, which should be applied to every thing that affects our life and action. As a tie-in with the precapitular phase, it is important that this tool, now being offered to the Congregation, be understood and applied in line with this dynamics.

It is a tool which not only affords us an overview of the present state of the world, but also encourages each community to acquire the habit of looking at the facts of that world as a necessary point of reference. It also offers some doctrinal guidelines, not with any pretense at being an exhaustive study of the theme of our mission, but rather as a stimulus to a process of reflection that should be carried out in a spirit of communion with the feelings of the Chapter. The programmatic guidelines that are here offered to the whole Congregation have been limited (as various passages in the text point out) to a general level, and require further application to the concrete situations which confront each provincial or local community.

It must be noted, moreover, that this is not a narrowly topical document referring to certain particular areas of Claretian activity. Rather, it is set in a global perspective which aims at including all aspects of our being and activity, seen from the viewpoint of our missionary charism.

1. The whole Congregation must regard this document as a wellspring for its action during the six-year period which we are just beginning. This is a task which by its very nature demands the active and co-responsible participation of all, both in the initial phase of internalizing the contents of the document and in the subsequent phase of translating it into life.

This process should immediately be set in motion on all community levels, making use of all available tools for study, interchange of ideas and decision making, such as plenary meetings, assemblies, chapters, courses in continuing formation, etc. This calls for special initiatives on the part of superiors and

those responsible for community animation, in keeping with the needs of the Congregation in its present moment.

For its own part, the General Government will strive to inspire its action along the lines set down by the Chapter, and will encourage every member and branch to be faithful in carrying out this program, which should be understood as the enactment of our vocational response in the present circumstances of the Church and the world. The Chapter, in all that it has done, has had no other goal than that of continuing and giving a new impulse to the process of renewal to which the Church has called us in our time.

We have been called to renew ourselves as Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in virtue of the charism that has made us such in the Church. Hence, we must entrust this work to the action of the Spirit who renews all things, and to the action of Mary our Mother who, in the mystery of our Saviour's birth, has offered us the new life of Christ.

Rome, Christmas Day, 1979.

*Gustavo Alonso, C MF*

Superior General

#### Introduction

1. The 19th General Chapter of our Congregation, in re- sponse to the wishes of most of our brothers, has carefully studied the theme of "the mission of the Claretian today." Aware of the fact that the whole Congregation was living in a state of prayer at that time, we ourselves prayed to the Holy Spirit to enlighten us in our work. We also asked the help of Mary, in whose maternal Heart the apostles of our Congregation are formed. Finally, we strove to bear in mind the import and implications, for us, of the "experience of the Spirit" which Anthony Claret had and which the Congregation has kept alive throughout its history.

Our feelings and reflections during this fraternal en- counter-a special moment of grace for the Congregation- are offered here in simplicity of heart. We wish to be faithful to the call of the Lord and respond joyfully to it by joining in the mission of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to the men of our times.

1. To speak of the mission of the Claretian has many specific connotations in our days. It is not simply a matter of further enriching the doctrine given us by previous General Chapters. Rather, our aim has been to step out and face the many new challenges offered us by the world, the Church and the Congregation itself, in the present juncture of events.

The missionary and evangelistic awakening of the Church in our times has aroused in us, too, a yearning to rediscover and bring new life to our own missionary and apostolic vocation. From yet another point of view, the radical nature of the issues with which the world and the Church challenge us, has forced us to take a serious and courageous look at the content and scope of our mission. We have felt an urgent need to stress the

Christological roots and the distinctive ecclesial thrust of our Claretian mission, to examine what our basic attitudes should be in fulfilling this mission, and to determine more precisely the recipients, objectives and lines of action which should characterize our apostolate, as well as the community lifestyle and kind of formation we need in order to be able to proclaim the Gospel effectively.

In its effort to clarify our doctrine on Claretian mission and point out some programmatic lines for that mission, the Chapter has aimed at helping the Congregation continue uninterruptedly the process of renewal that began after the last Council .

1. By means of the present document (which makes no pretense at spelling out all the implications of the topic of mission), the Chapter is simply returning to the Congregation the fruits of its own reflection, which had their beginnings in local communities, provinces and regional conferences, enriched now by the contributions and interchange of ideas that took place during the Chapter. It aims at being an expositor of the shared feelings and desires of the Congregation, in order to aid it in the work of reflecting on, revising and programming its mission during the coming six years.

The universality of the Congregation, as well as the re- gional peculiarities of geography and cultures which the Claretian family has acquired during its history, have guided us in our selection of the level on which our analyses have been carried out, of the treatment we have given doctrinal content, and of the lines of action which each organism of the Congregation will have to implement in keeping with the realities of its own situation.

## Part One

### Our Vision of Present-Day Reality

1. In keeping with the example of Claret (CMT ch. III) and in harmony with the Church in the modern world (GS 11ff; RH 13-14), the Congregation feels an urgent need to reflect on present-day man and to allow itself to be questioned by him, in order to become better equipped to fulfill its mission. Our reading of contemporary reality, in a perspective of evangelization without any scientific pretensions, could do nothing short of centering its attention on man and becoming conscious of the "situations" he is undergoing at present (RH ib.).

#### The Great Family of Man

1. 1.1. The great worldwide imbalance in population is obvious to anyone who sets the developed nations with their "zero population growth" against the Third World with its "population explosion." This imbalance militates against the economy and culture of the Third World. Moreover, some of the correctional measures adopted to lower the birthrate in these countries blatantly contradict Christian ethical principles.
2. We also know that the world with the greatest popula- tion growth is above all the non-Christian world. The fact that two thirds of the human race remains on the margin of the proclamation of the Gospel is something that makes the Church take stock of itself since, with a little less than twenty percent of the world's population, it is a mere minority and one which, relatively speaking, is growing smaller.
3. 1.2. As a response to this challenge, the Church has not only intensified its reflections on the urgency of evangelization (SO 1974; EN, etc.), but has fought for redistribution of the clergy (CD 6; PO 10) and incorporation of the laity in evangelization (AA 2,6; AG 21), and has called for new missionary efforts on the part of religious (AG 18,27).
4. Our own Congregation, which is well enough settled in countries where the population is decreasing, is becoming ever more painfully aware of the problem of vocations: during the next six years there will only be about two hundred ordinations

* a figure somewhat less than the foreseeable defections. Besides this, some fifteen major organisms are finding themselves in a critical state of subsistence while others, which have been traditionally strong will be obliged to cut back the personnel they send to the missions.

1. To be sure we have made the missionary effort of doubling our mission posts during the past six years. Nevertheless, only 12% of Claretian personnel are working in the missions, and only 4.5% are located within the 66% of the world's population where the proclamation of the Gospel has not yet arrived.
2. It is true that we have witnessed an awakening of vocations, precisely in the Third World, in places where the Congregation has not yet taken solid root. But this hopeful fact does not exempt us from questioning, with complete realism and with daring generosity, our capacity to respond to the demographic challenge of our times.

#### Between Abundance and Need

1. 2.1. Despite our high level of scientific and technological progress, the economic panorama of our world is marked by stark contrasts, conflicts and aberrations. The financial, monetary, pro- ductive and commercial structures and mechanisms of our society seem to occasion the constant broadening of the frontiers of mis- ery, with all its accompanying anguish and frustration (RH 16).

"We have before us here a great drama that can leave nobody indifferent. The person who, on the one hand, is trying to draw the maximum profit and, on the other hand, is paying the price in damage and injury, is always man. The drama is made

still worse by the presence close at hand of the privileged social classes and of the rich countries, which -accumulate goods to an excessive degree and the misuse of whose riches very often becomes the cause of various ills" (Ibid.).

1. Criticism has been aimed at all the prevailing economic systems, from the state centralization in socialist countries, too the uncontrolled capitalism of the underdeveloped countries, to the liberal capitalism of the western democracies.
2. The process of industrialization, which multiplies wealth, does not assure an equitable distribution of that wealth. This process, which runs on autonomous principles which have no regard for man as such (not to mention its often harmful effects on the geophysical environment), discriminates in fact against the producers of raw materials (especially the Third World countries), whose human masses remain on the margin of the benefits of progress. From yet another sector, we are witnessing an ever increasing urban agglomeration, accompanied by new forms of mass culture and materialistic consumerism, which is creating new breeding grounds for marginalization, discontent and delinquency.
3. The integration of youth into this world of mass pro- duction represents a serious problem for which society has offered no convincing solutions, as anyone can see from the extremes of protest and apathy that generally characterize today's young people.
4. In Latin America, where the majority of the masses are Catholic, the Church is trying to assume the role of advocate for social justice and human advancement. It is assuming a similar role in other countries as well. Since the Church is concerned with establishing Christian brotherhood, it is keenly aware of the humanly degrading consequences that can result from any economic system. For man, when he is deprived of his most

fundamental rights and degraded by material slavery, has a hard time developing his personal potential and his dignity as a child of God. This explains the Church's increasing zeal in favor of the needy (the poor, laborers, migrant workers, etc.) and its sensitivity in the face of situations of anguish and suffering.

1. This zeal and sensitivity should also be an imperative in our Claretian community. First of all, we should overhaul our attitudes and lifestyle with regard to our brand of poverty. For, even if we do see a greater solidarity in sharing goods in the Congregation and a greater appreciation of work as a real part of poverty, we can still note a certain tendency to live a comfortable life that does not harmonize with the Gospel inspiration of our life. We urgently need to review our notions of security and become aware of the dangers of conformism whereby certain forms of economic well being can tend to numb our missionary spirit and our concern for the neediest people.

#### The Difficult Task of Living Together in Justice and

**Peace**

* 1. 3.1. On a worldwide scale, the sociopolitical panorama does not meet the demands of respect for the human person, for on all sides one or another set of human rights are being institutionally violated.
  2. In the Third World, systems of extreme injustice and manipulation of the masses beget inevitable social tensions which foster guerrilla warfare, civil war and, often enough, new dictator- ships under the auspices of contending forms of imperialism.
  3. In communistic peoples' democracies, the person is sacrificed to the monolithic image of the government which, when it is confronted by dissident attitudes or even claims for the inalienable right of freedom of conscience, soon puts its oppressive machinery in action, including physical and psychological aggression.
  4. In liberal democracies, although fundamental human rights are officially guaranteed, legal loopholes allow the existence of many injustices, manipulations of the person and group aliena- tions, which in turn give rise to such phenomena as political abstentionism, opportunism, permissiveness, anonymity, admini- strative corruption, a loss of the meaning of life, crime and violence.
  5. On a worldwide level, political power is not the result of the peaceful consensus or united will of the people, but rather of the economic strategies of the superpowers ranged against each other in hostile blocs.
  6. These situations of injustice which are proliferating on all levels of society, are becoming odious to the conscience of humanity and are inspiring a struggle (sometimes a revolutionary struggle) which has stirred some sectors of the lay world to generosity and won the unconditional commitment of many men of good will, even of those with no religious motivation.
  7. 3.2. In the face of this spectacle, the Church, sustained by the Holy Spirit is engaged in a battle to build a new world in which peace, justice, brotherhood and love may reign. Above all, we must take note of its attitude-one of penitence as well as solidarity-which does not abstract from the present misfortunes of men, but rather takes the part of those who suffer margination or oppression and places itself at the service of a humanity that longs for a more just and orderly way of living together.

This is why the Church, on various levels of its prophetic service, has denounced sinful situations in the present social order (Cf. John Paul II, Allocution at Oaxaca; Medellin II, Peace 1), institutionalized injustice which can only lead to legitimate popular reactions (PP 30-31), and the steady grinding down of the dignity of the human person (DP 41, 44).

This is also the reason why the Church is striving to arouse an active commitment of Christians in the struggle to

establish a more just temporal order, as a guarantee of universal peace and progress (Cf. GS 75; AA 7; SO 1971).

* 1. Various groups of believers have made a tremendous effort to redefine Christian identity on the basis of this new critical awareness which aims at a truly transforming activity. This has given rise to certain theologies of praxis which have met opposition and have shocked some. The cause of justice, rediscovered in the heart of the task of evangelization, has even occasioned some acrimony within the communion of the Church.
  2. This interrelatedness of justice and evangelization af- fects us as Claretians, so that we may not remain indifferent in the face of situations which contradict the plan of the Creator, divine sonship and human brotherhood. As religious, we cannot close our ears to the cry of the poor (ET 1 7), or forget that the service of justice must be an inherent element in the practice of consecrated poverty (Cf. ET 18-20).

#### 4. The Heritage of Culture

* 1. **Universalization of Culture and Cultures of Domi- nation**
  2. 4.1.1. The fate of culture, with the many facts it has acquired in today's world, largely depends on the economic and political situation we have just described. In any case, we can observe an ongoing expansion and progressive uniformity in culture, owing to the vast outreach of the media of mass communication and the easy rapidity of modern transportation. This expansion and uniformity of culture does not, however, assure a balanced exchange of intercultural values, because of the colonialism exerted over underdeveloped nations by nations which are powerful in science and technology, who are the bringers of a new *secularculture*

Besides this, the cultural homogenization we are witness- ing tends to support a hedonistic model of man, devoid of spiritual

content, which poses a critical threat to the values of many people with a tradition of more than one world.

* 1. 4.1.2. In fact, the field of culture is being fought over by large, dominating blocs, who are devoted to *contrasting ideologies*
  2. a) *Marxist culture* has been touted as a mystique of total human liberation from any form of oppression, religious, cultural, social, political or economic. In socialist countries where Marxism serves not only as an ideology but as a practicing system of government, official culture does not countenance expressions of heterodoxy and restricts religious freedom within intolerable limits. In the non-socialist world, on the contrary, Marxism appears to some as an attractive alternative for the correction of the problems which afflict every developed society.
  3. b) Naturalistic positivism, based on scientific progress and driven by a Promethean will to satisfy man's natural and intellectual needs, bears all the earmarks of *liberal culture* and is broadly diffused throughout the so-called Western community of nations. Characterized by rationalism, utilitarian materialism and hedonistic consumerism, it has little or no regard for transcendence, let alone religion, which it sees as a vestige of prescientific civilization. In any case, it has no use for institutional religion, which it prefers to look on as a private matter.
  4. c) Standing in the midst of these great cultural blocs, the *Third World* is struggling today to make its own cultural statement which, for a very long time, has been passed over in silence by the opposing forms of colonialism. Feeling a need to return to its secular roots and purge itself of several ambiguities, this emergent culture is trying to show the worth of its own idea of man, its own world view and its own sense of transcendence. At the heart of this phenomenon is the affirmation of a cultural pluralism which is well worth guarding as a human heritage.
  5. 4.1.3. Clearly, the Church has not been indifferent to this cultural scene, which directly affects it in the task of evangelization (EN 19-20). While it is, on the one hand, aware that evangelization is not identified with any culture, the Church has striven, on the other, not to restrict its contacts with the cultural world only to issues involving denunciation and confrontation. Both dominating and liberationist cultures challenge the Church to more sharply define the medium in which it offers its message of salvation and its commitment to man. The secularity of modern culture has led the Church to reevaluate the traits of its own institutional setting in the human community and of the language it uses in the sacraments and in the education of people in the faith. At the same time, cultural pluralism has led it to seek out the values in each culture, in order to articulate an adequate and integral pedagogy of faith, which it owes to all peoples.
  6. The Congregation, too, has had some experience of contemporary cultural pluralism, which can doubtless serve to enrich its capacity for mission. Its geographic expansion and ministerial diversification necessarily bring it into contact with many cultures. Perhaps we have not given enough attention to this theme, but nowadays and from every quarter it has become increasingly clear that there is an urgent need to relate both the Gospel and the bearers of the Gospel to the culture in which they work. Looking at it the other way around (although not all our members have been equally open in facing the issues posed by secular culture), the Congregation has obviously felt the force of many disturbing questions raised by secular culture concerning our lifestyle, our more or less discarnate preaching language, our pastoral options and our objectives in education and human advancement.

#### Important Cultural Phenomena of our Times

* 1. 4.2.1. The historical process of culture in our times involves certain phenomena of more than regional interest which deserve the attention of every evangelizer.
  2. a) The *culture of labor* The modern era has witnessed many conquests made by the world of labor, not the least of which has been the achievement of a new social status. This is one of the most significant changes in history, although the Church's connection with it has not always been very clear. However, since the teaching of Leo XIII on social justice and on through the theology of the laity expressed at Vatican II, the Church has been able to accompany this process very closely in its desire for liberation from the new forms of alienation occasioned by mechanization, the system of production, the apparatus of consumerism, etc.
  3. b) *Marginalization*. Our modern culture of technology and power has not halted the daily growth of various strata of marginalization, ranging from ethnic and cultural minorities to various other groups that are either ignored or isolated by society: the drug culture, prostitution, the mentally retarded, displaced persons, etc. Marginalization is also found in the unjust distri- bution of income, unequal opportunities, racial prejudice, etc.
  4. c) The *crisis of the family*. Cultural changes encouraged by both Marxism and liberalism presage the disappearance of the family as a social institution. The traditional model of the family has suffered greatly at the hands of ideologies and social customs. Signs of its serious decay may be seen in irresponsible parenting, divorce, abortion, lack of education and emotional imbalance.
  5. d) The *emancipation of women* The main thrust of feminist movements in our times has been to win recognition of the dignity due any human person. These movements are a natural outgrowth of women's increasing social role in work, culture, politics and even the Church; however, some of the causes they support are ambiguous and sometimes give rise to imbalances in family life.
  6. e) The *new impact of youth* Since 60% of the world population is under 25 years old, no one can deny the social and religious importance of this sector of the population, both at present and above all in the near future. The developed world guarantees the fundamental rights of the human person and, among them, opportunities for education and work. But important blocs of today's youth feel that they are being manipulated by ideologies, whether this comes from being pressured into a conformism that slavishly integrates them into the system, or from the marginalization that befalls those who opt for non-conformism or protest. This leads to alienation from family and society, a loss of cultural roots, recourse to drugs and other forms of moral degradation. In any case, above and beyond these failings, youth plays the role of energizing the social body and applying a dynamism that brings new life to cultures that might otherwise grow old (DP 1169-1170).
  7. 4.2.2. The post Conciliar Church is trying carefully to follow these phenomena and interpret their deeper cultural implications. Numerous documents of the Church's magisterium on all levels have recently dealt with the problems we have mentioned. We need only refer here to: Vatican II, in GS nn. 47-52 and 67-69; Paul VI, in PP nn. 27-29 and 36-37, and in EN nn. 71-72; John Paul II, in the inaugural discourse at the Puebla Conference, especially Parts III and IV; and in DP, especially nn. 27-70, 419, 1 244, 571-581, 582-619, 834-849, 1166-1205.
  8. For a long time now, our Congregation has been devoting a great part of its pastoral resources to youth-oriented and popular programs. Hence it should more reflectively follow the critical situations through which they are currently passing and perfect its objectives in dealing with them, so as to avoid the risk of their becoming too generic or too content with merely surface commitment.

#### Education and the Media of Communication

* 1. 4.3.1. The expansion of culture which characterizes our times is linked to the traditional instruments of transmission, especially the school, as well as to the new resources provided by the modern media of social mass communication.

The school, which is the traditional vehicle for perpetuat- ing the cultural heritage of a people, is currently undergoing a grave crisis in nearly all countries. Hence there have even been some attempts at de-schooling, which draw their inspiration from certain liberationist proposals.

Besides this, the modern use of the media of mass communication is notoriously ambiguous. These media are often at the service of consumer interests and do little to cultivate a critical attitude in their audiences. Indeed, they often show even an aggressive attitude towards family values and civic values.

In any case, it is a plain fact that every ideology or political movement is eager to gain access to these transmissional instruments of culture.

* 1. 4.3.2. The Church, too, has made ample use of these instruments in the service of the Gospel and humanistic Christian culture. Hence, it is involved in running schools, presses, radio and IV stations and programs. At present, however, the means and agents which the Church is now using are hardly sufficient for exploiting the range of pastoral possibilities offered in this field. Worse still, in many Church circles there seems to be a lack of the conviction and attitude needed for an adequate commitment to it. Perhaps this is one way of showing clearly that we have a very slight grasp of the cultural ways of our times.
  2. The initiatives and efforts being carried out in this field in various parts of the Congregation are well known. There is a high percentage of Claretians engaged in teaching. Far fewer are

involved in the work of the media. Even when this presence is not included in planning, activities of this sort deserve continual review in our pastoral strategies and in the distribution of our resources. Besides, they are a test case for our creative and organizational abilities as a community.

#### 5. The Present Crossroads of Evangelization

* 1. Viewing this picture of man in our time, Paul VI declared that "for the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (EN 18).
  2. This implies that the challenges facing the Church today
* the Church which has been sent to bring Good News - do not arise from a mere recitation of statistics: The Catholic minority versus the vast majority of the unbaptized, the scarcity of evangelizers versus the great number of those who have not received the proclamation of faith. Doubtless this is an anguishing problem, but it is one that has been with us since the founding of the Church.
  1. But along with this, evangelization in our times must be concerned with questions affecting the quality of its delivery and content. The Church has asked itself these questions, in an endeavor to reactivate the transforming power of its proclama- tion: How and in what manner do we preach salvation in a world that is satisfied and lacks a transcendent horizon? How do we foster genuine Christian liberation without succumbing to the fallacies of temporal messianism? How do we talk about Christ to a society that regards itself as post-Christian? How do we present the mystery of the Church in a secularized society? In the process of announcing its unique Gospel, the Church feels that it cannot ignore cultural differences. While it must evangelize the multitude, it must also pay attention to specialized activities. While it must sustain and renew the faith of ancient Christian

communities, it must also find the right language for its dialogue with the non-Christian world. And, in whatever it does, it must give faith the transparency of life and reinforce its proclamation with witness.

* 1. In blazing this trail, the Church continues to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit shining through significant events (signs of the times), such as the new evangelizing consciousness of the laity, the rise of basic Christian communities as nuclei of evangelization, the renewed language of faith and worship, the charisms that are renewing religious and missionary life, the many witnesses of a Gospel preached to the poor, even by way of martyrdom...
  2. Our Congregation, which was born to evangelize, has felt its own numerical limitations during these past years in carrying out this work-limitations aggravated by the crisis in personnel which it has undergone. Nevertheless, it has made notable efforts to distribute its resources in a manner more directly inspired by the primary needs of evangelization. At the same time, it has endeavored to encourage the mobilization of lay missionaries, above all, by sharing the spirit of our Founder with different groups.

On the minus side, however, there have been lapses in the matter of availability, of continuing education and specialized preparation. On all sides there is a felt need for continuing in depth the process of renewal begun after the Council and, with the same end in view, for encouraging a shared reflection on the Claretian Mission, made in a spirit of conversion to the central motifs of our Gospel calling. This is the spirit in which the General Chapter has been prepared, and it wishes to be faithful to this spirit in its response.

# Part Two

### A Re-Reading of the Claretian Mission

* 1. Up to this point we have been trying to look through Claretian eyes at the most challenging aspects of contemporary humanity. It would be meaningless for us to underscore these situations if they did not move us to an up-to-date rereading of our vocation and mission as evangelizers in the Church.

In the following attempt to throw some light on the subject, we will first attempt to return to our historical and doctrinal sources. Then, in a second phase, we will try to connect these sources with the situations we described earlier, so as to discern the meaning of our missionary charism in the present. The two chapters of Part Two correspond to these two phases in our reflection.

#### Chapter I

**Sources for a Re-Reading of our Claretian Charism**

* 1. Two points of reference are indispensable for any attempt to throw light on the current meaning of our missionary charism:
     1. The experience of mission as achieved by our Founder and by the Congregation (historical reference);

b ) And the evangelizing consciousness of the Church of our times (doctrinal reference).

The two Articles of this Chapter are devoted to developing these two points.

#### Article 1. The Missionary Experience of Claret and the Congregation

* 1. The Holy Spirit, through the response and historical mediation of St. Anthony Mary Claret, has pointed out to us a special style of holiness and apostolate. Therefore, any time we wish to clarify and promote fidelity to our mission, we turn our gaze on the Founder in whom, for the first time, the light of this new community, of this vocation and mission in the Church, first shone (Cf. John Paul II, November 10, 1978).
  2. Our Father Founder's own experience of his missionary vocation was the organizing principle of his existence and the deep motivation which guided his entire life and apostolic activity. This experience of Claret's becomes in turn a source of inspiration and incentive for us in the response we must make to our vocation in the Church and the world today. As we here and now recall his vocational journey, we affirm the origin of the life that has been *propagated and followed* by the Congregation: a life that leads to communion, invites us to conformity with Christ and impels us to relive his prophetic spirit.

#### 1. The Missionary Vocation of Claret

* 1. Father Claret describes his vocation as the result of a complex experiential process that can be traced through his infancy. This process includes, among other elements, an early sense of friendship with Christ (above all, in the sacrament of the Eucharist), in whose deep sense of Sonship Claret gradually came to discover God the Father, who sent Jesus because he loves the world. Another important element in this process was a special experience of the "world," which Claret, as a young man, came to know in all its goodness, relativity and dangerousness.

From yet another direction, Claret cultivated his radical experience of God in Christ by persistent meditation on the Scriptures, in which the texts dealing with the vocation of the

Prophets and of Jesus impressed him with telling effect. At the same time he kept alive his keen awareness and grasp of what was most urgent for the Church and the society of his times in relation to God's plan of salvation.

A very important influence both on his closeness to Christ and his grasp of the ways of salvation for the world, was the presence of Mary, with whom he sensed that his own mission, in its origin and exercise, was closely linked.

#### Starting from an Encounter with God in Christ

* 1. The radical experience of God in Christ continued to be manifested in various forms throughout Claret's life, to the point that it offers us a synthesis of his special consecration to Christ and to the Heart of Mary, in a perfect apostolic and evangelical life of prayer and suffering for the salvation of mankind, to the glory of God the Father (PE 12).
  2. The decisive steps in the process of Claret's vocation, which was primordially centered around conformity with Christ, *consecrated and sent* by the Father for the world's redemption, were: the *external imitation* of Christ's apostolic virtues, the *living experience of his interior attitudes* and the culmination of his life in *full transformation* in Christ: "it is Christ who lives in me" (Cf. *Escritos,* BAC edition, p. 521).
  3. Imitating, reliving and allowing himself to be interiorly transformed by Christ, Claret, driven by the dynamism and urgency of his apostolic zeal, lived a life of abnegation, poverty and meekness, cultivating all those virtues which would dispose him to become an adequate instrument in extending the Reign of God. The title, APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY, sums up his essential definition.
  4. Our Founder particularly singled out the following traits in Christ:
     1. *The Son who is concerned about his Father's interests* (Cf. Lk 2:49). The Father's interests are: that he be known, that his will be done, that all men should be saved. Claret lived the concern of Jesus, who was always intent on the glory of the Father and the salvation of mankind. Christ had no other interests, and he suffered and died in pursuit of them. (Cf. Aug, n. 752).
  5. b). *The Son who is anointed to bring Good News to the poor* (Cf. Lk 4:18). "In a very special way, God our Lord made me understand those words: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore the Lord has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor and to heal the broken-hearted! (Is 61:1)" (Aut, n. 118).

This text, which Jesus made his own, led Claret to discover, both for himself and for his missionaries (Aut, n. 687), his prophetic anointing and his call to evangelize the poor. For our Founder, Christ was the Servant-Prophet, anointed by the Spirit to preach the Good News. The prophetic mission of Jesus is the very marrow of Claret's apostolic experience and the source of his inspiration. As the prophets were always attentive to and dependent on God and human need, so Claret would live his missionary vocation with the preoccupation of lending his efforts to the salvation of others (Cf. Aut, nn. 238, 448).

* 1. c) *The* Son of *Man who had nowhere to lay his head* (Cf. Lk 9:58). By this, Claret understood that he should live in detachment, without house or lodgings of his own, thus being always available, as Christ was (Cf. Aug, nn. 431, 222).
  2. d) *The Sign of Contradiction* (Lk 2:34) . This trait was to mark Claret's lifestyle and apostolate (Aut, 222) to such a degree that we could call them a life of martyrdom and of hope. Our Founder liked to regard the death of Christ as victory, as the source of reconciliation and salvation. It comes as no surprise that the Eucharist was his favorite place for encounter with Christ, first in His real presence and then as sacrifice and communion.

This encounter with Christ in the Eucharist was, for Claret, a source of his apostolic energy.

* 1. e) Son of Mary (Cf. Lk 1:38, 2:7). His great devotion to Mary is based on her being the Mother of Jesus, the Savior. And thus he feels that he is a "son and minister" formed by Mary in the forge of her mercy and love (Cf. Aut, n. 270). She is his "Mother, teacher and director" (Cf. retreat resolutions for 1847 in BAC, p. 530).
  2. f) *Sent by the Father, anointed by the Holy Spirit, sharing his life and mission with his Apostles* Claret delighted in contemplating Jesus as an itinerant missionary, "going from town to town, preaching everywhere" (Aut, n. 221). This is a trait he also liked to discern in the Apostles (Aut, n. 224). Jesus sought out and called collaborators to share his life and mission.

Claret, too, found companions to do what he alone could not do ( Cf. *Escritos,* BAC, p. 822 ff.). And from the start, he lived with them a simple common life, sharing the following of Christ with those priests to whom the Lord had given the same spirit he felt within himself (Cf. Aut, nn. 849 and 491).

#### Within a Social and Ecclesial Context

* 1. In our Founder's life, too, his apostolic vocation was marked by historical circumstances. Claret's vocation was an answer from God to the cries of his people (Cf. Ex 3:7-12). His calling to the apostolate opened his eyes and his heart to perceive and discern the ills of the Church and Spanish society in the 1 9th century, but it also suggested to him the resources and means through which they could be remedied.
  2. From his own analysis of society he concluded that in the world of his time there existed a great deal of egoism, and a love for riches, prestige and pleasure; that the people were not being evangelized and that there was a dearth of apostolic

preachers who lived a truly evangelical life (Cf. Aut, nn. 357- 358, 695' *Escritos,* BAC, p. 822 ff.).

* 1. His experience of life led him into a radical debate with economic power, to an attitude of alienation from any political faction, to a total commitment to evangelization and to the formation of seminarians and priests. At the same time, he accepted the challenge of the human and social urgencies of his times.
  2. Since he was by nature so "soft-hearted and compas- sionate," he did not hesitate to remedy as many bodily needs of people as he could (Cf. Aut, nn. 10, 19, 170, 173ff. ). He was particularly sensitive to the dignity of man, any man, including criminals and evildoers (Cf. Aut, nn. 32, 417-428, 583-584). He displayed a burning love, a passion, for the world of labor and for the dignity of the laborer (Cf. Aut, nn. 31-34, 56-63l 563-564). He strove to bring people out of ignorance and modernize their level of culture by all means available to him He had a powerful sense of justice, to the extent that posterity chose to inscribe on his tomb "dilexi justitiam."
  3. Claret chose to make use of all means available to him in accomplishing his mission, both his own personal gifts of nature and grace, as well as the means which social evolution and progress put at his disposal. He used his natural talents and abilities as an artist in illustrating his books. We could even say that he made use of everything that he had ever learned in his life. His intuitive creativity enabled him to apply the most opportune remedies to the most disparate cases. He gathered companions, established institutions, encouraged his friends to serve in his mission. There was no means that he let pass by, but he was outstanding in his use of the press for the spread of the Gospel.
  4. As we run through the stages of his life as a parish priest, missionary, founder, bishop and confessor to the queen, we

become keenly aware of his constant alertness to the urgent needs and challenges that he met in his evangelizing mission, and how he sought to respond to them by using the most effective means at hand. He was ahead of his time in raising up apostolic movements which have since been recognized and supported by the Church.

* 1. The founding of our Congregation must be understood as the result and expression of this apostolic zeal. He shared his missionary concerns with the Congregation and pointed out to it a number of objectives in evangelization. In order to fulfill these objectives, he suggested that his Missionaries make use of all means possible.

#### The Missionary Experience of the Congregation

* 1. The Congregation has kept alive its awareness of having been born in the Church as a community called together and consecrated under the action of the Holy Spirit and through the mediation of Saint Anthony Mary Claret. As the heir to his missionary spirit, the Congregation feels responsible for activating and promoting those missionary initiatives that he was unable to attend to personally. Our Founder has initiated us into a very special understanding of, and life with, Christ, who was anointed and sent by the Father (Cf. Jn l0:36), and whose consecration and mission are continued in the Church (AG 3-5). Thus it is that Claret acts as a father to our missionary family.
  2. As an experience of the Spirit (ET 11), his charism has been preserved, observed, developed and enriched by several generations of missionaries, and has thus given meaning to our plan of life. In many and varied ways, this foundational grace has been recognized as the root of unity and solidity in our community. Missionary likeness to Claret has been and must continue to be a touchstone, a permanent incentive and decisive criterion in confronting and revising the conduct (life + attitudes) and options of our mission.
  3. Included under the same gift of grace-charism-and essentially united with it, are our consecration and our mission. It is fitting to observe here, that mission is more than just "apostolic works." The terms are not interchangeable. Mission presupposes a complex of grace aimed at a special kind of edification achieved through apostolic works. It is through this complex of grace that we select our works and set the stamps of our distinctive style on the activities we perform.

#### Some Facts of Life

* 1. The history of the Congregation is the incarnation and existential realization of the founding charism of Claret. The first fact of life in this history has been summed up for us by our Founder, who writes: "Thus we had begun and thus we continued, living together strictly in community. All of us were going out regularly to work in the sacred ministry" (Aut, n. 491; Cf. Letter to Pius IX, April 1859).

The tasks assigned during this first hour were preaching popular missions, catechizing children, giving retreats to priests, seminarians and religious.

* 1. As it grow in numbers and had to face new ecclesial requirements, the Congregation-without abandoning its first activities-opened up to a missionary expansion aimed at rais- ing up catechumenal communities in places where Christ had not yet been preached. This was not simply a geographical expansion, but an opening up to new cultures, to which it became increasingly sensitive, until it reached the point of incarnation in them.
  2. From a rudimentary catechesis of children and adults by way of popular missions in our churches, the Congregation soon extended its activities to integrating faith into the context of culture by way of "Christian education." During this period, as its resources increased, the Congregation began a strong commitment to schools. Next came parishes, which were undertaken because of the missionary possibilities they offered.
  3. One activity inspired by Claret and personally very dear to his spirit, was the attention given to the formation of the clergy and religious. The same may be said of the apostolate of the press which, at the beginning of this century, formed a very special part of our service to the Church. The Congregation diverted some of its energies away from the direct re-Christianization of the people, in order to concentrate on building up the Church through the formation of evangelizers, directing or teaching in seminaries and universities, and printing specialized or popular publications. In more recent years, a great part of this activity has been devoted to the service of the Religious Life.
  4. This rapid review of some of the most characteristic facts of its life gives us some notion of the missionary history of the Congregation which, since its Founder's days, has been watered by the blood of martyrs. Like its Founder, it has suffered persecution, exile and death. There were significant examples of this a few years after the foundation. The same was true, somewhat later, in Mexico, Spain, China, Cuba and, most recently, in Equatorial Guinea. Add to these more notable examples of the *stigmata Christi,* the silent witness of many lives cut off prematurely by the climate and unhealthy or harsh conditions in mission territories.
  5. The criterion followed in establishing a community, beginning an apostolate or accepting a commitment, has generally been the need for evangelization, the urgency of an apostolate or the strategic importance of some qualified service, as was the case with our Founder (Aut, n. 200 ff.). It is fitting to remark here that the history of the Congregation deserves a full page in the annals of service to the needy, to the masses, and to the promotion and formation of agents of evangelization.

#### An Explicit Awareness

* 1. Mainly through the teaching of its Superiors General, the Congregation has always been motivated to reflect on and

live the values of our missionary vocation. Nevertheless, in response to the demands of Vatican II for renewal of the religious life, the Congregation had to make a great collective effort to rediscover and give new life to the missionary charism of our Founder. Mature reflection produced the Documents of the 1967 Chapter, which contained an explanation of our charism and spiritual heritage that was and is a challenge to fidelity to our vocation. But at the same time it filled out this overview with some important doctrinal and directive pages on missionary community.

* 1. Recently, the Circular Letter on "The Heart of Mary and the Congregation in its Present Moment" (1978) by Fr. Antonio Leghisa, has taken a firm step towards re-reading our missionary spirit from the point of view of the bonds between our Congregation and the Heart of Mary.
  2. Today, in attempting to reconsider our forms of living and evangelizing, in order to become more effective ministers of the Gospel, we find ourselves obliged once more to retrace the most significant milestones in this process of renewal, as we are about to finish here. We must especially insist on the need for receiving and assimilating the renewed text of the Constitutions as the most explicit commitment of fidelity to what we have been called to be in the Church.
  3. At this moment, in an effort to foster a more cohesive life and missionary commitment, we have chosen to present in summary form the vision of itself that the Congregation has been arriving at since the Special Chapter of 1967: a vision of the *basic attitudes* that made up the consecration-mission of Claret and that must be the identifying traits of every Claretian. They are:

1. AprofoundexperienceofGodasFather:alivingofour divine sonship.
   * Conformity with Christ, who was anointed and sent to save mankind.
   * A deep sense of Marian sonship.
   * A strictly evangelical life, following the poor, chaste and obedient Christ.
   * Community life in the style of the Apostles.
   * A fervent expression of the love which unites us with God, and apostolic zeal for the salvation of mankind.
   * A faith-filled, prayerful and loving ministry of the Word, listened to and assimilated.
2. These attitudes are present in every service which a Claretian renders to the Church-undoubtedly an evangelizing service. Like his Founder, in the *unfolding of his mission,* each Claretian:
3. proclaims the Father that he may be known and loved (the basic meaning of what Claret calls "the glory of God" - (Cf. Aut, nn. 42, 153);
   * feels that he is anointed and sent to the poor (love urges him to commit himself to mankind - Cf. Aut, nn. 313, 448);
   * by his own poverty proclaims to mankind the goods of the Kingdom;
   * by his own chastity shows his missionary availability and ardent love;
   * by his own obedience to the Church, the Pope and the Bishops, proclaims the mystery of the obedient Christ, the itinerant Christ, intent on the Father's glory;
   * by his own community life, recalls the apostolic com- munity, a community which was both evangelical and evangelizing;
   * faithfully and lovingly lives the Word which he hears and assimilates, to more fittingly fulfill his prophetic function and become an apostle, witness and martyr;
   * lives a life attentive to the needs of the world and the

Church, tries a great variety of means to obtain the salvation of mankind, and remains ever alert to what is most urgent, timely and effective.

1. These are attitudes and traits that define a life projected at mission. Moreover, they present a level of quality already defined in the model holiness of St. Anthony Mary Claret-a model which many of our brothers, during the 130 years of the Congregation, have generously striven to copy. All of us Claretians must feel that we are called together through that model.

#### Article 2. The Evangelizing Consciousness of the Church in our Time

1. Our Claretian mission absolutely lacks sense unless it is seen within the mission of the Church. We would not even be able to discern the present effectiveness of our mission, except in the light of the discernment which allows the Church of our times to be a really evangelizing Church, the bearer of Good News to humanity in its present hour.
2. The Spirit does not cease to inspire today's Church *to be alert to and to stress those values* which it urgently needs in order to faithfully fulfill the command it has received to preach the Good News: a new understanding of mankind, to whom the Church has been sent and who is now struggling in search of an environment of freedom in which all human beings can express their dignity as the firstborn of creation; a renewed awareness of itself as a being-for-communion, a being best described in terms of participation and a variety of services; a purer faith commitment to Christ its Lord, whose Reign it feels compelled to proclaim amid the contradictions of the secular world, to those who, humanly speaking, do not count...
3. This quickening of the Spirit is perceived through *significant events* which are happening at different places in the Church: Christians involved in works of human advancement and

liberation; the evangelizing presence of the laity; a great variety of charisms for personal and community renewal; ecclesial communities for fostering maturity in, and the transmission of, the faith; new ministries; missionary service to a non-Christian or de-Christianized world; presence among the most abandoned; an affirmation of the values of conscience and religious expression of the people; the attraction which the personality of Jesus exerts upon youth; a hunger for the word of God; new forms for following Jesus in spirit and in evangelical works. The list is endless.

1. At the same time, facing the challenges of our era and helped by the Holy Spirit, the Church, through its *magisterium,* is forming a conscience that discerns, guides and encourages these life-events in the service of its mission. Our whole era finds a necessary point of reference in the Second Vatican Council, and has benefitted from the magisterium of Paul VI (especially in EN) and John Paul II (RH), from important documents of the Synods of Bishops (1971, on justice in the world; 1974, on evangelization; 1977, on catechesis), and from the Conferences of Bishops in various parts of the world, who have offered sweeping and solid teaching on the evangelizing mission of the Church and its options for our times. This is the doctrine that should guide the missionary reflection and commitments of our Congregation in its present hour.

#### From the Mission of Jesus to the Mission of the Church

* 1. Faced with a crisis which has shaken the whole realm of "the sacred" in our times, the Church has reaffirmed its own identity by returning to the commandment it received from Jesus: "Go into the world and proclaim the Good News to every creature" (Mk 16:15) . In this sense Paul VI could join the Synod of 1974 in saying that "the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church" (EN 14). Seen in this light, mission and evangelization must express one and the same

content, whether we are referring to the Church or to Jesus Himself, who said of himself that he had been *sent to bring the* Good *News to the poor* (Cf. Lk 4:18).

* 1. The Good News which Jesus brings is no mere notion: it is an accomplished fact (Cf. Mk 1:15) which Jesus calls "the Kingdom," which he himself has introduced into this world. This is something "so important that, by comparison, everything else becomes simply 'the rest,' which is given 'in addition.' Only the Kingdom therefore is absolute, and it makes everything else relative. The Lord will delight in describing in many ways the happiness of belonging to this Kingdom (a paradoxical happiness which is made up of things that the world rejects), the demands of the Kingdom and its Magna Charta, the heralds of the Kingdom, its mysteries, its children, the vigilance and fidelity demanded of those who await its definitive coming" (EN 8). The Kingdom has its most concrete expression in Jesus himself, who is at once a gift of grace and a human response - at once the proclamation of the new Law of love and its perfect fulfillment.
  2. The proclamation of this Kingdom and its establishment in this world relates to *the very existence of the Church,* which is its "seed and beginning" (GS 5). Its existence, like that of Jesus, is centered on he proclamation and realization of the Kingdom which, since it is not of this world, comes into being as a gift of grace. It eagerly invites all to a conversion of heart, and continually proposes to those whose hearts are rightly disposed, new works that can change the world. It proclaims a message of brotherhood among all men and truly creates among evangelizers a communion with the power of the Good News. It announces a transcendent salvation, one which is not of man's making, but is a gift of God which touches man's time and earthly creations, as the anticipation of a new heaven and a new earth.
  3. The Second Vatican Council (LG ch. I), taking its inspiration from the language of St. Paul, has set forth this mission

of the Church in terms of its being the *Sacrament of Salvation*, placed by God in the center of human history. Inasmuch as it is the body and "fullness" of the risen Christ, the Church is the visible expression of the message of salvation, in such a way that through its presence and its word, man grasps the presence and the word of Christ. Thus, the Church must be an epiphany of the risen Christ, a manifestation of him that is offered through this new bodylines.

* 1. By the same token, the message of salvation is symbolized and communicated by way of witness (= martyrion) and the *service of Word*. The word of the Church is sacramental, inasmuch as it effectively transmits the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, sent to renew the face of the earth. Through its word and witness (its own living and dying), the Church proclaims to the world and puts into effect the work and mission of Jesus, who is the primordial sacrament, given for the salvation of all mankind.
  2. The great movement set in action by Vatican II can be described as an effort to restore evangelizing forcefulness to the language and attitudes of the Church: in liturgy, in catechesis, in dialogue with modern culture, in pastoral organization and in consecrated life.

#### 2. The Good News which the Church Proclaims

* 1. Our times have been lavish in doctrines affirming various kinds of liberation and salvation, which stand out all the more in view of modern man's "endangered" status (Cf. RH 16). This has pressed the Church into defining more precisely the content of its own proclamation - a message which it has not made up itself, but which it has received from Christ to be transmitted to mankind.
  2. The Good News which the Church proclaims is a salvation which, like the gift of God's grace and mercy, is offered to all mankind in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who

died and is risen (Cf. EN 27). It is not a reality of this world, in the sense that it arises and falls here in keeping with certain time- bound expectations. Nevertheless, salvation does take place in human space and time, which Christ has claimed as his own through his life, death and resurrection. This space and time have, by that very fact, become a history and a land of salvation, freed from the evil that comes from the human heart, which had turned them into a time of destruction and a place of exile.

* 1. The Church bears witness that God the Father, in Jesus his Son, loves all men as his sons and gives them the *spirit of sonship* A son is the opposite of a slave (Cf. Gal 4:7; Rom 8:15). A son is an heir with Christ and, like him, constituted in *lordship and liberty*. This means that the message of salvation in Christ Jesus implies a total liberation of man from all that would oppress him or militate against his integrity and dignity as a son of God. This is the aim of the dynamics of the Church's preaching, of Christian prayer and of sacramental life in its full development.
  2. Sin, ignorance, pain, hunger and poverty present the Creator's gift of life, which is man's inheritance, from flowering into a *proclaiming of the glory of Cod the Father* (Cf. Rom 8:15-21): a situation which is all the more deviant, to the extent that the degradation of some human beings is often the result of the hard-heartedness of others. This is why, over and above the universal proclamation of salvation, the Prophets and Jesus himself expressed their predilection for the poor, the oppressed, the sick and the abandoned. It also explains the feelings of the Church in our time: "Action in favor of justice and participation in the transformation of the world clearly strike us as a constituent dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, namely, the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation" (SO 1971, Introduction; cf. EN 30-38).
  3. Evangelization presents itself as an invitation to build a new humanity. But at the same time it fills the human heart with the energy needed in order to bring this about: the gift of God in Jesus Christ; the creating and renewing Spirit, which is not a spirit of violence and bitterness, but one of communion and hope.

#### 3. Proclaiming the Gospel to Every Creature

1. The Church in our time cannot fail to be deeply shaken by the fact that two thirds of the human race have not yet received the proclamation of the Gospel. Moreover, for several decades we have been hearing of a process of de-Christianization of masses of people who were once faithful to the Church of Christ, and among whom missionary vocations to the non-believing world once flourished.

In this situation, where the universality of the Church's saving message seems to be facing, where its capacity for missionary mobilization and even its transparency as the universal sacrament of salvation are being questioned, the Church does not cease repeating to itself the commandment of Jesus, who sends it out to all mankind.

1. 3.1. Paul VI (EN 50) pointed out some of the *obstacles* which have impeded and still impede the work of evangelization. Not the least of these is resistance of the people being addressed by the evangelizer, whose proposal that they change and be converted is not accepted, or whose proclamation does not agree with their creaturely expectations.
2. Sometimes the preaching of the Gospel is strongly opposed, if not prevented, by certain public powers which for various reasons (preservation of national culture, state security, etc.) discriminate against and persecute evangelizers. This is a condition that affects us today, even in countries with a supposedly Christian tradition.
3. Another obstacle "on the part of the evangelizers themselves, there has been the temptation for various reasons to narrow down the field of their missionary activity" (EN 50). This mission calls for a great spirit of availability both on the part of those called to it and on the part of local churches, which the Council (CD 6), in virtue of the doctrine of episcopal collegiality, reminded of the urgent need to attend to the evangelization of all people. Moreover, this sort of availability must be a substantive characteristic of those Church bodies which came into being in order to exercise an evangelizing service.
4. 3.2. The Church in our time has payed close attention to the problem of cultures which at times have set up distinct barriers to the spread of the Gospel. It is aware that the diversity of cultures (Cf. GS 53) cannot be ignored by the evangelizer and that "the building up of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures" (EN 20). The missionary availability of the Church must have, in this respect, a special orientation, which has rightly been given the theological label of "incarnation" since, as in the case of Christ, it denotes the way in which the Church, the gift of salvation, enters history and the concrete conditions of mankind. In this sense, it might be said that it completes the incarnation of Christ and is conformed to the model of his self-emptying for the sake of serving (Cf. Phil 2:7-8).
5. It is hard to speak of a Church as being 'local,' if it is not "intimately interfused not only with the people, but also with the aspirations, riches and limitations, ways of praying, loving, looking at life and the world, which distinguish this or that human group" (EN 63). The local Church "has the task of assimilating the essence of the Gospel message and of transposing it, without the slightest betrayal of its essential truth, into the language that these particular people understand, and then of proclaiming it in this language" (Ibid.).
6. 3.3. In this connection, Paul VI introduced the theme of *language,* which is of great importance in the universal proclamation of the Gospel. At question here is a total language, one that can run the whole gamut of expression in matters of faith and life, one that is capable of serving as the vehicle of the dialogue it aims at sustaining and perfecting. The compelling power of the message is conditioned by its transmission through signs and symbols that are more or less accessible, evocative and in harmony with the deep aspirations (not always fully formulated) of human individuals or groups.

In this field, the Church must exercise its responsibility in two directions: maintaining the *depositum fidei* and transmit- ting in all its integrity and at the same time, adapting its expression in liturgical signs, in catechesis, in preaching, in the overall social image of the Church and in its ecumenical dealings.

1. The evangelizer should first concentrate on perfecting his own inner dialogue in his own inner world of values, in an effort to harmonize faith and culture in his own life synthesis. This experience will equip him to join other individuals and groups in a similar process. The interest shown by the Church these past years in the theme of formation, has been largely a response to the need, on the part of those who are called to be evangelizers, to acquire this sort of synthesis, one which the process of modern culture certainly does not make easy.
2. 3.4. The Church must live out its universal mission as a *project,* with all the tensions implicit in the confrontation of the present moment of salvation and the future coming of the Lord. The Church's task is not a matter of power, prestige or postures. Rather, it is a matter of adopting the dynamics of growth and nurture that Jesus used in the parables in order to describe the earthly phase of the Kingdom. His references to the different kinds of soils, seasons and stages through which the seed of the Kingdom must pass, the protection that it needs for growth, etc., are so

many ways of directing our attention to the need for a process of discernment based on attentive examination of the signs of the times (Cf. Mt 13:24-30).

1. In different epochs of the vast sweep of its mission, the Church's pastoral discernment has led it to choose specific concrete objectives, suited to the needs of the times, around which it has mobilized its evangelizing activities. The Church of the Apostles experienced certain opportune moments for discernment and for the setting of pastoral priorities (Cf. Acts 4:23-31, 6:1-7, 11:1-18, 13:1-3). At the present moment, the pastoral prudence of the Pope and Bishops is proceeding in the same way to translate the whole thrust of evangelization into plans that detect specific urgencies, point out certain preferential subjects, endorse particular strategies for the apostolate, etc. Clearly, this procedure in no way contradicts the universal mission of the Church, but rather acts in its service.

#### 4. The Community that Proclaims the Gospel

1. Referring to the agents of evangelization, Paul VI observed that evangelization is always an ecclesial act, and never an individual or isolated one (EN 60). It is an action linked to the Church not only by an institutional relationship, but also "by invisible bonds and hidden roots in the order of grace" (Ibid.). The Church, which has been called together by the Word, is itself responsible for witnessing to and proclaiming that Word. The evangelizer is one sent by the ecclesial community for the building up of the Church, which is the community of salvation, and for planting it in local churches. His work will not be genuine unless it is done in full communion with the Church of Christ.
2. 4.1. As *Euangelii Nuntiandi* (17) points out, evangelization is an ecclesial action that is complex, rich and dynamic. It involves a multitude of actions which, through the mediation of *diverse agent,* reveal a single course and lead to a

single achievement: ecclesial source and lead to a single achievement: ecclesial communion. The Church of our time has been fully aware of this complexity and of the demands it poses for the great diversity of its agents, from the Successor of Peter down to the newest minister of the Word (Cf. EN 67-73). All of them enrich the evangelizing capacity of the Church and demonstrate the effective presence of the Spirit.

1. Along with the objective complexity of the work of salvation, there goes a wealth of means which the very life of the Church and the progress of the present age have placed at the service of evangelization. A diversification of activities may thus involve a variety of techniques and methods, which in turn may require the work of specialists who, allowing for a legitimate pluralism of language, must retain their clear relationship with what is central to communion.
2. 4.2. In explicitly implementing the evangelizing consciousness of the Church in our time, a significant contribution has been the development of the theology of the *laity,* which came of age especially during Vatican ll. The Council, setting aside any peripheral issues, structures its theology of the layperson within the overall sacramental context of the Church. Clearly, no evangelizing project can be carried out if it marginalizes the active participation of the laity, who have specific tasks to perform in the Christian transformation of the world. These specific functions cannot be covered by other sectors in the Church. Moreover, it is only natural that in this, as in other aspects, the laity should have their own ecclesial say and their own autonomy, as befits a mature sector of the community of believers.
3. The various movements arising today among the laity of the Church are expressing their search for a spirituality on the high level of the ecclesial responsibilities to which their commitment to evangelization calls them. It is important that we accompany this search with the respect due to its lay character

and also with an openness to receive its critical contribution to the community.

1. 4.3. The renewed understanding of the Church as the community of salvation has also provided the milieu for a more adequate acceptance of the *charisms* with which the Spirit enlivens the Church. These charisms are the concrete expression of the initiative that belongs to the Holy Spirit in the building up of the post-Resurrection Church. They are, in effect, the gifts which he freely distributes to individuals for the common good, according to the well-known teaching of St. Paul (Cf. I Cor 12:4-13).
2. The charisms should be both an expression of the liberty of the sons of God, set free by the Spirit (Cf. Rom 8:2), and an affirmation of the new law of love, which brings about reconciliation and communion, inclines one to service and gathers people together in the Church. This relatedness to the Church is a touchstone for discerning whether something really comes from the Spirit and promotes the work of salvation.
3. In keeping with St. Paul's teaching (Cf. 1 Cor 12:28- 30), we should correctly identify the charisms according to their purpose and give them their proper place in the Church. In doing so, however, we should bear in mind that the difference of gifts, as such, goes beyond merely human assessments of need, and that one must not stifle the Spirit.
4. Promoting *communion and participation* in the Church today is tantamount to readying the Church for the work of evangelization and furthering the building up of the Kingdom, as the Episcopal Conference at Puebla has frequently observed. This is why so much attention is given to the more significant centers of communion and participation that exist in the Church today.
5. Along with other estimable centers (such as basic ecclesial communities and catechumenal communities), it behooves us to give privileged attention to the *religious community*

which, of its very nature, is a place for Gospel witness and for the fostering of manifold missionary initiatives. It is indispensable that its identity be kept, in order that it may be able to bring to the Church and the work of evangelization its unique contribution of availability, originality, imagination and enterprising spirit, which Paul VI pointed out as characteristic of it (Cf. EN 69). Within the greater setting of evangelization, the religious community, by actualizing its relatedness to the overall ecclesial community, may in turn discover motives for its own inner renewal, a more adequate style of presence in the world, and more suitable works for its apostolate.

1. While it should effectively enter into and promote the joint pastoral efforts of its region, the religious community should keep alive in the local Church a universal outlook, and exhibit the missionary tension that befits every community born of the Spirit and endowed with his gifts in order to work for human salvation.

**Chapter 11**

### Our Missionary Charism Today

1. The Congregation knows and feels both an urgent need to be faithful to its missionary vocation and a concrete need to overcome obstacles that hamper or weaken the vitality of its response. Behind the conscious or unconscious longings and unrest of many Claretians, one can detect the same radical questions that the 1974 Synod of Bishops posed, with regard to evangelization:

In our day, is the hidden energy of the Good News able to stir man's conscience deeply?

To what extent can the power of the Gospel truly transform today's man?

What methods should we use in proclaiming the Gospel, in order to unleash its effective power?

1. Looking at the matter from our own condition as missionaries, the following similar questions arise:

How should we evangelize within the Church, in keeping with our own charism?

How, in keeping with our Claretian spirit, evangelize those sectors that have been entrusted to us, as well as those other areas where we are not present, but where we could and should be present?

1. In order to answer these questions adequately, all Claretians must make an effort to
   1. Renew the experience of the common vocation we have received in the Church for a specific mission.
   2. Be aware of the demands that this mission poses for us today, both on the individual and community level.
   3. Assume those commitments which, at the present moment, are indispensable for actuating our missionary project.

#### Article 1. A Community for Mission

1. Our missionary vocation in the Church is a grace, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, who pours forth his manifold gifts freely. This fact, with which we are well-enough acquainted in theory, needs to have still more impact on our life, so as to convert it, as in our Founder's own life, into a principle that organizes and articulates all our hopes, aspirations and projects.
2. In the 1973 Chapter (CA 11; F 4, 11-12; VR 6) and the Costa Rica Assembly (Declaration 23), attention was called and guidelines given as to how we might overcome the crises of *vocational identity, belonging and availability,* which are closely connected issues. In our treatment here of our mission, we could hardly avoid returning to these crises, since they are the nucleus

for all the other difficulties affecting our evangelizing action. Anyone who does not really feel centered in his vocation, tends to relativize his work at hand, becomes bottled up in his own individual projects and becomes incapable of supporting a common mission. Thus, the clarification and actualization of our mission in today's world, a mission lived in a spirit of genuine availability, can and should reaffirm our sense of identity and our sense of belonging in the Congregation.

#### Recovering Our Own Identity

* 1. We know that recovering our own Claretian identity, creating a true communion of life and apostolic action, and achieving genuine availability for mission, are not things that can be brought about by decree, by mere information or by study, although these are certainly indispensable. What we must do, is to resituate ourselves in the very center of our vocation-experience, where the unmistakable, absolute presence of God in Christ- whose Spirit enkindled the flame of high inspiration and generous commitment to mission-can overcome all the relativizing and debilitating forces that make us restless, distract us or lead us into suspect or alienating situations.
  2. We cannot overlook the great shakeups that the world and the Church have undergone (Cf. GS 4-11), and which have caused a broad disarray and the undermining of convictions, both in human and religious spheres. The analyses in the first Part of this Document have ample significance for our times. These changes have moved us away from a peaceful acceptance or holding of systems of ideas, symbols, values, beliefs and behavioral codes, to a situation of indifference and instability. On top of this, they have forced us into dealing with immediate and shifting situations, without the benefit of due discernment. In this juncture, we run the risk of leading unappreciative and shallow lives, without those values and convictions that characterize and justify a sense of brotherhood, of apostolic work

and of being always ready to serve the needs of the Congregation and the Church.

#### 2. Communion and Belonging

* 1. Authentically living our missionary vocation in com- munity demands no small effort on our part, no doubt about it. One does not live as a Claretian simply by enrolling his name in an institution, devoting a few working hours to it and offering his sympathies to those poor souls who in due course have come to occupy some important post in his effective environment. It is only when we profess daily to follow the Christ who was anointed and sent, the Son of Mary, that we gain our vocational identity in a *community in the service of the Church*
  2. The day is past for simply hoping for formulas that "define" us, or by which we "may be identified." What we need *is a conversion* that will lead us to recognize and accept, amid the challenges of our era, the gift of God, which is life, which becomes *personal and community* history, which is *a gift for others,* if we are to enter fully into the *process of identification* It is, then, an awareness of a *call* and the exigencies of a *response,* maintained in full lucidity and a maximum of corresponsibility, that provide the key for an understanding of *belonging* It is very hard to live joyfully, throwing in one's lot with that of the rest, without the primary experience of the "first love" (1 Jn 4:10), who gives coherence to the unrepeatable and unwaning history of our common vocation-mission. This implies an awareness that we are indeed distinct, but that we are present and generous to each other, in the same feeling, the same concerns and in the same projection towards the service of all mankind.
  3. This process can only find authenticating guarantees when it embraces human, ecclesial and congregational forms of *mediation and solidarity*

For us, being Claretians is the concrete way of being men, Christians, religious, priests and apostles (Cf. 2VR 6). It means reliving in community the spiritual journey of Claret and his basic preoccupation with serving and building up the Church through the ministry of the Word, proclaiming the Kingdom of God. All of our life, consecration and mission is shaped by this charism, which is offered and shared in community. In virtue of this grace we can and should renew our works and structures. And only if these have been impregnated with the spirit of Claret- our gift and our inheritance-will we be able to call them Claretian.

* 1. As we can clearly see from this, our mission in the Church is not specified by a name, and ideology, or a structure, but by a grace which reaches us and congregates us in a community of faith, life and service to the Gospel. And for this very reason, a Claretian's first and principal belonging must be his deep communion with his brothers, who are called and sent, as he is, to be witnesses and heralds of the Good News.

#### 3. Community Formation for Mission

* 1. By reason of its very nature, the Claretian community must possess those vital resources it needs to keep alive the principle that integrates its members. It must maintain in force the missionary thrust that is at the origin of its calling together as a group.
  2. Before all else, the proposal of a *shared project* in mission should be the nucleus for promoting new Claretian vocations, as well as a principle of discernment, of pedagogical incentive and of experimentation, throughout the process of incorporation into our Institute. During the time when he is being familiarized with an overview of mission in its real sociological, cultural and historical dimensions, anyone being incorporated into the Congregation should grow in theological understanding of

the Church, and in a spirituality that effectively mobilizes a personal response and an availability to be sent on mission through the mediation of regular community channels.

* 1. But these are attitudes that should not be limited to the period of a Claretian's first formation. Clearly, a shared understanding of the realities of mission could not fail to favor, in all our communities, a *harmony and complementarity of efforts,* and of planning itself, and as such it would constitute a permanently valid tool of formation and community growth. The complexity and fluidity which the community must meet in the realities of mission will easily lead to effective and affective splits in the community, unless it assumes these attitudes in its moments of discernment and decision.
  2. For the Church today, it is a question of "affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation" (EN 19). In facing this task, it is not enough just "to be informed"; a living experience of dialogue is needed. If our communities are to be in permanent service, they will have to live in a state of sensitivity to the change that is continually going on around us and they will have to help their members face it with a personalized faith. *Permanent formation* includes a solidly rooted spirituality which assimilates and lives through changes and evolutions in the world and the Church, with a continual openness to being led by the Spirit.

#### 4. Within the Church’s Mission

* 1. During the past years, the magisterium of the Church has repeatedly reminded religious of fidelity to the *proper character* of their Institutes, not only as a principle of inner renewal, but as a form of situating themselves and serving the

Church (Cf. PC 3c; CD 34; Renovationis Causam). The recent document on relations between bishops and religious states that "it is necessary in the present circumstances of cultural evolution and ecclesial renewal, that the identity of each Institute be assured in such a way as to avoid the danger of imprecision whereby religious, without bearing in mind the mode of action proper to their own character, should be introduced into the life ofthe Church in a vague and ambiguous manner." (MR 11).

* 1. For us, evangelizing according to our specific mission means backing the mission which the Congregation has received from the Church. The fact that we are *bound to and sent* from within the Congregation, is something that qualifies all our works, great and small, in churches that are just beginning as well as in churches that need consolidation and renewal.

In our community there is room for both personal charisms and radical options. Not everyone has to be doing the same thing in the same way. However, every personal charism and option must remain within the community boundaries that define our life and our mission. Therefore, any merely individu- alistic projects - whether of a person or of a community - which neither *share in the life* of, nor accept *being sent* by the community of the Congregation, cannot be regarded as works of the Congregation.

* 1. It is necessary for an evangelizer to perform his work within the ecclesial communion, since it is only there that the unique mission of Christ continues to be carried out. The Church in its actions simply shares in the obedience of the One who offered himself to the Father for the life of the world (Cf. Heb 5:8).

In our case, this exigency is even higher out of fidelity to our founding charism. It is true, of course, that all religious Institutes have come into being through the Church and for the

Church, and that they have an obligation to enrich the Church with their distinctive traits in keeping with their particular spirit and specific mission (Cf. MR 14b). But our community must lay particular stress on ecclesial communion through fidelity to the Pope and bishops, since this was a constant in the ministry of Claret and since the Congregation has always maintained and fostered it, as our Constitutions (n. 6) recommend. This ecclesial communion, we might note, is not broken, but rather heightened whenever, out of fidelity to the Gospel, we denounce selfish or partisan situations in the Church.

* 1. From another aspect, our ecclesial communion would not be complete if we did not take into account the process of interior renewal and the manifestations of the Spirit that are going on in the very midst of the People of God. Fostering, consolidating and bringing to maturity Ecclesial Communities, is a form of entering into ecclesial communion. Something similar might be said concerning ecumenical communion and sharing.

#### Article 2. Exigencies of our Mission

* 1. Our evangelizing mission today involves a series of demands that are stamped by the charge entrusted to us and by the challenging situation of the world into which we are being sent. The Council, speaking of the mission of the Church, observed: "Since this mission continues and, in the course of history, unfolds the mission of Christ, who was sent to evangel- ize the poor, then the Church, urged on by Spirit of Christ, must walk the road that Christ himself walked: a road of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice even to death" (AG 5).

Since that declaration, other Church documents have underlined other aspects which are equally well worth bearing in mind. We only want to stress here those demands which, in consonance with our charism, urges us on to a greater authen- ticity in our mission today.

#### Following Christ the Evangelizer...

* 1. 1.1. From a consideration of the innermost experience of our Founder and the consciousness of the Church, we have ascertained that our mission as evangelizers can only be understood and lived as a following of Jesus, who was sent by the Father to announce the *Good News*

Following Jesus means accepting and making our own the new order of values that he sets forth as the "Kingdom," the absolute reality in view of which all the rest acquires its proper relativity.

* 1. As it stands facing the world of our time a skeptical world, lacking a sense of transcendence and worrying about its security-the Claretian community is itself faced with the exi- gency of making the same radical option for God that our Founder made throughout his life: being taught by Jesus, being one with him in our concern for the Father's interest, carrying out his saving will, striving to help his Kingdom come in this world.

Starting from the manifestation made in Jesus, the Son, we have been offered an experience of the fatherhood of God which gives meaning to our life. It is in the light of this experience that we must read the world, life and death, history, the Church and all reality. And like Christ, we should have no other food than to do the will of Him who has sent us (Cf. Jn 4:34).

* 1. In the Claretian community this experience has certain concrete traits which we should not lose sight of, because of their prophetic resonance for the present day:
* unshakable faith in the Absoluteness of God who calls us, thus affirming the ultimate reason for our life;
* living our sonship in God, the merciful Father, who impels us to extend brotherhood among men;
* conformity with Christ, the envoy of the merciful Father and the Savior of all mankind, to whom we, too, are sent;

- living our Cordimarian sonship, which leads us into intimacy with Mary, who is a proclamation and type of the new humanity, and a symbol of hope for human beings in their longing for salvation.

In any case, amid the most varied situations in life and calls to apostolic action, the Claretian must be a sign and witness of evangelical radicalism and of the faithful following of Christ the evangelizer.

* 1. 1.2. It behooves us to remember that this intimate understanding of Jesus Christ, as well as any growth in closeness to him, is above all the *work of* the Spirit (Cf. Jn 14:26). It is the Spirit that discovers the present force and meaning of the Good News of Jesus, that enables us to discern the signs of the times, that impels us to evangelize, that comforts us amid tribulations and brings life even to death accepted in the following of Jesus. It is the Spirit that creates in the disciples and followers of Jesus the docility that bears fruit in permanent availability for mission. For we are not spontaneously available; availability requires inner liberty. It is the fruit of the benevolent presence of the Spirit within us and of our generosity. It is the Spirit who makes us go outside ourselves, leads us to work through various human, ecclesial and Congregational intermediaries and enables us to adopt as our own the great saving plan of Jesus. This is how Claret understood it.

#### ... in an Evangelized and Evangelizing Community

* 1. 2.1. "Those who sincerely accept the Good News, in virtue of this acceptance and shared faith, therefore gather together in Jesus' name in order to jointly seek the Kingdom, build it up and live it. They make up a community which is, in its turn, evangelizing" (EN 13). What the Holy Father said here for the whole Church, is particularly relevant for our community of faith, prayer, life and ministry. Claret founded a Congregation in the style of the community of Jesus with his Apostles, in order to evangelize. It is a community which, modeled on the Lord's *living*

*together* with his brethren, is destined to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

* 1. A community is evangelized, to the extent that it maintains itself in a state of permanent conversion. It always takes God's Word as its touchstone from which it goes on to conduct the dialogue which puts it in an attitude service to others, in order to offer them our trust and help them remain faithful to the commitments they have undertaken; from which it goes on to discern events and to allow itself to be evangelized by the things that happen to other human beings, especially to the poor and the most needy to whom we have been sent.

The Congregation, since its founding, has always been concerned that its missionaries, before going forth to preach, should first have cultivated a life of prayer, meditation on the Word of God and study of the sacred sciences. Even their rest was a form of preparation for missionary work-a form of letting themselves be evangelized in order to be able afterwards to transmit the Good News.

* 1. 2.2. Our consecration becomes for us our first and primordial form of evangelizing. Hence, if we want to exercise a critical and prophetic function, such as our Claretian mission demands, we must:

Live as *consecrated* men, perfectly centered in our vo- cation within the Church, witnessing and proclaiming that the Kingdom of God has come, is growing and will reach its fullness in the final coming of Christ, for whom we are waiting. Only in this way will we be able to call forth transcendent values in a world that only esteems the transitory.

Live our *community* by being signs that create unity, peace and brotherhood in a divided and selfish world, where violence and getting ahead at any cost are the reigning values; by being open to corresponsibility in fulfilling our mission; by living in friendship and unselfish charity with persons who differ from us in age, status, race or economic background.

Live our *poverty* in greater solidarity with those who somehow suffer misery, injustice, oppression or have no voice to defend their rights sharing our goods with the poor who live closest to us; putting our work, our time and our cultural attainments at the disposal of those who need them.

Live our *chastity* in greater availability: in a detached yet committed love which acts as a critical commentary against unbridled eroticism, against the commercialization of sex and against the hedonistic and unselfish invasion of life in our times.

Live our *obedience* by accepting our missions to apostolates, as a sign and an earnest of evangelization, thus fulfilling God's will as discerned through our community, and with the same saving intent that it had for the heart of Christ. In response to modem forms of individualism and authoritarianism, our active and responsible obedience must be a clear thrust of communion.

* 1. 2.3. The Claretian evangelizer should draw inspiration for his pattern of life from *Mary*, who listens attentively to the Word, ponders it in her Heart and commits herself actively to the interest of the Kingdom. Like Claret, Mary, through the working of the Holy Spirit, conforms us to her Son, who is the living Gospel of God. She is our formation guide and director for the work of evangelization. "Mary lived and still lives entirely consecrated to the Father in the Son by the Holy Spirit, in close association with the saving work of Christ and as she is placed before us as a prefigurement of the Church, the Mother of believers and the universal help of men." (DC 11).
  2. Under the maternal action of Mary, we learn to accept the Word, to give it a body of commitment to life and to communicate it with the same readiness and generosity that she did. Under her protection we grow in brotherhood and acquire the strength of mind we need in difficult moments.

Looking to Mary, we realize that the change for which mankind yearns has already taken place in her, in a privileged manner, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who sanctified her and made her the Mother of God-with-us. Her womanly and motherly consciousness was fully evangelized.

The presence of Mary in the Claretian family should bring light and fruitfulness to our urgent and effective endeavors as missionaries and servants of the Word. She is the star of evangelization.

#### 3.... through the Witness of our Life

* 1. Life-witness is a privileged means of evangelization (Cf. EN 21, 41, 69). Our witness is not separable from the prophetic proclamation of the Gospel, and it should include, in a deep and coherent unity, all of those elements which go to make up our mission-charism. By our total consecration to God in a missionary community and by our public profession that the world cannot be transformed or offered to God without the spirit of the Beati- tudes (LG 31), we become signs and exceptional witnesses of the wonders which the Lord works in his Church and among men.
  2. John Paul II has asked religious to give three kinds of witness: a life of sincere *consistency* with Gospel values and the charism of their own Institute, a *fully developed human personality,* and *joy* (Discourse of November 10,1978). We insist on this demand for consistency, since it is particularly important for us today, as can be seen from the position papers of several Provinces. Not only do we need to give a response to the generalized situation of ambiguity in which modem man lives because of the gap between taught and lived values, between theory and practice but, because we ourselves, since we live in this situation, might otherwise find it difficult to answer the question: "Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live?" (EN 76).
  3. Looking at it from another point of view, we cannot put our life-witness on a par with one which might be all right for other religious, priests and laypersons, even though we have a shared apostolate with them, because the identity of the Congregation's mission must be respected in all cases, inasmuch as it is a gift which God himself cherishes for the salvation of the world.
  4. The Claretian community is called to be, in the Church, a true community of witnesses and prophets who clearly and unequivocally testify by their lives, to "the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God" (EN 22). Our proclamation will be truly prophetic to the extent that our life allows the glory of Jesus to shine through upon our own dying. Every follower of Jesus Christ knows the relationship that exists between the cross and Christian witness. But we must also realize that our witness relates to *a new life* which must be made present in this world, thus opening a way for hope.

#### 4.... in Creativity, Love and Joy

* 1. 4.1. We would not truly be Claretian if we remained insensible to the many and varied challenges facing us today in the world and in the Church. These lead us, in all the circumstances we meet, to foster *astuteness and hard work* in the business of finding new methods that will be better adapted and more effective for the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom to the people of our times. We have many and more adequate means at our disposal, both for getting a better knowledge of human persons, cultures and social dynamics, and for enriching that kind of communication which humanizes dialogue and incarnates proclamation.
  2. The *spirit of initiative* that marked the ministry of our Father Founder obliges us, in these times of cultural upheaval, to

place ourselves beneath the impulse of the Holy Spirit and be generous and daring in instigating opportune ecclesial ex- periments, and in maintaining our productive inventiveness and search for new paths in keeping with the charismatic and prophetic nature of our life (Cf. MR 19).

Only an authentically communal and ecclesial discern- ment will give us the keys to a response to modem challenges.

**158** 4.2. In order to cope with these demands of evange1i- zation, it would be sufficient for us to appropriate and re-live the definition of a Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary that our Founder left us as a portrait of his own apostolic zeal.

The Lord expects of us an unreserved love for his people and a readiness to spend our lives in the service of the Gospel, for the glory of God. The *totality* of our commitment involves time, space and intensity. It involves us as a community disposed to serve: with our personnel and resources. Each must offer his abilities in order to fulfill our mission.

At the same time, this involvement and commitment presupposes a communion of minds and channeling of efforts for the single mission of the Congregation, which is carried out in every major organism and in each local community. Such an absolute and full dedication could not fail to summon up our personal charisms and in turn make them converge for the building up and consolidation of the Kingdom of God.

1. 4.3. Fervor in following Christ and joy in communicating the Father's love for us is something that nothing or no one should hinder. The Good News cannot be brought to modern man by way of men who are discouraged, sad, impatient or anxious, but rather, through ministers whose life radiates the warmth of those who have first of all received in themselves the joy of Christ (Cf. EN 80).

#### Article 3. Our Commitment to Mission

1. In our re-reading of the Congregation's missionary charism, we have tried, on the one hand, not to lose sight of the issues which current social and ecclesial situations pose for our evangelizing mission and, on the other, to take into account, within the overall picture of the Church, the gift of grace we have received from the Spirit, through St. Anthony Mary Claret.

On the basis of this renewed awareness of our mission, we have been led to formulate, in the shape of some fundamen- tal, guiding *options,* the kind of commitment we would like to make in truly and faithfully answering the Lord's call, which we feel to be strong and pressing. These options should in turn inspire concrete lines of action embodied in the programming of the Congregation, both as a whole and in its various branches. They will further serve as inspiration in reviewing our faithfulness to our mission.

#### An Option for Missionary Evangelization

1. 1.1. As men sent by the Spirit of Jesus to announce his Kingdom, we are conscious of the fact that evangelization is our service - a service to mankind, the world, the Church and the building up of God's reign. We know, too, that we have opted for a missionary form of evangelization, one "in the style of the Apostles" (Cf. DC 10), aimed at the conversion of mankind and the renewal of Christian life, in order to build and encourage various local churches, in dialogue with the cultures and religious values of many peoples.
2. Being a missionary in the style of Claret, means being directly and primarily oriented toward tasks of evangelization. It entails, on the one hand, committing ourselves deeply to those forms of activity which we as a community have discerned to be effective for evangelization and, on the other hand, being available for the new forms and fields that apostolic sensitivity and creativity

suggest to us. An adequate discernment should also tell us when some particular works have completed their cycle of evangelization and now need a profound renewal or, in some cases, need to be turned over to different pastoral agents.

1. For the kind of discernment needed in adopting particular missionary fields, the Claretian community has a valid criterion in the formula coined by the 1967 General Chapter (DC 12,14): "a sensitivity to what is most urgent, opportune and effective."
2. "What is *most urgent*" characterizes, better than the other expressions, the missionary thrust of our options. It supposes an availability to go to wherever there is the most pressing need of our presence to build up the Kingdom. It implies a spirit of unfixedness, mobility and detachment regarding any custom or interest distinct from that of the Kingdom.
3. "What is *most opportune* refers primarily to the kind of psychological and spiritual sensitivity that enables us to read and Judge the signs of the times. It also implies that the missionary's habit of seeing events in the light of the Word of God, gives him insight into what is useful for the work of salvation in a given time or place and, in contrast, what might have lost its relevancy or become an obstacle to that work.
4. "What is *most effective"* refers to the means and forms to be chosen and employed for the work of evangelization, either because of their universality or their connection with the power to transform. The basis of this search for the effective, is an overdose of love and impatience for the Kingdom. It is a form of apostolic zeal, not just some attempt at gaining ''efficiency."

#### 2. An Option for a More Culturally Related Evangelization

1. The saving law of the Incarnation of God among men demands of the Claretian evangelizers that he engage in a

respectful and active dialogue with various cultures (incultura- tion) and, at the same time, that he make a serious effort at discovering how to assimilate those values that are "seeds of the Word" (Cf. EN 53) or which exist in a more or less lively state in the "Christian memory" of the people. This requires an adequate grasp of different situations, new meanings and new values, and a commitment to reviving and expressing them in the language, signs, symbols and sensibilities of each culture. We Claretians would like to assume these attitudes responsibly in relation with the people and human groups to whom we are sent as evangelizers.

1. Since the great challenges we meet today in our evangelizing mission come in many forms and in many degrees of intensity, it is only logical that we should come to appreciate the priorities that characterize each of the areas where we work, such as secularism, Marxist atheism, marginalization, poverty, injustice, dialogue with other religions, etc.

Because we must offer our service to the Church in an incarnate and differentiated form, we should review our lifestyle, the way we express our evangelical commitment, our relation- ships inside and outside our community, our formation for delivering the Message (PC 3), and our mental and emotional outlook regarding local churches and our particular setting in them.

#### 3. An Option for a Prophetic and Liberating Evangelization

1. Our Congregation is present in vast areas of humanity where there are crying needs: for subsistence, for social and political participation, for access to education, etc. It is also present in other areas where human values are violated for very different reasons: overabundance of material goods, loss of a sense of transcendence, freedom without moral boundaries. And it is not absent from places where religious freedom has been abolished and the faith is persecuted.
2. In the face of all these imbalances and injustices, which destroy human dignity in so many different ways, we want to lift up, with our life and voices, the Light of the Gospel, with all its saving power to denounce and announce. We want to be a sign and a force that liberates men from every sort of egoism, servitude and slavery that may prevent them from achieving personal growth and communion with God and others.
3. If we are looking for an image for our prophetic and liberating mission, we have it in our Founder: a man who perceived and announced the plan of salvation in the concrete circumstances of his times. His denunciation was not that of a huckster, a demagogue or a sower of discord. He first experi- enced a divine vexation and then, expressing himself with evangelical liberty, denounced sinful and unjust situations. And it was thus, pursuing a proposal for Christian transformation beyond any personal interest or self-vindication, that he became an artisan of community and fraternity.
4. Driven, as Claret was, by the power of Jesus, and nourished by the example of so many Claretians who have given or are giving their lives for the sake of the Kingdom, we accept the risks of prophetic denunciation and commitment which is entailed in our evangelizing mission. We wish for solidarity with the human being to whom we have been sent, sharing in their anguish, their privations and their hopes. And at the same time that we confess that Jesus is living in the midst of men, we also hope to put an end to the unbelief, the hate, the injustice, the lies, the oppression, the sorrow, hunger, ignorance and all the other absences of love, which are also absences of God.

#### 4. An Option for an Evangelization from the Viewpoint of the Poor and the Needy

1. Along with the Church of our times, which has been challenged by the present world situation, we have come to a

new awareness that the poor are the first recipients of the mission of Jesus (Cf. Lk 4: 1 8-21), and that the bringing of the Good News to them is a proof of his true Messianism (Cf. Lk 7:20-23). It is our fidelity to Jesus - to whose following we have dedicated our lives-and to the Church-within which we are doing our re-reading of our charism - that urges all of us Claretians to give preferential attention to the poorest and the neediest, and to orientate our work of universal evangelization from the perspective of the very real fact of the poor.

1. Claret, while he expressed an overwhelming desire to "preach to and catechize everywhere, the poor and the rich, the wise and ignorant, priests and laity" (Cf. Chronicle of the Congregation, Annales 1915, p. 190), was well aware, on the other hand, of the fact that, like Jesus, the vocational anointing( he had received from the Spirit implied a special dedication to evangelizing the poor (Cf. Aug, n. 118), and that this must also be the work of his companions, the Missionaries of the Congre- gation (Cf. Aut, n. 687).
2. "In these times, what is required of religious, is the charismatic, lively and imaginative authenticity that shone brightly in their Founders, so that they might realize their apostolic work in the Church in the midst of those who form the majority in our days and were the Lord's own favorites: *the little ones and the poor* (Cf. Mt 18:1-6; Lk 6:20)" (MR 25f).

In this respect, the clear awareness of our Founder is a vivid reminder for us. Today we are being asked, according to the teachings of Paul VI, to give heed *"to the cry of the poor* uttered by those who are personally in need and by those who are oppressed by collective misery. Did Christ not come in answer to their appeal as God's children enjoying a certain privileged claim and did he not go so far as to become identified with them?" (ET 17).

1. This preference, which strikes a responsive chord in those who have professed a Gospel of poverty, calls us to review our criteria, attitudes, solidarities, structures, preferences, instruments for the apostolate and, above all, our lifestyle. It is an "insistent cry" for "a conversion of mind and customs" (ET 17; Cf. GS 63). It entails accepting the fatigue of work, which puts us elbow-to-elbow with the poor, and living with them their anguish, sufferings and hopes, without forgetting that they evangelize us, inasmuch as they put us deeply in touch with the message of Jesus.

At the same time, living a life of rigorous evangelical poverty, in the style of Claret, will give us the inner freedom we need in order to stand up and denounce the idols of power, money and pleasure, which foster the injustices that sacrifice many lives and breed so much bad feeling. The evangelizer's task is to accompany, with his special service, all of the just aspirations harbored by the poor in their search for the dignity that belongs to them as children of God. "The best service we can offer our brothers and sisters is an evangelization that will prepare them to realize that they are children of God, that liberates them from injustice and advances them integrally" (DP 1145).

#### 5. An Option for an Evangelization that Multiplies Evangelizing Leaders

1. The present urgency for evangelization, the orientation of today's Church and our own evangelizing vocation for the building up of the Kingdom of God, all demand that we reactualize the sensibility that Claret had in his own day, and make us opt today for the task of raising up and promoting evangelizers: priests, religious and laypersons. We understand this as an objective inherent in our mission.

We feel urged to promote a participative model of Church, one in which there is a flourishing awareness of the multiplicity of gifts which the Spirit pours forth and in which all

of these gifts are put to work in the service of a community that hears Good News. We must form living communities which, since they are fully inserted in the communion of local Churches, can be a leaven for the evangelization of the people. This will mean striving for the complete incorporation of laypersons in the tasks of the Church, especially in works of evangelization, by offering them our understanding and contributing as much as we can to their formation.

1. We feel a particular urgency to work among youth, who must see themselves as and actually be the protagonists of the Church and the world of the future. We must revive in them the awareness that it is up to them to answer the call of the Lord who, through many gifts, invites them to offer themselves in works of service to their neighbor and has not ceased to lead them to lives of consecration through the evangelical counsels, the priesthood and new ministries.
2. We believe that the present moment of the Church offers optimal conditions for shaping the project of an ample "Claretian Family." It would have to be seen as the realization of Claret's own project, thought out along the lines of a great movement for the evangelization of our time.

## Part Three

### Programming Our Missionary Action

1. In the preceding pages we have presented the funda- mental commitments of the Congregation, by way of an updated re-reading of what it means to be a Claretian today. This mission-charism of ours identifies us with the Church and also identifies our evangelizing work. Ours is not a nondescript task, without concrete profile traits. In order to be faithful to it, we must, at each moment in history, underline some of these traits with special intensity, and assign certain priorities as to the

recipients, objectives and lines of action for our missionary evangelization.

Pointing out certain priorities-as previous General Chapters have for their own times (1AP 27-37; 2AP 84)-does not detract from the universal mission of the Congregation. Rather, it concretizes it in a realistic fashion which takes into account, on the one hand, the limitation of our possibilities and, on the other, the demands on our charism in response to the challenges and most urgent needs posed to it by the Church and the world.

#### Article 1. Preferred Recipients of our Missionary Evangelization

1. The Chapter, after a laborious process of discernment, wishes to point our five great preferences that should orient the missionary action of the Congregation and each of its branches during the next six years. We list them here, without any special order of priority.

#### The Evangelization of the Non-Christian World and of Dechristianized Groups

* 1. Despite the Church's long history, two thirds of the world (more than two billion people) have still not been evangelized. Another large sector of mankind has undergone a process of dechristianization and no longer knows Christ sufficiently.

For us, who are evangelizers by vocation, this represents a challenge to which we must respond as a priority. Because of this, the Congregation, during the six years that lie ahead, must reinforce its existing communities in the non-Christian world and create new ones, insofar as it is able.

For the same reason, we should raise the missionary quality of all our activities in dechristianized or insufficiently evangelized areas.

#### 2. The Evangelization of the Poor

* 1. The proclamation of the Kingdom and the following of the Lord Jesus, which involve a preferential option for the poor, also demand that we give them priority in our evangelizing activity.

This does not mean excluding the rich from our sphere of evangelization, or the fostering of class struggle, or an exodus of all our communities to material sites among the poor. But it indeed does not mean that the evangelization of the rich be carried out from the perspective of evangelical poverty and injustice; from the perspective of the poor and of those who suffer injustice and marginalization. It also calls for a greater presence of our missionaries among the poor, which can certainly not come about without diminishing our presence in other human spheres.

* 1. Preference for the evangelization of the poor will cause many Claretians to feel called to share the hopes and sorrows of the very poor, in a growing nearness that will lead them to share their physical environment and accompany them effectively.

#### 3. Raising up and Forming New Evangelizers

* 1. The Church feels, to the very quick of its being, an urgent need for evangelization and evangelizers (EN 59). Here, the charism of Claret finds a dimension that is proper and native to it. We wish to proclaim to the whole People of God (laity, priest and religious) the call of the Lord who invites us to follow him in the mission of evangelization.

#### This apostolic preference opens up two new fronts for us:

* 1. 3.1. Decisive action in favor of a vocational pastoral policy which proclaims the Lord's call to all members of the People of God and raises up a faithful response to the gifts and charisms with which the Lord has enriched them.

Within this pastoral policy for vocations, special relevance

must be given to activities aimed at aiding vocational discernment on the part of those whom God may be calling to join our Congregation or some of the other institutions that make up the great Claretian Family.

* 1. 3.2. An out and out will to implement Claret's dream of establishing a broader missionary fraternity, such as we have been discovering lately in the Claretian charism itself, by incorporating the laity and even other priests in our missionary evangelization.

#### 4. Evangelization of Youth

* 1. The Church has more than ever been attaching capital importance to youth and the evangelization of youth. "The future of humanity is in the hands of those who are capable of providing coming generations with reasons for living and hoping" (GS 31).

Youth (more than half of the human race), since they are the hope of the world and the Church, must be preferred recipients of our evangelization, in response to the Church's unrest concerning them (EN 72). The Church trusts in youth. For the Church, they represent hope and a real potential for the present and future of its evangelization (AA 12).

* 1. The seriousness and importance of youth challenge us to pay particular attention to them, to prepare ourselves in a special way to get in tune with them through open dialogue, to let ourselves be questioned by their values and to build up the Kingdom with them.

Presently, the Congregation has a good number of youth oriented works. The Chapter, in listing this as one of our priorities, wishes to bring about an improvement in the quality of evangelizing activities in these works. It likewise deems it urgent to give greater relevance to pastoral emphasis on youth in other institutions of the apostolate in which this field of action has been overlooked.

#### 5. Evangelization of the Family

* 1. The importance of the family in the human and Christian formation of the coming generations, as well as the grave problems which today threaten and sometimes destroy the community of the family, make it, too, a challenge to our capacity as evangelizers.

The family is, so to speak, the little "domestic Church" in which the future of each person is forged and his first education in the faith takes place (LG 11). Hence, the family is both the agent and recipient of evangelization (AA 11, GS 3, EN 71). Parents are genuine evangelizing leaders who, in the intimacy of the home, help most effectively to structure the Christian personality of their children. "The apostolate of married persons and of families is of unique importance for both the Church and civil society" (AA 11).

* 1. The family has suffered in a striking way from the process of change that has marked our times. It has been the victim of those who make idols and absolute values out of power, money and sex (GS 8). Divorce, abortion, conjugal infidelity, free love, etc., figure among the principal problems that beset the family, and against them we cannot remain impassive, either as men or as missionaries (Cf. GS 47-52).

#### Article 2. Objective and Lines of Action within the Framework of Local Churches

* 1. This last part aims at pointing out some objectives and general lines of action which challenge the whole Congregation during the next six years. Rather than being a suggestion of certain activities that should be carried out, it is a call to creativity on the part of our communities.

The whole content of the pages that follow are being submitted for an "on-the-spot" re-reading, so that each community

and each level of government may discover the concrete forms which their apostolic action should take in the context of their own situation.

* 1. Our evangelizing mission is fulfilled in the midst of parti- cular churches that have very different characteristics and live under very different circumstances. Basically, there are two general frameworks within which we carry out our Claretian mission: formed churches and churches in formation (Cf. Const. n. 47).
  2. *Churches in formation* offer a broad diversity of types:
     1. In some cases they exist in non-Christian areas where they are making proclamation of the Gospel in connection with the very planting of the Church there. The diversity of such churches is heightened by the fact that their efforts at implan- tation are carried out in religious and socio-cultural contexts that are as strikingly different as those found in Muslim countries or in Japan and India.

2 . Another type of these churches in formation are the so called "mission territories" in which the first proclamation of the Gospel has been made, but is not considered as completed, in some cases because it is recent and lacks consolidation, in others, because although it was begun in far-off times, it has lacked continuity.

Churches of this sort are usually located in underdevel- oped regions or nations where popular religion is imbued with elements of animism and syncretism.

1. There is a third type of church in formation whose real situation closely resembles that of the preceding type. Nevertheless, churches of this type have ceased to be officially considered as "missions," largely for sociopolitical reasons, and are recognized as having the pastoral structure of formed churches, although they are in grave need of a native clergy, evangelizing agents and vocations of their own
2. *Formed churches* are generally characterized as having a long historical tradition, as well as a maturity and vitality that allow them to make their own special contribution to the Church at large. They enjoy autonomy in Church resources and have a large enough number of vocations to allow them to attend to their own needs and even, in some cases, to missionary expansion.

Some of these churches live under totalitarian regimes, where they are either deprived of their freedom or are the victims of open persecution.

Within these formed churches there are often zones or districts (mostly poor ones) where the church is really in formation and has to face some particularly difficult specific problems.

1. Formed churches tend to be located in developed regions where there have been profound changes in culture (diverse ideologies), in the socioeconomic order (industrialization), and in the religious sphere (secularization). All of these changes have brought about a situation in which there is a great diversity of opinions and attitudes, ranging from compromise through indifference and alienation to outright hostility.
2. The needs for evangelization on the part of the groups that make up these churches are a real challenge to our mission-charism. Some of them are in need of an initial proc- lamation of the Word, while others need to be brought to conversion. There are some that refuse to allow themselves to be questioned by their faith, while others, who really live their faith, need to nourish it daily. Finally there are some groups actively committed to evangelization that clamor for our attention.
3. Our Congregation has the ability to carry out its evangelizing mission, both in new churches and in formed churches. But it is necessary for Claretians who work in one kind of church to remain in constant and fruitful dialogue with those who work in the other.

#### 1. Knowledge of the Real World and Inculturation

1. *Objective:* To acquire a deep and living knowledge of the human and religious situation of the people we intend to evangelize.

#### Lines of Action:

1. We need to make a *critical analysis* of the concrete (human, social, cultural, economic and religious) situation in which the life of the people we evangelize actually unfolds. This analysis should be followed up with theological reflection.

We should show a special interest in getting to know any situations of injustice, poverty or margination, and support any organizations started by the people with a view to liberation from these situations.

We must develop our sensibilities concerning the Church's role as liberator of the oppressed, evangelizer of the poor and defender of justice and of those who have no voice.

1. We cannot ignore the deep *social and economic inequalities* that may exist among the population of formed churches: inequalities that can run the gamut from the heights of privileged status and comfort to the depths of want and misery.

We must be conscious of the autonomy and maturity of the movements and *political processes* present among developed peoples, and keep a clear head and critical distance, so as not to interfere in extraneous fields.

1. In churches in formation, we should study, be open to, and incorporate into our lives, the religious expressions and values proper of *native cultures,* for these may either be ways to prepare for the presentation of the Gospel, or may some day come to be valid expressions of the faith. At the same time, however, we must continue to question those anti-values that offend human dignity or are actually opposed to the Gospel.
2. It is necessary for us to study the cultural categories of the *language* of the people and their possible uses in evangelization.
3. In churches located in places where there is a history of ethnic and cultural pluralism, we should be especially sensitive to *open dialogue* with all cultural, social and economic strata, and work from a starting-point of justice to integrate these various communities in brotherhood and hope, so that they may be mutually enriched by their pluralism.
4. In First World situations especially, we should study in depth and then actually effect some rapprochement with *influential cultural movements and ideologies* affecting situations of margi- nation that relate to the faith, and be a living witness in their midst to our consecration to God. This rapprochement itself will afford us a living grasp of the values which these cultures and ideologies convey, as well as providing them, through our presence, the dimension of openness to the Word, which they may be lacking. Thus, at the same time that we allow ourselves to be questioned by these cultures or ideologies, we evangelize them.
5. It is also necessary to study the phenomena of secularism, materialism, pragmatism and indifferentism that often prevail in older Christian cultures. This will allow us a more realistic starting point in finding the aptest and most adequate categories and language for fulfilling our evangelizing mission in a hostile environment.
6. Another aspect that merits our preferential attention *is popular religiosity* and the concrete possibilities it offers for evangelization.
7. Keeping in mind the preferred recipients of our evangelization, we should study with special interest the various

aspects, situations and expressions which characterize the family and youth today, and we should pay particular attention to discovering persons with skills for encouraging Claretian community.

1. The study of the human situations of the persons we evangelize will be neither deep nor motivating, unless our lives are truly incarnate in the reality of the people, and share their anguish and their hopes in a constant *dialogue of life*

#### 2. Pastoral Insertion in Local Churches

***212.*** *Objective:* To know, to discern and to assimilate the pastoral situation and the resources which the local church offers in the direction of our missionary insertion in it.

#### Lines of Action:

1. To keep in close and living touch with the different structures and pastoral urgencies of the local church, especially those related to the family, youth, the laity, human rights, justice and peace.
2. To become inserted, after adequate discernment, into the *joint pastoral plan* and infrastructures of the local church, without losing our dimension of universality and our specific role as Claretian missionaries.

Since there is a greater risk, in formed churches, of undertaking evangelizing tasks that are not altogether in keeping with our missionary character, we must discover those particular needs that call for our attention as Claretians.

1. Our churches in formation require a *differentiated pastoral* approach. We ought to treat each of them according to its own, distinctive reality, both as regards its system of evangelization and as regards its personnel.

Its pastoral organization must also be adapted to its real

majority or minority within the concrete society in which it lives, as well as to the diversified cultural situation.

We should also strive to see to it that our pastoral work respects religious freedom, fosters ecumenism and avoids syncretism.

1. Bearing in mind that there is an abundance of clergy in some formed churches, as compared with churches in formation, we should review our distribution of evangelizers.

Even within the formed churches themselves, there are contrasting zones of scarcity and oversupply of evangelizers. The fact that in some cases we are present in the latter and not in the former, should not escape our revision.

We must stimulate the interrelation between churches and emphasize their universal missionary dimension.

1. Within particular churches we should promote missionary *vocations* - priestly, religious and lay - both for the local church and for the Congregation. We must demand of all our major organisms that they make a serious effort at gaining vocations.
2. In planning for *specialization*, we must weigh not only the demands and commitments that flow from our mis- sion-charism, but also the pastoral needs of the churches we are called to evangelize. In formation and specialization, we should normally show a preference for educational centers in the region itself where we are to carry out our evangelizing activity.
3. We should reinforce and strengthen our pastoral measures through the presence of *evangelizers*, who are spe- cifically prepared to implement:

a deepening of faith;

in some cases, a re-catechesis;

a valuing of local culture as an adequate medium for expressing

the faith;

a self-operation, befitting a Christian group that can provide its own pastoral agents;

a self-organization, befitting a local church.

1. We must cooperate intensely in the pastoral planning of churches in formation, so that they may in due time reach their maturity and *autonomy*. It is necessary that we develop, both in Christians generally and also in Claretians, the awareness that, when that due time comes, we must hand these churches over to evangelizers who come from the region itself.

## 3. Revision and Adaptation of our Lifestyle

1. *Objectives*: To accept the lifestyle that best responds to the demands of our mission-charism and of the local church.

#### Lines of Action:

1. We must exert ourselves to achieve a *missionary life in community*. This is a fundamental exigency of our charism. Moreover, missionary community is, of itself, the first and most unequivocal word of evangelization.

The Claretian community should live in a permanent state of acceptance of the gift of God that transforms us at each moment, and thus launches us into mission.

The following of Christ, the suffering and risen missionary, should be at the heart of our community. This following of Christ implies a lifestyle that is happy, simple, hopeful and dynamic.

1. Ours must be a *praying community* of prophets and apostles, who bring before God the historical situations in which they live and for which they seek an interpretation as a community: a community which is open, in all kinds of prayer, to the Holy Spirit and to the People of God among whom they live.

In our community, Mary must always be present as the one who receives the word, meditates on it, is faithful to God's plan for her, and proclaims God's mercy for the poor and simple.

1. In our *lifestyle,* the mission commitments we have taken and the priorities we have set, must be obvious to all: an option for the poor and for justice; an openness to the family and youth; and a concern for raising up agents of evangelization.

We must open up our communities to vital and apostolic relationship with laypersons, especially with members of our Claretian family.

1. We should adopt a lifestyle that is truly inculturated and incarnate in indigenous values (language, culture, customs, etc.).

In underdeveloped countries or zones, an evangelical discernment must help us adjust our lifestyle to the concrete situation of the people, as to economic level, housing, food, vehicles, trips, etc.

And not only in the Third World, but also in countries with a higher economic standard of living, we must opt for a lifestyle that is poor and that denounces unjust riches, consumerism and the selfish amassing of goods.

Apostolic circumstances being equal, we should choose from our communities a *location among the poor*

1. Amid the secular, anonymous and mass culture of the First World, our communities should undertake the mission of being, for all people who approach us, centers of solidarity, fraternity and communion, and places where they can find the meaning of life.
2. A lifestyle like this is a transparent and effective proclamation, one by means of which the Lord calls together new missionary *vocations*
3. The new generations who enter the Congregation must be formed for evangelization in "missionary community," undertaking from the outset a communitary, poor, inculturated lifestyle.

The demands of our mission, the commitments, prefer- ences and objectives pointed out by this Chapter, must be notably present in formation, and not just in a theoretical way.

#### 4. Revision and Adaptation of our Apostolates

1. *Objectives:* To make our apostolate and its structures, means and content measure up to the demands of our mission-charism and of the Church which we serve.

#### Lines of Action:

1. In line with the demands of our mission and of the preferences, commitments and objectives set by this Chapter, we should revise our apostolic works and structures, as well as our evangelizing activities and their content, so as to purify them from whatever is not evangelizing or does not respond to the concrete pastoral exigencies of each church.
2. The creation and acceptance of *new apostolic works* should strictly correspond to the preferences and commitments adopted by this Chapter, as the representative of the entire community of the Congregation.
3. We should stress the prophetic aspect of our evangelizing language:

with a critical vision of social realities; by denouncing modern idols;

by arousing a desire for conversion;

by proclaiming Christian community, in which all may find their place, so as to be able to put their gifts to the service of the rest.

1. The *missionary commitments* which the Congregation and some major organisms have taken on in churches in formation, must be regarded as their own, by all the members of the general or provincial community, respectively. And this should be manifested not only in material and spiritual support, but in the effective availability of all to cover generously the needs of the missionaries of these newborn churches.
2. We must decidedly incorporate *laypersons* in evan- gelizing efforts. Hence, we should organize, foster and support the Claretian Associates movement and, on the general level, create an interprovincial service of lay missionaries.
3. In our parishes, schools and other institutions of our apostolate, we should cultivate a clearly missionary and evangelizing sense, in consonance with the joint pastoral plan of the region.
4. We should support the movement for basic church communities, aimed at the creation and building up of *Christian communities*

**237 .** We should utilize the *media of social communication* in order to create human and Christian community, thus converting them into multipliers of the proclamation of the Gospel.

We should create, defend and develop communication models that are personalizing and liberating, especially by cultivating a critical, participative and creative attitude in the public.

In our major organisms, we should increase the number of teams specialized in the use of the media of communication, for evangelization and for the encouragement of this pastoral task.

**238.** We should adjust our economies to offer concrete services to our churches in formation, so that they may accom- plish their pastoral programs.

#### Conclusion

**239 .** The 1 9th General Chapter of the Congregation would like to close this reflection on the THE MISSION OF THE CLARETIAN TODAY with a pressing call to all of our major organisms and to each of our communities, asking them to plan, program and evaluate their apostolic action, in keeping with the commitments, priorities and objectives which we have pointed out in this Position Paper.

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