

# The Forge

in our daily life

SPIRITUS DOMINI

Ordinary Time I

**2** ANOINTED TO BRING THE  
GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR

# SPIRITUS DOMINI - 2014

**T**he arrow forged on the anvil is not saved in a museum. Its destiny is to be launched, although nicked with the passage of time. We are called to be missionary arrows: "The ministry of the Word, through which we communicate the total mystery of Christ to humanity, is our special calling to the People of God. For we have been sent to proclaim the Lord's life, death, and resurrection, until he comes, so that all who believe in him may be saved. (CC 46).

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To help individuals, communities, Provinces and Delegations to be consciously aware of their present reality, rekindling their experience of Fire and missionary zeal following the methodology of the Forge.



## OBJECTIVES

- To pass from passive attitudes to creative attitudes.
  - To believe in the experience of the Spirit who anoints us to be ministers of the Word in the prophetic mission of the Church.
    - To deepen in the Cordimarian dimension of our missionary spirituality.
      - To personalize the significance of our belonging to the Congregation today and to value its charismatic diversity and universal mission.
      - To recapture the experience lived throughout the Forge Project to continue progressing in the missionary life.

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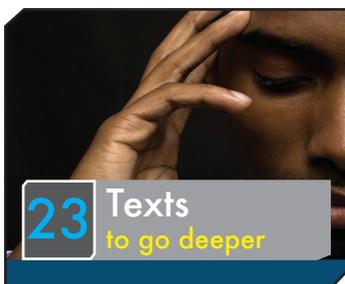
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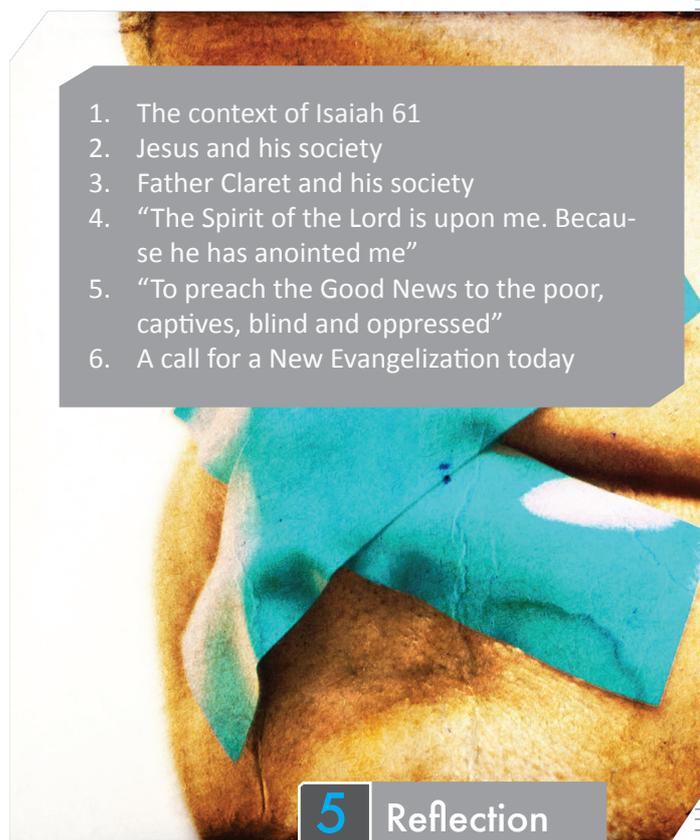
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## 1. Introduction

**Y**ou have in your hands the second booklet of the *Spiritus Domini* stage of "The Forge in Our Daily Life." We just entered as a congregation in the fourth and final stage of our inner renewal. After an intense Christmas season we are now at the beginning of the Ordinary Time of the liturgical year. As the star guided the wise men, we are guided by the Spirit to worship Jesus born in our life. **The Ordinary Time of the liturgical year is a beautiful opportunity to live our fidelity to the Lord in the daily events of our life** with our struggles, joys, pains, failures and successes. The nucleus of the final stage of the Forge is "The Spirit of the Lord" who accompanies us always in the process of our configuration with the person and values of Christ.

The core of our reflection in this booklet centres on the text of Is 61:1-2. As you read on, you will come across the context and meaning of this text discovered by Isaiah, Jesus, Father Claret and each one of us. This booklet also can be an invitation to understand the importance of the text of Is 61: 1-2 in the charism of our Founder. He tells that he was inspired in a special way by this text, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me....." (Aut 118). The message of God presented as Good News to the poor also inspires each of us to contextualize this text in our missionary living. The new poor, new situations of poverty and the New Evangelization are the contexts and calls for re-examining our missionary commitment.

## 2.1. The afflicted, the broken-hearted, the captives, and the prisoners in Isaiah 61:1-2

The chapter 61 of the book of Isaiah begins with an introduction of the author's personal identity and his involvement in the society, such as, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ..." and its missionary intention "to bring the news to the afflicted, to soothe the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, release to those in prison, to proclaim a year of favour from Yahweh and a day of vengeance for our God, to comfort all who mourn" (Is 61:1-2). **Jesus observes in these verses the prophetic fulfilment of his life and mission (Lk 4:18-21). Father Claret discovers in this text his own missionary vocation and that of his missionary companions.** He writes, "God our Lord made me to understand those words in a special way, the Spirit of the Lord ..." (Aut 118) and in the context of his missionary companions he reiterates them in the tone of sharing his missionary spirit with them (cf. Aut 687).

From the two parts of the introduction of these verses of Isaiah, you may observe the prophet's God experience (the anointing of the Spirit) and his mission (among the poor, captives, afflicted ...). Therefore, it is good to know the context in which he understands his call and how he lives it. Now you may journey with him to his social context to get to know your God experience from missionary dimension of your life.

Apart from the economic crisis, Isaiah chapters 56-66 show clearly the bitter enmity between the rival groups in Judah. They denounce their corrupt political and religious leaders, reflect the discouragement, pessimism and negativism with a vindictive spirit that sought scapegoats and wanted to exclude and marginalize the foreigners and eunuchs from the new community. The prophet addresses his message to those living in Jerusalem in the post-exilic period and tries to re-establish their lives. From this perspective the reading of the Third Isaiah presents an impression that the author does not see the situation in post-exilic Palestine as appreciably better than the situation in Babylon. In both cases Israel remains "shackled" because of sin and so, it awaits deliverance by Yahweh.

## The Ministry of the Prophet

The prophet is described as being sent by God “to herald good news to the poor, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Yahweh’s favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn” (61:1-2). For many interpreters the recipients of this ministry are primarily those suffering from socioeconomic oppression and unable to come out of their poverty. In the spirit of the eighth-century prophets, this situation, more often than not, results from the unjust social structures which allow the wealthy and powerful to take advantage of the poor (cf. Is 3:14; 10:2; Amos 2:7; 4:1; 5:11; 8:4-6). Thus, the poor become broken and so they are without hope. The socioeconomic aspect of this ministry is most clearly in view in the second set of infinitives mentioned in Is 61: 1-3: to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners. The liberty proclaimed is for those who have been sold into bonded labour service because of their debts. As there was no Jewish monarchy in post-exilic Palestine, those who controlled the temple system would also have enjoyed an enormous amount of socioeconomic power. It is this imbalance of power and the resulting exploitation that underlie the declarations in Is 61:1-3.

The terms in question (*anavim, aniyim*) had acquired a broader and specifically religious connotation without losing their basic sense of economic deprivation, marginalization, and exploitation. This religious dimension of the poor is seen throughout the Psalms (e.g., Ps 22:26; 69:33; 72:2, 4, 12; 109:16, 22) and will show up in a later portion of Third Isaiah (66:2). Similarly, God is especially close to the broken hearted (Ps 34:18; 51:19) and the binding of the broken hearted is something that God does when he restores Jerusalem and gathers the exiles (Ps 147:3).

Another view of this prophet in postexilic Palestine is that of an on-going exile. Because, even though the situation the prophet is addressing is after the end of the historical exile, the presupposition of his message is that the exile is in some way continuing. Thus, Is 61:1-3 may represent one of the earliest attestations of the phenomenon of understanding the exile as an on-going state, that is, understanding the exile theologically rather than just historically (like Jeremiah, Deuteronomy and Chronicles). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that under this view, the exile as a historical event was not left aside, but was viewed as a paradigm of Israel’s experience in the Second Temple period and beyond.

The reason for this typological “theologiza-

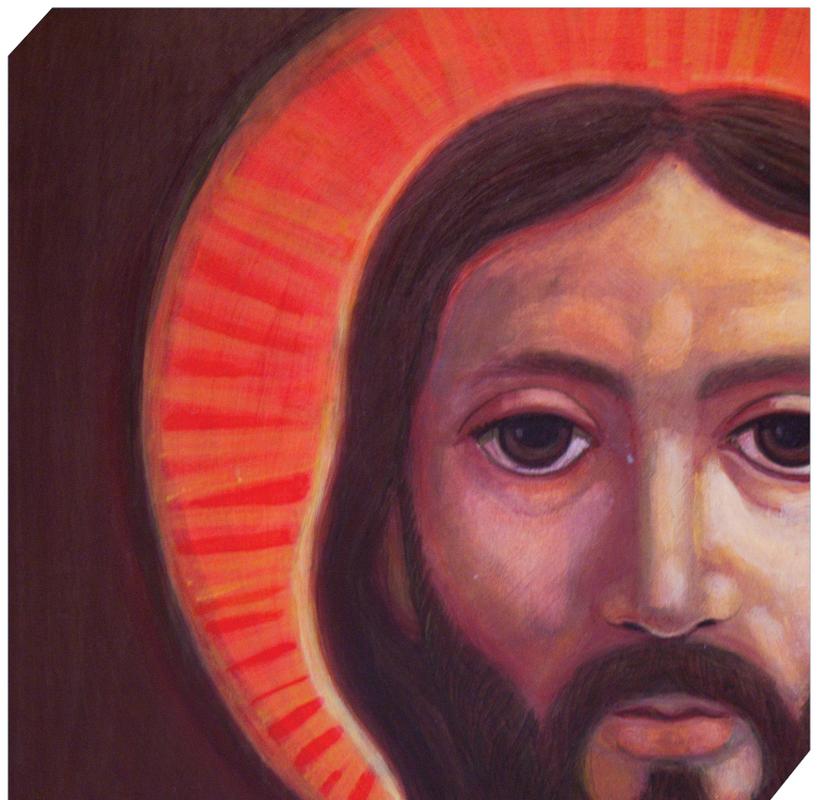
tion” or hermeneutical move of the exile was the disillusionment during the postexilic period that the sweeping visions of restoration found in Jeremiah 30-33, Ezekiel 20; 40-48, and especially Deutero-Isaiah, had not come to pass according to expectations. These exilic prophets had portrayed the return in terms of a “new exodus” that would result in a rebuilt temple, a restored community, the streaming of the nations to Zion, and possibly a Davidic heir to rule over the kingdom. When these expectations failed to materialize as expected, there were two options. Either the exilic prophets were wrong or their prophecies still awaited fulfilment. For those who took the latter route this could only mean that, despite the return and efforts at resettlement and rebuilding, the exile in some sense continued. All these themes are found in the struggles reflected in Third Isaiah, and the idea of an on-going exile underlies the Trito-Isaianic core of chapters 60-62.

It is in this context the Third Isaiah proclaims, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor...”

## 2.2. Jesus and his society

### The poor and sick

According to the gospel of Luke, Jesus begins the ministry presenting his Mission Statement of Nazareth Manifesto from the text of Third Isaiah (Is 61: 1-3; Lk 4: 18:19). As the afflicted people, captives, blind and oppressed manifested the call of God to Third Isaiah and confirmed his anointing of the Spirit to live and work for them, Jesus too listens to his Father’s voice in the reality of his people and so, at the outset of his mission he sees himself as the fulfilment of this prophecy of Third Isaiah. The Pal-



estine of his time presents an extreme economical imbalance between the richest and the poorest: the land owners or well-to-do class and peasants. Given the distance between the two, there was no hope of human promotion for the poor, and they had no means of bettering their situation which depended wholly on the will of the men in power. The dejected situation of the poor, sick and sinners wounded the tenderness of Jesus. "Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness. And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:35-36). This poverty stricken surrounding forced him to send his disciples with authority to all the villages around to cast away the evil spirits and heal the sick (Mt 10: 1). **When he presented the beatitudes, he placed the poor as the first blessed ones of his list.** Their poverty-stricken situation was highly blessed by him because he saw in them their capacity to place their trust in God as their refuge and strength even in their absolute nothingness (cf. Mt 5: 3; Lk 6: 20).

### Religious traditions and laws

In the context of the religious practices and laws, Jesus reacted strongly against the mere observance of these to avoid being sinful. The religion of his time was reduced to a legalism of petty rules and regulations. People regarded them literally as matters of life and death and eternal destiny. Jesus opposed this legalism particularly that of the Pharisees who believed that salvation rested in strict conformity to the Law of Moses and oral traditions they had built around it. He rebuked this self-righteous attitude and the hypocrisy that subverted the Word of God. In doing so, they had shifted the focus from the heart to the outward man. Religion neglected the fact that the Lord looks on the heart. He challenged them to cleanse their hearts full of robbery and wickedness (Lk 11:39), because for the genuine religion is a matter of the heart and not just of external compliance. According to him, the law is to do good and save life (Mk 3:4).

He looked upon the Law as a great gift from God, a sign of God's love for them. Certainly some laws are necessary if a society is to maintain any reasonable kind of order. A basic and decent moral foundation had become overly legalistic and was no longer just guiding the people but actually oppressing them. They are necessary means to discern the will of God and obey him out of love from the heart. For so long as obedience is only subjection to an authority which man does not understand, it is no true obedience as something in man still remains outside and does not submit and is not bound by the command of God. Radical obedience exists only when a man inwardly assents to what is required of him, when the thing

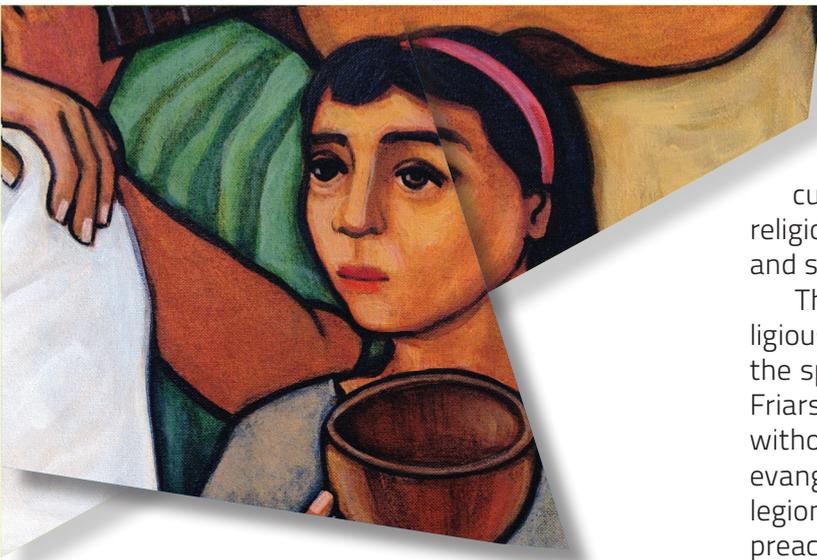
commanded is seen as intrinsically God's command; when the whole man stands behind what he does, or better, when the whole man is in what he does, when he is not doing something obediently, but is essentially obedient.

Jesus went beyond the limitations of the Law, shattering any sense of narrow nationalism as well as breaking down the barriers of legalism, insisting the love for God and the neighbour as the highest demands of the law and not the minute details of daily life (Lk 10:25-37). He clearly explains the love of the neighbour even the enemy as the demand of the law of God. He did not believe that the Law, in itself, was bad. Rather, he recognized that the many spin offs and additions to it had actually crippled the believers' ability to respond to one another with compassion and love. Therefore, he claimed and asserted an authority greater than that of the Law. The essential fact about a teacher is not his acceptance of an authoritative mass of tradition, but the way in which he interprets it. And that's why he was able to call people beyond mere legalism to an interpretation of the Law in the light of unlimited love (cf. Lk 6:6-11; Mt 19:3-9; Mk 7:1-23).

### His mission for the sinners

While the Pharisees along with others could readily admit that everyone is a sinner and in need of God's mercy and forgiveness, they labelled the tax collectors as the worst and special class of sinners and couldn't bear their presence. Because these were people who deliberately and persistently transgressed the requirements of the law. Included in this group would be money-lenders who charged interest on loans advanced to fellow Jews. In the group of sinners were also the prostitutes who were persons who sold themselves to a life of sin in deliberate disregard for the law of God.

Jesus apparently associated with such people at dinner parties and allowed himself to be criticized and called "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Lk 7:34). Observing the hypocritical life of these self-righteous men, he even dared to tell them, "The tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you" (Mt 21:31). He perceived in them a transparency for truth and conversion. Before preaching these sinners to be converted at once, he accepted them as they were and expressed his solidarity with them. He openly explained to his critics that his mission was for the sinner and not for the righteous (Lk 5:32) and so, he asked them to learn God's desire of mercy (Mt 9:13). He presented God as a loving Father waiting for the return of his prodigal son (Lk 15:20); as a good shepherd who was in search of the lost sheep (Mt 18:12). When he was questioned about his authority to forgive sins, he claimed that he had authority to do so (Mk 2:10).



This authority aimed at showing sympathy and compassion towards the fallen person and thus making him to experience love and change his old way of life. His generosity to forgive the sinners portrays his greatness to understand the human fragility for sin. By this he meant proving an opportunity for a face to face meeting between the divine mercy and human misery and to pave a way for a healing process from the wounds of sin. Having pity and showing compassion towards human weakness is the first step to forgive and lead the person for a new beginning. Thus his mission was not to condemn but to set the sinners free (Jn 8:11). His compassionate understanding for them led him to be the lamb of God who bore the sins of the world (Jn 1:29) and shed his blood for their forgiveness (Mt 26:28). Finally, by praying for the forgiveness of his persecutors, he showed his generous and compassionate understanding as if they did not know what they were doing (Lk 23:34).

### 2.3. Father Claret and his society

The situation of Christian faith and morals at the beginning of the 19th century Spain was by no means a rosy one. The liberal revolution was causing deep havoc across all sectors of society. In the times of Ferdinand VII, Spain had "become a cesspool of filth and corruption." On his death (1833), the nation was divided between the Isabellines and the Carlists, that is, between the late king's daughter, Isabel II and his brother, Don Carlos. This gave rise to the three Carlist Wars that followed one another throughout the 19th century. In 1834, there broke out the burning of the monasteries into ashes and killing of the innocent friars in the main cities of the country, such as Madrid and Barcelona. The situation worsened when Don Juan Alvarez de Mendizábal was designated Prime Minister (1835). Anti-Church measures followed one another uninterruptedly throughout his

brief mandate: the expulsion of the Jesuits and the confiscation of all their assets (27 August 1835), the suppression of all religious houses with less than 12 members. The persecution against religious Orders reached its culmination with the suppression of all men's religious houses and the consequent confiscation and sale of their assets (8 March 1836).

This brought out the annihilation of all those religious centres of evangelization that had provided the spiritual support for the faithful. The Mendicant Friars, Clerks Regular and Societies of Common Life without vows were the principal agents of specialized evangelization. At different times of the year, various legions of religious went out from their houses for preaching the Word of God in all the villages and cities of Spain. With the suppression of convents and religious houses, there also disappeared the strong support that certain core groups of lay Christians had been receiving by way of the Third Orders of the various First Orders of Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Servites, etc., who cultivated a more intense spirituality and also fostered certain forms of apostolate and charitable work either by themselves or through the efforts of their affiliates.

This exclausturation affected 23,935 religious. This meant that the Religious Life was eliminated from Spain by the Prime Minister, Don Juan Alvarez Mendizábal, so that, from the 52,000 religious existing in Spain at the beginning of the 18th century, there were only 750 religious in 1848. It was precisely at that time when Spain was in greatest need of an intense movement of evangelization, all the structures that nourished the faith of the Spanish People disappeared: religious houses in general, and above all, those dedicated expressly to the preaching of the Word of God through popular Missions, Spiritual Exercises, Retreats, Novenas, with their missions of Preaching and Reconciliation, etc. The disappearance of the most active sector of the agents of evangelization brought an almost total dismantling of the traditional forms of evangelization mentioned above.

Thus the 19th century Spanish Church, like the whole Church in general, was desperately in need of a deep internal as well as structural reform. But the highest echelons of the clergy, who could have set such a reform in place, were not aware of the gravity of the problem. The growing anticlericalism should have called for an adequate pastoral response, and not just the erudite Pastoral Letters of some Bishops, who seem to have written them more for their own personal display, than for the immediate spiritual good of the faithful. The clergy in general did not know how to distinguish the political sphere from the religious sphere, and thus, they allowed themselves to become entangled in the clumsiest intrigues of the absolutists. This too led to the heating up of the anticlericalism of the liberals, as they remained ever on the watch for a favourable time to

deal a death blow to the Church. The hierarchy did not know how to discern the signs of the times, perhaps because instead of setting out the core of the Gospel message in all simplicity, they opted to defend themselves with the same weapons that their enemies were using.

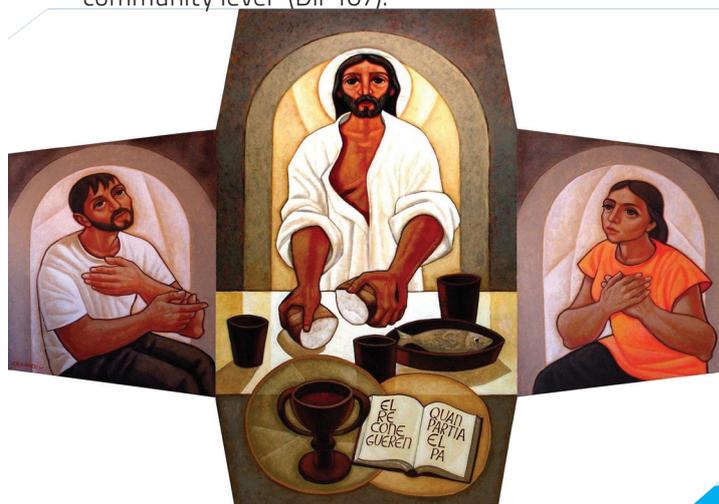
A situation such as this demanded a profound reform at all levels of the Church. It was imperative that the Church returned to its inner spirit, highlighting its more spiritual aspects and doing away with many temporal assets. Only a serious re-form would have been capable of doing away with the criticism of the Church's adversaries. It is in this background Anthony Claret was ordained as priest on June 13, 1835. He experienced directly the negative impacts of the political, social and intellectual revolutions in his priestly ministry in Sallent (Letters to the mayor of Sallent in 1836-1838). He observed his society degraded with moral impurity and with the spread of blasphemies (Aut 316.317). These social realities, at the same time, made him discover a great absence of evangelical and apostolic preachers in Spain and the unquenchable thirst of the people for the Word of God (Letter to the Apostolic Nuncio in 1849). Instead of remaining as a mere observer, he discerned the voice of God that convinced and called him for a missionary evangelizing action. "God made me to understand in a very special way these words, 'The spirit of Lord Yahweh is on me for Yahweh has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the news to the afflicted, to soothe the broken-hearted' (Is 61:1)" (Aut 118). He heard the voice of God who dwelt in his inner self from the social reality of his time and called to be the messenger of Good News in a special manner.

### Is 61 in the present context of our mission

The roots of Father Claret's missionary spirit strengthened from Is 61:1 leads us to appreciate his eagerness to share it with us. Citing his inspiration from the post-exilic Isaiah, he emphasizes it to the members of his Congregation, "The Lord told me both for myself and all these missionary companions of mine ... that each one of us will be able to say..." (Aut 687). Our identification with his missionary identity teaches us how to look at our reality around and discern God's calls from the challenges emerging from it. His attention to the fast and constant changes of the environment leads us to discover a new awareness within us and the exciting possibilities for a personal and social transformation at large. His observation of the society with the eyes of Jesus guides us to be compassionate and committed to the mission of God manifested in it. In his attempt to "studying and gaining a thorough knowledge of the maladies of this social body" (Aut 357), he achieved a faith experience in his particular context. He understood the meaning of his faith in the lived experience of his pastoral communities of Sal-

lent, Viladrau, Santiago de Cuba and Madrid. By this he instructs us that this reality of a community can never be overlooked and so he stresses the analysis of faith as very essential for our response to God and people. His life led by the Spirit explains that the text of his missionary being was interpreted well by the context of his people. His response to the different situations of his life portrays his life journey with Christ and his people listening to both of them at the same time.

- "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 fulfil its mission. Our reading of contemporary reality, in a perspective of evangelization without any scientific pretensions, could do nothing short of centring its attention on man and becoming conscious of the "situations" he is undergoing at present (RH ib.)" (MCT 4).
- "Sharing the hopes and joys, the sorrows and trials of the people, especially those of the poor, we readily offer to join efforts with all who are striving to transform the world according to God's plan" (CC 46).
- "Our commitment to the service of humanity requires of us a solid spirituality of action; to cultivate an in-depth experience of God; to discern, in the light of the Spirit, the challenges of our times and to transform them with courage and daring into options and projects that are consistent both with our original charism and with the demands of the concrete historical situation" (Dir 103).
- "Our mission forms part of the mission of the Church in the service of humanity. For this very reason, without an attentive and participative study of the realities of human life in each age and place, we cannot know people's needs for evangelisation, or the characteristics our mission must have in order to respond to those needs. We must be especially sensitive to all those aspects that most directly challenge our missionary identity, such as the absence of evangelisation, possibilities for raising up evangelisers, situations of poverty and oppression, and cultural, ideological or political movements" (CC 14; 46; Dir 106).
- "The attentive observation and study of the reality should lead us to an attitude of constant discernment and revision of our positions (CC 48). "This attitude must be fostered on the personal as well as the community level" (Dir 107).



## Exercise 1: Reviewing your missionary ideals

1. Take your Forge note book and write the date of your first profession, the dreams and ideals you had about your Claretian missionary vocation at the end of your novitiate period. Try to compare them with your present dreams and ideals as a Claretian Missionary. What are the feelings present in your heart, (joy, sadness, contentment, or frustration)?
2. Make a list of the responsibilities you held till now in your province/ major organism and evaluate how much you were able to take them up as your mission at that particular moment in your life.
3. While assessing these missions of your life, try to remember the people and their needs you came across and how they helped you to live your mission as means of sharing the love God.
4. How have you carried out responsibilities assigned to you? Were they occasions of seeking personal comfort and prestige or were they occasions of self-oblation in the service of the Lord and his people? What were your personal struggles in living your ideals and dreams of mission?

### 2.4. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Because he has anointed me”

#### The Anointed one of Is 61

Isaiah chapter 61 begins with an assertive tone of the presence of the Spirit with the author in his life situation surrounded by the afflicted, broken hearted, captives, prisoners and sorrowful. This declaration of the prophet conveys us his capacity to discern the call of God in his inner self and the conviction that through the experience of God alone he could face the challenges of his society. He realized that the anointing by the Spirit was his God experience that captivated, possessed and invaded him to give an adequate response to the call of God.

The anointed personage of Is 61:1 can be the visionary Levitical community in postexilic Jewish society background that is attempting to enact a program of restoration, insofar as that community understands itself to embody the Servant of Second Isaiah. The anointed person of this text can refer to a prophetic figure operating within the postexilic community who views himself as specially equipped to bring about deliverance. In this sense, the anointing, then, would be metaphorical and not literal, though there is one allusion to a prophet being literally anointed (1 Kgs 19:16). **This prophetic figure is having some kind of continuity with the Servant of Second Isaiah with the role of being the Servant for himself and for his community.** The endowment with the spirit of the Lord recalls the first verse of the Servant Songs, where God says that he has placed his spirit upon his Servant (42:1). The same concept likely underlies 48:16b that points out the Lord sending the Servant with his Spirit and the promise of God to pour out the spirit upon the offspring of the Servant (44:2-3).

#### Jesus, the Christ

The very fact about Jesus as “conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit”, portrays his intrinsic relationship with the Holy Spirit. “The Father’s only Son, conceived as man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is “Christ”, that is to say, anointed by the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of his human existence, ..... Thus the whole life of Jesus Christ will make manifest “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” (Acts 10: 38)” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 486). The presentation of the scene of the baptism of Jesus by all the four gospel authors confirms the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Third Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Because he has anointed me.....(Is 61:1 = Lk 4:18-21)”. All of them coincide in the symbolical descending of the Spirit as a dove on Jesus (Mt 3: 16; Mk 1: 10; Lk 3:22; Jn 1: 32). The synoptic gospels are in unison to recognize “Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit” in his baptism (Mt 4: 1; Mk 1: 12; Lk 4: 1) and being led by the Spirit to be tested in the desert and begin his mission of the Kingdom of God. The double mentioning of John the Baptist about the Spirit of God coming upon Jesus shows us that in Jesus the Spirit took up his permanent abode. That is still another way of saying that the mind and power of God were uniquely in Jesus.

And so, experiencing the anointing of the Spirit in him, Jesus teaches his disciples to ask his Father for the presence of the Holy Spirit in them (Lk 11: 13); being aware of his speaking from hearing the voice of his Father (Jn 12: 49), he led his disciples to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit from within (Jn 14: 26); as bearer of this Spirit, he promised his apostles that he would send him after his glorification (Jn 15: 26; Lk 24 : 49); and when he commissioned his apostles with the mission of being his witnesses, he made them “to receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20: 22).

### Father Claret's anointing by the Spirit

When Father Claret convincingly writes in his Autobiography that he was able to identify himself with Third Isaiah and Jesus with regard to anointment by the Spirit (cf. Aut 118), he means his experience of being led by that indwelling Spirit in him. For him, this anointing was the Spirit invading his entire being and captivating him to be with a thirst to know his will, "I feel that I am totally annulled. I desire nothing but his holy will. I live by Jesus' own life. In possessing me He possesses nothing, while I possess everything in Him" (Aut 754). The anointing of the Spirit was His invasion of the inner self of Father Claret that led him to undergo a purification process of uprooting him from the worldliness (cf. Aut 113). This realization made him to confront the "dreadful giant" of a consumerist god by being content with what he had and was given, "I had nothing, wanted nothing, refused everything" (Aut 359). **The anointing of the Spirit in Father Claret was the experience of the Spirit taking possession of his inner self that led him to know the truth of God and his call.** "My God and my Father, may I know you" (Aut 233), was his earnest petition to God for his apostolic life. The truth of his God was that he was the center and strength his life. "I want nothing but you yourself, Lord, and in you-and only through and for you all other things. For you are all I need. You are my Father, my friend, my brother, my spouse, my all. I love you, my Father, my strength, my refuge, and my consolator" (Aut 755).

Father Claret's understanding of the anointing of the Spirit was his total union with God who led him to recognize the Truth in his life. In this mystical union, his inner self became a little chapel of Jesus where he would sit at Jesus' feet and listen to him. In this way he longs "to know the most holy will of God alone" and obey it by all means (cf. Aut 113-120; 674-700). His experience of being anointed by the Spirit led him to the realization of being set apart for Jesus alone and for his mission of preaching the Truth of God's love that forced him to make God. "Charity urges and impels me; it makes me run from town to town; it obliges me...." (Aut 212). "My only aim was to glorify God and save souls. I was often forced to remind people of this" (Aut 119). "Another force that drives me to preach and hear confessions is my desire to make my neighbour happy. Oh, what a great joy in healing the sick, freeing the prisoner, consoling the afflicted, and cheering the sad. All these and more than these are worked out for the heavenly glory of my neighbour" (Aut 213). "This is my aim: to make God known, so that He may be loved and served by all" (Aut 202).



### The anointing of the Claretian Missionaries

Realizing the importance of being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit for the mission, Father Claret identifies his experience of being anointed by the Spirit in his missionary companions who could spell out this fact as the only reason behind their missionary efforts. "The Lord told me both for myself and for all these missionary companions of mine, 'you yourselves will not be the speakers; the Spirit of your Father (and of your Mother) will be speaking in you'. So true is this that each one of us will be able to say, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken hearted" (Aut 687). Our anointing of the Spirit took place already in the baptism where the Holy Spirit has taken possession of our entire being. As the kings and prophets of the Old Testament received the power of the Spirit in their anointing, so too the symbolic gesture of the anointing with the chrism oil in baptism points out our reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit who has poured out "the love of God in our hearts (Rom 5:5). This is our Pentecostal experience. Without this we cannot be born anew to see the Kingdom of God (Jn 3:5).

It means that our inner self has been filled with the love of God already in our childhood and we are enabled by this fact to recognize and respond to the signs of his love. **In this sense, we bear the seeds of God's love that spring out into our action when we come into contact with the needs of our fellow brethren.** Our gradual growth in this awareness has led us to manifest on the day of first profession our radical decision to live the demands of the love poured into our hearts in our baptismal consecration. It is on this basis of our personal experience of the love of God, we be-

come more and more convinced and strengthened to carry out the mission of our communities amidst the challenges and failures.

If our mission flows from our consecration, it means that we are obliged to live our experience of the love of God as the reason behind our mission. Love of Christ urged St. Paul and Father Claret; that's why they felt "woe to me if I don't preach the gospel" (1Cor 9: 16; Aut 212). "The anointing of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are anointed to preach the Good News to the poor, is a sharing in the fullness of Christ" (CC 39). "Our missionary charism includes consecration and mission, and involves belonging totally to God and being entirely committed to the Kingdom" (Dir 102).

## Exercise 2: Listening to the Presence of the Spirit

1. Please read the text of Is 61: 1-3 and in the light of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, make a small prayer with regard to your current apostolate and listen to the invitation of God for you.
2. Kindly read the text of the Patriarch Ignatius mentioned in Booklet 1 (p. 11) and take note of the words that draw your attention. In the light of this try to see the moments in which you could or couldn't hear and respond to the calls of the Holy Spirit.
3. In the light of the above mentioned reflection, try to go through your pastoral life. As you dwell on your different experiences, pay attention to those moments that made you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit.

### 2.5. "To preach the Good News to the poor, captives, blind and oppressed"

Just before the beginning of the Vatican Council II, Pope John XXIII proclaimed the Church as the Church of the poor. "In the face of the underdeveloped countries, the Church is and wants to be, the Church of all and particularly, of the poor" (Discourse on September, 1962). Pope Francis pointed out to the journalists on the third day of his pontificate, "How much I would like a Church that is poor and for the poor".

The support and solidarity of Jesus with the world of poor essentially belong to his life and mission. If this is removed, the dimension of Jesus as the saviour of the people remains distorted. Jesus is the Good News to the poor. He preached the Good News to the poor. His option for the poor manifests that he personally lived in poverty. He committed himself to the poor by offering them the salvation of God in a special manner.

Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God as Good News of liberating salvation has the poor people as the preferred recipients. His proclamation of the Good News to the poor is the central and essential part of his mission. The presentation of the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah in Jesus and his response to John the Baptist (cf. Is 61: 1-2; Lk 4: 18,19; Mt 11: 4-6; Lk 7: 22-23) show clearly the most significant signs of the time of salvation and in this sense

these texts are his "Identity card". The different human situations enunciated in these texts, such as, poverty, captivity, blindness and different sicknesses are signs of death. The Good News of Jesus introduces the principle of life in the human history against these threats of humanity.

The centrality of Jesus' Good News as the evangelization of the poor is the very heart of his preaching and at the same time, a highly scandalous one (Mt 11: 6). He confirms this fact as the central one of his presentation of the beatitudes. The beatitudes of the poor are the «Constitutions» of the Kingdom of God. The salvation reaches with the beatitudes of the poor. "How blessed are you who are poor: the kingdom of God is yours" (Lk 6:20). The persons who are really or materially poor (ptochoi) are blessed because the Kingdom of God has come. The beatitude according to Luke does not mean that the poor have to accept their poverty with the hope that it would be compensated in the kingdom of God. Rather, he means that the happiness of the poor is the result of the beginning of the Kingdom of God, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand" (Mk 1: 15). It means that the suppression of the situation of squandering and poverty that impeded the people to be persons has begun; the kingdom of justice that goes beyond their expectation has reached. "Happy are they because the arrival of the kingdom will place an end to their poverty by creating a fraternal world" (G. Gutiérrez).

The scene of the final judgment (Mt 25: 31-46) establishes solidarity with the poorest (the hungry, thirsty, sick, naked, rejected strangers, etc.) as the decisive criteria of salvation. The sacramental-Christological dimension of the poor attains in this text a scandalous character with this strange and hearty identification of "you did it to me". In fact, the cause of Jesus for the poor in the history is very well affirmed here. Whatever may be their subjective situation or spiritual disposition, it is in these crucified ones of the history, the commitment to live the message of Jesus is checked.



The miracles and banquets of Jesus are other aspects to show his commitment for the poor and marginalized. The miracles are to be considered as the "outcry of the Kingdom", as "signs" that show the saving power of the kingdom of God that makes present the simple and abandoned people of Galilee as preferred recipients. As "signs", they announce and anticipate a new world opened to carry out justice fully by showing how Jesus saves the needy in particular situations and frees them from the historical oppressions. The banquets or meals of Jesus especially with the sinners and the excluded ones are a liberating table community. "The community of table with the so called 'publicans and sinners' as if with his own is an essential and characteristic view of the historical Jesus. Jesus himself reveals in it the eschatological messenger of God who communicates to all even particularly those who were excluded to the divine banquet, to the banquet of peace of the kingdom of God, according to the criteria of the period; the action of dining with Jesus offers in the present the eschatological salvation" (E. Schillebeeckx).

The meals of Jesus presented in Luke calls to promote the participation in a common, open and equalitarian table in which all the excluded and marginalized ones of the system have to be integrated. Questioning the concept of honour and system of purity that were confining the human relationship unjustly, he offered the alternative values of welcoming, reciprocity, sharing of life, fraternity. All the barriers opposed to a table fellowship are abolished by Jesus. The solidarity that was really scandalizing with the poor and sinners was one of the reasons that led him to the cross.

We who confess as believers in Jesus should be clear about our solidarity of Jesus with the poor. Because, "there cannot be anymore debates: Jesus was on the side of the poor, those who cry, those who were hungry, those who were unsuccessful, the weak and those considered to be nothing" (H. Küng). A strong option for the poor and their just cause is an essential and inalienable aspect of following Christ. In this sense, the credibility of christian faith depends on the believers' authentic way of living this option personally and as community.

## 2.6. New poverty and the new poor

Poverty and marginalization are no more the exclusive facts of the Third World; they are growing fast in the First World. We stand before a physical and human deterioration that affects some groups that had never thought that they could come to the path towards poverty and social exclusion, whether it is a classical

and persisting poverty or new forms of poverty that come up and are consolidated in our times; and they give way for social exclusion, hunger, deviation and delinquency.

The poor in the earlier times were different from today both in quantity and quality. There are three categories of poor. The first are the structurally poor who know nothing but poverty; the second are those who are totally poor today, but were not so before; and the third are the impoverished ones fallen into poverty but without losing their access to the things and basic services. The last two categories are called the new poor who present common traits with deep differences.

The new poor are the persons with certain level of formation; but this does not provide them capacity to face the crisis adequately. They are the labourers who have lost their jobs; youth who haven't found a satisfying and permanent job or who have been forced for anticipated retirement; elderly persons who are yet to find a job; a young mother with a son but does neither have a house nor a job and knows not to face her new reality; the refugees, the migrants who have returned to their families, etc. The new forms of poverty make the rich richer and the poor to be poorer day by day.

Social security is always associated with work. This is an essential component in the constitution of the identity of the persons and the organizing principle of daily family life. This gives a decisive impact in the quality of life of the workers and the middle class. In a society with an assurance for daily labour and just salary, there is a place for personal effort as a recognized value; as a result of this, educational priorities, savings, social upcoming, solidarity among the equals will come into play to pave ways for possible future in which the children would have a better life than their parents.

While the traditional poverty exists from the ancient times, the new poverty is the result of social strategies carried out by the particular state politics and their liberal economic policies of the recent times which try to expel more and more people on to the street because of their inability to support financing the state systems of health, education, housing, justice, security, etc. The highest unemployment, diminishing of the real salary and the decrease in the distribution of the income brought out the levels of critical poverty were never known before: there are a number of persons below the poverty line who are



unable to meet their daily needs and attain their basic services with their limited income. This new poverty does not allow the families to meet their needs with the salary they earn. In this context of new poverty a person can be considered to be poor when the level of life of a particular society is very much inferior to the present one.

The growing number of unemployment around the world does not allow today's socio-political system to understand what is happening in these persons and get into the obscurity of the social structure. The new concepts like social capital, human development and strategies for survival try to analyse, interpret and compensate the situation of a growing mass of the poor. The strategies of survival speak about the poor. While these concepts point out to boost the energies of solidarity, the dominant values like competence and individualism continue to be the values for those are capable.

This system brings out some mechanisms through which the interdependence of each one of the precarious situations is installed and this causes a vicious circle of poverty. The accumulation of the precarious situation of the persons brings out the aggressive affective imbalances, indifference and the ill treatment of the women and children. In this way many seek an outlet in alcohol, drugs, leaving from the family, etc; these situations lead them to drugs, alcohol and finally to crimes as a way of escaping from the life they lead. The new poor and new forms of poverty are the terms to sketch out various forms of precariousness that come up basically from the massive unemployment produced in the recent years.

The new poverty is a complex table of misery spread out in big cities. While the old poor live in the slums and are known by all, the new poor are not so. Any middle class area or building of the society can accommodate them. It is a private poverty within the doors. This dispersion and disorientation transform the new poverty into a poverty that is almost invisible.



## 2.7 The Context of our reflection

"Our life develops in a particular social and ecclesial context that has some common characteristics in this globalized world as well as its own accents in each of the places where we are present. We cannot forget that we are situated in the world when carrying out our life and apostolate. Most probably the

word "crisis" has appeared in the communication media more than ever in the recent times and never before had people felt so strongly its effects. Without entering into complicated analysis of the great macro economical indexes, all of us know persons who have experienced the consequences of this crisis: persons who have lost their job and have to face difficult times, others who lack the necessary things for life and are forced materially to survive, etc. The economic crisis has occupied the attention of governments and analysts and it has become a sort of a difficult atmosphere to breathe, but impossible to avoid. In all the places where we work it has produced concrete effects that have conditioned the life of persons and communities. However, during the times of crisis many questions come up, scandalous contradictions are revealed and new proposals arise. Have we been able to grasp these questions? Have we been capable of being in tune with the new proposals that seek a different and more just world? What is the effect that this situation of crisis and its consequences have had in our own life and missionary work?

"Recuperating some values on which we can build up a just and peaceful relationship between persons and nations and a way of relating with nature which does not destroy its harmony, comes up as a more pressing need than ever before. Faith in God the Father calls us to commit ourselves to this task since it affects the life of all his children. We do it together with other persons who are also committed to it, motivated by their own religious faith or by other humanistic ideologies.

The calls of God that we highlighted in the Chapter and placed in the Chapter document continue questioning our generosity and our creativity; in short, they continue questioning our faith and the consistency of our vocational response. We cannot forget the situation of our world ...

"How do we place ourselves in this world as Christians? How does the Church feel challenged by the problems of humanity? What does this historical moment demand from us, the disciples of Jesus? We

are part of this humanity that journeys in search of a world where all can have their place and feel attracted by the ideals of justice, peace and truth that are deeply rooted in the heart of each human being. But we form part also of this humanity that should continue to fight against those who want to impose their dominion on others and thus try to discredit those who do not accept "the dominions" that dehumanize. The Church tries to respond to these challenges and in it we find marvellous examples of Christians -laity, religious, priests and bishops- capable of inspiring a generous commitment for life and justice to those who know how to look at reality without prejudices or

selfish motivations. However, the life of the Church is also seen frequently shadowed by a lack of transparency and unselfishness which are basic demands of the Gospel. Is it not true that we still continue to be too much preoccupied of ourselves and of our own self interest? Are not those words of Jesus in the Gospel, "The one who wants to save his life will lose it, but the one who loses his life for me and for the Gospel, will save it" (Me 8, 35) strongly challenging us? What Gospel does our life announce? On the other side, we have not found a language that reaches the heart of the people of today." (Message of Fr. General to the Major Superiors in 2010).

## 2.8 Spirituality of the option for the poor

The call to proclaim the message of salvation from the perspective of the poor and needy (cf. Dir 114) invites us to understand and undergo an experience of the kenosis of Jesus (cf. 2Cor 8:9; Phil 2: 5-9). He was submerged entirely in the human condition to the extent of accepting the condition of a "slave". The self emptying of Jesus led him to embrace poverty to share the life of the poor. This sharing is his solidarity of love for them. He was poor out of love for them and not out of love for the unjust and imposed impoverishment. His faithfulness to them led him to offer this life for them so that they could have life in abundance (Jn 10:10). The self emptying experience will lead his disciples to a perseverance in their fight against the elements of death and sin to give life to the poor and become a new creation (2Cor 5:17).

The preferential option for the poor as our priority in the evangelizing activity (cf. MCT 159) demands us to undertake an experience of exodus: to go out of oneself towards the world of the poor and try to identify ourselves with them with the aim of looking at the reality from their perspectives for a transformation.

Called to share the joys and suffering of the poor

and accompany them (MCT 160) means to live in an active solidarity to defend their causes, struggles, rights and thus affirming unconditionally their right for life.

It means to be prepared to face persecutions and martyrdom that comes as a result of following Jesus in this way. Because it is the cross that makes us to fight against the unjust crosses placed on the poor. It means a great measure of asceticism and purification to empty ourselves from the old mentalities for a critical analysis of the reality and trying to identify ourselves with the cause of the poor in order to be strong in our daily struggle to bear the persecutions. Because the preferential option for the poor demands a total conversion for their integral liberation (Puebla 1.134).

It means to be challenged with an unlimited spiritual growth. It is a journey of moving from the paternalistic and dreamy world of the option for the poor into their crude reality and learning from them and their cultures; "It means to personalize the God experience of the poor, their way of living the relationship with the Lord and take up historical practice of Jesus and raise up with them in our spirituality". Thus we are called to discover the power of the poor and our contribution to overcome the differences between the attitudes of master and slave, rich and poor and thus become one in Christ (Gal 3:28).

It means to experience and express the indignation in the face of an unjust situation of poverty which should make us to stand with the poor against their poverty. It is a basic Christian option that questions our way of following Jesus and challenges us to reformulate the motivations of our spirituality and apostolates (Puebla, 733).

### Exercise 3: My experience with the poor

In the light of the above reflection on "The Good News to the Poor", try to reflect for few minutes on your experience of identification with the poor in your assigned ministry.

1. While proclaiming the Good News to the poor, how do you understand living an experience of being evangelized by the poor? Try to identify those experiences that have challenged you to change your perspective, opinion or attitudes in some way.
2. What is your attitude to the "new poverty and new poor" of your mission field?
3. Are the poor you encounter daily in your mission part of your prayers before God?
4. Conclude this moment of reviewing your life with a small prayer asking for the grace for a greater identification with those with whom you live your pastoral life.

## 2.8. A call for a New Evangelization today

In this **Booklet 2** of The Forge you are coming across the meaning and context of Isaiah's anointing of the Spirit for a mission of being and bearing the Good News to the poor. Jesus identifies it with himself and becomes our saviour. The call of Isaiah and Jesus led Father Claret to share his evangelizing charism with his fellow missionary companions who are called to be faithful to his spirit. He discovered that his spiritual and pastoral itinerary mission was a special call from his time to animate and give life to the people who are already Christians for centuries. In the context of the changes in all the spheres of his society, he was convinced of Jesus Christ and his Gospel as the permanent and eternal answer. He was able to present the Word of God in the light of the turbulent context of his time. Looking at him



from the current social situation and our call to respond to it as missionaries, his mission too was a New Evangelization for that time.

### New Evangelization and Father Claret

While a greater part of the Spanish clergy in the 19th century was inclined towards nostalgic attitude of maintaining the image of the time-honoured forms of evangelization with their greatest splendour and efficacy and insisted the State to make exact reparation for all the injustices committed against the Church and its religious institutions, the Liberal Governments had despoiled the Church of the greater part of its evangelizing forces and would not like to allow any more to announce the gospel. But there was another group of priests supported by the indestructible power of the Gospel to give new responses to the new challenges. At this juncture, the Holy Spirit raised up both theoreticians and pragmatists of a then New Evangelization – although they would not have used this term. Among the former, Father James Balmes contributed a lot for a dialogue with the new culture of his time and discovered the ways for evangelization. And among the latter Father Claret was a brilliant star to put into practice the apostolic strategies discovered for the so called New Evangelization of his time.

Balmes' study of his society made him realize that it was infected with unbelief and scepticism spread out everywhere; so he said, "the spirit has to fortify itself continually to catch its deadly contagion". Instead of pondering with nostalgic feelings for the past splendour, he invited the priests to be witnesses of the Gospel by being salt and light of the world; he reminded them to be in contact with the people buffeted by stormy passions and unbelief and work for their salvation. He tells them, "Let us not forget them".

There are doubtless two great coincidences between this programme for a New Evangelization mapped out by Balmes in the various studies he published, and the notes that he wrote after his interview with Father Claret in 1846: an interview which dealt exclusively with the way in which Father Claret had already carried out his work of evangelization.

### The need for a "new evangelization" today

Pondering over the present realities of faith crisis, the loss of the sense of the sacred and lack of enthusiasm to live Christian life in many countries, especially those of ancient Christian tradition, Pope Benedict XVI stated, "Proclaiming Jesus Christ the only Saviour of the World today is more complex than in the past; but our task remains identical to that at the dawn of our history" (May 30, 2011). So he insisted the urgent need for a new evangelization as the specific response to the various forms of modern ideology that denies the presence of God and

claims that every human person, especially in ethical matters, is absolute. Falling prey to this sort of the ideological powers, humanity remains disconnected to the Transcendental living.

While modern ideology excludes God from the people's lives, it produces a generalized indifference towards the Christian faith to marginalize it from public life and believes God to be "dead, useless and unnecessary"; it underlines the crisis of human being left to itself. Justifying everything in terms of the current fashion, the ethical standards given to the Western World through the Bible, now appear weakened, concealed and hardly evident. The fluid side of post-modernity particularly has traced out the weakness of certainties promised by the "virtual economy", which is increasingly distant from the real economy; the principle of maximum profit with minimum risk has produced the rubble of an economic and financial instability at all levels.

All these show a strong need to be connected with the living God and live with a longing for him. This leads to "an awareness that an interior desert results whenever the human being, wishing to be the sole architect of his nature and destiny, finds himself deprived of that which is the very foundation of all things" (*Ubi cumque et semper*). Thus the post-modern era is a call for us to live our faith as the disclosure of a humble, yet saving beauty, in the resurrection of the Crucified.

### What is "New" Evangelization?

According to Benedict XVI, "The term, 'New evangelization' recalls the need for a renewed manner of proclamation, especially for those who live in a context, like the one today, in which the development of secularization has had a heavy impact, even in traditionally Christian countries. The Gospel is the ever new proclamation of the salvation worked by Christ".

- It is a call first of all to be joyful and responsible Christians of the 21st century with a great fidelity to the Gospel and to the people of our time and with new way of mission. It is a new the strategy of the Spirit for our time. It is not an organizational or strategic matter but rather a spiritual one (*Instrumentum Laboris*, 158).
- It means trying to find out the personal witnessing as the essential means for the proclamation of salvation more effective; For those who remain tied to their Christian roots, but live the difficult relationship with modernity, it means something living and all-encompassing, able to contain all that is good in modern life.
- It means instigating life journeys for each and every one, thus radiating the light they have first received.
- It means communicating and inspiring life at its deepest self in the light of Jesus, so as to inspire journeys of freedom and expanding consciousness.

- It is a readiness to accept the essentials of new challenges, to learn new languages, and to try new approaches from the Gospel. The new approaches propose a new experience of contact with Christ for those who believe. Therefore the New Evangelization needs to have a genuinely "new" quality of possessing the inexhaustible ultimate and eschatological newness of the Gospel, and not simply a newness occurring in the course of time. Evangelization will be "new" if it springs from a deep commitment to renew and reform the whole Church and in all its members. It demands new enthusiasm based on contact with the risen Christ and credible witness to others from the lives transformed through discipleship to Jesus.



- It is aimed at Catholics and rooted in a personal relationship with Christ; it is directed to believers, thereby deepening religious experience, so as to permit the Gospel to penetrate in a way that allows them to share faith; it calls non-practicing believers to active participation; it seeks to evangelize the traditionally Christian countries weakened by secularization; it looks for new methods, especially with technology and communication; and, finally, the new evangelization involves all members of the Church, especially the laity.
- It is applying the invitation of Jesus to conversion of heart not only ad extra but ad intra, to believers and cultures where the salt of the gospel had lost its taste. It is the rekindling of faith in the persons and cultures where it has grown lacklustre and the pastoral care of those daily living as believers. It is to "stir into flame" the gift of faith given them (Tim1:6).

### How to promote the "New evangelization"?

The need of the Church to be evangelized. Pope Paul VI taught in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: The Church

herself needs evangelization! This gives us humility that the Church has a deep need for the interior conversion that is at the core of the call to evangelization. Only from this conversion, the Church can invite its members their conversion. Real reform is evangelical metanoia, a radical change of heart, the only reform that can bring the Church back to its original beauty and to be sign for the nations. Renewal and reform of the Church go hand in hand: they depend on each other. It needs an ecclesial organization that may reflect true this corresponsibility and complementarity of vocations and charisms in the church. The summons to "New evangelization" includes commitment to reform the Church beginning from within with the Christianization of hearts. The renewal of ecclesial life according to Benedict XVI "does not consist of a quantity of exercises and external institutions, but in belonging, singly and entirely, to Jesus Christ... Not in the sense of cutting down or diminishing, but in the sense of becoming simple, turning to that true simplicity that is an echo of our Lord's simplicity. Becoming simple in this sense is what would be the real renewal for Christians, for everyone and for the Church itself".

**Witnessing life, the first and foremost need.** Paul VI wrote, "Modern people listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers; and, when they listen to teachers, they do so because they are also witnesses" (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 41). According to Benedict XVI, "... We need people whose minds have been enlightened by the light of God and whose hearts have been opened by God, so that their minds can speak to minds of others and their hearts can open others' hearts. God comes back to us only through those who are touched by God" (Subiaco, 1 April 2005). In this sense, the New Evangelization is a call to share God's Love with the needy. Recognizing his love in the personal life manifested through many persons and events will lead us to this sharing. This leads to a joyful living of Christian faith amidst the problems and difficulties. Joy is the infallible sign of God's presence. The witnessing life of those who are happy as disciples of Jesus alone can speak to the heart of our contemporaries. It means "faith experience", "community of disciples" and gratuitous commitment to the task of building up the Kingdom of God".

**Mystery of Christ to the poor.** To announce the total Mystery of Christ especially to the poor as their



integral freedom, the New Evangelization insists strongly the evangelizing action of clear option for the poor and justice that gives credibility to it.

**A right and proper Christian formation.** Combating the catechetical illiteracy with adequate knowledge about Jesus, the Truth, and his Church is a special need in the mission of new evangelization. Worshiping and listening to the word of God in liturgy, in communion and in charity play an important role. The celebration of the fundamental stages of life with the sacraments, significant effort to the catechesis both for children and adults, the preaching of sermons, meditation of the word of God (*lectio divina*), spiritual exercises for everyone, marriage preparation courses, taking care of families, especially young people, religious education in schools by the teachers' own meaningful experience, etc. are important means to present the beauty of Christ that attracts and changes us, both in traditional and new forms; this pastoral commitment inspires the thirst for a friendship with Jesus as the way to sanctity and root of our faith.

**In the youth apostolate with the information technology.** We find difficult to convey our values to the younger generation. It seems the gap between generations has widened all of a sudden, because of the rapid rate of change and the new languages of the computer and of the Internet. Well-intentioned instruction on the part of parents and educators can be negated by the Internet world. This makes the people feel that they are living in a world without God. That may be the result of thinking of "God without a world". In the light of this negative experience there is a need to include opportunities in the internet for prayer, retreat resources, music, and ways for people to communicate and blog about particular spiritualities. All these kinds of online resources need to supplement sites that dispense information about the Catholic faith.

**Personal accompaniment.** We find ourselves surrounded by the culture of death in our evangeliz-

ing mission and are forced to question, "Would we be able to live as missionaries without feeling ourselves deeply affected by this situation? Are we not responsible—at times—for that "culture of death"? Would our Chapter Guidelines have any meaning if they did not motivate us to serve with more dedication those whose lives are diminished, to make our contribution to the establishment a true "culture of life"? The loss of life's meaning and the disregard for the person are at the root of these signs of death". (TTHL, 7.8). In the face of the culture of death the New Evangelization reminds us "the passion for life thus belongs at the very heart of our missionary vocation" (TTHL, 8). This can be realized by a personal accompaniment. This means our journey with Jesus and accompanying others to walk with him as in the case of the disciples to Emmaus. The New Evangelization is unthinkable without paying a special attention to the spirituality of the evangelizer and of the Christian community for a personal and communitarian conversion in the light of the signs of our time.

**The gift of spending time with people.** Giving time for others is the most credible sign of genuine service. We must have time for others and give them time, accompanying them faithfully for the duration, patiently experiencing the gift of our own time. Who is ever in a hurry and not ready to give time for others on their journey, will never be an evangeliser.

**Care for interpersonal relationships.** A "crowd of loners" closes everyone up in a private world. We are increasingly alone because we lack a common dream. Modern means of communication, combined with this personal dimension today, make it possible for people to form their own worlds. They shape data to their preferences and retool resources to their desires. Building bridges, therefore, between those who are alone is now of vital importance. This is the call for the evangelizers to be with others before being for others. Faith has to penetrate these personal worlds as much as it tries to penetrate the world at large.

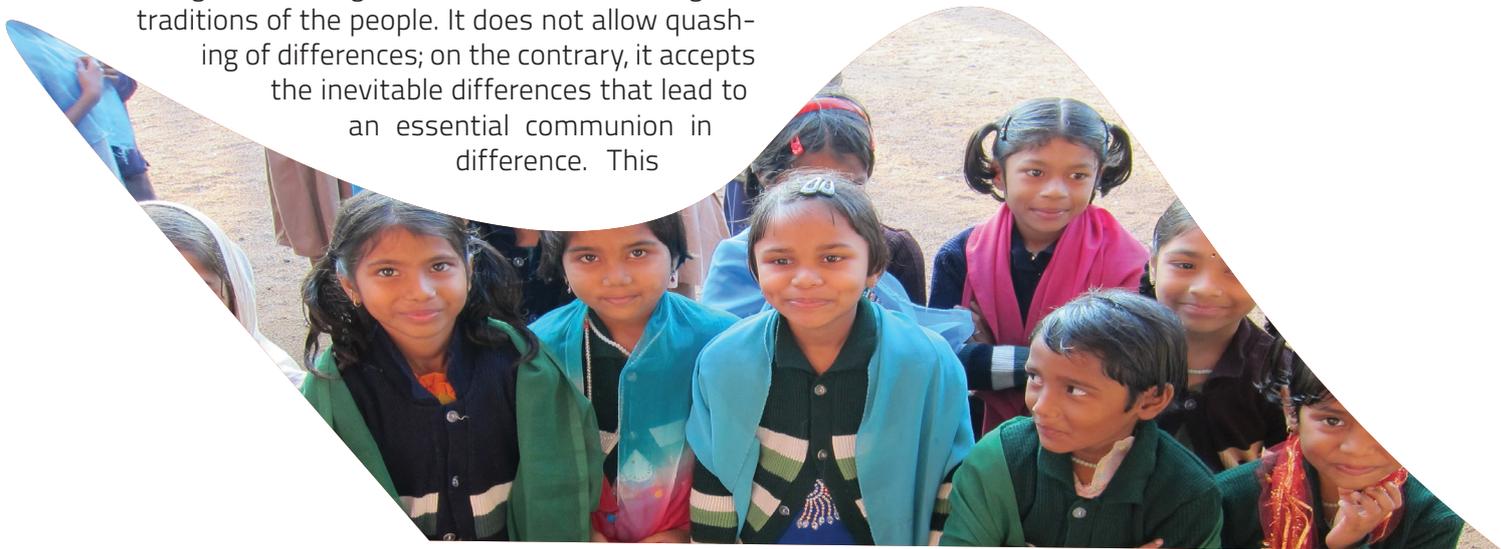
**Special and untiring attention on Dialogue.** Evangelization takes place through dialogue unfurled into listening and sharing with the cultural and religious traditions of the people. It does not allow quashing of differences; on the contrary, it accepts the inevitable differences that lead to an essential communion in difference. This

is what the sharing of one's faith experience. As John Henry Newman loved to say, *cor ad cor loquitur*, "heart speaks to heart", a sincere recognition and respect from the heart for an undeniable openness to the divine even among the materialistic persons, agnostics or atheists will pave way for a dialogue. In the light of secularism, knowing God and making him known (Aut 233), demands the evangelizer to keep alive this recognition in them.

**The ability to keep memory alive.** Eradication of the past undermines the very possibility of addressing the challenges of the present and the future. Without memory there is no identity and so, no prophecy. The language of memory is not to simply recall the past; it means to test and apply in such a way as to address the deepest questions of our present lives. The "new evangelization" involves keeping alive the vital and "dangerous" memory of the Jesus, Truth.

**Respect for the freedom.** In post-modern culture there is a shortage of great hopes to open horizons of a matured and responsible freedom. Evangelization aims to open horizons, to rise to challenges, and to ignite passion for the cause of God in this world. In this sense, the evangeliser cannot intend to dominate others, but to lead them to true freedom. When the evangelization fails to respect the freedom of the other person, it distorts its aim of witnessing Jesus.

**Joyful living of Christian faith amidst problems and difficulties.** Joy is the infallible sign of God's presence. Our faith in Jesus is a call to trust in his love that strengthens us to bear the sufferings for a just cause. In this sense, the New Evangelization provides the possibility to undergo the experience of living the definition of the Son of the Heart of Mary, "Nothing daunts him; he delights in privations, welcomes work, embraces sacrifices, smiles at slander, and rejoices in suffering" (Aut 494).



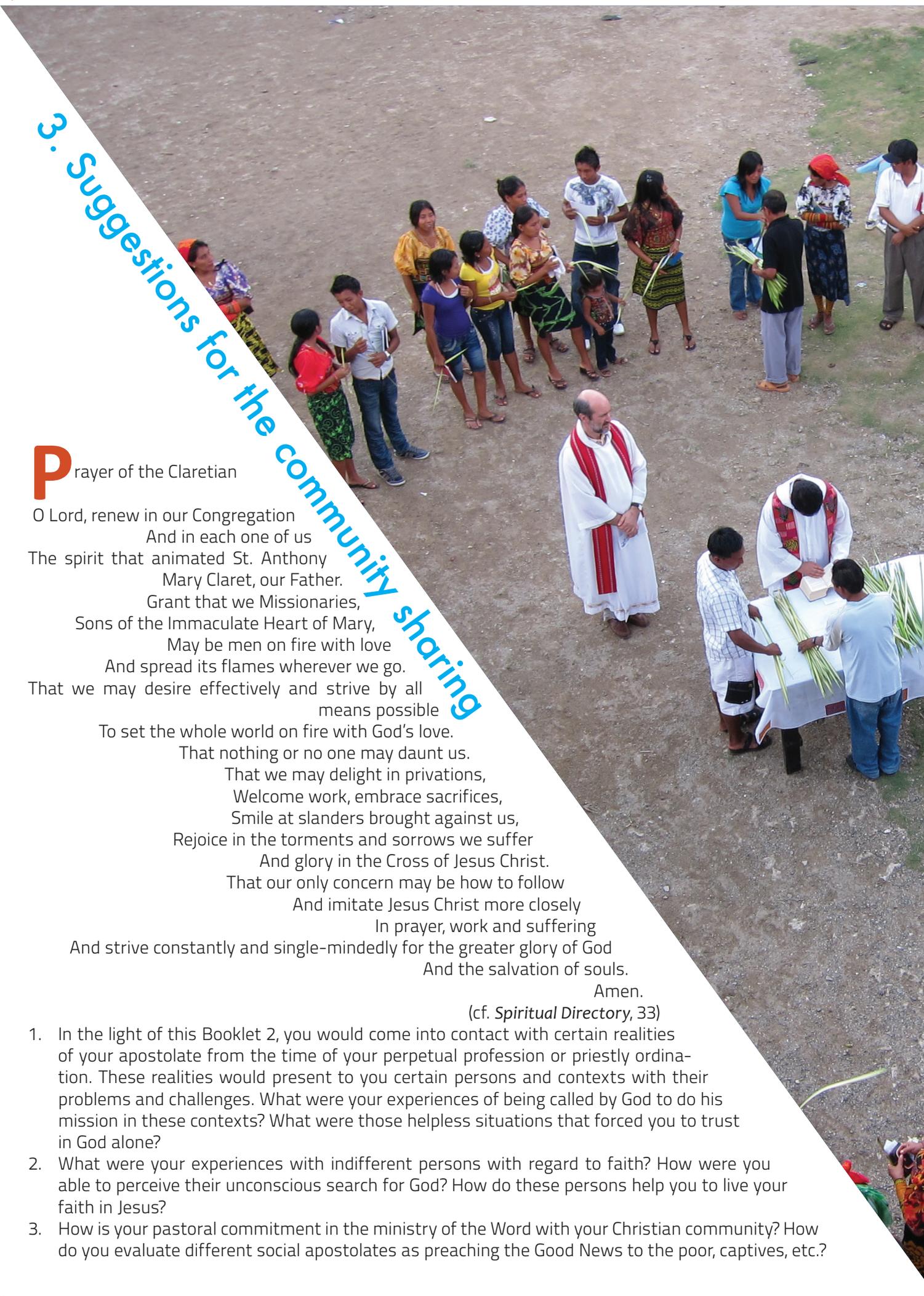
### 3. Suggestions for the community sharing

#### Prayer of the Claretian

O Lord, renew in our Congregation  
 And in each one of us  
 The spirit that animated St. Anthony  
 Mary Claret, our Father.  
 Grant that we Missionaries,  
 Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,  
 May be men on fire with love  
 And spread its flames wherever we go.  
 That we may desire effectively and strive by all  
 means possible  
 To set the whole world on fire with God's love.  
 That nothing or no one may daunt us.  
 That we may delight in privations,  
 Welcome work, embrace sacrifices,  
 Smile at slanders brought against us,  
 Rejoice in the torments and sorrows we suffer  
 And glory in the Cross of Jesus Christ.  
 That our only concern may be how to follow  
 And imitate Jesus Christ more closely  
 In prayer, work and suffering  
 And strive constantly and single-mindedly for the greater glory of God  
 And the salvation of souls.  
 Amen.

(cf. *Spiritual Directory*, 33)

1. In the light of this Booklet 2, you would come into contact with certain realities of your apostolate from the time of your perpetual profession or priestly ordination. These realities would present to you certain persons and contexts with their problems and challenges. What were your experiences of being called by God to do his mission in these contexts? What were those helpless situations that forced you to trust in God alone?
2. What were your experiences with indifferent persons with regard to faith? How were you able to perceive their unconscious search for God? How do these persons help you to live your faith in Jesus?
3. How is your pastoral commitment in the ministry of the Word with your Christian community? How do you evaluate different social apostolates as preaching the Good News to the poor, captives, etc.?



## 4. Tips for "lectio divina"

Monday, January 13, 2014

1 Sm 1: 1-8/ Ps 116: 12-13, 14-17, 18-19/ Mk 1: 14-20

The Ordinary Time of the Liturgical year begins with the call of Jesus to his first disciples. While the "Spiritus Domini" phase of the Forge is leading us to deepen our missionary commitment, we are called to remember the roots of our Claretian missionary call through today's gospel reading. The shore of the lake of Galilee, the presence of Jesus and the first disciples' job of fishing presented in the gospel may take us back to the place and situation when we first felt the voice of God calling us to our Claretian way of life. Remembering them is reminding our selves of our first enthusiasm to respond to our love experience with God manifested through this vocation. Routine and monotonous ways of living, various crises and attractions of the world not only make our initial joy of our vocational response cold, but also remind us to make a "U" turn to the roots of our call and get strengthened in our missionary vocation. "We choose as a priority the cultivation of one's own vocation in fidelity to our evangelical and charismatic roots expressed in the Constitutions" (TMHL, 48). How do I take care of those roots of my Claretian Missionary Vocation?

## Tuesday, January 14, 2014

- 1 Sm 1: 9-20
- 1 Sm 2
- Mk 1: 21-28

The people in the synagogue wondered at the power and authority of Jesus over the evil. His words have the capacity to expel the evil power and give life to the sick and the dead. His words give eternal life (Jn 6: 68). His words penetrate the inner most self of the person (Heb 4: 12). Today the captivating words of Jesus call us to recognize his voice resounding in us with the call to fight against our selfishness. The call of Jesus born in us through the resounding of his voice has its effect only when we respond to it with a special attention. Mere listening alone won't help us to experience the power of the Word. Our steadfast commitment to listen to Jesus in our inner self and trying to obey him in our daily life by his grace will bear fruit to overcome our personal difficulties and failures. For Jesus, the person who starts living his words is like a house on the rock that withstands all the hardships of life (Mt 7: 24). How do I make use of 'the Lectio Divina' in my daily life?

## Wednesday, January 15, 2014

- 1 Sm 3: 1-10. 19-20
- Ps 40
- Mk 1: 29-39

The result of Jesus' listening to his Father in the prayer of that early morning ends up with his decision to move away from the healing ministry to the Mission of Preaching the Word. Jesus was very conscious about his aim of spreading the Good News of the Kingdom along with the healing ministry. When he sent his disciples for the mission, he placed the proclamation of the arrival of the Kingdom of God as their first priority and then the healing ministry (Mt 10: 7-8). In his reply to John the Baptist, he highlights the proclamation of the Good News to the poor as 'His Mission' along with the healing ministry. In the beginning of the missionary life of Father Claret, though the people of Viladrau insisted on his presence to heal their infirmities, he was very much aware of his call to preach the Gospel and so he decided to leave from there (Aut 173-174). The Missionary service of the Word "is the source of our apostolate and the fundamental criterion for the choice of our apostolic works" (Dir 101). Am I capable of maintaining a balance between my social apostolate and the Ministry of the Word?

## Thursday, January 16, 2014

- 1 Sm 4: 1-11
- Ps 44
- Mk 1: 40-45

The lepers in the ancient world, not only suffered a physical illness, they underwent the pain of being banished from the human society and totally shunned. No one would dare even to touch them because of the fear of social and religious prohibitions. While the people rejected the leper of today's gospel, Jesus was bold enough to extend his hand and touch him. Instead of rejecting totally a sickly man on the basis of laws, he was moved with compassion to recognize that man as an indelible image of God. In the face of human sufferings Jesus was always moved with compassion to console and give hope to the society. Compassion towards the suffering person is the seed for a prophetic life of being a consoler and messenger of hope. Father Claret lived his prophetic call from his compassionate heart. For he says, "I am so soft-hearted and compassionate that I can't bear seeing misfortune or misery without doing something to help" (Aut 10). When we love, compassion enkindles "the fire within us" (MFWL. 28). How do I react in the face of pain and suffering of the people: am I a critic or compassionate?

## Friday, January 17, 2014. St Anthony, Abbot

- 1 Sm 8: 4-7. 10-22a
- Ps 89
- Mk 2: 1-12

Jesus has the authority to forgive sins. That's the reason he was lavishly forgiving any kind of sinner. His Father is always kind hearted and compassionate to run towards the lost son and embrace him and accept him as His son. The mission of Jesus was to seek and save the lost (Lk 19:10). While the religious structures of his time made business with God's forgiveness through offerings and sacrifices, Jesus offered his very life as the ransom for many (Mk 10:45). That's the reason he was ready to forgive the people at any moment and at any cost. His total forgiveness made the people to know God's love and made them to love God more (Lk 7: 47). We suffer the unbearable burden of our sins that break our relationship with God. Our longing for the God's forgiveness is the sign of our openness to rebuild our son ship with God. In the celebration of the compassionate love of Jesus in the sacrament of reconciliation, our experience of being "reconciled with the Church, which we have wounded by our sins, and with Christ" (CC 38), leads us to a real joy and peace. How do I make use of the sacrament of reconciliation for the forgiveness of my sins? How do I treat the people in this sacrament?

## Saturday, January 18, 2014

- 1 Sm 9: 1-4. 17-19; 10: 1
- Ps 21
- Mk 2: 13-17

While the Pharisees and experts of the Law criticized Jesus as friend of the sinners and tax collectors, Jesus takes one more step further to make them his followers and disciples. Any tax collector in the time of Jesus was very much hated because of his unjust and merciless way of collecting money. Mathew was not an exception in this regard. He was corrupt to the core because of his office and so he couldn't get the love and acceptance from anybody. But in the eyes of Jesus, he was a good man worthy of his mercy and compassion. Jesus needs this clay vessel to place the precious pearl of being his messenger. In front of the generous and unconditional love of Jesus we can never say that we are called to be his disciples because of our goodness; on the contrary, it is his goodness that made us his disciples. The more we realize this fact we will be capable of placing the love of Jesus as our only first priority and to respond to it. His love is the root of our Claretian Missionary Vocation. "We, the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, have also received a calling like that of the Apostles and have been granted the gift to follow Christ....." (CC 4). How do I respond to the love of Jesus as the main resource to be strengthened in my call?

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 2014: SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Is 49: 3. 5-6
- Ps 40
- 1 Cor 1: 1-3
- Jn 1: 29-34

To be light to the nations (Isaiah), to be the apostle of Jesus Christ (St. Paul), and to take away the sin of the world (Jesus Christ) are missions inherent in their calls. The kernel of the mission is nothing but being the witness for Jesus Christ. Jesus lived as “faithful witness” (Rev 1: 5) of the Father by fulfilling his mission of manifesting his Father’s love for the humanity (Jn 3: 16). The apostles bore witness to Christ by bearing witness to what they saw in and heard from and lived with Jesus (Acts 4:20; 1Jn 1:1). St. Paul’s personal encounter with the Risen Jesus led him to be a captive for bearing witness to him. Father Claret’s evangelizing mission is the result of his personal experience with Jesus in the crucial moments of his life (Aut 76). “The ministry of the word, through which we communicate the total mystery of Christ to humanity, is our special calling among the People of God” (CC. 46). These words of our constitutions call us to go through our way of doing the ministry of the Word. A personal encounter with Jesus is the discovery and recognition of his saving presence in our daily struggles.

## Monday, January 20, 2014

- 1 Sm 15: 16-23
- Ps 50
- Mk 2: 18-22

With his mission of making everything new (Rev 21: 5), Jesus presents himself as a new wine that needs new wine skins. His new ways of presenting God as a loving Father who is ever ready to forgive the sinner at any moment was a shock to the religious authorities. His compassionate approach to the needy shook the inhuman face of the religion. His new vision of the Kingdom of God radically ashamed the politicized religious atrocities. As fermented new wine bursts the old wineskins, his life and mission threatened to burst the superficial living styles. His assurance of total freedom for the children of God utterly destroys the barriers and frontiers of all social discriminations. This “new way of life” challenged the power seeking minds. This “newness” of Jesus can be accepted and lived by his follower only when he is born anew in the water and the Spirit (Jn 3:3-7) • This is a call to strongly fighting against our selfishness and be a new person every day. The capacity to forego the old way of living and being new is possible when we are in Christ (2Cor5:17) and abide in his love (Jn 15:10). “We should strive to walk in newness of life, setting our hearts on God, doing everything with an upright intention and true fervor of heart, bearing adversities for his sake” (CC 52). Am I ready for “a newness” of my life?

## Tuesday, January 21, 2014

- 1 Sm 16: 1-13
- Ps 89
- Mk 2: 23-28

In the background of the accusation of the Pharisees against the disciples’ “deadly sin” of breaking the Sabbath law, Jesus interprets the aim of the law for the good of man. We need the laws, traditions and regulations to attain our aim in life. They help us to love God and our neighbours. But if certain social traditions are converted into laws and given the religious colourings in God’s name, then they become ridiculous, inhuman and arrogant. Questioning and breaking these laws for the good of a person in need is strongly and blindly believed to be a sacrilegious and sinful condition to be punished. These irrational and ignorant religious approaches make the people to be violent to protect the outdated and meaningless religious traditions. They even come to a convinced conclusion that they are the saviours of God who is at their mercy for His existence. In no way, God is in need of our laws to defend Himself legally. Our minute details about the laws and rubrics in our religious experience make us sickly. Instead of helping the persons to experience the presence of God, our legal and religious attitudes hide the compassionate face of the God of Jesus. “The Constitutions have to be the central axis of our impulse for renewal” (Dir 4). How do I live the spirit of our constitutions? Are they norms to renew and deepen my God experience?

## Wednesday, January 22, 2014

- 1 Sm 17: 32-33. 37. 40-51
- Ps 144
- Mk 3: 1-6

To save life and to do good – this is the interpretation of Jesus for the law. If the same law is utilized to enslave the person, then there is a need to humanize it. This was what Jesus did with regard to the laws of his religion and society. Therefore he was plotted against. The human approach of Jesus was not accepted by the legalistic attitudes of the Pharisees. When God experience is reduced to certain norms and traditions and are presented as obligatory means to attain the grace of God, the value of a human being is trampled. These obligatory norms are changed into the punishing methods to provoke a fearful image of God in the people. The religions brought out their laws to guide the people and not to control and curtail their freedom. The easiest thing for any institution is to impose the rules at the pretext of punishments and silence the voice of its followers. But Jesus was in favour of a dialogue with the lawyers of his time to do something good for the people. But their narrow mindedness hindered them to listen even to meaning of proposal of Jesus. Going beyond the meaningless laws and practices to do good to the neighbour is a risky job. It needs a lot of courage and strength from above. “Our commitment to the service of humanity requires of us a solid spirituality of action” (Dir. 103). Am I able to listen to the call of Jesus from my religious practices and rules to do good to the people?

## Thursday, January 23, 2014

- 1 Sm 18: 6-9; 19: 1-7
- Ps 56
- Mk 3: 7-12

The repeated mentioning of the presence of a “great crowd” around Jesus and his healing of all their sicknesses presents us the innumerable needs of the society and his response to them. We never see him in the gospels rejecting any sickly or needy person. On the contrary, he healed them all, cast away the evil and fed the hungry. “He went about doing good to all” (Acts 10: 38). The mission of Jesus was born from the cry of the needy with whom he shared the compassionate presence of his Father. He realized his inner demand of knowing the will of his Father in the pain of his fellow persons. His sending of the disciples to heal the sick and announce the Good News of the Kingdom manifest that this mission is an obligation and not an option. His vision of the Kingdom of God is that all human beings enjoy peace and joy by alleviating the pains through a generosity and commitment for the suffering humanity. “Imitating Jesus’ preference for the poor, answering the call of the Church and following the example of our Founder, we wish to bring to all people the message of salvation, proclaimed from the perspective of the poor and needy, who constitute the greater part of humanity”. (Dir 114). How do I react to the sufferings of my brothers in the community?

## Friday, January 24, 2014

- 1 Sm 24: 3-21
- Ps 57
- Mk 3: 13-19

To be with Jesus is one of the three reasons for calling his apostles. To be with Jesus is to be companions who share his life and mission. The proclamation of the gospel began with this experience. They proclaimed the conviction of their experience of what they saw and with whom they lived. In face of threat for their life they authentically proclaimed that they would not withdraw their stand for Jesus with whom they lived. Proclaiming the Good News does not mean a mere repetition of what one has studied and read from the books on Jesus and his gospel. It is all the more a sharing of one's faith experience in Jesus. It means a journey with him who accompanies us everywhere in everybody. In this journey with him we hear his call for a change of life from self centeredness to others, from unjust ways to just ways, etc. It is from this personal meeting with Jesus we are called to participate in his mission and become ready to be sent out. How is my desire to live with Jesus to be his messengers?

## Saturday, January 25, 2014. Conversion of St Paul

- Acts 9: 1-22
- Ps 117
- Mk 16: 15-18

The conversion of St. Paul takes place with his question to Jesus and the latter's answer. 'Who are you, Lord?' he asked, and the answer came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting' (Acts 9:5). He identified the living presence of Jesus in the persecuted Christians. Jesus was very much concerned whether his disciples really understood him. That's why he asked them, 'who do you say I am?' (Mt 16: 15). The gospel of John presents us his understanding of Jesus. He portrays Jesus as the light, life, living bread, resurrection, way, truth, good shepherd. This feast of the conversion of St. Paul reminds us the importance of attaining our knowledge about Jesus from our life experiences. This apostle of the gentiles discovered Jesus in the Christians persecuted by him (1 Cor 15: 9). Our daily life experience is the place where we are called to see, listen and recognize the living presence of Jesus. Through the needy the Lord is manifesting his call to recognize his love for us and to respond to him. Do I know Jesus from my life experience?

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 2014: THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Is 8: 23 – 9: 3
- Ps 27
- 1 Cor 1: 10-13. 17
- Mt 4: 12-23

In the context of Israel's exile by the Assyrians, prophet Isaiah consoles the people of Israel with the message of the coming of the Lord as their light in darkness and death. This expectation resounded in the messianic prophecies. Mathew looks at this prophecy fulfilled in Jesus. He gives sight to the blind and light to the dead; he becomes LIFE and LIGHT to the world. All those who follow him will walk in the light. Jesus is the fulfilment of the promises of God and thus he fulfilled the will of God. He did so by discovering the voice of his Father in the human realities of darkness, illness and death. Today he is calling us to examine our commitment to fulfil the will of the Father in the needy persons. How is my commitment in this sense?

## Monday, January 27, 2014

- 2 Sm 5: 1-7. 10
- Ps 89
- Mk 3: 22-30

The scribes were the intellectual elites of the society. But their intellectual brightness did not help them to understand and appreciate the mission of Jesus. They were miserable victims of their narrow mindedness. Reason must be at the service of faith. When reason takes the upper hand, we will never be satisfied with our life of faith. It is not a rational faith we need, but a faith that is reasonable. Intellectual curiosity will not allow us to appreciate Jesus and his life-giving words. It may give us more possibilities to speak more about him than speaking with him. It may solve our logical and intellectual constraints about the understanding about Jesus. But can it lead us into an affectionate relationship with Jesus?

## Tuesday, January 28, 2014. St Thomas Aquinas, doctor of the Church

- 2 Sm 6: 12b-15. 17-19
- Ps 24
- Mk 3: 31-35

The only condition to be the member of the family of Jesus is to do the will of his Father. He came to this world to do that will and urged his disciples to pray for the grace to be obedient to God. His obedience to the Father led him to offer himself as a sacrifice for love. Mary, our Mother is the perfect example for this obedience. "Let it be done to me according to your will" was her final response to the call of God. She asks us to do whatever Jesus tells us. "Obedience brings blessings" tells Father Claret. Foregoing the personal wishes and accepting others' plans many look like a denial of oneself. But there is something good in accepting others' needs, advices and guidance. It is not interference in one's personal freedom. On the contrary, Christian freedom is obedience in freedom. Am I free to obey?

## Wednesday, January 29, 2014

- 2 Sm 7: 4-17
- Ps 89
- Mk 4: 1-20

After presenting the parable of the sower to the crowd, Jesus explains it to his disciples in private. They were gifted to receive this explanation. The ardent listening is the condition for the word of God to being fruits. Being a disciple of Jesus means learning to sit at the feet of the Lord and listening to him. A disposition to learn and allow oneself to be taught characterizes the disciple the disciple in his process of learning from the Master. Recognizing one's ignorance of something and the need to be enlightened is the humble approach to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of God. Spending time to read, to pray, to meditate and contemplate the Word of God is one of the means to the vocation of being a disciple. Learning to read the signs of the time and interpret them in the light of the Word of God and dialogue with others is another means to be faithful servant of the Word. How do I listen to God?

## Thursday, January 30, 2014

- 2 Sm 7: 18-19, 24-29
- Ps 132
- Mk 4: 21-25

God has not left anyone empty handed in this world. We are full of the gifts of God. Having these gifts in us is the fulfilment of God's promises and our commitment to develop and multiply them. The God given gifts to an individual are for the well-being of the others. The more they are utilized for others, the more growth they will achieve. In this growth process, the bearer of his gifts discovers some more new gifts added to him. Thus he becomes more gifted and in this way he becomes faithful to the gifts of God. The moment one denies to make use of them for the other, he begins to bury them, neither using them for himself nor for others. In this way he loses even what he has received. How do I make use of my gifts from God?

## Friday, January 31, 2014. St John Bosco

- 2 Sm 11: 1-4a, 5-10a, 13-17
- Ps 51
- Mk 4: 26-34

The kingdom of God is compared to a tiny seed that contains life for generations. The life giving principle of the kingdom of God begins with the experience of the love of God. All those who have experienced the love of Christ will be captivated with the power of life to work for justice, truth, fraternity, etc. Impelled by the love of God, they are committed to share it with the needy till it wounds them. Being wounded by their love experience with God, they are moved with compassion for the suffering persons. They withstand courageously the struggles and threats against their very lives on the basis of their hope for a better world that foreshadows the heavenly kingdom. How is your experience of the kingdom God?

## Saturday, February 1, 2014

- 2 Sm 12: 1-7a, 10-17
- Ps 51
- Mk 4: 35-41

Jesus is journeying silently with us. We come across all on sudden tempests and at once we cry out as if our boat were almost sinking. But the silent presence of Jesus is calling us today to remember his presence with us. We are not left alone in our journey. His only advice in our difficult moments is to have faith in the different moments of our life. Faith works wonders. This faith in Jesus is the source of our joy that supports us to shoulder the trials of life. If there is no such element called faith in human life, our life will become unbearably frustrating. In fact, our constant bitter experiences make us pessimists and they force us to look at life and persons around with a negative outlook. But Christian faith encourages us to be open and work out our life positively. How do I recognize the presence of Jesus with me?

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2014. FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

- Mal 3: 1-4
- Ps 24
- Heb 2: 14-18
- Lk 2: 22-40

Mary and Joseph presented Jesus to God on the eighth day. In fulfilment of the law, the presentation of Jesus points out his consecration to God. This event in his life is celebrated in the Church as the day of Consecrated Life. As the consecration of Jesus shows his total belonging to his Father to carry out his mission of the Kingdom of God, we are reminded to live our belonging to God and to depend on Him. We are his people and He is our heritage. This belonging to God leads us to an intimate relationship with God as his sons with an affectionate attachment with him. The effect of this contact with God leads us to do his mission for the world. Our vow of poverty helps us to live this demand of living from him. Our vow of chastity animates us to live totally belonging to him. How do I live my belongingness to God and total dependence on him?

## Monday, February 3, 2014

- 2 Sm 15: 13-14, 30; 16: 5-13
- Ps 3
- Mk 5: 1-20

Jesus saves a man possessed by a legion of demons. He was a person suffering from the power of the evil spirit. The freedom granted to that man by Jesus shows us that he alone has the power to overcome and control the evil in the world. All of us suffer from the power of evil both personally and socially. This evil in the person is manifested in the form of selfishness that blinds him from doing good to the people. In the conclusion of the "Our Father", Jesus teaches us to pray to the Father to save us from all evil. In his prayer to the Father before his passion, he prays to the Father to save his disciples from the evil one of the world. His victory over death, the final enemy of life, assures the unending presence of Jesus with us in the moments of struggles for good. His miracles not only express God's solidarity with the persons who suffer because of the evils, but they also invite us to be committed to withstand the evil with a deep trust in Jesus. How do I deepen my trust in Jesus in my personal and social struggles?

## Tuesday, February 4, 2014

- 2 Sm 18: 9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 30 - 19: 3
- Ps 86
- Mk 5: 21-43

The woman who had suffered for so many years from her sickness touched the Lord's tunic and got healed of her ailment. In most of the healings of Jesus, he either touched the sick or he allowed them to touch him. When Thomas, the twin was not able to believe in the resurrection of the Lord, the latter invited him to touch and experience his real presence. St. John announced the message of salvation from his experience of having touched Jesus personally. When the woman of today's gospel touched the Lord's tunic, she was not only cured of her illness, but she had also grown up in her understanding about Jesus. When the sinful woman touched and washed the feet of the Lord with her tears and costly perfume, she recognised his compassion and saving power. Touching a person or allowing to be touched by someone is a personal experience that leads to relationship. It is getting into the reality of a person that leads us to understand and help him if he needs so. Understanding and accepting a person are the ways to healing. How is my understanding and acceptance of my community members?

### Wednesday, February 5, 2014. St Agatha

- 2 Sm 24: 2. 9-17
- Ps 32
- Mk 6: 1-6

Jesus is rejected in his home town. He went to his own and his own did not receive him. On the basis of his family background, he and his message about his mission were totally turned down. His countrymen were more interested in looking at the external reality of Jesus than his Good News for the poor. Superficial living is one the important causes that hinders us to go deep into ourselves and build our relationship with others and God. Paying more attention to external matters lead us to an activism that takes away the taste for an inward journey to be with Jesus. Insisting more on external observance of the spirituality damages our capacity to recognize Jesus in the ordinary persons and events of our life. Searching for the novelty in our efforts to be closer to God, we lose sight of the Lord's presence in the already existing structures of daily life. Am I aware of my superficial way of living?

### Thursday, February 6, 2014. St Paul Miki and companions. martyrs

- 1 Kgs 2: 1-4. 10-12
- 1 Chr 29: 10. 11ab. 11d-12a. 12bcd
- Mk 6: 7-13

A missionary is someone who is sent. He is sent with a mission. In today's gospel we see Jesus sending out his disciples on a mission. They were to go in pairs; they were to adopt a very simple lifestyle and they were given authority over evil spirits. And the disciples comply with what Jesus told them to do. As they did these, the text tell us, they also proclaimed that it was the time to repent. Every missionary is sent out so that he may perform apostolic actions and proclaim the message of repentance. Both Jesus and John the Baptizer began their ministry with the message of repentance. The world needs witnesses of the gospel who work hard incarnating the Kingdom of God and at the same time proclaim the message of repentance. Without a sincere commitment to a gradual and ongoing repentance, our lives can be stagnated and stinking although we may feel comfortable with our routine rituals and lifestyles. How attentive am I to my own need to repent and to proclaiming the message of repentance to others?

### Friday, February 7, 2014

- Sir 47: 2-11
- Ps 18
- Mk 6: 14-29

It is an irksome thing to prick the consciences of people. Moreover it is a very dangerous thing to prick the consciences of people who are very much settled comfortably into ways of wrongdoing. In today's gospel we hear about the price one has to pay for daring to do that dangerous thing. People like to listen to things that sound music to their ears. But the prophetic vocation of the missionary requires him to do more than merely pleasing ears in a sugar-coated language. This way we may be diluting the dynamic message that we have been gifted with to announce and denounce. This does not mean that we have to threaten the people with the message. It requires prophetic fervour, courage and conviction to tell the people what they need to listen to. Sometimes it is done with words of appreciation. At other times it is done with words of encouragement or persuasion. And there will surely be moments in a missionary's life when he may have to have the prophetic fire to go for outright pricking of consciences no matter who the listener of the message is and what position he or she holds. The price may be devastating, though. It is said, truth will make you free but not before it makes you miserable! Are you an ear-pleaser? Or are you a conscience pricker?

### Saturday, February 8, 2014

- 1 Kgs 3: 4-13
- Ps 119
- Mk 6: 30-34

Jesus tells the disciples to take some time off from their apostolic work because they have done a good job as a response to the invitation of Jesus. Jesus is satisfied with his disciples and he wants his disciples to go into retreat, as it were, not because what they have already achieved is enough but they need time for themselves. Time for what? Maybe to stay in touch with the Lord and with their own selves. To reflect for themselves on what they have done and have not done. We need to be hard working missionaries. But Jesus makes it clear in today's gospel: his ministers need time for themselves. He does not want his disciples to become burned-out and worn-out people. Sometimes, we ministers of the Word find ourselves very exhausted and dispirited. Maybe we don't take quality time to be with ourselves. We may spend time on distracting activities. How does it sound to my ears when I hear Jesus saying "go off by yourself and take some rest?" What sense do I make out of it?

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2014: FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Is 58: 7-10
- Ps 112
- 1 Cor 2: 1-5
- Mt 5: 13-16

"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world." Jesus has given us the invitation and vocation to be a light that shines so that others may live in that light. We are invited to be salt that gives flavour so that others' lives may be enriched. That is a great responsibility. If I need to give light I must possess that light and if I have to be salt I need to possess that saltiness in me. If I don't possess them, I will be radiating a kind of darkness and distaste that make people to stumble and suffocate. Can I call myself as a dispenser of light and taste? A messenger of the Good News of Jesus cannot be anything else but a dispenser of light, truth and mercy.

### Monday, February 10, 2014. St Scholastica, v, r M

- 1 Kgs 8: 1-7. 9-13
- Ps 132
- Mk 6: 53-56

There is a beautiful hymn which goes like this: "Wherever you see me talk about Jesus. He is the lover of my soul..." In today's gospel we find a great enthusiasm in the people to spread the news that Jesus was around. As soon as they recognize Jesus, the first thing they do is to tell others so that they too could come to Jesus and have the experience of being touched by him. They did this because they recognized not only the person of Jesus but that he has the answer to their struggles and pains. Jesus is not just a hero for our worship. In him we need to recognize the "salvific potential" he possesses inherently as the Son of God. And we need to share that good news with others so that they too maybe touched by his grace.

## Tuesday, February 11, 2014. Our Lady of Lourdes

- 1 Kgs 8: 22-23.  
27-30
- Ps 84
- Mk 7: 1-13

Jesus warns us against the danger of diluting the message of the gospel with our emphasis on human traditions. Yes, this is a potential danger that knocks at our doors every day. If we are not careful we can easily succumb to this temptation. As messengers of the gospel we are called to preach it with the authenticity and dynamism it contains. We are in a certain sense custodians of the message but it does not authorize us to manipulate it according to our whims and fancies. Oftentimes this dilution happens because we ourselves may not be convinced of the message; or because it asks of us “too much.” In any case, the message that is to be passed on is to be passed on as it is and with what it holds. If I dilute the gospel message can I identify some reasons for doing so?

## Wednesday, February 12, 2014

- 1 Kgs 10: 1-10
- Ps 37
- Mk 7: 14-23

The heart is the repository of what we choose to put in it. It is like an empty basket. If we put flowers in it, it gives fragrance and if we throw rotten things in it, it stinks. Pope Francis tells us that a Christian who constantly complains is not a good Christian. If someone is complaining all the time and about each and everything, it is a sign that something is wrong on the inside. And it contaminates. Jesus is clear in saying that what contaminates really comes from the heart. Hence when we choose to put dirt in the heart habitually by entertaining evil thoughts, we are sowing the seeds for what may grow into a tree of evil actions that contaminate. We need to cultivate the habit of putting flowers in the basket of our hearts. Let us sow good thoughts in it.

## Thursday, February 13, 2014

- 1 Kgs 11: 4-13
- Ps 106:
- Mk 7: 24-30

Faith heals and absolute faith heals absolutely! We see a woman of great faith winning the heart of Jesus. Jesus in fact does not do anything. The cure takes place. Jesus does not say that he healed the child of this woman. But the woman has brought cure to her own daughter, as it were! How was it possible? Yes, it was great faith that healed the child of the demonic possession. The faith of the woman in Jesus’ power was so strong that the evil spirit went out without being able to withstand the clout of such faith. And here we see Jesus showing us the power of faith to heal. The year of faith that we are in now invites us to cultivate in us this kind of great faith. Only a person who has this kind of faith will be able to proclaim it with conviction.

## Friday, February 14, 2014. St Cyril and St Methodius

- 1 Kgs 11: 29-32;  
12: 19
- Ps 81
- Mk 7: 31-37

Sometimes touch can be selfish, damaging and abusive. This we may call “stealing touch”. But touch can be consoling, healing and liberating too. This we may call “healing touch.” The people ask Jesus to lay his hand on the man who was deaf and dumb. Jesus instead of doing it in a ritualistic way takes the person aside and introduces a powerful instrument of human compassion, i.e. touch. With it comes his groaning to heaven “be opened.” Jesus could have healed that person in the presence of others by pronouncing just a few words. But he chooses this style to teach us that miracles can also happen when human compassion is shared and dispensed.

## Saturday, February 15, 2014

- 1 Kgs 12: 26-  
32; 13: 33-34
- Ps 106
- Mk 8: 1-10

The disciples of Jesus rely on the practical reason. Where to find bread for such a large crowd in this deserted place? Their question makes sense! What they failed to see was the possibilities that lie open when they are in the company of Jesus. They believed more on practical reason than on providence. Jesus opened their eyes to see the possibilities that the disciples could not see. “This is not practical” is a phrase that comes to our minds when we fail to realize the potentials that are within our reach when we believe in providence. Sometimes in our meetings we discuss on “this is not practical” tone. And we leave many possibilities unexplored. When we include providence in our discernment coupling it with practical reason and wisdom we can achieve more than what we achieve or do not achieve by employing mere reason.

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2014: SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Sir 15: 15-20
- Ps 119
- 1 Cor 2: 6-10
- Mt 5: 17-37

The Word of God today invites us to renew our “yes” to the Lord. He had set before us “fire and water,” and we stretched out our hand and chose life — the fire of God’s love that burns within our hearts and moves us to bring this flame to others that they too may see what we have seen, hear what we have heard, and share with us what God had prepared for those who love him.

The call we received was not something abstract, but an experience of something concrete and life-changing. We have been called to be sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to be brothers of her Son. But even our response to this call is the gift of the Spirit. Let us allow the Spirit to show us this wisdom that from our experience of living with the Lord in our midst, we may have the strength and the courage to live according to the words of Gospel.

## Monday, February 17, 2014

- Jas 1: 1-11
- Ps 119
- Mk 8: 11-13

It is not only the Pharisees who ask for a sign; we also ask for signs at times. It is easy for us to see signs as something exceptional, even abnormal. In reality, our life is full of signs, if we would only pay attention to them. We wake up every morning, we pray, eat, work.... But if we pause and think for a while, waking up in the morning is not a given in our daily life for there are those who do not wake up anymore. There are those who want to pray or simply walk, but cannot. See that we are able to do the seemingly meaningless routine of our daily life because of God’s abiding presence in our life. See God’s extraordinary power in the ordinariness of our everyday life.

## Tuesday, February 18, 2014

- Jas 1: 12-18
- Ps 94
- Mk 8: 14-21

What do people search for in life? Many miracles have happened in our life though we may not be aware of them most of the time. Remember how the Lord brought us to this Congregation. Those first days of our formation were days of our first love, of zeal and fervor. But as the years passed, familiarity with our new way of life had numbed our sense of wonder and joy! With the profession of the vows, some of us became «professional» sons of our Mother, and we began to forget how much we had understood before. So we keep on looking and waiting for what we think will be better for us. We already have the best in life, but we still go on asking for it. We are like a child who keeps on telling his mother he is hungry, all the while holding a piece of bread in his hand.

## Wednesday, February 19, 2014

- Jas 1: 19-27
- Ps 15
- Mk 8: 22-26

Try to walk with your eyes closed to feel how it is to be blind. It is difficult. You will bump into many obstacles while you continuously grope to sense where you are going. How can the blind feel so confident though they cannot see anything? We have been most of the time sure of ourselves, especially when what we do turn out well. It feels good to have the assurance that we are on the right track. But there are times in our life that things happen not according to our expectation. We seem unable to see and make sense of what is happening. When such happens, may we have faith in Jesus that, and in time, the Spirit will make things clearer to us.

## Thursday, February 20, 2014

- Jas 2: 1-9
- Ps 34
- Mk 8: 27-33

Praying, working and suffering are the three aspects of our life as sons of the Immaculate Heart. Like Peter who saw Jesus as the Messiah, it is easy to follow Jesus in praying and working. We have our regular schedule for personal and community prayer, as well as our time for ministry either in the community or outside. Also like Peter, we'd rather not have a suffering Messiah. We would very much like to pray and work, but if possible not to suffer. But this is how a Son of the Immaculate Heart lives his sonship and following of Christ: by praying, working and suffering.

## Friday, February 21, 2014

- Jas 2:14-24. 26
- Ps 112
- Mk 8: 34 – 9: 1

It is not easy to persevere in following Jesus. The older we get, the more difficult it becomes to deny oneself and not cling to one's life. But when we think about it, it was for a life free from the care and burden of this world that Jesus had invited us. He has opened a way for us to be happy in life. Why should I waste my time and energy to gaining the world when I have to leave everything behind when the time comes?

## Saturday, February 22, 2014. Feast of the Chair of Peter

- 1 Pt 5: 1-4
- Ps 23
- Mt 16: 13-19

Who Jesus is for us shows how we see ourselves as Christians. He is the fullness of the God's offer of life and love; in him the past and the future meet to show us how wonderful the present is! The Christ is the center of all creation, the unity that proclaims that we, even on earth, are all sisters and brothers, children of one Source of Life in heaven. This is our call as sons of the Immaculate Heart.

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2014: SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Lv 19: 1-2. 17-18
- Ps 103
- 1 Cor 3: 16-23
- Mt 5: 38-48

Jesus calls us to forgiveness! Forgiveness does not prevent us from being assertive in explaining to the offender how we feel about their action, but it does letting go of the wrong done to us. Jesus' proposal that we gift something to the offender is an act which will often be illuminating for the offender. It may lead to reconciliation which revenge perhaps can never do! Hence, taking sometime to pray and reflect may more easily lead to a response which forgives and gifts something to the offender. This is actually the core of a healthy life style of a Claretian community. How do you respond in offensive situations?

## Monday, February 24, 2014

- Jas 3: 13-18
- Ps 19
- Mk 9: 14-29

This episode is a teaching on faith. Jesus rebukes the faithlessness of this, 'perverse generation.' They want results (a cure, for instance) but are not prepared to trust Him. This provokes the desperate cry of the father of the boy. The disciples are also shocked that they could not work a healing miracle because their faith was weak. Mark adds Jesus' caution: some devils are cast out only through prayer. The point is clear: the disciples like the crowd are concerned about the external effect, in this case a healing which has a sensational and popular appeal. Jesus however focuses on the internal attitude – putting trust in his person and clinging to him. It is inner faith that transforms not the outer cure. Where do you take shelter in your daily living of evangelical vows?

## Tuesday, February 25, 2014

- Jas 4: 1-10
- Ps 55
- Mk 9: 30-37

This passage narrates the second announcement of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. Of course the disciples of Jesus are terrified and worried. They do not understand the words about the cross because they are not capable to understand or accept the 'Messiah' who becomes the servant of others. It is clear that Jesus wants to serve whereas disciples think of being in positions that command. Ambition leads them to promote themselves at the cost of Jesus. Goals which are not discerned in the spirit of religious life can be disastrous in building up of the kingdom of God. Where do you find yourself today? Are your goals discerned in total submission to God's will?

### Wednesday, February 26, 2014

- Jas 4: 1-17
- Ps 49
- Mk 9: 38-40

St. Mark presents here the closed mentality of the disciples of Jesus. In the name of the community the disciples forbid that the other one can do a good deed. They perhaps think that being the disciples of Jesus they have the monopoly on Jesus and because of this, they want to forbid that others use the name of Jesus to do good. For Jesus what is important is not whether the person forms part of the community or not, but rather the person does the good which the community should do. Profession of evangelical counsels may not lead us to do good unless we grow in authentic discipleship of Jesus who called us to follow him. Again, it is a broader vision of our call centered on the guidance of the Spirit that allows us to see the goodness of others. In today's multi-religious context, how do you exercise this teaching of Christ in your life?

### Thursday, February 27, 2014

- Jas 5: 1-6
- Ps 49
- Mk 9: 41-50

'Salt and peace'- these are two important words in today's gospel. Jesus says, "Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another." The community in which the members live in peace with one another is like the salt which gives flavour to the meal. To live in peace and fraternally in the community is the salt that gives flavour to the life of the people around us. It is, in fact, a sign of the kingdom and a revelation of the Good News of God. Am I like salt in my community giving it the flavour of fraternal love? How do I become salt in the true sense?

### Friday, February 28, 2014

- Jas 5: 9-12
- Ps 103
- Mk 10: 1-12

Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce comes in response to a 'test question' posed by the Pharisees. In his reply Jesus highlights the original vision of God on human marriage. Hence Jesus even rejects the law of Moses. However, Jesus says that for some, 'marriage' is sacrificed for the sake of the kingdom. Jesus does not specify for what purpose this renunciation is made. Perhaps in the context of renunciation he demands of his followers –the sacrifice of family and property. It is a call to be a disciple and to live by the values of the kingdom. The disciples are taken aback! Only a person who is filled with the Spirit of God can make a true renunciation in order to follow Christ. It is then every renunciation gives joy to his heart. How do you find this reality in your vowed life?

### Saturday, March 1, 2014

- Jas 5: 13-20
- Ps 141
- Mk 10: 13-16

Jesus' way of welcoming and accepting the little ones and the children is a powerful sign of the dawn of God's Kingdom amidst us. In the social context of Jesus' time children did not count much. But Jesus embraces them and blesses them. God's love flows naturally to the little ones. Jesus makes the children teachers of adults! And this is the paradox of the Kingdom of God. The little ones are bearers of God's wisdom and goodness. Generally, we do the contrary. In my life, what do I learn from the little ones concerning the kingdom of God?

### SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 2014: EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Is 49: 14-15
- Ps 62
- 1 Cor 4: 1-5
- Mt 6: 24-34

Stress is the common symptom of the life style of our times. Anxiety disorders, depression, heart problems and cancer are associated with stressful life. There is also a big market of stress management techniques and strategies in the consumer world. The Gospel of today offers us an antidote for worry and stress. It is opening oneself to the providence of the Father. Faith opens up a new horizon in life where tragedies and tensions of life are lived on a different level. Trust, love and joy replace fear, antagonism and sadness that haunt many of our fellow humans.

When a Claretian is anxious about the daily cares of his life and suffers bouts of anxiety and stress, it is paradoxically a call to make a shift in life and live the freedom and security of the children of God, a call to radical faith in God who has called us to follow Jesus closely. Are you willing to cede your need to be in control of all that happens around us and assume responsibility for the stand you take towards life. It is a commitment of faith in the God of life and love.

### Monday, March 3, 2014

- 1 Pt 1: 3-9
- Ps 111
- Mk 10: 17-27

Lasting joy and freedom is the native desire of the human heart which one may strive to satisfy with what world can offer. But the heart remains restless until it finds the true source of Joy. The rich young man has come with his thirst near the source of the living water. A man of search, he won the admiration of Jesus. When he was expecting Jesus to whisper a magical formula of salvation, Jesus invited him to two action steps: one to move away from his idols (sell, give) and the second to move towards Jesus (come, follow). He went back sorrowful, losing even the thrill of the search. Only an empty vessel can offer space to be filled. St. Peter points to the imperishable, undefiled, unfading inheritance we have in Christ. It is a tragedy in religious life when we have taken the first move to sell/give everything to possess the field where the treasure is hidden. But if we just sit above the treasure without digging and taking it for ourselves (the second movement of "come and follow"), we would be worse than the rich man in the gospel. How do you go about your heart's desire for lasting love and joy?

### Tuesday, March 4, 2014

- 1 Pt 1: 10-16
- Ps 98
- Mk 10: 28-31

"Leaving everything" is a condition for "following" Jesus. But where does it lead to? After the sorrowful return of the rich man of the gospel of yesterday, it is the turn of Peter to query Jesus about their future with Jesus. Jesus promises his followers a hundred fold of life in its depth and breadth along with persecutions. It is abundance in emptiness, gain in loss, presence in absence which is vividly present in the paradox of evangelical counsels. A life of poverty truly lived is a celebration of the abundance of the Father, chastity the flowering of unconditional love, obedience the summit of freedom. When radicalism of the Gospel gives way to mediocrity, religious vows lose their mystic beauty. The quality test of a Claretian is his capacity to rejoice in privations, endure hardships and glory in the cross of Christ.

## Appendix 1: Our missionary spirituality along the journey of God's people (2001)

### The “Mystery” of Apostolic Activity

To be a missionary is to share in the “*missio Dei*” (the mission of God). Thus our apostolic activity is holy. God is the primary subject of our action. Our Founder expressed it this way after his preaching in Andalusia: “The Lord has always been my fuel”. Our apostolic activity is, likewise, the action of a body and not only of a member. We make up a “congregational we”—and, even more, an “ecclesial we”—that is the authentic subject of every missionary enterprise: “in the Church there is a unity of mission but a plurality of ministries”.

With this awareness we overcome any individualistic vision of our ministry and we feel connected with the history of Salvation in our time. When our missionary service is born from zeal and charity, it allows our greatest possibilities to be realized, it establishes our personality and composes the story of our life.

Apostolic action is not merely external activity. It is the sacramentalization of the mission of the Spirit and of the Risen Lord, and of the mission of the Church and of the Congregation within it. From this we can understand that there is a wondrous inequality between our missionary commitment and its accomplishments. The accomplishment is always greater than the effort. During the mission we are in God and in the Church, we are their instruments and thus their action is present in our own activity.

This requires us to integrate interiority and activity. In the mission we go out of ourselves to be with Christ. What is more, we are united with Him in a very special way. The preparation of each one of our ministries, especially the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments, is a constitutive moment for our spirituality.

### Evangelized in Order to Evangelize

Evangelizing activity is, therefore, for us the main source of our spirituality, not only because through it we evangelize others, but also because through it we are evangelized. This occurs under certain conditions:

- When we are disposed to listen and to welcome and not only to speak and act. The “seeds of the Word” (*semina Verbi*) have been sown in every human being, in every human community. These seeds are the “word of God” for us, a word with which we have to dialogue and to which we must listen. Attention to the Word of God is, for the missionary, the presupposition that allows him to then be a good minister of the Word.
- When we value what is different. Discovering the values that reside in different human groups and individuals, allowing ourselves to be affected and enriched by them, is a wellspring of spirituality. The consequences of this

5. Texts to go deeper

are unpredictable, just as the Spirit is unpredictable.

- When we turn to the other: listening to and welcoming the other fosters a process of personal change that is expressed in incarnation or insertion. The missionary shares the life of the recipients of his evangelizing mission. He lives with them and in them he finds one of the wellsprings of his vitality.

### **The Ability To Do Battle: Creative Imagination and Martyrdom**

There are many obstacles, difficulties and tests on the path of each missionary's life. Unpredictable, crucial and decisive moments also arise. External factors (like an assignment, a failure, an historical event) or internal factors (such as an illness or depression, a loss, a friendship, or a crisis of faith or identity) produce an enormous tension in his life. The missionary will discover the meaning of his vocation if he avails himself of spiritual accompaniment, from the brothers around him who welcome him, from friends that counsel and comfort him. There are also many who oppose the establishment of the Kingdom. Nevertheless, for the missionary "nothing deters him; he rejoices in privations; embraces sacrifices". Within him the virtues of perseverance and constancy, fortitude and prudence, are active.

Faced with difficulties, the missionary demonstrates his prophetic imagination and his creative ability...Lack of Spirit leads to routine, to monotony, to mere repetition. The presence of the Spirit is a fire that animates and recreates everything. A missionary can never be complacent.

He is always discovering the newness of the Kingdom of God in everything he is doing. At the limits of the life of an authentic missionary always lies the possibility of martyrdom, the "limit case" of self-giving, of love, of confessing the faith and of proclaiming hope.

Martyrdom is a gift. And it always must be recognized as such. It is a gift for the martyr and also for the Church and the Congregation. It is a paradoxical gift, but a real one. We can flee from it beforehand, if we escape danger, if we seek security, if we avoid any type of risk. Martyrdom on the horizon gives a distinctive coloration to the missionary life.

Among the kinds of martyrdom are those commitments to evangelization, to others, to the People of God, that involve marginalization, isolation, condemnation. It is when the missionary can say: "I was in jail", "I was expelled"...Initial and continuing formation thus become "a school for martyrdom".

## **Appendix 2: Homily on the WYD, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013 (Pope Francis)**

"Go and make disciples of all nations". With these words, Jesus is speaking to each one of us, saying: "It was wonderful to take part in World Youth Day, to live the faith together with young people from the four corners of the earth, but now you must go, now you must pass on this experience to others." Jesus is calling you to be a disciple with a mission! Today, in the light of the word of God that we have heard, what is the Lord saying to us? What is the Lord saying to us? Three simple ideas: Go, do not be afraid, and serve.

1. Go. During these days here in Rio, you have been able to enjoy the wonderful experience of meeting Jesus, meeting him together with others, and you have sensed the joy of faith. But the experience of this encounter must not remain locked up in your life or in the small group of your parish, your movement, or your community. That would be like withholding oxygen from a flame that was burning strongly. Faith is a flame that grows stronger the more it is shared and passed on, so that everyone may know, love and confess Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and history (cf. Rom 10:9).

Careful, though! Jesus did not say: "go, if you would like to, if you have the time", but he said: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Sharing the experience of faith, bearing witness to the faith, proclaiming the Gospel: this is a command that the Lord entrusts to the whole Church, and that includes you; but it is a command that is born not from a desire for domination, from the desire for power, but from the force of love, from the fact that Jesus first came into our midst and did not give us just a part of himself, but he gave us the whole of himself, he gave his life in order to save us and to show us the love and mercy of God. Jesus does not treat us as slaves, but as people who are free, as friends, as brothers and sisters; and he not only sends us, he accompanies us, he is always beside us in our mission of love.

Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us to everyone. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent. The Lord seeks all, he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love.

In particular, I would like Christ's command: "Go" to resonate in you young people from the Church in Latin America, engaged in the continental mission promoted by the Bishops. Brazil, Latin America, the whole world needs Christ! Saint Paul says: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16). This continent has received the proclamation of the Gospel which has marked its history and borne much fruit. Now this proclamation is entrusted also to you, that it may resound with fresh power. The Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity and the joy that is so characteristic of you. A great Apostle of Brazil, Blessed José de Anchieta, set off on the mission when he was only nineteen years old. Do you know what the best tool is for evangelizing the young? Another young person. This is the path for all of you to follow!

"We cannot deny that it sometimes bothers us to have to confront in our own lives the demands of being close to the needs of the poor and excluded. We begin to wonder what the purpose of missionary work is, if it is incapable of bringing the world to God's plan for all its children. The words of Jesus recounted in the Luke's Gospel (cf. Lk 4.18 to 21) and which inspired the missionary life of Fr Founder, challenge our hearts and our way of thinking." (J.M. Abella, *Missionaries*)

# spiritus domini

The Forge in our daily life

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