

The Forge

in our daily life

SPIRITUS DOMINI

Ordinary Time VI

9

PROGRESSING IN THE
MISSIONARY LIFE

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.

BOOKLETS

1. The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Us (Advent-Christmas)
2. We Have Been Anointed to Evangelize (Ordinary Time I)
3. In the "Today" of the World and the Church (Lent)
4. As Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Easter)
5. Servants of the Word in the Church (Ordinary Time II)
6. In the Style of Claret (Ordinary Time III)
7. In the Missionary Congregation (Ordinary Time IV)
8. Open to the Whole World (Ordinary Time V)
- 9. Progressing in the Missionary Life (Ordinary Time VI)**

contents



4 Introduction



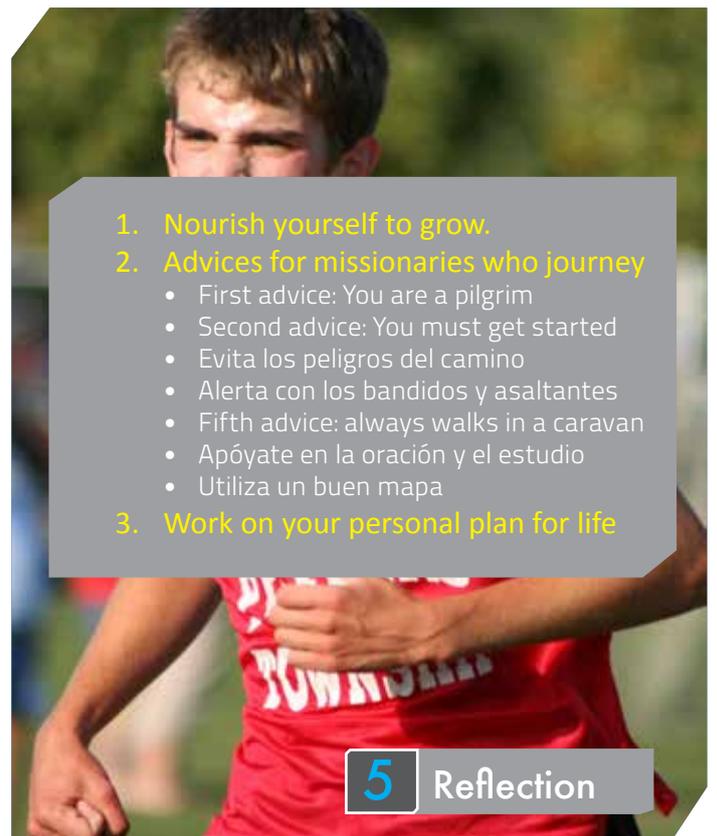
17 Suggestions
for the community meeting



18 Tips for
the Lectio Divina



24 Texts
profundizar



1. Nourish yourself to grow.
2. Advices for missionaries who journey
 - First advice: You are a pilgrim
 - Second advice: You must get started
 - Evita los peligros del camino
 - Alerta con los bandidos y asaltantes
 - Fifth advice: always walks in a caravan
 - Apóyate en la oración y el estudio
 - Utiliza un buen mapa
3. Work on your personal plan for life

5 Reflection

1. Introduction

This Book-let 9 is the last of the collection of "The Forge in Everyday Life." This will end the cycle initiated four years ago. You have surely lived this as a time of grace. You've received a lot of good material. All this you owe to God. The love received "has a divine name and never remains anonymous." (MFL 49) You feel grateful and enabled to share freely what you have freely received. (cf. MFL 33) In addition, you have grown, as your loyalty is based on gratitude. Only a life "received" as a gift can be transformed into a life "offered" permanently.

The content of these pages does not repeat nor synthesizes what is proposed throughout the Forge. Nor is it a summary of the contents of this last year. Rather than an assessment or summary, it is springboard: it encourages you to continue with enthusiasm the new phase that begins with the end of the Forge.

The "Spiritus Domini" stage is the end of the process: the iron rod, heated in the fire of the love of the Father (and Mother) and conformed to Jesus Christ through various formative activities, becomes the arrow that the Holy Spirit and/or Mary shoot against evil. It is the momento of the missionary sending, which is impossible without the anointing of the spirit. Like Claret, the Spirit of Jesus anoints you to proclaim the gospel to the poor (cf. Aut 687). The end of this process does not lead to a time of vacation. The life in the Spirit must always occupy "first place in our life project." (MFL 8) There is no rest for the missionary who is anointed because he lives a "continual process." (MFL 45)

To ensure that continuity, you will undertake now an essential dimension of the "Spiritus Domini": progress in the missionary life. This is developed in Chapter VIII of our Constitutions. You are presented here below the now classic metaphor of the "path": "an ongoing process of conformity with Christ." (MFL 33) From that perspective, seven sections are developed in the form of practical advice: 1) Feel like a pilgrim; 2) Begin the journey; 3) Dodge potholes and dangers; 4) Avoid bandits and robbers; 5) Walk always in a caravan; 6) Rely on prayer and study; and 7) Be guided by a good map.

With this program "The Forge in Our Daily Life" comes to a closed. While it is true that your missionary life does not end here, it is also importance to underline this conclusive moment. It marks an achievement that will help you move forward. The evocative story in Annex 1 perhaps will serve as a motivation for you to live this last month of the Forge in a meaningful way.



2. Reflection

2.1. Nourish yourself to grow

"I would say that the apostolic missionary should be a model of all virtues; he should in fact be virtue personified." In imitation of Jesus Christ he must start by doing and practicing and later by teaching. *Coepit facere et docere.* (Acts 1:1) By his actions he will be able to say with the Apostle, Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (Aut 340)

Chapter VIII of our Constitutions constitutes an irreplaceable piece in the makeup of our missionary spirituality.

The spiritual life demands development and growth. The holiness to which you have been called is never reached once and for all. (See Annex 2) Like any vital phenomenon, it implies progress and dynamism: "At no stage of life can a person consider himself totally formed." (MFL 12) This growth will only be possible with solid nourishment. You know that every missionary has three places where he is fed: the "chapel" where he receives the bread of the Word and the bread of the Eucharist; the "library," the symbolic place of study of the divine and human sciences; and the "dining room" where the daily bread restores your depleted strength.

Thus in numbers 51 to 57 of the Constitutions you'll find formulated, in an essential way, short and clear, the essential elements to make growth in your missionary life possible. You are called to live the same life of Christ. You accomplish this by a constant exercise of conformity with with Him. This will be impossible without the intervention of the Holy Spirit, with which you have been anointed in your religious profession: "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. For this reason we who have been called to follow the Lord and collaborate with him in the work assigned him by the Father, must keep our gaze fixed on Christ, imitate him, and be so

steeped in his spirit that it will no longer be we who live, but Christ who truly lives in us. This is the only way in which we will become effective instruments in proclaiming the kingdom of heaven." (CC 39)

2.2. Advice for missionaries who journey

The Christian philosopher Emmanuel Mounier assured that "a person only reaches his full maturity at the moment he has chosen allegiances that are worth more than life." Look for the most valuable. This requires tenacity and lucidity. The following advice will serve to successfully undertake this pilgrimage.

1) First advice: You are a pilgrim.

"Our missionaries, hungering for holiness should strive to grow fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself so as to be more effective in communicating the grace of the Gospel to others. However, since God has called us not because of any merit of our own but according to his own gracious design, and has justified us in Jesus Christ, we therefore trust that he who has begun this good work in us will carry it to completion, right up to the day of Jesus Christ." (CC 51)

You live on a path. If you want it or not, your missionary life is a journey that you are traveling as you are passing through these years. You are asked to "walk in newness of life" (CC 52), "daily renew our resolution to advance in the way of the Lord" (CC 52) and strives "to grow fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself." (CC 51) Following the path of the Lord is dynamic: it demands proximity to Jesus and movement, friendship and flexibility. He determines the goal, who is the Way and the strength for the journey. It is not enough to walk. You have to walk well. And you do this to the extent that you have strength, are well prepared and progress along the "straight path." (CC 55)

You are a pilgrim, don't forget it. You're not an immobil traffic signal indicating a direction to others. As Don Quixote judged "it is better to have a way than an inn." Rest will be a necessary moment on your journey, but it is always provisional. Don't make rest permanent. The march may exhaust you, but it will also delight you with the innovations that the path provides.

To be able to walk count on having what you need: basic equipment and the gift of your missionary vocation. You have been created with many gifts and talents that make you resemble God and open up enormous possibilities. It is true that you experience your "own fragility" (CC 55) and the limitations of your human contingency. But you have experienced that once known, these shadows are sometimes mysteriously exploitable because "the Lord manifests his power in our fragility." (MFL 7) And above all, you are

a son of God, called by Him, justified by Christ and graced by the Spirit with the characteristics of Jesus... to deal with the difficulties. (cf. MFL 35) Trust with all the firmness that you are capable in God, because what he started in you will continue growing up to the day of Jesus Christ.

"The Forge in everyday life" points out the peculiar journey of our spirituality with its different and progressive stages. It is a path within the Church: in her with her and in the midst of her, you seek to follow Jesus historically. But to journey along this way, you have a differentiated and systematized pedagogy in your initiation process and in your progressive continuation. Let yourself be guided by a companion. Having a guide is absolutely necessary, especially when you come across unknown places.

"Yo digo que el misionero apostólico debe ser un dechado de todas las virtudes; ha de ser la misma virtud personificada. A imitación de Jesucristo ha de empezar por hacer y practicar y después enseñar. Coepit facere et docere (Hch 1,1). Con las obras ha de poder decir lo del Apóstol: Imitadme a mí, así como yo imito a Cristo"

(Aut 340)

Exercise 1: Your path of the forge in everyday life

Recalling the journey lived throughout these four years of “The forge in everyday life,” try to bring to mind some important events—positive or negative—lived during this time. Use of traffic signs. Beside each one, write what each signal evokes in you in relation to your personal experiences of Forge. Your notes will help you in your community meeting with respect to what will be proposed at the end.



2) Second advice: You must get started

“strive to walk in newness of life, setting our hearts on God, doing everything with an upright intention and true fervor of heart” (CC 52)

Every hiker knows how decisive the act is in beginning the march, especially after times of fatigue, and sometimes also after a period of rest. You yourself have experienced at times the importance of such a decision. The first step is hard, but decisive. The most important thing is not the initial length of the stride, but the direction taken. The successive steps become easier because they are driven by an inexplicable inertia. You'll have to take many first

although moving forward a little, is approaching the goal; worse for him who walks out of the path, the more he runs, the more he moves away from it.” (Commentary on the Gospel of St. John 14.2)

Number 52 of the Constitutions points out the two tools necessary to begin the march: uprightness of intention and fervor of spirit. What do such expressions refer to?

The righteousness of intention is a powerful “mental herbicide” that eliminates bad motivational weeds. Because it is not enough to walk. You must follow on the right path. The rectitude of intention, the “move towards a proper purpose,” lets you maintain good orientation and warns you of twists or deflects along the path. The intention remains well-oriented with the examination of conscience, which is

also demanded in our spirituality. (cf. CC 37)

To diagnose the ills that stop you from walking well is not an act of pessimism, but lucidity. The hope to heal a sick person begins by knowing what evil is afflicting him. But don't reduce the examination to making a list of bad actions. Try, above all, to feel how the Lord your God leads you (cf. Jn 6:44) and guides yourself from deep within your conscience. Check if each movement or inclination of your heart is based on who you are

and who you belong to. (cf. MFL 32) To examine oneself is to listen, to be challenged and to respond. It is a permanent disposition of the Spirit rather than a regulated ceremony.

The fervency of the Spirit. The Constitutions speak also of fervor (cf. CC 52), a word currently in disuse, but which evokes ardor, fervor, combustion. It is the language of “Patris Mei.” Fervor works in our psychology like the spark of a spark plug which starts the engine of the car. Fervor is required to begin. You may at times feel little energy, overloaded, overwhelmed, supporting a rhythm of life that is not humanizing and separate you from the essential. Life has its “ashes of routine and ...weariness.” (MFL 32) How to move forward? With the fervor of the spirit, with that affective strength that from within putting you into motion. It is the courage that heats up your spirit and activates it. Fervor is like a hearth of an old locomotive. The coaches of the train travel at the speed expected if the fire from



steps in your life. As it was hinted at by Blessed Cardinal Newman: “to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often.”

You should not be transformed into an “onlooker,” paralyzed and immobile. But also not in a “sprinter.” Rushing and lack of control make one pay a high and unnecessary price. When you must start again on the way, don't speed up. No one is asking you to run in haste, overwhelmed or nervous. Let your self be moved by the love of God, always paused and calm. Don't become a “crazy ant” that exacerbates the anthill with his nervousness and trampling. Don't be fooled either by inertia that goes adrift. That inertia is carelessness, distinct from abandonment of the trust.

Don't become paralyzed when you feel that you're not in the best conditions for walking. St. Thomas Aquinas said that “it is better to walk on the path, although you may be limping along than outside of it. Because one who is limping on the path

the hearth is maintained at a constant temperature. Fervor of the spirit is brought about through prayer, supplication, and meditation... Nothing can take the place of prayer.

3) Third advice: Avoid the potholes and road hazards

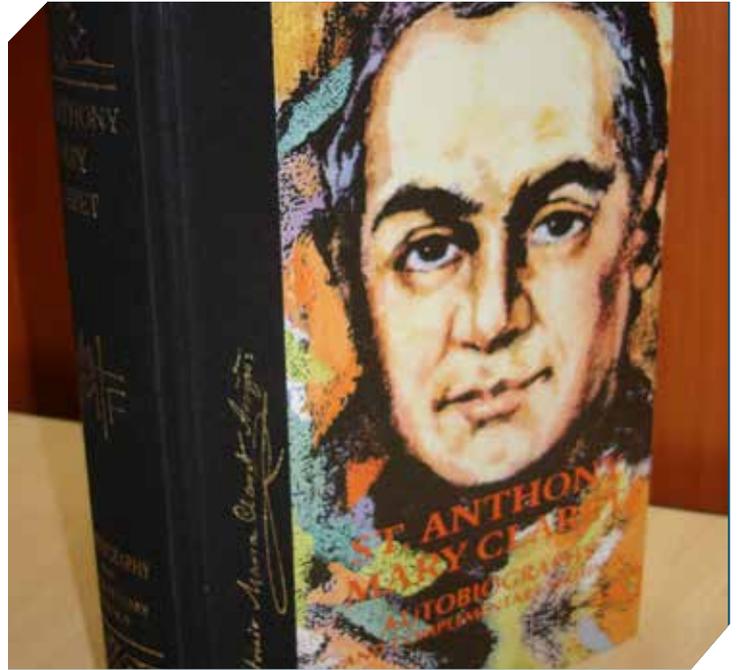
"...bearing adversities for his sake. We should daily renew our resolution to advance in the way of the Lord. Each month we should set aside a day for recollection during which we can reflect on our own vocation and renew within us our hope of the glory to come, so as to be better prepared for the Lord's coming. Each year we should make a retreat with all due care." (CC 52)

You should be prepared for difficulty. To travel along a good path is always the result of two factors: to wager boldly with a goal and maintain that vigilance while walking toward it. The way of the Lord is "straight and narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few." (cf. Mt 7:14) If you want to move forward, you'll need to determine if you will do it with a "very determined determination" (St. Teresa de Jesus), because there are potholes and dangers. These obstacles, internal or external, will test your courage. It is very sad to walk with clutter and obstacles. But if passion takes hold of what is in front it will become occasions of progress. Of the "potholes" more frequently there are two that stand out: comfort (cf. MFL 22) and your mood swings.

Convenience is the twin sister of laziness. Your journey of growth can be slowed down by laziness, which paralyzes the desires. The book of Proverbs says that "the soul of the sluggard craves, and gets nothing." (Prov 13:4) The sluggard is creative to disable everything hoped for that is needed to make the journey. Renounce a demanding goal and convenience and living well take its place. He does not allow himself to experience the gaze of God who tells you as he did with Abram: "Go forth from the land." (Gen 12:1)

Laziness is detrimental to the missionary life. When machines are not used they become un-serviceable or malfunctioning. What is not in use will atrophy. Something similar happens to persons. One who allows himself to be detained loses the capacity to make an effort. A sluggard is the antithesis of the missionary.

You will notice with frequency some internal voices that invite you to stop. They will employ powerful reasons: "Why walk if others do not? Is it worth so much fatigue and exhaustion? What is the purpose of so much energy? God does not ask that we be heroes, etc." When laziness becomes the norm it gives rise to what tradition calls lukewarmness. The lukewarm person never recognizes himself as such, since his conscience has been



dulled. A lazy one hides his interior emptiness behind the impermeable wall of self-justification.

Mood changes. Other times you will notice how it happens within you alternately push and reluctance, desire and fear, encouragement and discouragement, energy and weakness. This succession of opposites, although disconcerting is beneficial for your maturation. The experts teach that inspiration is very good and discouragement very instructive. The first prevents despair and motivates one to continue. The second avoids arrogance and reigns in self-sufficiency. In fact, without this oscillation growth is not possible. It purifies the desire, purging any interest that is not directed specifically toward God. (cf. CC 52) This oscillation is also criterion of the authenticity of your motivation for the pilgrimage. When, in spite of fatigue, you go on without receiving immediate gratifications, but rather move forward toward the goal out of love, your growth begins.

But, how do you cope with this oscillation inside you? What do you do when you find it inside you?

- You should know in the first place, that you'll

have problems only in moments of reluctance, weakness, discouragement and fatigue. When things are going well and you are animated, you won't find a problem. The power of the Spirit moves you forward with joy. Watch, therefore, for moments of difficulty!

- In these most difficult times looks to see if your discouragement comes from a physical cause (tiredness, lack of sleep, a physical discomfort...), mental (consternations, special circumstances ...) or perhaps spiritual (mediocrity in your commitment, search for vanities, important negligence, infidelities, complacency, etc.). A good diagnosis will indicate to you where you must give priority.
- Never take the decision to stop and leave the path. Remember that in any circumstance you find yourself, you will always have the possibility of moving forward, in some form, even if only a tiny distance. And even if your pace seems slow and painful, it will always be moving forward and not backward. Many problems would disappear if we would keep walking even though it be at a

Exercise 2: My pilgrim handbook

Prepare a brief "pilgrim handbook" from the personal convictions that have arisen from your experience and knowledge. This exercise will help you to put names to some of the attitudes necessary to deal with the interior bumps that you find along your path. To do this complete the following sentences, knowing that it deals with the "inner journey" of progress in your missionary life:

- *Walking is ...*
- *If I continue the path that I am taking now I will come to ...*
- *The weariness tells me that...*
- *When I get lost, the first thing that I have to do is ...*
- *I have to walk because...*
- *When walking I despair that...*
- *What I like least about this path is...*
- *The goal to which I must arrive at this stage of my life is...*
- *My best guide is ...*
- *I would move ahead more if ...*

4) A Fourth advice: Stay alert against the bandits and robbers

"As Christ our Lord was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil, so must we, his disciples, undergo many temptations. But during our temptations we must stand loyally by Christ who is still being put to the test in us. Let us all put on the armor of God, not presuming on our own strength, but trusting with unwavering hope in the Lord who will show himself faithful to us in the midst of temptation itself. Let us be on guard, then, as the Lord tells us and pray to our heavenly Father not to put us to the test." (CC 53)

As you can see, the word "path" is a familiar word in your life. It evokes the existence of an origin and a destination and between them, an adventure: the

journey of your life is an act of unforgettable moments, but also of trouble and testing. Our Constitutions are realistic to warn that "as Christ our Lord was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil, so must we, his disciples, undergo many temptations." (CC 53) Pay attention to that expression: "many temptations!"

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. The film "The last temptation of Christ" by Martin Scorsese caused a scandal. Apart from its unfortunate erotic concession, it put an accent on a dimension that pushes the limit: the Messiah role of Jesus was not obvious or easy to recognize. Being tested was constant from the beginning of his mission until the end on the cross. Therefore, if you follow him you will be tempted. Only in the crucible

of the test can you prove your righteousness and, moreover strengthen it. The theme of temptation is not new in the Forge; it appeared in Book 4 in the stage "Patris Mei." What is added now complements what was indicated earlier.

Thus like Jesus, the Spirit will push you to the desert to be tested: "...when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for testing." (Sir 2:1) The test is hard because it seems endless; you experience a profound and prolonged impotence and are required to make the more dramatic decision of your existence. In the temptation you will better differentiate God from the Tempter. In that moment there is no one else. And you will see the battle between the two being waged on the battlefield of your very life. The tempter uses its ways that you need to know.

The strategy of the Tempter. The Evil One is the "father of all lies." (Jn 8:44) He lies by trying to resemble God. Therefore, try to unmask his appearance of good. The devil does not see any value in you but the life of Jesus in you. Evagrio Pontico said that "a multitude of passions are hidden in our soul, but escape our attention... What reveals is temptation when it presents itself." It can be useful to understand the structure of temptation so as to confront it when it is present. The Biblical reports usually presents it in four strategic movements:

- **First movement: PART OF A NATURAL TENDENCY.** The Evil One begins its attack in the area of predispositions and trends that form part of the human condition. For example, for Eve in the Garden of Eden, hers was curiosity; for Jesus in the desert it was hunger; for Peter in Caesarea Philippi it was prudence; and in Tabor it was the gratifying religious experience; for Judas, the apparent solidarity with the poor; etc. In themselves, these tendencies are not negative because they are natural and even virtuous.

- **Second movement: EXALTS THAT TENDENCY AS SOMETHING ABSOLUTE.** Then enters a disorder. The Evil ONE leads us to consider this tendency as something that cannot be discarded that must be satisfied immediately and without any kind of delay. This type of absolutism arrives via internal voices which have powerfully persuasive value that mention things like these: "Why not eat that apple that looks so appetizing?", "Why not transform stones into bread if I am hungry?", "Why is it necessary to undergo the cross?", "Why not stay here at Tabor if God is here?" etc.

- **Third movement: TO REINFORCE WITH RELI-**

GIUS ARGUMENTS. Once it become absolute, this tendency seeks justification aluding, in a veiled or overt way to the Word of God. This is manipulated for ones own benefit under expressions such as: "It is written..."; "You will not die, but will be like God ..."; "Throw yourself down, because it is written..."; "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross ..."; "What sign do you offer us...?" etc.

- **Fourth movement. ADDRESSES THE FAILURE OR THE VICTORY.** This is the last point. The first premise could be not only true but also noble. But between the premise and the conclusion the enigmatic deception is introduced. It distorts a minor truth so as to convert it into an inescapable imperative. Thus the person finds himself in a dilemma: or he seconds the voice of the Tempter or he opposes it. Never nourish the temptation by probing with reasoning and analysis: "Sin should never be an object of contemplation;

one should focus the gaze on that which surmounts: grace." (P. Evdokimov) In the face of evil there is only one valid reaction: a resounding "no."

Temptations can be a difficulty for progress in holiness of life. To warn and fight against them, you should perform the regular checkups that are monthly and the annual retreats. Both are supported and encouraged by our Constitutions. These in turn offer other tools for that fight of faith, in particular:

- **Union with Christ:** "But during our temptations we must stand loyally by Christ who is still being put to the test in us." (CC 53) Jesus is not only tempted in us, but wants to vanquish the Evil One in you with you. The conformity with Christ cultivated in listening to the Word and in the celebration of the sacrament have to become your main weapons to resist the evil tempter evil.

- **Humility:** Let us all put on the armor of God, (cf. Eph 6:11), not presuming on our own strength, but trusting with unwavering hope in the Lord who will show himself faithful to us in the midst of temptation itself." (CC 53) You need to be aware that the temptation is stronger than you. Don't be afraid of the truth. This fear can make your efforts useless. It can make you a slave to them with appearances of self-sufficiency.

- **Vigilance:** "Let us be on our guard, then, as the Lord tells us and pray to our heavenly Father not to put us to the test." (CC 53) To be vigilant use the now classical means: manifest (the temptations) to someone who will be able to help you; resist them promptly, consider where your where your greatest weakest lies and strengthen it with meditations,



prayers and virtuous acts. While the temptation lasts do not make any change in your manner of life nor take any new resolution nor form any new proposal; trying in the meantime not to skip, decrease or shorten your spiritual exercises, rather to increase or prolong them. (cf. Dir 142)

▪ **Have a good sense of humor, which is the antidote of panic.** When there is a tragedy in a stadium, the misfortunes are much larger by the panic that is unleashed than by the bad thing that caused it. Temptation is noisy: unleashing fear and anguish. When confronted with this, react with good humor. Good humor is grace and gift. It is outside of your possibilities. It is not just a joke or frivolity. Trust that God is near and will not allow you to succumb to the test.

Exercise 3: Analysis of the temptation

1. Spend a little time to review the texts that are indicated below. Try to recognize in them these four strategic movements of temptation that have been explained above. If you use your personal Bible, you can write it in notes that you deem useful.
 - Mt 4:1-11 (or parallels): Temptation of Jesus in the desert.
 - Genesis 3:1-19: The first temptation.
 - Lk 23:35-43: Temptations of Jesus on the cross.
 - 2 Sam 11: 1-12 – 7: David's sin.
 - Mk 8:31-33: Peter tempts Jesus in Caesarea Philippi.
 - Mt 26:6 -13: Judas tempts Jesus in Bethany.
 - Lk 9:28 -36 (or parallels): Peter tempts Jesus on Mount Tabor.
2. In a second moment, try to remember three personal situations of temptation and see how those movements are present in those temptations. Without a doubt, writing about it will help you.

5) Fifth advice: always walks in a caravan

"As an effective means of advancing spiritually, we should ask our brothers for help, either by way of spiritual direction or community discernment, or by other means. We

should earnestly desire and ask for correction and advice and respond to all corrections with outward thanks and inward gratitude." (CC 54)

"Since we really care for one another, if we happen to see one of our brothers going astray and committing faults that might harm himself or others we should humbly, gently and charitably admonish him in private, remembering our own frailty. If he will not heed us, or if immediate

action should be taken for his own good or that of others, we should inform the superior so that he may apply the proper remedy. Meanwhile we should

commit the matter to God. We should all receive a repentant brother lovingly and encourage him so that he may follow more surely in the way of the Lord." (CC 55)



At the beginning of his ministry Fr. Claret, because of his special circumstances "walked alone and on foot." But this was not his ideal situation. If you look at his itinerary of evangelization there is a corporate tension always present in his intentions. For us his sons, he also asked us to "Do with others" and this implies "to walk with others." You have had occasion to meditate on all this in booklet 7. You do not go alone.

Walk in caravan, "in congregation." To walk alone is to walk in bad company.

Ordinary assistance is imperative from your

brothers in community and extraordinary help from spiritual accompaniment (cf. CC 54 and 73), from discernment and fraternal correction. It is not necessary to repeat the desirability and the dynamics of spiritual accompaniment and fraternal correction. Accompaniment has been greatly emphasized because it is one of the four essential dynamisms of the Forge, which in spite of this by no means has this objective been achieved. On the practice of fraternal correction you will find a useful explanation in the Booklet 8 in the stage "Caritas Christi" dedicated to fraternal life in community.

Let us review the attitudes that enable fraternal help. So that this help not remain merely a desire or futile rhetoric, our Constitutions calls for above all, two attitudes: humility and docility.

▪ **Humility to ask for help:** "As an effective means of advancing spiritually, we should ask our brothers for help." (CC 54) Thus, take the initiative to ask for help and at the same time be fraternally responsible when your brothers ask for help. Be humble in requesting the ordinary and extraordinary help you need. Feeling in need of help does not mean a lack of capacity nor subservience nor should it generate dependencies. It is a key disposition of a disciple who knows that without brothers he will not walk or grow correctly. For your part in their life don't be impatient nor an intrusive nor exhibit carefree indifference. Your closeness, attentiveness and understanding will be,

without doubt, the doors that will foster openness and make possible an effective helping relationship.

▪ **Docility to receive such help:** "We should earnestly desire and ask for correction and advice and respond to all corrections with outward thanks and inward gratitude." (54 CC) Sometimes, help will come in the form of correction. When it comes, requested or not by you, let it be welcomed. This type of help, if done well is a sign of great love and is basic to advancing along the path. Do not confuse it with an attack. If fraternal correction were practiced more, it would definitely improve the spiritual temperature of our Congregation. Avoid being like the hypocrites who having a beam in their own eye, they look down upon their brother who has a sliver in his eye. (cf. Mt 7:1-5) Recalls the aphorism that Claret took from the "Guide for sinners" by Fray Luis de Granada, and made his own: "For God I will have a heart of a son, for myself the heart of a judge and for my neighbor a mother's heart."

All of this will be much easier if you acquire the habit of reviewing in community our missionary life together. Before, there was the "chapter of faults," which was regularly held in the formation houses. The Claretian Cardinal Arcadio Mary Larraona used to say that in the Claretians we do not have the "chapter of faults" like the monks, but that the Constitutions prescribe that we live continually in a state of "chapter." The "chapter of faults" disappeared and we have not found an exercise to replace it. In these years in which we revise apostolic positions and institutes, work together to keep alive in community the revision of fraternal life and mission among our brothers.

Exercise 4: Review of life

1. Question some people who belong to various church groups (movements, associations, groups, communities, etc.), how they as a group do a review of their life together.
2. Raises this issue in community. It is intended to, firstly, create awareness. And second, try to agree upon some simple and practical ways to do a review of their life together.

6) Sixth advice: Help yourself through prayer and study

"Our members must grow equally in virtue and learning in order to be able to meet the needs of the times and be fit to minister effectively. We should be diligent in sacred and human studies, keeping abreast of recent developments. As far as circumstances allow, superiors should see to it that each community is supplied with the tools and means required for a profitable pursuit of studies. The whole community should set great store by its library."(56 CC)

In his missionary life, all Claretians should rely on two feet to be able to walk: prayer and study. Apostolic prayer was amply treated in Booklet 8 under the theme "Patris Mei." You can review your suggestions, which are always current and necessary. Now we deal with study, as it appears on the number 56 of our Constitutions.

In our spirituality, study is a part of the mission. To be a servant of the Word and not of verbiage, you

have to dedicate many hours to prayer and to study. This way there grows in you the word that you must announce to your brothers. What defines a good missionary is not the quantity of hours he dedicates to the service to the others, but the quality of his service. As a famous theologian would say: "The Holy Spirit does not usually help one who is guilty of his own incompetence." (E. Schillebeeckx)

The current situation, marked by the religious indifference and by a widespread mistrust in the capacity of reason to arrive at the truth as well as by the new questions and problems brought on by scientific and technological discoveries requires an excellent level of intellectual formation, that enables you to proclaim the Gospel and make it credible in the face of the legitimate demands of human reason. In addition, the phenomenon of social and ecclesial pluralism demands an intellectual formation that it be stronger than ever.

One will not be serious in his studies if he has not previously appreciated study: "Intelligence can



7) Seventh advice: Use a good map

“In keeping with the demands of the missionary life, some part of the house should be set aside for the members alone. The community should establish its own inner order, setting up a timetable for community prayer and regulating the others aspects of its life, so that community exercises are distributed according to the needs of the apostolate. Besides the time devoted to spiritual pursuits and work, our missionaries should also have some time for themselves and be able to enjoy a suitable period of recreation, silence and rest.” (57 CC)

Everyone walker so as not to get lost needs a map that orients him well and shows him the best paths and shortcuts. A game without rules is not a game. A road without a map is misleading. A map is the graphic representation of a territory along with clear and precise information necessary for the walker to reach the goal he seeks.

Number 57 in the Constitutions requests that each local community have a map, i.e., with its own regulations. With it, in the first place it protects their privacy and thus prevents the deterioration of the fraternal life and, secondly, articulates their life and mission in an orderly manner. What does this mean for you?

- You live in an organized community with its own plan. Without it, the community does not work well. This organizational dimension is performed in common and should not be put to one side. Your personal project – which is a lesser project – is inserted into that of the community, which has a larger project being one held in common-. Therefore, you must reconcile your personal pace with that of the community and the apostolate. To do the programming, requested by our chapters, the Directory (cf. 150-155) provides guidance on the organization of the community life, that you can reread now.

- Remember that you do not belong to a monastic community but a missionary congregation. Neither are you a part of a team of independent missionaries, living in the same House. You live with brothers with whom you should discern and agree upon a common rhythm of life and the Apostolic demands. Once agreed upon, the agreement becomes a community plan, which must always be sanctioned by the provincial government.

- It helps to ensure that the internal organization be harmonious and balanced. In other words, it combines the human and the divine, the personal and the common, prayer and action, co-existence and mission, study and recreation, work and rest. Everything is necessary. Nothing is dispensable. Everything should be wisely organized. Even the enjoyment of legitimate space and time for rest and leisure. Healthy diversions are not a concession to your weakness, but an indispensable dimension of mental health. Our Constitutions thus demonstrate a great humanity and wisdom.

only be guided by desire. But for there to be desire there must be pleasure and joy in work. The joy of learning is as essential to study as breathing is for running.” (Simone Weil) Let your love of study be true so as not to turn it into an instrument of power, prestige, or competitiveness. Engage in it with these wise principles:

- In study as in life, it is not enough to wish, it is necessary to want. It is not enough to start wanting but one must continue wanting. And it is not enough even to continue wanting but you must know how to start afresh when you have abandoned it due to unwillingness or lack of successes or tiredness.

- Keep in mind that study is not only to memorize information and systematize it. Nor does it consist of accumulating useless data. First and foremost look for an understanding of the faith, – “intellectus fidei” – that aims to develop and update your faith so as to apply it to your life.

- Investigate rigorously to search, find, accommodate and personalize your studies. Study is an intellectual and cordial foray into wisdom. Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, who was Master General of the Dominicans, adds that “studying is a eucharistic action. We open our hands to receive the gifts of the tradition, rich in knowledge.” Study is therefore, an exercise in gratitude. And gratitude is the memory of the heart.

- Infuse your study with profound apostolic zeal. This is accomplished when your study of the human, theological and pastoral studies gives you a living comprehension of the mystery of Christ and the Church and raises in you a personal willingness to put into practice your evangelizing mission. (cf. Dir 234) To achieve this, as requested by the Constitutions for our students, we must dedicate ourselves to the same “above all” (in primis) and “with diligence” (diligentissime). (CC 56)

2.3. Work on your personal plan for life

Th. Adorno said "men of today are capable of many things, including loving, but are not prepared for fidelity." A life plan facilitates fidelity in your spiritual progress. John Paul II said in a homily that "all faithfulness must pass the most exacting test: endurance. It is easy to be steadfast in the hour of exaltation; it is difficult to do so in the hour of tribulation. Steadfastness can only be called fidelity when it lasts throughout the whole of ones' life."

From that perspective, our Fr. Founder pondered the purposes and plans of his life as an irreplaceable means to achieve progress in the missionary life. In one loose note he writes: "Such will be the advances of our spiritual life according to the resolutions that we do and how we do them." (Mss. Claret, II, 156) In other Claretian writings you can check the use of encouraging words to carry out the plan of life. You can find them in Annex 3. In addition, he uses his own

- The linked distribution of his schedule and works.
 - The daily examen on a particular point that was the focus of his spiritual attention and effort. For many years it was humility. Toward the end of his life the daily examination was about the love of God.
 - Some maxims and ejaculations, as ideas-strength that, by repeating them, would guide and motivate him. They varied depending on the circumstances and generally were selected from Sacred Scripture or the writings of saints.
 - And some penance for infractions. To give more efficacy to his resolutions he would give himself a penance if they were not completed. It was his way of freeing up energies for the only thing necessary.
- 4) Convinced in the importance of a plan of life and in the resolutions, he would recommend them to all kinds of people. Worried about the growth in the Christian life and in their own vocation, he offered in all his books and pamphlets life plans. He even dis-



personal methodology to craft them, as is preserved in the Manuscripts. This method is still valid and useful:

1) He always does them at the end of his annual retreat. He does what he recommends for seminarians: "Toward the end of the exercises, write the resolutions, which should be like the memorial and seal of the same." We are aware of such life plans from 1843 until the year of his death in 1870.

2) He writes them. They have varying lengths depending on the different years. Sometimes there are notes of previous years. Some contain a constant focus, which in subsequent years he would complete particular points.

3) He organizes his life plans in four very specific aspects and oriented to his everyday life:

tributed them in the form of loose sheets.

5) The ideal plan should be the fruit of prayer and the council and approval of a spiritual director.

6) His proposed plans for life spring out of theory and practice. This is shown, for example, by the fact that the plan he published in 1844 for priests in "Advice to a priest" is no more than a copy of his own with the exception of a few points.

We cannot conclude this Claretian presentation of the Plan of life, without recalling that in our Christian and missionary life, all is grace, absolutely everything. For this reason, your spiritual growth is not an exclusive work of yours as planned as it might be, but the work of the grace of God in you. This way you can always understand it as "a miracle," the "miracle of the empty hands." (cf. Annex 4)

Exercise 5: My life plan at the conclusion of the Fragua

1. **MY PERSONAL SCHEDULE.** Your schedule must be adjusted to your personal rhythm of life. It might be that you can't spell out every the minute of all your activities, or place them on a pre-established schedule. Life itself can make this an impossibility. More than this only note those activities in your schedule which are essential (rest, meals, personal and community prayer, Eucharist, study...). Use this template therefore with a wide latitude..

	ON WEEKDAYS	ON HOLIDAYS
Morning		
Afternoon		

2. **PERSONAL EXAMEN.** To "examine" oneself means to be vigilant and to propose practical remedies about that aspect – only one – of your life that because of its importance and centrality requires your explicit and permanent attention. That implies that you decide well just what your weak point is.
3. **MAXIMS AND LIFE PRINCIPLES THAT HELP ME.** Make a list, not very long of those biblical phrases or the words of some saints which, by their incisiveness and energy, encourage you to move forward in your ordinary commitments.
4. **RESOURCES TO HELP ME STAY FAITHFUL.** Establish for yourself some tools that can help you correct possible lapses, shortcomings and infidelities in what you propose in your life plan.





3. Suggestions for the community meeting

Prayer to start the meeting: O Virgin and Mother of God

O Virgin and Mother of God, you know that we are your sons and ministers, formed by you in the forge of your mercy and love.

We are like an arrow placed in your mighty hand. Release us, our Mother, against everything that is opposed to the Kingdom of God.

Confident in your protection, we undertake the preaching of the Gospel with no other weapons than the Word, with no other titles than that of Sons of your Immaculate Heart.

Come with us along the path and give us your joy and your loyalty. Yours Mother, will be the victory. Amen.

1. Objectives of the review:

- Share in common what we have lived during this last journey of "The Forge in everyday life."
- Plan how the community is going to give continuity to the Forge from now on.

2. Issues to be addressed:

- Shared in common from ones personal journey. In the common sharing the exercise "Your path in the Forge in everyday life," that appears in this booklet and that relies on a simple dynamic of traffic signs. Where it is not possible to do this, it is enough to share ones own personal journey in the Forge. In order to make this worthwhile, it would be good to allow some time previously for personal preparation.
- Planning for the future
- In a second moment, the brothers of the community dialogue on how to continue in the future. Two points give channel to the second part of the meeting:

What should we maintain from the Forge in our community?

Once defined, this should be written up and incorporated in the community plan

4. Orientation for the "lectio divina"

The Word does

not act in a magical or automatic form. This method serves to help, but does not substitute it. It is only a means. It does not guarantee immediate success or the absence of difficulties. It is true that the Word is always efficacious, but requires openness and docility to the action of the Lord. The following criteria are crucial for your reading of Scripture to be done in the Holy Spirit and in faith.

1. The hermeneutical approach. Remember the classical rule "Scriptura ipsius interpres sui." The word explains itself. Some texts reveal the meaning of others. For this reason, don't forget to read the footnotes. You will discover how it enriches your understanding of the texts.

2. The criterion of simplicity. Jesus used this to focus the entire word on the precept of love. (cf. Mk 10:5-9; Mt 7:12) It refers to the fundamental simplicity of the Scriptures and thus, not only of its reading but in its application to everyday life. Do not complicate that which is simple.

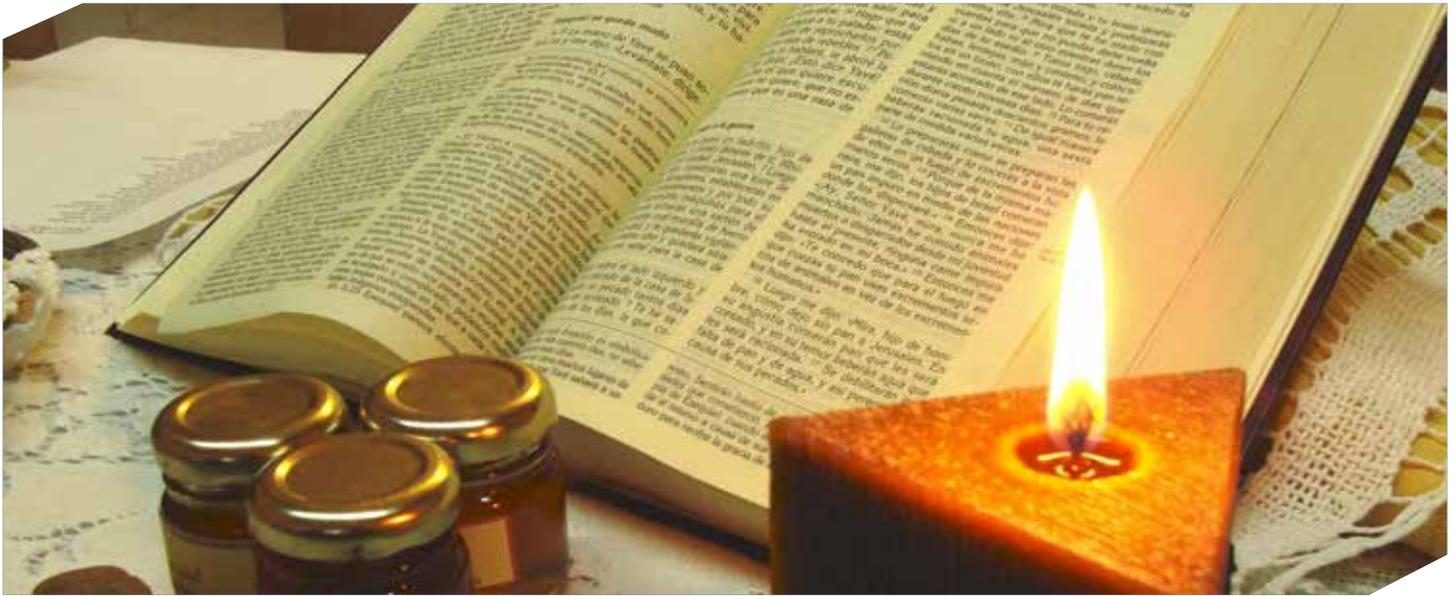
3. The Christological criterion. Christ is the main pillar that unites the Old and the New Testament. In Him is the Word of God incarnated. All of the Word of God speaks of Christ. To pray the Word is to know better its mystery. The biblical texts are witnesses to His presence.

4. The criteria of obedience. To listen, in the biblical sense, signifies obedience in the faith. Don't approach the Word only to learn more but above all to seize it, live it and put it into practice. (cf. James 1: 22-23) To obey is an essential part of understanding the Word.

5. The criteria of contemporaneusnes. In the Word, God speaks "of" and "to" your own life, today. St. Paul says that "for whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." (Rom 15:4)

6. The community approach. Make your own what St Gregory the Great experienced: "Many things in the Holy Scripture that for myself I have not been able to understand, I have understood with the collaboration of my brothers [...] I have noticed that the understanding I have has been granted through them."

7. The criteria of prayer. Finally, it is always necessary that the reading must be preceded by a prayer and openness to prayer: "May your prayer (oratio) and your reading (lectio divina) be diligent. With the first, you speak to God; with the second, God speaks to you" (St Cyprian) and this "with the help of the Spirit through whom it has been written." (DV 12)



Saturday, November 1, 2014. Solemnity of All Saints

- Rev 7: 2-4, 9-14
- Psalm 23
- 1 Jn 3: 1-3
- Mt 5: 1-12^a

All Saints Day, that typical Christian feast is a source of inspiration in the Forge. It expresses the hope that lives in us: what God has done in the saints we hope for ourselves, confident in His love: “We are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed... we will be like Him, for we will see Him as he is.” (1 Jn 3:2) The saints play a triple function: they give us example with their lives, help us with their intercession and share with us their destination. As in a relay race: the first ones have already ‘entered’, we are going behind them as others begin to leave: “so that, inspired by their encouraging presence, we strive tirelessly to achieve in the race and, like them, the imperishable crown.”

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2014. XXXI OF ORDINARY TIME. COMMEMORATION OF ALL SOULS.

- Mal 1: 14b – 2: 2b, 8-10
- Psalm 131
- 1 Tess 2: 7b-9:13
- Mt 23: 1-12

Today Matthew presents Jesus directly in opposition to the Pharisees, in the presence of the crowds and his disciples. He denounces three behaviors: they don’t do what they say; they impose heavy loads without helping to carry them and they play to the gallery. And He explains the third with examples: to use ostentatious phylacteries and fringes; preferential presence in places; and salutations and “titles.” This must not be that way with his own. He asks that you take the last place, service and simplicity. We also recall today with the whole Church, our dear departed. We should not fear death. If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord. We value so much the death of Christ, that we celebrate it permanently.

Monday, November 3, 2014. [Fr. José Xifré, Cofounder and Superior General (CMF Calendar, pp. 431-436)]

- Phil 2: 1-4
- Psalm 130
- Lk 14: 12-14

In the phrase of Christ “do not invite your friends” this is no intention of normative law but of charity. In family and social life it is customary to meet together and celebrate holidays. Jesus also did this. But there exists the danger of turning this friendship relation into a business transaction, where what becomes important is ones’ personal gain. It is not possible to advance in the way of the Lord if there is no gratuitousness and lack of self-interest. The reward will come to us in the resurrection.

Tuesday, November 4, 2014. Memorial of San Charles Borromeo

- Phil 2: 5-11
- Psalm 22
- Lk 14: 15-24

Today’s Gospel asks us to make an ultrasound of our intentions to see if we also deserve the complaint from Jesus for not accepting his invitation to the wedding banquet. If we are invited to do penance or a huge amount of work, one could understand the refusal. But we are invited to a banquet: to be happy, to joy, to salvation. Are we wasting His invitations? We make excuses saying we are not aware?

Wednesday, November 5, 2014. Commemoration of those who have died in the Congregation, family

- Phil 2: 12-18
- Psalm 27
- Lk 14: 25-33

Jesus asks us not to prefer anything or anyone over him and consequently, to renounce everything. And he appeals to two experiences: that of the builder of a tower and that of the king in war against another king. What does it mean for us? Something essential: let’s measure the consequences of what we do calculating where it will take us. This grand view is practical wisdom and helps to reach the secret of happiness.

Thursday, November 6, 2014

- Phil 3: 3-8^a
- Psalm 105
- Lk 15: 1-10

Chapter 15 of Luke has been called “the heart of the Gospel.” It shares with us the parables of mercy. Today we read of the lost sheep and the lost coin. With both, Jesus educates us in our attitude toward others, especially when they fail or disappoint us. Are we the living portrait of the Pharisees who whisper about the forgiveness that God gives to sinners? Do we have a stingy heart or the heart of a shepherd?

Friday, November 7, 2014

- Phil 3: 17-4:1
- Psalm 122
- Lk 16: 1-8

Apparently it seems that Jesus valued the performance of an unjust employee in the parable. But he is not praising the behavior which brings the employee rapid dismissal. What Jesus praised is the intelligence of the manager who knowing he was to be dismissed, obtains, with skill and cunningness, friends prior to becoming unemployed. Jesus tells us this parable to exhort us and that we might know how to take advantage with cunning in times of misfortune and adversity.

Saturday, November 8, 2014

- Phil 4: 10-19
- Psalm 112
- Lk 16: 9-15

What should be done with money? Jesus does not have any sympathy. It is called “unjust money,” “small change,” “vile money.” He warns us not to let ourselves become slaves by it: “no one can serve God and money.” Money like all the other goods of this world is necessary. But it is not the end. It is a means and, as such, relative, not absolute. Ambition, greed and avarice bring us down until we convert it into a god. Money, while always necessary, is very dangerous because of this absolutization.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2014. XXXII SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Wis 6: 12-16
- Psalm 63
- 1 Tess 4: 13-18
- Mt 25: 1-13

The parable tells the story of how a group of young people are waiting, full of joy, for the groom of the Wedding feast. Some are “sensible” and other “foolish.” The “sensible” ones have provision of oil to keep their lamps lit; the “foolish” didn’t think of this. The groom is late, but arrives around midnight. The “sensible” ones come out with their lamps to illuminate the road, accompanying the groom and enter with him into the feast. The “foolish” for their part, “their lamps have extinguished.” Thus they cannot accompany the groom. When they arrive after finding oil, it is too late: the door is closed. The message is clear and urgent. We are the light of the world which must be lit by the light of the Word and the Eucharist. It is a folly to be neglectful and to be waiting for Jesus Christ with a life which is turned off and empty. We need to care for our life in the Spirit.

Monday, November 10, 2014. Memorial of St. Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor

- Tit 1: 1-9
- Psalm 24
- Lk 17, 1-6

Today we listen to several brief recommendations about scandal, forgiveness, and faith. About scandal, Jesus uses very harsh expressions: to those who scandalize the weak – those who makes them fall – it would be better if they were dragged to the bottom of the sea. The hyperbole indicates the seriousness of the scandal. It asks also for a generous heart and to forgive a brother, up to seven times in a day. We are like the Apostles: we shudders at such a demanding life style. Let us ask Jesus for “Spiritus Domini” that strengthens our weak faith and maintains it.

Tuesday, November 11, 2014. Memorial of St. Martin of Tours, Bishop [Fr. Federico Vila and martyred companions (CMF Calendar, pp.443-447)]

- Tit 2: 1-8, 11-14
- Psalm 37
- Lk 17: 7-10

Today’s Gospel passage is strange. It suggests that Jesus defends the despotic attitude of an employer toward his employee. When the employee returns from work, he is required to prepare and serve him dinner. But here Jesus does not refer to labor relations or justifies the whimsical and authoritarian treatment. What he is trying to teach the disciples is their attitude toward God: not as that of the Pharisees, who demand a prize, but the humility of one whom after having worked recognizes that they are but simple servants who have done what they were suppose to do. Because everything is a gift.

Wednesday, November 12, 2014. Memorial of St. Josaphat, martyr

- Tit 3: 1-7
- Psalm 23
- Lk 17: 11-19

After being healed, of the ten lepers only one returned to give thanks to Jesus. The short prayer of the ten was exemplary: “Jesus, master, have pity on us.” But then, only one of them and a Samaritan, frowned upon by the Jews, returns to give glory to God. The attitude of the nine unthankful lepers is disappointing. Jesus directs a rebuke to those who have been elected and, sometimes become forgetful. And at the same time, he values those who stored in their hearts with faith a memory of gratitude, whoever they may be.

Thursday, November 13, 2014

- Phil 7-20
- Psalm 146
- Lk 17: 20-25

We don't need to know exactly how or when the definitive coming of the Kingdom will happen. Jesus announces it will not appear preceded by the spectacular and apotheosis. His coming will be discreet, silent, and humble. But a sign will guarantee its authenticity: the paschal seal. The Kingdom will happen inbetween suffering and rejection. These words of the Master show us how to recognize His kingdom and indirectly, warn us about the possibility of confusing and losing it.

Friday, November 14, 2014

- 2 John 4-9
- Psalm 119
- Lk 17: 26-37

Jesus today compares his final coming like that of the flood in the time of Noah and the punishment of Sodom and that of Lot. These tragedies surprised the majority of those people who were caught up with their parties or very absorbed by their businesses. They were not prepared let alone hopeful. With such notice, Jesus wants us to see that His final arrival (the ' day of the son of man') is going to divide our life in a "before" and a "now." As a result, one should watch and be prepared. Nothing should distract and detain us. Waiting for the end moves us to wait for Him with the light of faith and works of mercy.

Saturday, November 15, 2014. Memorial of St. Albert the Great

- 3 John 5-8
- Psalm 112
- Lk 18: 1-8

Jesus invented the parable of the stubborn widow "to explain to the disciples how they had to pray without losing hope." It is, therefore, a teaching on prayer. We must pray with insistence, knowing that God always hears us. He wants that which is good for us more than ourselves. If we persevere, what we truly need will be given to us. Prayer is continuous love, insistence, trust that operates in the worshipper as a slow transformation. It is achieved to see things as God himself sees them. And we are given that which we hope for.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2014. XXXIII SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

- Prov 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31
- Psalm 128
- 1 Tess 5: 1-6
- Mt 25: 14-30

The parable of the talents encourages responsibility in this time of waiting for the coming of the Lord. The servants in the parable traded goods that are entrusted to them in different ways: two of them risk that which was entrusted to them and manage to duplicate the original amount. The third cautiously saves it. The first two receive the same praise. It does not happen this way with the third servant, who is challenged like a "negligent and idle person" for his indolence and being overly fearful. To wait for the Lord one must be active and responsible. As St. Francis de Sales would say: "He who does nothing good, is already a great evil."

Monday, November 17, 2014. Memorial of St. Elizabeth of Hungary

- Rev 1: 1-4, 2: 1-5^a
- Psalm 1
- Lk 18: 35-43

The blind man, sitting on the edge of the road, regained his sight when he called out repeatedly to Jesus who was approaching, because nothing could stifle him, and he asked openly: "Lord, I want to see again." The blind man of Jericho is a teacher of prayer by his faith. This faith allows him to distinguish and recognize Jesus. He is not confused. He calls out loudly, without being convinced by those who oppose him. He communicates with the Master. He regains the gift of sight and the strength to follow Jesus as a disciple on the way. This rosary of actions is a magnificent record of prayer.

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

- Rev 3: 1-6, 14-22
- Psalm 15
- Lk 19: 1-10

Zacchaeus was a man of short stature and small on the inside. He was a lonely man, illiterate in love. Then he had the immense good fortune to stumble upon someone who for the first time offered him a loving gaze, who entered into his life and changed it completely. When someone is looked upon by the Lord and opens the doors of the self... the unimaginable happens. Today Jesus is passing through your life. Let Him look upon you. Don't hide yourself. Open the doors that are part of you. And, in the silence of your soul, hear what he says to you. Like Zacchaeus, you're born again. Who could be so lucky!

Wednesday, November 19, 2014

- Rev 4: 1-11
- Psalm 150
- Lk 19: 11-28

We have received many talents: life, health, intelligence, skills in the arts or in leadership or the apostolate. We all have gifts and talents. We are stewards of what we have received, but not its owners. We have to make them bear fruit because we are accountable. To this "capital of grace" -not of money - it happens as in nature: he who has more vitality grows and flourishes more. He who has more love of God will love even more.

Thursday, November 20, 2014. [Blessed Fr. Andrés Solá, martyr. Claretian Calendar, pp. 449-453]

- Rev 5: 1-10
- Psalm 149
- Lk 19: 41-44

Jesus wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. Today He mourns for Jerusalem. After a long journey from Galilee to the capital, rather than cheering songs of joy – “what a joy when they told me: we are going to the house of the Lord!”, Jesus was sobbing. Jerusalem didn’t “understand on this day what leads to peace,” “it did not recognize the time of his coming,” and didn’t foresee its ruin. It was destroyed by the troops of Vespasian and Titus in the year 70. Before the Church or the Congregation, what would Jesus say? Would he mourn because we have not “recognized the time of his coming” throughout the process of the Forge? Would he praise for having hav-

Friday, November 21, 2014. Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin

- Rev. 10: 8-11
- Psalm 119
- Lk 19: 45-48

Jesus remained in Jerusalem. Yesterday he wept for the city. Today He makes a scandalous gesture: “He throws out the venders,” telling them: “you have turned my house into a den of thieves.” Jesus unites two biblical quotations in their bitter complaint: that of Isaiah (cf. Is 56:7) claiming that the Temple was a “house of prayer for all peoples” and of Jeremiah (cf. Jer 7:11) alleging that some have converted it in the den of thieves. Would Jesus reproach you for not praying or for reducing your faith into a business?

Saturday, November 22, 2014. Memorial of St. Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr

- Rev. 11: 4-12
- Psalm 144
- Lk 20: 27-40

Questions that are meant to “ambush” one so that one is viewed poorly, no matter what he says are called the “Sadducean trap.” These Sadducees, upper-class and liberals, introduced a trap to Jesus, a situation that is extreme and ridiculous, based on “Levitical law.” (cf. Dt 25) Jesus shows his skill in negotiating traps. He begins by affirming the resurrection because God “is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” And he adds that the future life will be very different from the current. He does not explain ‘how’ it will happen, but He assures us that death does not have the last word.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2014. THE SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING

- Ez 34: 11-12, 15-17
- Psalm 23
- 1 Cor 15: 20-26, 28
- Mt 25: 31-46

We have here the last lesson of Jesus according to the Gospel of Matthew. With prophetic language He describes the coming of the Son of Man in glory and power for the judgment. It is a judgment of “all nations,” -those where the Gospel must also be proclaimed (cf. 28:19) -. The Law consists in loving God and neighbor. Each one will be declared righteous or shall be condemned according to the treatment given to each neighbor. The condemned are surprised when they hear that how the treatment they given or don’t give on a brother they are doing the same to Christ. The judgment is based on that the Son of Man is in solidarity of all those who need help. He was not seeking exceptional actions, but active concern for the needs of our neighbor. The works themselves are what save or condemn us.

Monday, November 24, 2014

- Rev 14: 1-3, 4b-5
- Psalm 24
- Lk 21: 1-4

It does not matter the quantity of what we give, but the love with which we give it. Over the material value of the gift there is the attitude with which it is offered. That good woman gave little, but she it gave it with humbleness and love. And, also, she gave everything she had, not from what she had extra. That’s why she deserved Jesus’ praise. Although we do not know her name, God did know who she was and applauds her love. What do you give? That which you have extra or what you need? How do you give? With discretion or with ostentation? Freely or keeping tabs?

Tuesday, November 25, 2014

- Rev 14: 14-19
- Psalm 96
- Lk 21: 5-11

From today until the end of the liturgical year, we will read the “eschatological discourse” of Jesus about the end of the world. We listen to the second lamentation of Jesus about the ruin of Jerusalem joined with the event dealing with the end of time. It is a difficult condition. On the one hand, it makes us humble to see how outdated are our human institutions on which we tend to put our trust. On the other hand, the end time is not imminent, but it is serious. We look forward to the future not to dampen our feast of this life, but to make us wise and live life to its fullness.

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

- Rev 15: 1-4
- Psalm 98
- Lk 21: 12-19

Jesus warns his followers that they would follow him in the same fate: they will be persecuted and brought to the courts and to jail. And so they will have the opportunity to give witness to Jesus. The Teacher from Nazareth has not deceived us. He never promised applause and ease along the road of discipleship. What He assures us is that we will save our lives through faithfulness and that He will bear witness to the Father for those who have been his witnesses before men. It has been this way for well over two thousand years. Don't forget: "With your perseverance you will save

Thursday, November 27, 2014

- Rev 18: 1-2, 21-23, 19: 1-3, 9^a
- Psalm 100
- Lk 21: 20-28

This is the third time that Jesus announces with regret the destruction of Jerusalem. Here Luke also mixes two levels: the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world, preceded by signs in the sun, the stars and the sea along with the anguish "before what is coming to the world." But the perspective is optimistic: "Then you will see the Son of Man coming with power and great glory." The announcement does not sadden, rather it encourages: "When all this happens, let us get up, look ahead: your liberation is at hand." Above all you are to have confidence in the victory of Jesus Christ.

Friday, November 28, 2014

- Rev. 20: 1-4, 11-21, 2
- Psalm 84
- Lk 21: 29-33

Jesus takes an example of the life of the fig tree so that his listeners understand the dynamics of the future times: when the fig tree begins sprouting branches, we know that spring is coming. This way, those who are attentive, perceive the signs of the times and will understand "that the God's Kingdom is close." This sensibility to this amazing future keeps us firm in the hope against all hope, encouraged at all times by the Spirit.

Saturday, November 29, 2014

- Rev 22: 1-7
- Psalm 95
- Lk 21: 34-36

The final recommendation of Jesus in his "eschatological discourse," the last advice of the liturgical year, the last of our Forge: "Be always awake." The opposite of being awake is that of being "distracted in our minds with vices, drinking and the concern for money." And the means to keep our focus in our waiting is prayer "asking for strength to escape from all that is to come." The final rule is short and expressive: 'Continue standing before the Son of Man'. To stand before Christ is to be on watch, close to Him and walking in His footsteps, as we give ourselves to the thousand tasks that life entrusts to us.

5. Texts to deepen awareness

Appendix 1: Grade for the end of the course (Cf. FRANK McCOURT, *El professor, Maeva*, 20065, p. 286. (Pulitzer Prize 2005))

“The big question at the end of the course is: how does the teacher decide the grade?

I will tell you how I decide the mark. In the first place, how has been your attendance? Even if you’ve been in the background, silent, thinking of the discussions and readings, surely you will have learned something. Secondly, have you participated? Have you read on Fridays? Anything. Stories, essays, poetry, theater. Thirdly, have you commented upon the works of your companions? Fourthly, and this depends on you, can you reflect on this experience and ask yourself what you have learned? In fifth place, have you been sitting there, dreaming? If so, increase the grade.

Here is where the professor gets serious and asks the big question:

What is education, after all? What are we doing in this Institute? You can say that you want to graduate so that you can go to the University to prepare yourself for a professional career. But, fellow students, it is something more than that. I have had to ask myself what the heck am I’m doing in the classroom. I have come to express this in an equation.

I write on one side of the blackboard an uppercase F, on the right is the uppercase L, and drew an arrow from left to right, which goes from fear to liberty.

I do not think that anyone reaches complete liberty, but what I try to do with you is to get the fear to takes refuge in a corner.”

Appendix 2: Programming Holiness (John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 31)

“How can you “program” holiness? What can this word signify in the logic of a pastoral plan?

In reality, to put pastoral planning under the sign of holiness is an option full of consequences. It means to express the conviction that if Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God by means of the insertion in Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a mediocre life lived according to a minimalist ethic and a superficial religiosity. Ask a catechumen, “Do you want to receive Baptism?” which means at the same time asking, “Do you want to become holy?” which means to put you on the way of the Sermon on the Mount: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)

As the Council explained, this ideal of perfection should not be misunderstood, as if it were to involve a kind of extraordinary life, practicable only by some “geniuses” of holiness. The paths of holiness are multiple according to the vocation of each individual. I thank the Lord that I have been granted beatifying and canonizing during these years to many Christians including many lay people who have been sanctified in the most ordinary circumstances of life. It is time to propose this “high degree” of ordinary Christian life again all with conviction. The whole life of the ecclesial community and Christian families should go in this direction. But it is also clear that the paths to holiness are personal and require pedagogy of true holiness and ones’ own, capable of adapting to the rhythms of each person. This pedagogy must enrich the proposal to all traditional forms of personal aid and of the group and with the most recent forms offered in the associations and the movements recognized by the Church.”



Appendix 3: Importance of the plan of life (cf. A. M. CLARET, *True wisdom. Barcelona*)

“One of the main reasons that so many souls are in hell, is that they live for anything or, to put it better in the darkness, without a system of direction that guides, encourages and rectifies their actions; therefore living in this way, everything which is done, minus that which comes from grace or of any principle of virtue that the momentum of a corrupted nature or a mere general inclination. For this reason, the saints and in particular St Gregory the Nazarene, feel it is so important and necessary to have a rule of life which he claims to be the foundation and basis of the good or bad habits, and therefore the cause of salvation or eternal damnation. The same saints who having to fend off the passions and be enlightened by a special light from God, were less exposed than we are of the craftiness and deceptions of self-love and the bonds of the world, specifically the devil and believed that it was necessary for them this rule of life and have carefully arranged with great care each one according to the inspirations of God and the opinions of their confessors.”

Appendix 4: The miracle of the empty hands. (José Luis Martín Descalzo)

In my years as a seminarian they explained to me time after time that the world of the souls was governed by the old rule that “noone gives what one does not have.” But the truth is that now some - thirty years later - I am not so sure. And I believe that the affirmation of Urs von Balthasar makes more sense when he writes that “the privilege of the Christian is to be able to give more, infinitely more than what he possesses.” I hope I will be able to explain myself.

Even today I still remember how much I was scandalized, in my years as a student of theology in a conference from a priest - a brilliant apostle and well known in Spain at that time - who was saying to us that it was not necessary to be saints to be effective apostolically. The idea seemed then ludicrous to me and it continues in a sense in the tone in which that lecturer was saying: as if intelligence, technical rhetoric, humor might suffice for holiness and love. I have never believed in intelligence nor in technique, when referring to the world of grace. They are it seems to me, what the custard maker is to the custard: if it is prepared with rotten eggs, it is inedible regardless of the very good actions of the maker. I am always interested in the inner workings of what is being said than the adjectives which are mere ornaments. Although I also think that some serious content require of the speaker or the apostle to take very seriously the methods of transmission. But knowing that they are just that: simple methods.

However, in the idea that there is a grain of truth and there is a lot as presented by Balthasar. And it is that in thirty years of ministry I have been taught that one can give much more than what one has. And this by an elementary reason: strictly speaking, in the world of grace no man gives anything. God is the only one who can give, He alone. And the experience of any priest or any Christian is that if he does not put too many obstacles, God gives through us things that even we are unable to suspect. It is what Bernanos called “the sweet miracle of the empty hands,” through which the torrent of God can pass.

In the sacramental field this is obvious. What are my hands but to absolve, what are my words but to consecrate? Someone “works” inside of me and for that reason, “exit,” as the wine comes out of the bottle without it having created or manufactured it.

But it also happens in other areas more mysterious. What Christian has not planted hope in days in which all was thought to be lost? How many times have we given joy to someone and have left thinking that we were the one who most needed it?

Sometimes mysterious things happen to you. One day someone approaches you and says to you that for twenty years he has been fed on a phrase that you said to him once. You ask what the phrase was about. And when they say it to you, you would swear that this idea never came to your mind, which you said by chance. And it looks like the arrow was right for the person who needed it.



Any priest knows that perhaps he has prepared a conference or a homily with all care and that, suddenly, as he is speaking; a thought comes to the lips or a phrase about which he had not even thought. And then it turns out that it is precisely the one that some of the listeners needed.

It has happened to me when a stranger comes to thank me for an article of mine that helped to solve in his house a serious crisis. And I don't even remember having written such an article or on this topic. Do I have a guardian angel that writes and signs with my name on articles that I have not prepared? Or is it that I was writing about another thing, but that family - that needed an answer - found one where the author had not considered it? You know what I mean!

I do not know if all this that I am telling you will be heresy. But, at least, it serves me. Because if I have to wait to be a saint to begin speaking to the people of God, I would still be quiet. And if I can only write of the happiness when everything is fine, my life would abstain from letters. I understand that I have an obligation to have my hands full because God deserves it but I do not discourage myself when I see them empty. And I love the idea of being a means through which someone more important enables us together to all breathe. And if so much is happening thanks to my hands, some of that will surely stay with me, I think.

Our problem consists then in being good transmitters, in becoming transparent so that we can look behind us to the hidden God that we carry inside. And then to distribute without stinginess the little that we have - this pinch of faith, this splinter of hope, these grams of happiness - knowing that someone will come to multiply it like the bread of the miracle. Certain that from the small flame of a match can grow into a large fire. Not because of the match, is important but because the flame is infinite.

Appendix 5: There are no Magic Recipes (Miguel de Unamuno)

“... the inquisitive persons will ask me again: “Very well, but what solutions do you bring? And to conclude I will say to them that if they want solutions, they should turn to another store, because in mine such things are not sold. My effort has been, is and will be, that those who read my work, think and ponder about fundamental things, and has never been to give them complete thoughts. I have always looked for ways to agitate and at most, to suggest more than instruct. If I sell bread, it is not bread, it is yeast for fermenting.”



“Nuestra identidad es *ser misioneros*. He querido invitaros a reflexionar sobre el sentido profundo que hoy tiene para nosotros y para el mundo. Mi deseo es que sepamos vivir con entusiasmo esta vocación que es un regalo de Dios para cada uno de nosotros y quiere serlo, a través nuestro, para muchos” (Josep M. Abella, *Misioneros*)

spiritus domini

La fragua en la vida cotidiana

www.lafraguacmf.org
misioneros claretianos