

caritas christi

The Forge

in our daily life



9

Impelled by the Love of Christ

Ordinary Time VI

CARITAS CHRISTI

2013



This stage of the forge – focused on the activity that makes the blacksmith on the anvil – **symbolizes the process of being conformed to Christ.**

OBJECTIVES

- Moving from individualistic and self-centered attitudes to self-giving attitudes.
- Going deeper into the knowledge of the person of Jesus.
- Growing in the experience of following Jesus Christ through the vows and apostolic virtues, in the style of St. Anthony Mary Claret.
- Rediscovering the Eucharist as a “meeting place” with Christ.
- Improving the capacity for community life and dialogue.

BOOKLETS

1. Encountering Jesus
(Advent - Christmas)
2. Consecrated to God and to people
(Ordinary Time I)
3. Poor in fact and in spirit
(Lent)
4. Seekers of the Father’s will
(Easter)
5. Chaste for the Kingdom of heaven
(Ordinary Time II)
6. Until Christ lives in us
(Ordinary Time III)
7. United so that the world may believe
(Ordinary Time IV)
8. Transformed by the Eucharist
(Ordinary Time V)
9. Impelled by the love of Christ
(Ordinary Time VI)

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1. Introduction



This booklet, whose title was inspired by the motto on the Episcopal shield of Archbishop Claret, completes the theme *Caritas Christi*. As we have been recalling throughout the year, **it has been a theme centered in our process of identifying with Christ**. In the allegory of the forge this process is symbolized by the forging of the iron bar on the anvil. According to our Constitutions, the configuration process with Christ consists in the frequent contemplation of the Lord and in imitating him, the fruit of the Spirit, “until it is Christ who is truly alive in us. Our configuration to Christ is done mainly through the practice of the evangelical counsels and the apostolic virtues”, as you’ve had the opportunity to reflect on in the previous booklets. The Constitutions are very clear about the importance of this process: “Only in this way will we be valid instruments of the Lord to proclaim the kingdom of heaven” (CC 39).



Don't forget that in the technique of the forge, unlike what happens with the technique of casting, the process is crafted and slow, you will move forward and backward, there is a constant dialogue between the fire and the hammer; but the products are unique: there are no two exactly alike. With terminology of today, we can say that this is a "personalized" process. Our configuration with Christ takes place in this manner.

The objective of the final booklet is to help you recapture the theme of *Caritas Christi*. We will try to do this exercise on par with the recapitulation suggested by the Church at the conclusion of this liturgical year. In effect, during this last journey of ordinary time we will celebrate **the feast of All Saints** (day 1) and **the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed** (day 2). Also we shall commemorate **Fr. Xifré** (day 3), **the Blessed Andres Solá** (day 20) and one of our co-patrons: **Saint Andrew the Apostle** (day 30). We will join them in memory and the mystery of the communion of saints to the many testimonies of missionary life in the Congregation. Our martyrs along with other witnesses, and "all those who have preceded us in a sign of faith and who now sleep in peace", are the authentic sign of configuration with Christ arrived at its high point. This testi-

mony is for us memory and prophecy of a faithful vocation, made concrete in the daily living of our charism. At the same time, during the month of November, the liturgy of the Word will lead us in a crescendo to meditate in the final realities. The Lord will come, as He has taught us. His Father "is not a God of the dead but of the living" (*Mk 12: 27*). What will we carry in our hands when the Son of Man appears seated on his glorious throne (cf. *Mt 25:31ss.*)? Have we grasped completely this configuration with Him, out of love? Will we receive the blessings that are appropriate to those who have recognized Him in the brother who is need?

Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, once again, invites us to focus on the ultimate goal of history and of our vocation: that the God of life extends His dominion of truth and life, of holiness and grace, justice, love and peace. That day will officially close the **Year of the Faith** that we began on October 11th of last year, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the **Second Vatican Council** (1962) and the 20th of the promulgation of the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** (1992).

Take courage! Our project of the Forge is about to move on to another theme, suggesting to you a horizon of hope.

2. Reflection

From the beginning with *Booklet 1* we have underlined various accents along the entire stage that Claret centered his Christian and missionary life in Christ. For this reason, because he lived a special relationship with Him, his witness and guide are of great help for the times in which we live. Times of enormous pluralism and complexity. Times in which we feel the need to go and look at what is essential, which center us and help us dialogue with other types of beliefs and positions. **For a Christian what is essential is the same Jesus Christ: his person, his message, his liberating presence in us and in the world.** It is necessary *to return to Jesus Christ*, so as better recognize,

to listen so as to follow, to change ourselves with Him and identify with His mission.

2.1. To contemplate Jesus as teacher and model

The historical research on Jesus - as we remember in the *Booklet 1*- has made many advances and has returned to us the face of Jesus with a very high degree of historical data. This helps us to deepen with greater knowledge what Claret achieved with the instruments of his time: to contemplate on the life of Jesus in its various aspects.



For the Founder, it was almost an obsession to contemplate on the words, actions and attitude of Jesus, his teacher and Lord, so that he would be able to imitate Christ. Perhaps because of his experience and training in the field of weaving, for Claret it was very important to have a good model to copy.

Since childhood he was greatly impacted by the figure of his primary teacher, Mr. Antonio Pascual (cf. *Aut 22-28*). This made him highly value the figure of the teacher, not only by what he teaches, but because he embodies the same virtues that he teaches and, therefore, can

serve as an example and model to imitate. Perhaps for this reason, for Claret the title of *Teacher* will be one of the preferred in referring to Jesus. From your experience, the teacher is not only someone who you should be thankful for by what he does, but also loved deeply.

For Claret, Jesus is the divine Master (*Aut 375*), my Father and my teacher, (*Aut 356*), of whom I should learn from (*Aut 372*). He would frequently call my Jesus and my Master! (cf. *Aut 421, 444* etc.). He is someone who is not only to be listened to but also to imitate. His message isn't just words or theories, but a way of

life (cf. *Aut 356*) in whose horizon is also the cross. Jesus, as the singular Master, chooses his disciples with an invitation, with a follow me which is very personal and, therefore binding.

In response to the teaching of this Master, Claret explains what it means to be a disciple. He says in a booklet in 1846: "This name Christian means a man of Christ, saying the same thing as that of disciple or imitator of Christ ... If we want to imitate or go in pursuit of Him, we must reject our own selves, take up our cross and follow him" (*A Patient Imitation of Christ*, in *EE*, p. 173-74).



As a Son of the Heart of Mary, Claret yearned to follow and imitate Jesus “in work, in suffering and to do everything possible for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls” (*Aut* 494).

The discipleship that revolves around Jesus the Teacher is not understood, therefore, as a simple method of notional learning. It is not a temporary activity designed to give autonomy and self-sufficiency to the disciple, who then will go at it alone, perhaps distancing himself from his master. On the contrary, he establishes a strong personal relationship that is completely

committed and forever bonded with the person of Jesus, with an emotional and cordial implication, of attachment and communion with Him even to the point of making it his own way of life and his mission, that begins to give direction and meaning to one’s existence.

In this way, Claret would try to imitate this way of living, of preaching and being in Jesus, initiating with Him a deep personal relationship. The virtues that Claret tries to imitate are valuable not because they arise from a code of ethics, but because he sees them concretely embodied in Jesus. This is why Claret

speaks to us of “the virtues of Jesus that I propose to imitate” (*Aut* 428-37). In *Booklet 6* we already dealt with this aspect.

2.2. Contemplate and meditate on the person and life of Jesus

Fr. Founder proposes to us some texts with a specific method of introducing us to this process of the imitation of Christ: “I sought to imitate Jesus, who to me and everyone he says: Learn from me, that I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. And thus I continuously contemplated

Exercise 1: The traits of Jesus

1. **Read in the Autobiography of St. Anthony Mary Claret some of the aspects of the life of Jesus** that Fr. Founder meditated with the intention of imitating him (cf. *Aut* 387):

- in his attitude of living in the presence of God (cf. *Aut* 648).
- in his private life (cf. *Aut* 658).
- in his missionary itinerancy (cf. *Aut* 221, 432, 817).
- in his parables and ways of expression (cf. *Aut* 222).
- in his dealing with children (cf. *Aut* 276, 435).
- in his work on behalf of sinners (cf. *Aut* 214).
- in his mortification (cf. *Aut* 658).
- in his poverty (cf. *Aut* 363, 370, 429, 433).
- in his modesty (cf. *Aut* 389).
- in his meekness (cf. *Aut* 372, 374, 782, EA 566, EE 350).
- in his prayer (cf. *Aut* 50, 434).

2. Now **imagine yourself writing a passage similar to your “Autobiography”**. Think about your age and physical condition, mental and spiritual state. Put yourself in the community and in the ministries that you have been given throughout your life as a missionary. Take into account the recipients, past and present, of your apostolic service.

3. Thinking about “the missionaries in formation”, who aspire to commit themselves in your missionary Family; **how will you share your own testimony about the best way in giving apostolic fruit?** What details of your own reading of the Gospel would you highlight? Do you join with Claret highlighting Jesus the missionary, preacher of the good news?

Jesus in the manger, in the workshop, at Calvary. I meditated on his words, his sermons, his actions, his way of eating, dressing and walking from one town another town... In this example he encouraged me and always told me: What would Jesus do in situation like this? I tried to imitate Him, and I would do this with much contentment and joy, thinking that I am imitating my Father, my Master and my Lord and by doing this I bring Him joy” (*Aut* 356).

“Not only will I recall what Jesus suffered at each hour, but I will also recall what Jesus would do and how He would do it, in order to imitate both the intention with which He worked, and the perfect way in which He performed whatever He did. When I awake in the morning, I will think of Jesus, of how He awoke and offered Himself to His Eternal Father; I will rise promptly and offer myself and all my works to God. When I say my prayers, I will think of how Jesus used to pray” (*Resolutions-Homage* 1870, in ACW p. 855).

Meditating with that passion and love of Jesus, Claret wrote these words, along with his desire to reproduce in himself the same feelings, attitudes, actions, and style of the Teacher. In his depths,

Claret was convinced that he had to respond to His love, and collaborate with Him in His saving mission.

The meditation and contemplation of the life of Jesus, which fed him from the synoptic gospels, would become a daily practice, such as a fine rain, helped Claret in taking the form of his Teacher and Lord. This is what our Constitutions, faithful to him, advise us in a text that has been repeated several times in the *Caritas Christi* stage: “We 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). The daily *lectio divina*, especially that of the Gospel, in this project of *The Forge in Our Daily Life*, how is it helping you, like Claret, to take the form of Jesus, the Teacher of life?

2.3. What aspects of Jesus should we imitate?

In the Autobiography we can observe that the contemplation of Jesus covers the entire life and

person of Claret: “I constantly reflected on Jesus in the manger, in the carpenter’s shop, on Calvary. I meditated on his words, his sermons, his actions, on the way he ate, dressed and traveled from town to town ...” (Aut 356). He highlights the particular charism that the Holy Spirit bestowed on him: the special sensitivity to Jesus the itinerant missionary, sent by the Father, anointed by the Spirit to evangelize to the poor and bring salvation to the whole world.

In this contemplation of Jesus, Claret puts his whole mind, heart, and energies. This is the grace of his vocation, which has illuminated him. This has given warmth to his heart and has led him to identify with Christ even to the point of offering up his life: “I am ever more deeply impressed at the thought of Jesus moving from town to town, preaching everywhere-not just in big cities, but in little villages and even to a single woman. When he spoke to the Samaritan woman, he was tired and thirsty from traveling, and the moment was as inconvenient for him as it was for the woman.” (Aut 221).

The Constitutions embody the experience of Claret and propose to us Jesus as a model, to whom we are to imitate. We should imitate him in everything, in the likeness of the twelve (cf. CC 4). Like them, we follow Christ in community to proclaim the Good News throughout the whole world (cf. CC 4). From this key concept everything else is understood. We should imitate him especially: in *chastity* (cf. CC 20), in *poverty* (cf. CC 23), in

obedience (cf. CC 28), in *meekness* (cf. CC 42), in the *assiduous prayer* (cf. CC 33), in the *communion of life with the apostles* (cf. CC 10), in *service* (the deacons: cf. CC 81).

For the Constitutions the following-imitation of Jesus Christ must be, therefore, our project of life. As it is said programmatically in the Fundamental Constitution: “We answer this divine call by adopting Jesus’ way of life, a way which the Virgin Mary,

In this reading he also pays special attention to Jesus’ style of preaching: “From the very beginning I have been thrilled by the preaching style of Jesus, his likenesses and parables.” (Aut 222).

It is remarkable the willingness to make the Gospel a rule of life that will lead to an obsession in wanting to physically reproduce all of the traits of Jesus Christ. Thus Claret is placed in the line of saints who have practiced the following of Jesus in their itinerant and apostolic preaching, like Dominic of Guzmán, Francis of Assisi, or Ignatius of Loyola.

In this first stage it is possible to speak about an evangelical literalism or the pursuit *sine glosa*, of the itinerant and missionary Jesus, who preaches untiringly the good news of the Kingdom for the people and villages.

In the final analysis, it is, to *work and suffer* (cf. Aut 130; EE 344). Two verbs, incorporated into the Claretian Memorial which, together with *prayer*, synthesized his imitation of Jesus seen in the missionary style.

too, embraced in faith. And so in the Church we have to manifest Christ’s virginity, poverty and obedience in proclaiming the Good News.” (CC 5).

2.4. To configure us to Jesus and unite closely to Him

Configuration to Christ is first and foremost, a mystical experience expressed differently in the diverse New Testament traditions. The Pauline tradition, for



example, speaks to us of dying with and resurrected with Christ, especially in baptism. It also tells us to live in the Lord. The Johannine tradition prefers terms such as “to remain in Christ” or “in the Father”, “be in Him”, or “to receive his dwelling in us.” The tradition of Matthew refers to a similar experience framing the gospel between the title of *Emmanuel*, God-with-us, given to Jesus and his promise to be with us each day until the end of the world.

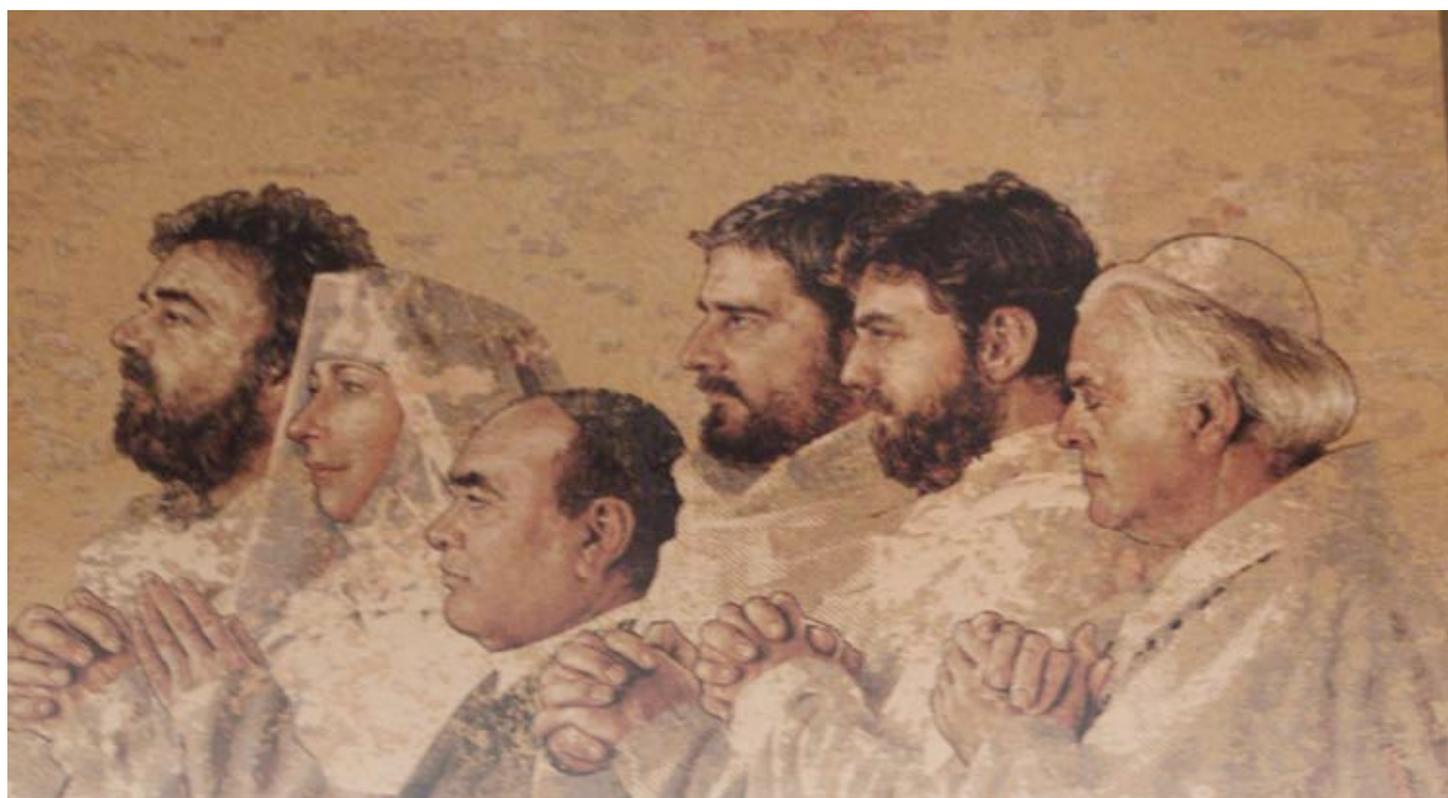
As we already saw, in the stage of apostolic missionary, **Claret gave prominence to the fundamental sign of imitation that will be present the rest of his life.**

But, progressively, Claret will pass from imitation to **configuration with Christ.** The stages of

Cuba, of Madrid and of his exile will mean, in this sense, a strong development with regard to the stage of his apostolic missionary work in Catalonia and the Canary Islands, although it is not possible to talk about two totally different stages.

This process will involve, above all, a profound **union with the Lord**, to the point of taking the form or the figure of Christ. It is the experience that St. Paul expresses it in the culmination of his mystical life: “It is no longer I who live: it is Christ who lives in me” (*Gal 2:20*). Claret would make this Pauline expression his own because it reflects his own experience.

The configuration will reach in Claret degrees unimagined in his intimate union with Jesus in



the Eucharist. It is developed to high levels of sensitivity which was already present in him since childhood: “I attended all the functions of our holy religion with great faith. The services I liked best were those connected with the Blessed Sacrament, and I attended these with great devotion and joy.” (*Aut 37*). “How fervently and with what devotion and love: more than now, yes, more than now...” (*Aut 38*).

The “great grace” of conserving the sacramental species in

his chest would be the pinnacle of his mystical union with the Lord (cf. *Aut 694*). With it came a deeper awareness of his body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Before the Blessed Sacrament he felt a faith so alive and experienced so much the presence of Jesus that he believed he could kiss Jesus’ wounds continuously. Claret said: “When it’s time for me to leave, I have to tear myself away from his sacred presence.” (*Aut 767*). But, even in so intimate a union, he does not put

aside the apostolic sensibility but revives it in a deeper way: “I must pray and confront all the evils of Spain.” (*Aut 694*).

The configuration now comes with a strong sense of martyrdom and adopts the characteristics of union with the Pascal Christ and his offering as a victim. Claret, besieged by persecutions, wishes to finally die to be with Him, yearning to offering himself in sacrifice and join with Christ for the glory of the Trinity. The voice of Jesus is made close

to him in the diverse locutions he receives (cf. *Aut.* 684, 690, 691, 831, 832, 839).

Our Constitutions devote an entire chapter to transforming oneself to Christ (cf. CC 39-45), as we had the opportunity to meditate in *Booklet 6*. In the beginning they make it clear that this is produced as an admirable result between the gift of God, which has primacy, and our free response. In fact, thanks to the anointing of the Spirit, we participate in the fullness of Christ and are changed with Him. But

- *Charity or apostolic zeal*, that transforms us with Jesus, urged by an ardent love for the Father and for others (cf. CC 40);
- *Humility* that helps us to participate with the same sentiments that Jesus had, emptying himself taking the form of a servant (cf. CC 41);
- *Apostolic meekness*, which was in Jesus an expression of his charity (cf. CC 42);
- *Corporal mortification* that we take with Christ who said: "If anyone wants to come af-

is gravely ill, he should also unite himself more closely to Christ through the Sacraments of the Sick and offer his life to God for the salvation of all people, placing all his trust in the One who is our resurrection and our life." (CC 45).

- *Experiential union*, strong and constant, even in the midst of the changes of this world (cf. CC 73).
- *Privileged union in the daily celebration of the Eucharist* (cf. CC 35). It is interesting



the gift requires our personal collaboration. That is why we are asked "to 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." From here we try to attain conformity to Christ by professing religious vows in a missionary community. We also pursue this conformity by the practice of other virtues and express it according to our gift in the Church." (CC 39).

In the following, the Constitutions highlight some apostolic virtues, which were highly recommended by our Father Founder:

- ter me, let him deny himself and take up his cross" (cf. CC 43);
- *Resistance in adversity and solidarity with those who suffer* (cf. CC 44);
- *Configuration with Jesus in a moment of suffering or in illness* (cf. CC 45).
The same Constitutions also emphasize other elements leading to a union with Christ.
- *Union in moments of temptation*: "During our temptations we must stand loyally by Christ who is still being put to the test in us." (CC 53).
- *Union in the moments of suffering*: "When any of us

in this respect what is being asked especially of the novices, "they should cling wholeheartedly to Christ our Lord, especially in the mystery of the Eucharist, since they are planning to share in his life and ministry." (CC 61).

- *The union that grows in prayer*, especially that of the Eucharist. For this reason, we all are asked to "cherish conversation with Christ our Lord by visiting and worshipping him in the Holy Eucharist." (CC 35).
- *A union as the basis of the trust that we should place in Him*, "Placing all our trust in

Exercise 2: Making your own arrow

1. As we approach the end of the *Caritas Christi* stage, you can symbolize your own process of configuration with Christ by finding, asking someone, or making yourself, a small arrow or a something that will symbolize it. The act of searching for it or the method of acquiring it is part of the exercise.
2. Once found, **customize it**: you can polish it, refine it, paint it, find a place for it among your things, write your name in it, etc. Perhaps you may decide to symbolize it as a process that is still incomplete. You may also symbolize it in a virtue or an element of your process of configuration with Christ that you feel called to reproduce or in which you feel a particular need.
3. When you have the opportunity, **look for a moment of prayer**. Go back and re-read the points of the last part of the preceding paragraph and contemplating your arrow, recite one of the prayers of Claret; for example, the second part of the n. 342 of his Autobiography, or the prayer to Mary which he recited before each mission (cf. *Aut.* 270). You can also compose your own prayer and write a reflection of it in your arrow.

the Lord and not at in domination or wealth, we seek before all else the kingdom of God, which belongs to the poor. Voluntary poverty builds up a fraternal community that is one in heart and mind: a community which is expressed in sharing its material and spiritual goods with the poor and in serving them.” (CC 24).

2.4.1. The suffering Jesus: the “wisdom of the heart”

It is surprising the emphasis that Claret places in the sufferings of Christ. Suffering of all kind that inevitably accompany the Christian and the apostle.

A good part of the “definition of the missionary” is dedicated to developing this aspect of our spirituality. It calls attention to the paradoxical combination of *nouns* that express pain and suffering (deprivation, jobs, sacrifices, slander, torments) with *verbs* that denote joy and triumph (to be joyful, to deal with, to embrace, to please, to rejoice). And all this as an expression of the following of Christ. In effect, the only concern of the missionary “is how he can best follow Jesus Christ and imitate Him in working, suffering ...” (*Aut* 494).

What is expressed in the “definition of the missionary” coincides with the description that the figure of St Paul makes. In two key texts, after referring to the tireless work of the Apostle to the Gentiles, he refers to their great sufferings: “He suffers scourges, stoning, persecution of all kinds,

the most atrocious slander. But he is not afraid; on the contrary, takes pleasure in trials and tribulations; and is able to say that he does not want to glory, save only in the cross of Jesus Christ” (cf. *Gal* 6:1ff; cf. *Aut* 224). “He did not fear prisons or chains; he was not intimidated by scourges, nor could the threat of death stop him” (*EE* p. 286; cf. *2 Cor* 11:23).

After the attack at Holguin, Claret would understand in his own flesh the consequences of being an apostle of Christ and would interpret this suffering as a result of his fidelity to the truths of the Gospel: “I can’t describe the pleasure, delight, and joy I felt in my soul on realizing that I had reached the long desired goal of shedding my blood for the love of Jesus and Mary and of sealing the truths of the Gospel with the very blood of my veins. My spirits soared at the thought that this was but a promise of what I might achieve in time-to shed my blood completely, in the ultimate sacrifice of death.” (*Aut* 577).

This powerfully calls to attention that Claret, after speaking of his imitation in the style of preaching like Jesus, makes an abrupt change by expressing admiration for his sufferings: “And how He was persecuted! He was a sign of contradiction, persecuted for his teaching, his works, and his very person. Finally, they took his life amid affronts, torments, and insults, making Him suffer the most shameful and painful death imaginable.” (*Aut* 222).

In the *Notices to a priest*, a booklet of 24 pages, published by Father Claret in 1844 and



aimed at those who practiced the Spiritual Exercises under his direction, we are surprised with the notice no. 25, the most extensive: "If the charity, the need, or the mandate of your superior calls you to the ministry of the divine word, stop yourself then, like your divine Master, to pray a little in solitude; to acquire, meditating on the sufferings of Jesus Crucified, that knowledge of the heart without which your word would be like the sound of a bell." (EE, p. 244).

The text expresses a profound experience of the configuration of Claret with the Suffering Christ which was considered fundamental to acquire the knowledge of the heart that constitutes a missionary.

Genuine initiation in the mission is only fulfilled in contemplating the icon of the crucified Jesus. Jesus, in his passion, is first and foremost the icon of human pain, shown in all its harshness: in the bloody agony in the garden, in the humiliating silence before those who judge him, in the destructive harshness of the nails and the spear, in his experience of extreme abandonment. Pain later transformed thanks to the personal experience of Jesus who, "having loved his own who were left in the world, he loved them until the end." (Jn 13:1).

This is why the face of the Crucified stays also and forever as the icon of the most genuine love, of the love that leads him to give his life for those whom he loves (cf. Jn 15:13).

In another booklet of popular piety entitled *Time piece of the passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*,

Claret had been identifying countless lessons of love that the Crucified one transmits and concrete gestures that we can make part of our life (cf. *EE*, p. 196-201).

Knowledge of the heart makes us capable of prioritizing service over the power of dominion and giving fraternally before it is required. It allows us to illuminate the reasons of mercy and forgiveness to generate justice. It gives us clarity to discover the centrality of the person facing other possible convenience or interests. It helps us to a understanding the experience of the seed falling on the earth and in the meaning of giving one's own life so that all may have life in abundance.

One of the characteristics of the missionary preaching of Claret and his whole ministry was always to transmit mercy, the mercy of Jesus himself, as primary impetus to conversion. In the contemplation of the Crucified Christ, in His reasons for love, you can begin to blossom in a deep identification with Him, an identification which is always *opus amoris*. In some periods of his life the work, and tirelessly proclaiming the Gospel prevailed; in others, persecution, the attacks, and the exile experience will prevail. Also, in these critical moments, the missionary -like Claret- is aware that his message has to be like that of St Paul when he said: "For Jews demand miracles and the Greeks go in search of wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified." (1 Cor 1:23 ; cf. 2:2).

Only from the message of the Crucified One, can the knowledge of the heart be placed in the center: the love of neighbor without distinctions. All things dealing with moral development and with justice have their basis in the love of God and neighbor (cf. *Mt* 22:36-40; *Rom* 13:8). The wounds that humanity supports today are demanding a justice imbued with compassion. Through their words and attitudes, the disciple brings, along with the humanism of reason, the humanism of love.

2.4.2. The Son of Mary, the formator of the Apostles

In the Claretian process of imitation, the following and configuration with Christ, acquires great importance the figure of Mary. The profound experience of Claret in this respect will be qualitatively collected by the Constitutions.

Jesus is the Son of Mary. As this is understood in our Fundamental Constitution (cf. *CC* 2), citing *Gal* 4:4-5 : "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law,

so that we might receive adoption as sons." The incarnation in the womb of a woman will manifest, according to Paul, the *kenosis* or the annihilation of the Son of God, who is submitted to the law and is born as a true Man to rescue those who are his brothers.

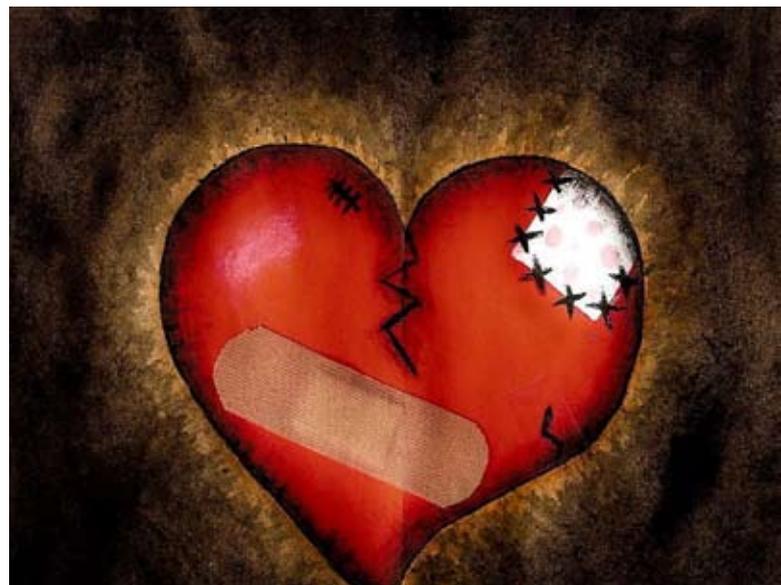
Therefore, for us Claretians, Jesus will always be the Son of Mary, the one who comes physically and spiritually from her with the mission to save all of humanity, given because of sin and its consequences.

The Mother of Jesus, referred to also as the *first disciple* of Jesus (cf. *CC* 5, 61; *LG* 44, 46), is for us our model of poverty, chastity and obedience. However, all these virtues will find as a fundamental the exercise, in us, her spiritual motherhood (cf. *CC* 8). She, who conceived Jesus in her womb and in whose heart he was being shaped as the Son of God incarnate, continues to exercise her maternal role in us until, under the power of the Spirit, we will be able to take the form of her divine Son. For this reason Claret will highlight the role of Mary as Mother and Teacher of Apostles in the furnace of her motherly heart (cf. *Aut* 270).

There is no doubt that the tone of Claret in virtues such as humility, gentleness, mercy... those that today we might translate as cordiality, owes much to the strong stamp of his love for Mary in the following of Christ. The natural compassion and tenderness of Claret, who was impelled to remedy the suffering of others (cf. *Aut* 9-17), will be found in this Marian cordiality which was deeply ingrained in his apostolic spirituality.

2.4.3. The Mystery of Jesus as a mystery of love

Claret also has a global and deep gaze of the person and work of Jesus understood as the Mystery of Love. In its foundation, it is expressed in the motto *Caritas Christi urget nos* (2 Cor 5:14) of his Episcopal Shield. The Mystery of Love intimately linked to the Love of the Father whose will is "that

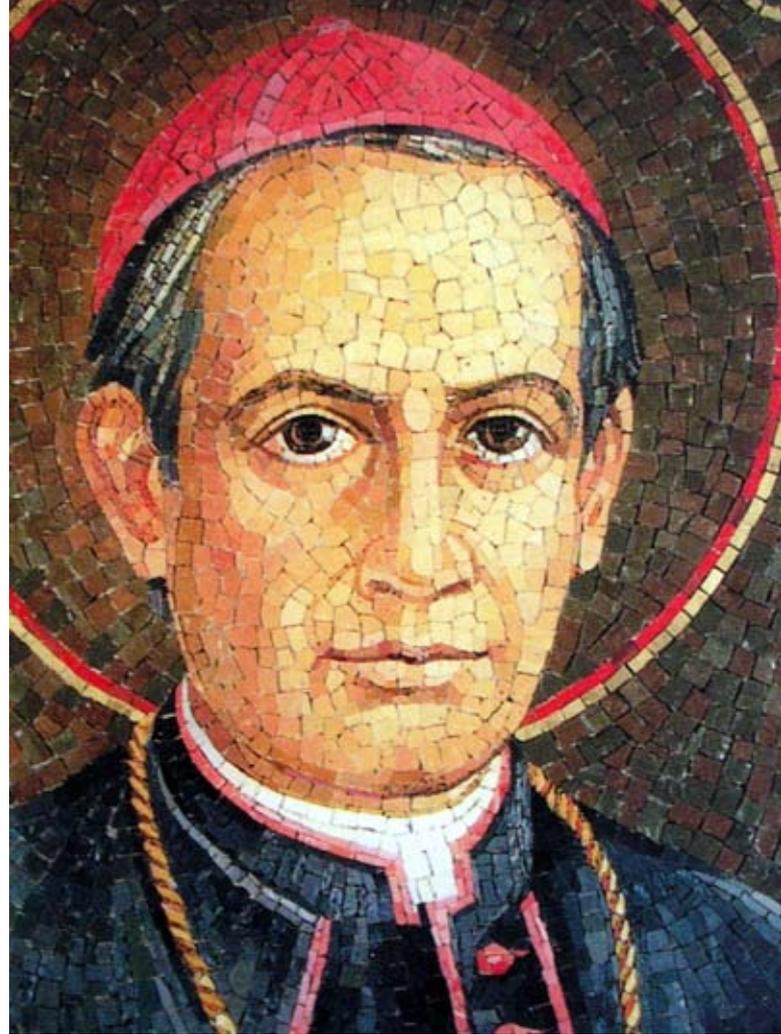


all men be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4).

From this point of view, our Fundamental Constitution presents Jesus as being Sent by the Father which expresses the unequivocal love of the Father for the world and his will of salvation. In n. 3, citing the Gospel of John, it clearly states: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3:16-17).

Claret contemplates the immense love that Jesus had and has towards the world and people, which led Him to experience so much suffering, slander, persecution and a most cruel death. For Claret, to contemplate the totality of the person and mission of Jesus is to feel deeply loved and energized to give oneself to Him and His cause. From here may you find the phrase of St. Paul - "The charity of Christ impels us"- a perfect synthesis of his motivations. In some texts, Claret also expresses to us how he clearly understood this Pauline text: "The motto that said *Caritas Christi urget nos*, means that it is not the love of gold, silver, etc. that impels someone to run from one part of the world to another; but the love of Christ, as St. Paul said, because it is from him that these words are taken" (EC, I, p. 414). "In such a way [this fire] impels the Prelate, who forgets himself and walks where the Spirit of the Lord directs his path, which could also be said of the Apostle Paul: *Caritas Christi urget nos*. You know, my children, that this is our call, our emblem and our all; because it is the love of Christ that has made us take so much work in visiting you, exhorting you, in catechizing and making your hearts ready, to administer to you the holy sacraments ..." (Pastoral letter to the people ... 1, p. 6).

The love that Christ has. The love he has for Christ. This is the critical element of a person and his work. Therefore he indicates the virtue of charity as most important for the missionary, that will allow him to develop the great zeal he needs and the ability to cope with all kinds of renunciations and sacrifices. That is why we have to ask this love in the prayer: "My Jesus, there is one thing I ask that I know you will grant. Yes, my Jesus, I ask you for love, for great flames of that fire you brought down from heaven to earth. May that sacred fire enkindle, burn, melt, and pour me into the mold of God's will." (Aut 446). "Mary, my Mother, Mother of Divine Love, I can ask for



nothing more pleasing to you, nor anything that you are more ready to grant, than the love of God. Grant me this, my Mother and my love. Mother, I am hungry and thirsty for love; help me, satisfy my need. O Heart of Mary, furnace and instrument of love, kindle in me the love of God and neighbor." (Aut 447).

2.4.4. The message of "Caritas Christi": love in the center

The message of *Caritas Christi* constitutes the Claretian response to the problem of the lack of human happiness. Man understands that only in love he will be happy; but he doesn't know how to love and finds himself defeated. Only when man accepts love as a gift is he then able to convert it into his art and work. For a missionary, to announce Jesus Christ and His work of love implies some particular accents.

- First of all, *this love is not an abstract value*. In Christ it has been made visible in the form of unsurpassed saving and personal love of God. Christ, in turn, impelled by the same love for the Father and people, was delivered to the point of death on the cross. The sacrifice of himself reveals to us the God who sends

and heals all the distorted images that man has fabricated. For this reason it becomes the way of access to the Father, and ultimately the center of man's life. To love in Claretian terms means, against all romantic reductionism, to offer one's own life as Christ and to share in His death and resurrection. This is not a moral precept that recharges our saturated conscience: it is a gift that he offers to us. Who, through faith and the sacraments, is incorporated into Christ and able to live as an oblation.

- In the circumstances of the present moment, to visualize Christian love necessarily implies a *preferential option for the poor*, who constitute the majority of suffering and discrimination by



humanity. In first world countries, responsible to a large extent for the impoverishment of the third world, it is imperative to emphasize this dimension of love and find channels to express this love. The task of humanization, to be truly such, must always begin with those who are seen as the most dehumanized. The culture that has lost God by the means of reason is called to find it on the path of a serious commitment to justice. This commitment, when it springs forth from deep-seated motivations,

helps to correct distortions of pure reason and reveals other hidden dimensions of reality.

- The missionary, who has experienced Christ as his center, *must proclaim him as a New Man*, but trying to show in his life and in his words, that this announcement is not based primarily on a system of thought, or in a simple code of ethics, or in a sentimental attachment, but in a experience of encounter that progressively leads to the configuration and, like Claret, associates us to his life and mission. As missionaries, ours is a spirituality that we configures us to Christ through virtues that are more typically Claretian (poverty, humility, meekness, mortification, zeal, etc.) and impels us to take the Word of salvation to all who are most in need.
- *The community born of this love is an alternative to the self-centered model of social organization.* It is a community born and convened by the Word that shares the faith, the spiritual experience, the apostolic sending forth; in both the area of prayer as well as reflection and work. For this reason, given that collaboration in the ministry of the Word belongs to the source of our community life, we must encourage those means to help us overcome individualism (community assembly, life project, team work, etc.).

2.5. The journey from egocentrism to service for others

The *Caritas Christi* experience has to do with our emotional life, but does there exist a real affective training, or, on this earth, do there abound so many taboos, fears and silences? We live in a society that has changed much in the way of understanding and living ones sexuality and affectivity in general, as we have already had the occasion to reflect from different perspectives in the *Booklet 8* of the *Quid Prodest* stage, and in the *Booklet 5* of the *Patris Mei* stage which now we are concluding. Today the meaning of consecrated chastity is very difficult to understand, unless it is clearly perceived unequivocally as a source of life and of sincere giving to others. That is to say, unless our celibacy resembles that of Jesus.

Cases of sexual abuse of minors by some clergy have done nothing but aggravate a crisis rooted in the difficulty of believing that celibacy can be a way of life which is truly humanizing.

Celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, before anything else is a gift, a charism which God gives to some men and women to live the same life style

of Jesus. Not everyone receives it and not everyone can understand it. However, this charism takes root in an affective human structure. To this we now turn. The human affectivity is developed between two poles: *withdrawal into oneself* (egocentrism) and *being open to the other* (oblativity). Our process of continuous formation helps us in our lifetimes to make the journey that goes from selfishness to oblativity.

Egocentrism is fed culturally. We live in the era of the “I” (I want, I decide, I like, etc.). This, in principle, is a huge leap forward over the times in which the “I” was diluted in the group; because it helps us to discover our dignity as human beings and the value of conscience and the freedom of the individual. But, what happens when we focus on the “I” being the center of everything, the ‘be all and end all’? We become egocentric people, unable to open ourselves to the other and to give ourselves lovingly to God.

Those of us who discover the call and try to follow Jesus are invited to live like Him. Let us remember His words: “For if you love those who love you, what reward is there in that..? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” (Mt 5:46). From a pedagogical point of view, to love in this way requires two basic learnings: that of *distance* and that of *closeness*.

- Without *distance* there is no autonomy only dependence. We need to learn to live for ourselves without using others for our benefit. This involves learning how to accept solitude without resorting to false solutions: such as pleasure (alcohol, sex, and diversions), resignation, work, or violence. It also implies a respect for others as being different.
- But where there is love there is also *closeness*. As followers of Jesus we have to learn to live close to people, especially those most in need. We have to learn to be of service. A follower of Jesus is always, and above all, a servant, someone who is prepared to give his life.

To combine *distance* and *closeness* is essential for emotional maturity and to live a life that is Claretian that is not evasive but produces with clarity the lifestyle of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve (cf. Mt 20:28). The best expression of this dynamic is found in the Eucharist.

2.6. The Eucharistic existence: the gift of self

We have already seen, with the help of the *Booklet 8*, the importance of the Eucharist for Claret in his configuration process and union with

Christ. In his likeness, the authenticity of the sacramental celebration of the Eucharist for a missionary is translated into a Eucharistic existence, marked by oblativity.

Our Constitutions say that “every day we should wholeheartedly celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist, keeping close to Christ our Lord as he proclaims the words of life, offers himself for his brothers and sisters, honors his Father and builds up the unity of the Church.” (CC 35). On these lines, the document of the Congress of Claretian Spirituality, held in Majadahonda, Madrid, 2001, makes an adequate systematization of what it means today for us to live the sacrament of the Eucharist (cf. III, 2, a, b, c).

We may say that he who is nourished by the bread of life learns how to live and to transmit life, and is transformed into what he eats. The Eucharist forms us from within, and gives us the energy we need to live the vows as a way of freedom, to build community with our permanent self-giving, and to practice the virtues that give us a missionary face. In this way we are forged into a Eucharistic existence (cf. Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n.70).

The dynamic of the sacramental Eucharist is the dynamic of a genuine missionary spirituality. Those of us who participate daily in the Eucharist are transforming ourselves sacramentally in the bread that is *taken, blessed, broken and shared*. We understand by *existential* Eucharist the attitude of complete availability to become food for others. What makes us like Jesus is not so much the completion of the services and schedules we follow (and are often only an extension of our narcissism or our desire to be recognized) but of those that we require us to respond to others (and usually are really necessary).

This continued disappropriation has many practical translations: attitude to work in a team, willingness to accept new destinations, openness to new people and situations, etc. In these are verified the in oblativity dimension, characteristic of the core of *Caritas Christi*.

In this perspective the verb *to suffer* is also understood, which forms part of our missionary definition. Our religious vows and the call for apostolic virtues take on a deep meaning, and naturally, finds space in our commitment to the most poor, without this sounding like a fashionable song or simple emotional relief.

Exercise 3: The Eucharist in everyday life

1. As it was for Claret, the Eucharist is a privileged place for intimate union with Christ. Over the following successive days, focus your personal meditation around the various moments that make up your celebration:

- Gathering of the assembly, convoked by Christ in the power of the Spirit, for the glory of the Father.
- Penitential rite.
- Liturgy of the Word.
- Eucharistic liturgy with its diverse moments: presentation of the gifts, Eucharistic Prayer, doxology...
- Communion rite: The Lord's Prayer, rite of Peace, Sacramental Communion...

2. To stop at each one of these moments and in its various parts, **ask yourself how they can become an opportunity for a union with Christ** and make into reality what the Constitutions of this Sacrament highlight: "Every day we should wholeheartedly celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist, keeping close to Christ our Lord, as he proclaims words of life, offers himself for his brothers and sisters, honors his Father, and builds up the unity of the Church" (CC 35).

3. Don't forget **to write the insights that the Lord has given you in this exercise**, concretize them into a proposal and, if possible, share them with a member of your community.

3. Suggestions for the community meeting

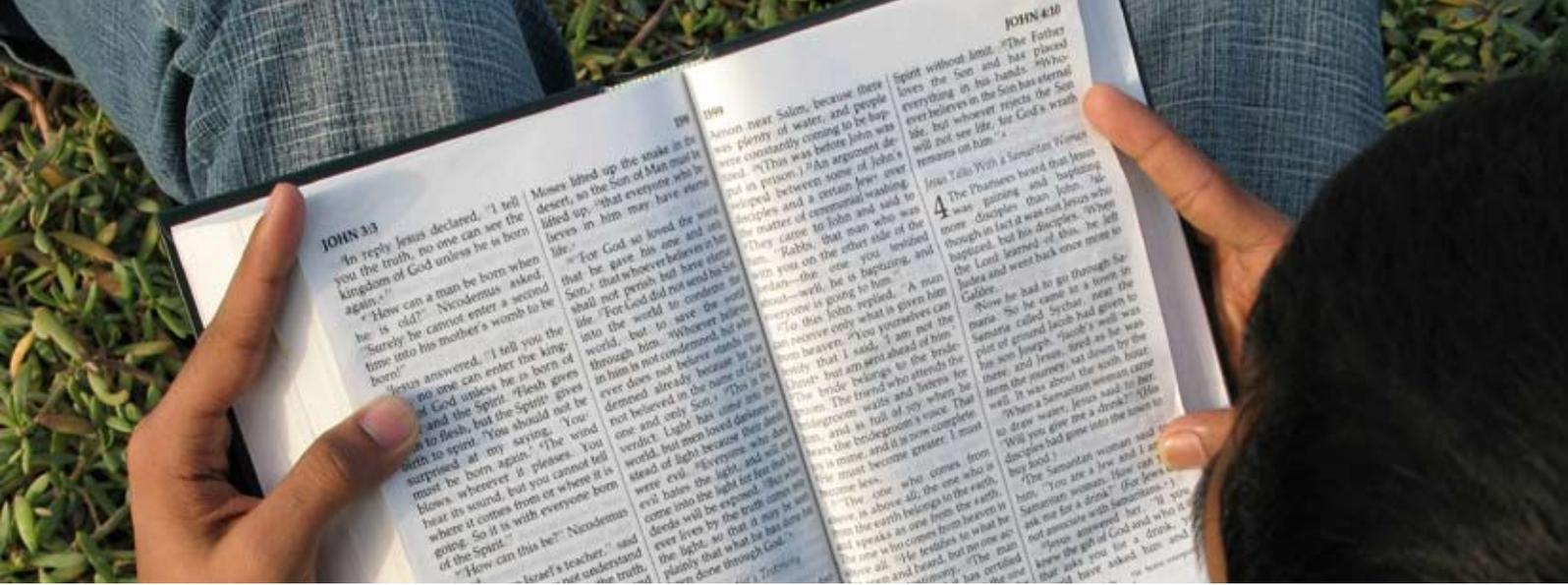
1. You can start or end the meeting with a **liturgy of the Word**. It is suggested any of the three forms collected in our Spiritual Directory to celebrate the second day of the Triduum preparatory to the Feast of the Father Founder and to focus on "Configuration to Christ" (*Spiritual Directory CMF*, pp. 195-202).

2. This meeting for ending of the stage, deals with a **community thanksgiving**, for all that the Lord has helped us to discover during the year. But it is also the moment of fraternal sharing the advances, joys, difficulties, fears or setbacks. The richness of sharing will help us to realize that this journey is not one that we do alone, but rather in a community.

3. In order to facilitate fraternal sharing, the fundamental question that you can make at the end of the *Caritas Christi* stage is "How have I noticed that Christ is being formed in me, or that my bar of iron has been taking shape, thanks to the love of the Father and the process of the Forge?" Perhaps you may also find help with the following elements:

- What aspects of Jesus have been especially called to my attention?
- What do I consider to be the most important virtues to lend credibility to the proclamation of the Gospel in the culture and society in which I am offering my missionary service?
- Under what circumstances or moments of my life have I experienced more union with Christ?
- What is my experience of the Eucharist that I can narrate, as privileged moment of communion with Christ?
- How am I experiencing in my life the tension between egocentrism and oblativity?





4. Guidelines for the *lectio divina*

This booklet corresponds to the final weeks of the liturgical year and the final stage of the *Caritas Christi*, two circumstances that invite us to an assessment of our journey in following Jesus and responding to the invitation to let Him live in us.

We will accompany you almost every day with the **Gospel of Luke**, in those chapters in which the last part of Jesus' ascent to Jerusalem is narrated and His brief ministry in the Holy City. Perhaps we can highlight some elements of the seriousness in the following Him, or the firm decision of Jesus going up to Jerusalem.

In the last few weeks we read texts of the apocalyptic style and how it relates to the resurrection. Some fragments of the **Book of Daniel** and the **two books of Maccabees** go in the same direction, and remind us that the times of martyrdom are generators of great hope. They are an invitation to reflect on who we place our trust and security.

Friday, November 1, 2013. Solemnity of All Saints

- Rev 7:2-4.9-14
- Psalm 23
- 1 Jn 3:1-3
- Mt 5:1-12a

In the mystery of the "communion of saints" we contemplate a multitude of women and men who have travelled the way of holiness. Within the Church, our Congregation has also been blessed with the testimonies of numerous models of holiness and apostolic work. It is not about only admiring a glorious past. The proposal of Jesus is for today. With gratitude for so many people that have been for me a sign of God's loving presence. I am able to renew the decision to continue to walk the path of Jesus who was poor, merciful, clean of heart ...

Saturday, November 2, 2013. Commemoration of All Souls

- Wis 3:1-9
- Rm 5:5-11; or 6:3-9
- Jn 6:37-40

The love of God has called me to existence. With this gift of life, I have received the invitation to join Christ in his passion, death and resurrection. This life in communion reaches all those who are loved by the Father, also my deceased brothers. I'm happy with them for the fullness of life enjoyed and I am grateful because I am encouraged to set my eyes on Christ and pursue the path of discipleship.

Sunday, November 3, 2013. 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time. Fr. José Xifré (Cal CMF, 431-436)

- Wis 11:23-12,2
- Psalm 144
- 2 Tes 1:11-2,2
- Lk 19:1-10

Jesus came to seek and to save what was lost, which is to say, everyone. He sees us and calls us personally. When Zacchaeus gives an account of this, his life is in a slump, and the center of his being is no longer money or extortion; Jesus has entered into him as his Savior. It is worth cultivating a desire like this man: to know who Jesus is and how He influences my life.

Monday, November 4, 2013. Memorial of St. Charles Borromeo, Bishop

- Rm 11:29-36
 - Psalm 68
 - Lk 14:12-14
- Claret was distinguished by the love of poverty and a total renunciation of personal ambitions. He wanted to imitate the love of Jesus, and to share this with everyone, with a special preference for the poor and excluded. In my life as a missionary, do I give sufficient attention to those who have been excluded from the banquet of life? How do I behave before those who, by their condition, cannot imagine that they can sit in our communal tables or enter into our temples?

Tuesday, November 5, 2013. Dead of the Congregation, relatives and benefactors (Cal CMF, 437-441)

- Rm 12:5-16a
 - Psalm 130
 - Lk 14:15-24
- Before the resounding failure, the host of the banquet doesn't renounce his offer of hospitality at his feast. On the contrary, the doors are opened each time a little more, first to the people of streets and squares; then, to those who are walking by the most varied paths and trails. The failures, disappointments, and errors in the missionary life cannot weaken me, but to get me closer to Christ the evangelizer, in community, so that I may discern in which streets and squares, roads and trails today I must throw the nets.

Wednesday, November 6, 2013

- Rm 13:8-10
 - Psalm 111
 - Lk 14:25-33
- We exist as a religious family in the Church to accompany Jesus, like the apostles. Learning each day about Him and with Him, acquiring His attitudes and feelings. Surely I am a dutiful follower of the vows, and I must give thanks for them. But also, surely, there are still things in my most intimate self that I am afraid to renounce. These things prevent me from the most beautiful construction of my life or of our missionary family.

Thursday, November 7, 2013

- Rm 14:7-12
 - Psalm 26
 - Lk 15:1-10
- Still being a sinner, I am fully welcomed by Jesus and invited each day to sit down with him at the table of the Bread and the Word. The personal experience of Claret helps us to understand and live that we are welcomed and treated with the dignity of children by pure grace and goodness, and not as a result of our merits, as claimed by those who criticized Jesus. What attention do I give to the brother of community who is experiencing moments of difficulty or crisis and needs help?

Friday, November 8, 2013

- Rm 15:14-21
 - Psalm 97
 - Lk 16:1-8
- The man who worships the gods of money and well-being is compelled to make quick and risky decisions to ensure his future. To what extent am I motivated to make serious and long-lasting decisions, the work of living impelled by the love of Christ, who has been poured into my heart? Claret was led to a poor and itinerant lifestyle for the service of the Gospel.

Saturday, November 9, 2013. Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

- Ez 47:1-2.8-9.12
 - Psalm 45
 - Jn 2:13-22
- As servants of the Word, our mission is to live it with depth and to plant it in the heart of each person, so as to produce the fruit that God expects. An important outcome is the birth and consolidation of living and fraternal Christian communities. Another will be the disposition of each believer to respond to the Word they have received. To that end, we must devote our best energies and resources.

Sunday, November 10, 2013. 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

- 2 Mac 7:1-2
 - Psalm 16
 - 2 Thes 2:16-3,5
 - Lk 20:27-38
- "He is not God of the dead, but of the living". Jesus reminds us that it is the right of God to offer life to full hands. This is so that life may be welcomed by each person, to grow and reach its fullness. Every human being needs to be recognized as a child of God, together with Jesus Christ, and brother of his fellow men. Baptism has planted in us the seed of this life. How I am living and transmitting this life?

Monday, November 11, 2013. St. Martin of Tours. Fr. Federico Vila and Companions (Cal CMF, 443-447)

- Wis 1:1-7
 - Psalm 138
 - Lk 17:1-6
- We propose to follow Jesus forming a community of fraternal life and mission. In every community there is friction between brothers. Following the Gospel, the Constitutions give us guidance to correct, forgive and inspire one another. A Christian would not impede the personal growth of a brother or place an obstacle in the way. Maturity in the faith positively influences the quality of fraternal life.

Tuesday, November 12, 2013. Memorial of St. Josaphat, Martyr

- Wis 2:23-3,9
 - Psalm 33
 - Lk 17:7-10
- The Constitutions translate this page of the Gospel for our missionary community, reminding us of the availability for the ministries that are entrusted to us or to be sent to places where God and his People require our presence. The reason is obvious: we want to be configured with Christ, who came not to do his own will, but that of the Father who sent him. And to put his life in the service of all.

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

- Wis 6:1-11
 - Psalm 81
 - Lk 17:11-19
- Jesus does not act with mercy waiting for gratitude: His actions are like this because this is the way of being of the Father, who is good even to the ungrateful and evil. But goodness and mercy are contagious, and at least one of the ten lepers cured was able to discover where the freely received gift came from. This changed his life: "Your faith has saved you".

Thursday, November 14, 2013

- Wis 7:22-8,1
 - Psalm 118
 - Lk 17:20-25
- "The kingdom of God is within you", even though it may not be noticeable in a spectacular way. It is within us because the Father has decided to pour all his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It is within us like a seed and a task. That is why our mission is manifested in a personal and community way. Beginning by asking for it and having a lively desire for it, and allowing that God be truly the Lord of our lives.

Friday, November 15, 2013. Memorial of St. Albert the Great, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

- Wis 13:1-9
 - Psalm 18
 - Lk 17:26-37
- Our existence as Christians and consecrated religious plays a role in ordinary life and in the fidelity of day to day events. Let us not place our hopes in signs or extraordinary events to decide to follow Jesus with all our heart. Let us endeavor, rather, in knowing to hear His voice and His call on a daily basis. Let us embrace every day with feelings of mercy, brotherhood, peace, respect for human dignity and everything created.

Saturday, November 16, 2013

- Wis 18:14-16;
19:6-9
 - Psalm 104
 - Lk 18:1-8
- The introduction to the parable recalls the temptation of Jesus' disciples in every era: to think it is sufficient to pray every once in a while, and then to become discouraged when the prayer does not give us a great feeling or we don't automatically obtain what we wanted. Jesus instructs us with the example of the poorest, whose only power is constancy; and he invites us to savor the contrast: we are not sent to a judge without feelings, but to the Father who is rich in mercy.

Sunday, November 17, 2013. 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Mal 3:19-20a
 - Psalm 97
 - 2 Thes 3:7-12
 - Lk 21:5-19
- "So you have an opportunity to give witness". Our greater witness is fraternal community life. At this time of profound changes and turmoil we are being asked to be a light that shows the value of our fraternity, the dignity of the smallest and fragile, the path of happiness through personal self giving. Jesus invites us to see the present world as a magnificent opportunity – the only one for us – to live and share the Gospel.

Monday, November 18, 2013

- 1 Mac 1:10
 - Psalm 118
 - Lk 18:35-43
- As a result of his faith, the blind man's eyes were opened and he began to follow Jesus, which is to say, to be a disciple. The path of my life as a disciple and being sent has to help other people to open their eyes, to discover the beauty of the faith and the invitation of the Gospel. It is to discover the person of Jesus who continues calling His followers.

Tuesday, November 19, 2013

- 2 Mac 6:18-31
 - Psalm 3
 - Lk 19:11-10
- Before Zacchaeus there are two distinct ways of looking at things. All considered him a sinner who needed to be avoided, and even criticized Jesus for coming closer to him. Jesus sees him in his human dignity and as the child of God, thus approaches him. The first attitude favors contempt and mutual separation. The second leads to the change of heart and attitudes.

Wednesday, November 20, 2013. Blessed Andrew Solá, Martyr (Cal CMF, 449-453)

- 2 Mac 7:1.20-31
 - Psalm 16
 - Lk 19:11-28
- The road to Jerusalem was not easy, because the expectations of the disciples did not coincide with the hope of Jesus. Perhaps you yourself have sense this type of experience in your consecrated and missionary life. Don't let fear paralyze you. Blessed Andrew Solá, who we remember today, teaches you to make fruitful the treasure entrusted to you. The only worker worthy of condemnation is one that has given in to fear, staying completely inactive.

Thursday, November 21, 2013. Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

- 1 Mac 2:15-29
 - Psalm 49
 - Lk 19:41-44
- Jesus weeps and laments that Jerusalem has not recognized the moment of the visit of God. Every day we began the day blessing God - in community or personally - because he has visited and redeemed us as a people. Do I live deeply this saving presence of God within myself and in my community? Do I convey it faithfully in every one of my activities?

Friday, November 22, 2013. Memorial of St. Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr

- 1 Mac 4:36-37
 - .52-59
 - (1 Chr 9:10.11ab.
 - 11d-12)
 - Lk 19:45-48
- Jesus entered the temple, expelled the sellers, and every day he in the temple. The manner of Jesus' action reminds us that the Spirit moves the Church to give primacy to the Word and to the person of Christ. Perhaps it would be worthwhile for us also to free ourselves of those secondary things that prevent us from centering on the teachings and person of Jesus Christ.

Saturday, November 23, 2013

- 1 Mac 6:1-13
 - Psalm 9
 - Lk 20:27-40
- Jesus affirms the certainty of the resurrection. At the heart, it is based on personal and unique experience that God has as Father and giver of Life. The conviction and authority in which He speaks is that even some teachers of the Law approved of His words and were attracted to Him as a person. In the mission of communicating the Word, how do I also express with authority and sincerity a deep experience of God?

Sunday, November 24, 2012. Solemnity of Christ the King

- 2 Sam 5:1-3
 - Psalm 121
 - Col 1:12-20
 - Lk 23:35-43
- The Solemnity of Christ the King is an invitation to renew the journey of following Jesus Christ. During this year as it comes to an end, have I identified with the Jesus Christ, servant and sent by the Father? Has our community been truly evangelized and evangelized? Whatever point is in which we find ourselves on our journey, may this prayer comes from our heart: "Lord Jesus, remember me and our religious family".

Monday, November 25, 2013

- Dan 1:1-6.8-20
 - (Dan 3:52-56)
 - Lk 21:1-4
- Give everything you have to live as a visible sign of total trust in God and His love. In my religious profession I have placed my whole life, with all its possibilities, available to the plan of God. Has my ability to give of myself and be available, increased with the passing of the years? Or do I go compromising and looking for false excuses every time I encounter some important step?

Tuesday, November 26, 2013

- Dan 2:31-45
 - (Dan 3:57-61)
 - Lk 21:5-11
- In the same way that some give emphasis to the beauty and grandeur of the temple, we also love to be proud of our apostolic structures. Jesus calls it to our attention: that we use all the means to proclaim the Gospel. Perhaps it also means not to absolutize any of them. We must always ensure that the structures and material resources are at the service of evangelization and are a means for witnessing to the Kingdom.

Wednesday, November 27, 2013

- Dan 5:1-6.13-14.16-17.23-28
 - (Dan 3:62-67)
 - Lk 21:12-19
- The words of Jesus in these final days of the liturgical year make us think of those of Claret when he speaks of following Jesus Christ through suffering and joy in difficulties and persecutions. With the problems and contradictions that have arisen during this year, have it been an occasion of living closer to Jesus Christ, or have I collapsed and placed myself in crisis? In what state is my confidence when I cross conflicting situations?

Thursday, November 28, 2013

- Dan 6:12-28
 - (Dan 3:68-74)
 - Lk 21,20-28
- The destruction of Jerusalem was not the end of the world; in any case, the purpose of that religion centered on the temple. Again Jesus tells us that we must focus our attention in Him, in the Son of Man. He is present in every moment of the human journey as Savior and liberator. As evangelizers, we have received the mission to make Him known and invite others to follow Him.

Friday, November 29, 2013

- Dan 7:2-14
 - (Dan 3:75-81)
 - Lk 21:29-33
- The fig tree blooms every year. Each year Spring arrives. In the midst of our world, every day, the Word of God, is received in welcoming hearts, and has the power to bring about faith, peace, forgiveness, and fraternity. Jesus invites us to be creators of hope. Let us not be reasons of disappointment like the fig tree full of foliage but which had no fruit.

Saturday, November 30, 2013. St. Andrew, Apostle (Cal CMF, 455-459)

- Rm 10:9-18
 - Psalm 18
 - Mt 4:18-22
- The last day of the liturgical year, the end of the third stage of *The Forge in Our Daily Life* and feast of an Apostle and co-patron of the Congregation. This would be a good time to bring balance to one's life. As Claret, we have received the same vocation of the Apostles to be with Jesus ("Come and follow me") and to share His mission ("I will make you fishers of men"). What kind of response am I giving? How do I identify with He who has called me?



5. Texts for reflection

Appendix 1: “A new journey: disciples of Jesus today” (MFL, 44-46)

44. Like the disciples of Emmaus, we too can overcome the lack of enthusiasm and zeal when we allow ourselves to be accompanied by the Master along the way of the missionary life. He hears our frustrations and questions and gives us what we need to rekindle the embers of a weakened vocation: the Word “that makes the heart burn” and the Eucharist that “opens our eyes” (cf. *Lk 24: 31-45*). That was the experience of our Founder. In the forge of meditation, spiritual exercises, and especially of Scripture and the Eucharist, challenged by the social, political and ecclesial context, his heart burned with the fire of his love for God and Mary (cf. *Aut 227, 342*). Realizing that love is a gift, as well as a task, Claret calls insistently upon God the Father (cf. *Aut 444-445*), Jesus (cf. *Aut 446*), the Spirit and Mary: “Oh Heart of Mary, furnace and instrument of love, kindle in me the love of God and neighbor!” (*Aut 447*).

45. The fire of our vocation is kept alive through a continual process of a deepening the call and formation in discipleship until we are conformed with Christ (cf. *VC 65; GPF 12*). This gift received allows us to overcome tempta-

tions fed by forms of thinking that favor superficiality, overvalues enjoyment and rejects self-denial and sacrifice. If we open ourselves to the Spirit in a continual process of formation, we can name our infidelity, enkindle the fire of our vocational gift, be attentive to the clamor of our people and find with them the creative responses to the changing needs of our world.

46. Jesus is the passion that spurs us on (cf. *CC 4*) and the path we follow. With Him we look for the glory of God and the salvation of humankind, praying, working, and suffering. Prayer sets our love to God and our brothers alight. The missionary work expresses that love and communicates it. The acceptance of suffering refines us in the same fire as Jesus: it makes us one with the crucified of this world and this makes us credible. To set ourselves alight in prayer like Claret, spurs us on to work and suffer for the Gospel. Centering ourselves on these values throughout our life and formative journey purifies our motivation, illuminates our perplexity and directs all that we are and do for the greater glory of God and the salvation of all.

But what is most notable, in this aspect, of the Claretian mysticism is not their Christological direction revealed by the usual contemplation of Christ or by the reference to the greater part of the phenomena. The most remarkable thing is that the predominant reference to the incarnate Word has culminated in an intimate experience of the life of Christ in him. St. Anthony Claret had always proposed that “it is not I who live, but Christ in me”, as the goal of Christian life. “Look to Jesus Christ and copy Him to yourself, until you can say: I live, not I; but Christ lives in me”, he had written to the priests in 1861 [in volume II of *The Well Instructed Seminarian*. The ethics of imitation should be transmitted in a communion of life of which Christ is principle. He said this more clearly in the *Talents of Prayer* when he defines the final stage of prayer (the spiritual marriage) by that vital inter-communion: “As the soul of the righteous loves God, it is in God, and so the two, which he says like St Paul: I live, but not I, but that Christ lives in me”.

In 1862, Claret writes in his autobiography that, at least in certain privileged moments, he had an experience of this life in Christ: “During the half hour after mass, 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” (n. 754). We have seen that the Saint later will find this engagement mystical, ready to enter the state of a transforming union. Now, in these circumstances he was able to experience a vital intercommunion between him and Christ. The text assumes a particular value if it is recalled that, as we said on another occasion, in order to describe this new experience St. Anthony Mary has been inspired by an expression of Father Juan Bautista Zappa: “Everything in me has vanished. I live with the life of God”. In an attempt to reproduce this thought the Saint believed he should clarify: “I live with the life of Jesus Christ”. Given that all other Claretian texts also emphasize this Christological sentiment of its mystical union, we believe that the correction is intentional. Therefore Anthony Claret was aware that the highest mystical experiences were relegated particularly not only to the Divinity but also to the Humanity of the Lord. What is the theological value of this assessment? That the transforming union accords to the soul a particular relationship to the Word of God which was taught more or less explicitly by St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross. The same conviction seems to be the basis for many assertions of the Church Fathers, in particular of Gregory of Nyssa. But the assertion of St. Anthony Mary leads us to assume a relationship not only with the Word, but also with the Blessed Humanity that He assumed: the term of marriage is the Incarnate Word. St John of the Cross who spoke only of the Word of God, the Wisdom of the Father, does not require this relationship of love with the humanity of Christ. He simply tells us that the state of spiritual marriage leads as a consequence to a more profound understanding of the mystery of the Incarnate Word. But this assertion does not prejudge the answer to our question. And, nevertheless, the judgment of St. Francis as a sign of his transformation, the nuptials of St. Teresa with Christ appear as religious imagery, the experiences of St. Catherine

of Sienna who lived a very close union not only with the Divinity but also with the Humanity of the Lord, and finally the experiences of St. Anthony Mary Claret reveal that in the final stages of his spiritual life, the soul can not only have an experience of instrumental intervention of the Sacred Humanity in the fullness of the grace, but also that this state confers a particular communion and configuration with the Humanity of Christ. The life that one feels fulfilled is the very life of Christ. There is thus a perfect transformation of the holy soul in the soul of Christ. Fr. Bover told us how all of the theology of St. Paul assumes this outcome. Only that, we include, in the level of the experience a few saints who may have a keener awareness of this common act.

For St. Anthony Mary Claret the life in Christ culminated on September 12, 1869, a little more than a year before his death, with the grace of love for his enemies. This grace had been bestowed in the preceding days by a series of extraordinary recognitions, reading the *Five Mansions* of St. Teresa. On that day, at half past eleven in the morning, reading the meditation on “the prodigious love that Jesus manifested on the cross to His enemies,” the Lord granted him the grace to experience an intense love, maternal, toward his own enemies. Let us listen to his words:

“Day 12. At half past eleven on that day, the Lord granted me love for my enemies. I’ve felt this in my heart. The Lord has secured this with a miracle: in the act itself that I felt in my heart, I have seen that the Crucifix and the picture of the Blessed Virgin were joined together without being touched ... The 27th meditation of the Exercises explained has given me this great grace. “Vivo ego, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.” Jesus looked at the Jews as a mother who looks at her sick children” (Writings, p. 663).

The Saint calls this the Great Grace. Exactly like the conservation of the species. Not great, but the greatest grace that was received in his heart, to the point of disrupting the level of sensibility, this participation in the love of Christ crucified for one’s enemies. To explain it, St. Anthony Mary contented himself with quoting the text of Galatians: *vivo ego, jam no ego, vivit vero in me Christus*. It could be said that it deals with an allusion to the presence of the sacramental species. But at the same time the Saint insinuates that he has already come to this point of enjoying that vital communion with Christ that he regarded as the summit of mystical life. He loved his enemies with the love of Christ, because his whole soul belonged to his Lord. We have here the contents of the phenomenon that the medieval mystic called “change of hearts”.

The Claretian spiritual journey had ended well with an intense experience of the life of Christ in his soul. His experience, like that of St. Teresa, that the Humanity of the Lord, far from being a hindrance in the last degrees of union, is made each time more present. In being forced to dive into his own experience, St. Anthony Mary came in contact with the most authentic mystical tradition. St. John of the Cross had found no better definition of the spiritual marriage than the text of Galatians 2:20. Long before he said this, it

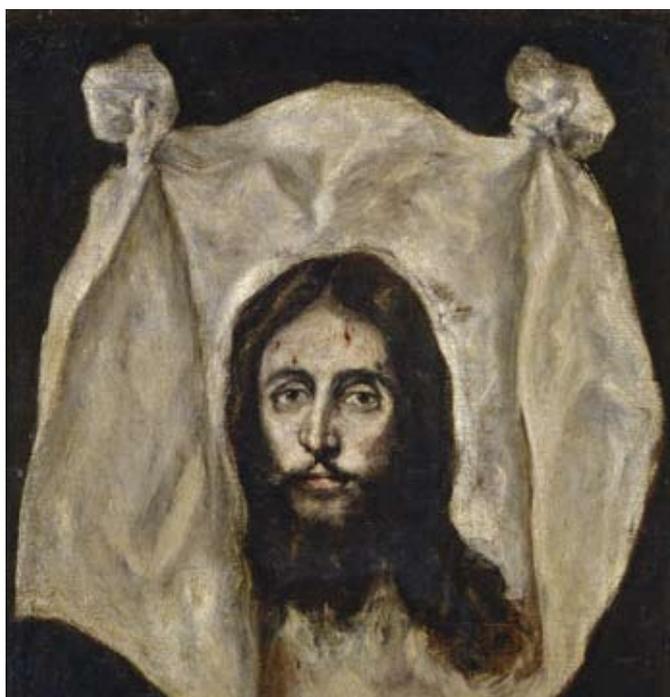
had already been said by Origin and Gregory of Nyssa; such transformation in Christ is the ultimate ideal of the Christian. This was a transformation that St Jerome, speaking theologically, had described as the culmination of all the virtues and gifts; and that much later Victorino the African had described this, from the psychological point of view: “for one to live Christ is to live spiritually, in faith, in thinking about Him constantly, to speak about Him, to believe in Him, to serve to Him with all your soul”. One could not have given a better description of the spiritual life of our Saint in his final years.

Appendix 3: The symbol of Jesus and His images (J.M. Lozano)

The reader will have already noticed how the images of Jesus have been changing along the spiritual journey of Anthony Mary Claret. We started with the title Lord in whose service he wanted to devote and Friend with whom the child spoke in his ‘visits’ before the Tabernacle. This won’t ever leave him, and the Friend will appear once again in the quiet years of Madrid. Then there would be Jesus the evangelizer of the divine kingdom, sent by the Father, with his preaching, healings, and rule of life for the uprooted and poor.

Much later the image would be internalized. Jesus lives in his disciples. Thus it appears intimately united with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Anthony, in the Latin version of the creed, professed his faith in the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son. But it refers more often to the humanity of the Anointed Jesus (incarnation, baptism) with fullness of grace and gifts which we participate as His disciples. Here is where he inserted his charismatic experience. The two acts that the seminarian Claret had experienced conjointly, was the power of the Spirit and the identification with Christ the Evangelizer. These clearly appear as two aspects of the same reality. On the other hand, this close relationship between the glorified Lord who lives in us and the gift of the Spirit, flowed into the vision of the Church as body whose head is Christ. And finally, as we shall see more clearly, at the end of this study, Anthony, persecuted and defenseless, will remain with the Crucified One.

These transformations of the image of Jesus have an easy explanation. The Son of God, who makes us crazy, is something more than this. It is, culturally and psychologically, a powerful symbol. The grace of God works in our psyche by means of symbols of charged with energy and called to



channel our activities. We are deeply oriented and we relate through symbols. This fullness of symbol is Jesus the Christ, presented continually by the Church, is refracted, passing through the prisms of the various cultures in diverse images. His accounts are already in the New Testament, from Mark to Paul to John. And these accounts continue to happen, even for us: *Logos* in Origin, *the interior Teacher* in Augustine, Byzantine Artworks, *the pietistic intimate Jesus* of the XII century... up to *the Liberator* of the today’s Latin American theology and spirituality.

The same is true in the development of a person. We change our images of God and are transformed into those of Christ. The nights, the purifications are precisely, in psychological terms, a fall back to earth, until we are in pieces. It is from these masks that we place over the God-without-face, to be able to speak with Him. Jesus, in his redemptive night, complained about being abandoned by God. What was missing in his psyche was the symbol of the Abba, who was central in his experience. It is that symbols change with growth or with the various states of the human spirit. There is a close relationship between what we see and what we are. As we see throughout the life of St. Anthony Mary Claret there is a perfect correspondence between the way as he saw himself and his preferred way of seeing the Lord.

Christ's Presence

Dominus vobiscum.

Gloria tibi, Domine.

Laus, tibi Christe.

Mortem tuam annuntiamus, Domine, et tuam resurrectionem confitemur, donec venias.

Ecce Agnus Dei... Domine, non sum dignus...

“The principal ways by which Christ is present in the Church are gradually revealed in the Mass. He is present firstly in the assembly of the faithful, gathered in his name; he is present in his word, which is read in the Church and commented upon in the Homily; he is present in the minister; he is present finally, and above all else, in the Eucharistic species – a totally unique presence because in the sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ is wholly and entirely present, God and man, substantially and without interruption. It is precisely for this reason that the presence of Christ in the sacred species is called real: ‘This presence is called “real” not to exclude the idea that the others are “real” too, but rather to indicate presence par excellence’” (*Mysterium fidei*, 39) (*De sacra communione*, 6).

“There is a particular need to cultivate a lively awareness of Christ’s real presence, both in the celebration of Mass and in the worship of the Eucharist outside Mass. Care should be taken to show that awareness through tone of voice, gestures, posture and bearing.” (*Mane nobiscum Domine*, 18).

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As a visible sign of invisible realities, sacraments contain what they signify. The Eucharist is first and foremost an *opus Dei*. The Lord speaks and works, here and now, for us, by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. CCC, 1373). We express our faith in his real presence by means of the our professions of faith after having listened to the Word: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ; and before receiving him in Com-

munion: *Lord, I am not worthy to receive You, say but the word, and I shall be healed.*

The Eucharistic celebration should lead us to exclaim, as did the Apostles after having encountered him risen: We have seen the Lord! (Jn 20:25).

Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ is communion with the Risen One, foretaste of immortality, pledge of future glory. The presence, warmth and light of God should remain in us and shine forth in our entire lives. Communion with Christ helps us to “see” the signs of the Divine presence in the world, and to “manifest” it to all whom we encounter.

The Forge in Our Daily Life

CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013

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Because we should do all things just as Jesus Christ did, I used to ask myself in every situation, and still do, how Jesus would have acted. How carefully and with what purity and rightness of intention He did everything: preaching, eating, dealing with all sorts of people, praying! Thus, with the Lord's help, I resolved to imitate Jesus Christ in all things so as to be able to say by my actions, if not in so many words, "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ." (Aut 387)