

caritas christi

# The Forge

in our daily life

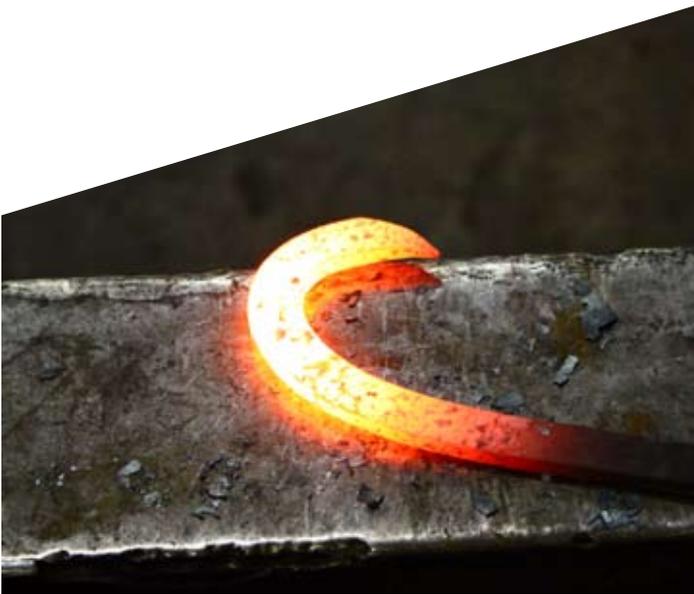
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Consecrated to God and to people

Ordinary Time I

# 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 God’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

**Words** that, no doubt, you often utter is “thank you”, or “thank you very much.” In the Christmas season and at the beginning of the new year you have had the opportunity to repeat it: you have received good wishes and gifts from your community and perhaps from others; on such a day, or any other day, your soul has been able to experience feeling a saturation of favours that have dug you out of a tricky situation. You have also shown your gratitude to God: first, in the liturgy, with the singing of the *Gloria*, the recitation of psalms of thanksgiving and, above all, the celebration of the Eucharist, the great act of thanksgiving in the church; secondly, in your own personal prayer, because “it’s good to give thanks to God”, so that it accompanies you throughout every day.

On the twelfth night we tell the story of the Adoration of the Magi. They, like the shepherds, experienced an encounter with Jesus. Matthew mentioned the gifts they offered, and in our sim-



ple carols we sing of these shepherds and the gifts they bore Jesus, and the ones we would like to give him ourselves. It's our way to bid him welcome and, at a deeper level, to give thanks for the ineffable gift of his presence here amongst us.

As a Christian, you have received the grace of filiation. The Lord has included you on his list of children: God is his Father and your Father, something you have encountered and been reminded of in the *Patris Mei* section. As a Son of the Heart of Mary, you have been given the gift of following Christ according to the Claretian charism (cf. CC 4). Like the first disciples, you have received the grace of communion with him and of participating in his mission. These essential gifts give expression of his love for you, the *Caritas Christi*. You have welcomed this grace into your heart, you have answered his call affirmatively. You have dedicated and devoted yourself to him, sharing his fate in times of joy and pain.

In this booklet, you will try to recall the love of Jesus you felt when you were first called and of

the gifts bestowed on you. Some are offered to us all; others, of a ministerial or charismatic nature, are distributed amongst the various members of the Church, as Paul taught us. For your part, when you said "yes" to Christ's call, you surrendered yourself to God through him. Saying "yes" also involves sacrifice, but in the realization that "the objective of being a follower is not resignation, but Jesus himself" (*M. Fraijó*).

**The Liturgy of the Word in ordinary time**, which we have begun, shows, in the Gospel readings, how he gave of himself, the Light that shines in the darkness. It also shows the steps taken by his followers, who left everything for him, and those he said were his brothers, his sisters and his mother (cf. *Mk* 3.35), but the evangelist does not hide the fact that those steps were awkward: we are eternal learners in the school of being followers. If every day you perceive a flash of light, give thanks and walk after it.

## 2. Reflection

“This is love: not that we loved God but that he first loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 Jn 4:10). In line with the very essence of revelation we can say: “This is the gift: not that we have given anything to God, but that he gave us his Son and showered us with gifts”; in fact, “Who has given him something first, so that God had to repay him?” (Rom 11:35). There is an order: in love, in the giving of presents, everything. God comes first.

**The text you are about to read is about your consecration**, read from the perspective of it being a gift or personal surrender to God. But the passages cited suggest keeping the proper order, considering first the gifts that God has given you. They establish, inspire and feed your personal surrender at every moment.



### The new and special consecration

“In the Church’s tradition religious profession is considered to be a special and fruitful deepening of the consecration received in Baptism, inasmuch as it is the means by which the close union with Christ already begun in Baptism develops in the gift of a fuller, more explicit and authentic configuration to him through the profession of the evangelical counsels. This further consecration, however, differs in a special way from baptismal consecration, of which it is not a necessary consequence. In fact, all those reborn in Christ are called to live out, with the strength which is the Spirit’s gift, the chastity appropriate to their state of life, obedience to God and to the Church, and a reasonable detachment from material possessions: for all are called to holiness, which consists in the perfection of love.

But Baptism in itself does not include the call to celibacy or virginity, the renunciation of possessions or obedience to a superior, in the form proper to the evangelical counsels. The profession of the evangelical counsels thus presupposes a particular gift of God not given to everyone, as Jesus himself emphasizes with respect to voluntary celibacy (cf. Mt 19:10-12). This call is accompanied, moreover, by a specific gift of the Holy Spirit, so that consecrated persons can respond to their vocation and mission.” (*Vita Consecrata*, 30).

#### 2.1. Gifts from God the Father

In the stage *Patris Mei* you meditated on God’s love for us, in the form of a series of commitments. There are commitments that the Father gives the Son; here we can ignore these, and we

can linger over his gift of his Son to mankind. The apostle Paul highlights this with these disturbing thoughts: “If he did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not give

us all things with him?" (*Rom 8:32*); pages earlier he had written: "But see how God manifested his love for us: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (*Rom 5:8*). The apostle does not allow himself to get carried away by empty, pompous poeticism; rather he speaks of the price of grace, of what it cost God to save us. You may say it's just a way of speaking, and perhaps it is; but you will quickly correct yourself and realise that it is not just merely a manner of speaking: saving us came at a price for God; **he didn't just sacrifice crumbs, some leftovers; he gave what was most precious to Him: his only Son, the Son in whom he was well pleased.** In the drama of Jesus, Paul understands the mystery of God and his passionate love (*P. Evdokimov*). And the liturgy proclaims it with unashamed beauty in the solemn proclamation of the Easter Vigil: "What incomparable tenderness and love! To save a slave you gave your Son." That is how much he valued us.

If the death of Jesus takes us back to his birth, it is enough to simply let the echoes of the recent Christmas liturgy ring out: "A child is born, a son is given to us" (cf. *Is 9:5*); moreover, the virginal motherhood of Mary which rounded off the octave of Christmas reveals how much this child is a gift from God, in whom power has an equal status with love.

And if, finally, between the birth and death of Jesus, you read about the progress of his ministry, what do you find? Jesus himself draws up a list of precious gifts, eagerly awaited, to be concluded with the announcement of the Lord's year of mercy (cf. *Lk 4:19*). It is a year in which the creditor tears up the credit notes, a year in which God will cancel the debts of his people; pardon and relieve the bankrupt debtor: that is the perfect gift.

## 2.2. The gifts of Jesus

**The gifts of God are clearly revealed in those which Jesus lavishes upon us, starting with his planned announcement.** He proclaims the coming of the Lord our God, the beginning of the greatest of gifts; he goes out to teach everyone everywhere; through miracles he shows the splendour of his love and service: to make them a reality, he demands faith and trust, but he doesn't demand payment; he feeds the crowd at a feast that symbolizes the arrival of the messianic promises. All these gestures serve to highlight the open road to our salvation so generously bestowed. This way of doing things encouraged his audience to prac-



tise the art of giving ("Give and you shall receive": *Lk 6:38*), forgiveness ("Forgive and you will be forgiven": *Lk 6:37*) and inviting the uninvited to their banquet (cf. *Lk 14:13*). And he commands his disciples who are sent out on mission, to give as a gift what they have received as a gift (cf. *Mt 10:8*).

At the Last Supper he offers the bread and the cup to his disciples, a prophetic action which proclaims the surrender of his body and the shedding of his blood. You commemorate it day after day in celebrating the memory of the Passover. And you bring it to mind with the *Pange lingua*:

*"Sing, my tongue, the Saviour's glory,  
of His flesh the mystery sing;  
of the Blood, all price exceeding,  
shed by our immortal King,  
destined, for the world's redemption,  
from a noble womb to spring.  
Of a pure and spotless Virgin  
born for us on earth below,  
He, as Man, with man conversing,  
stayed, the seeds of truth to sow;  
then He closed in solemn order  
wondrously His life of woe.  
On the night of that Last Supper,  
seated with His chosen band,  
He the Pascal victim eating,  
first fulfils the Law's command;  
then as Food to His Apostles  
gives Himself with His own hand."*

All actions carried out in the ministry seem to lead us to the most important action of all, the Supper, which draws us into the reality of the passion and death. These are caused by the rejection of the gift that Jesus offers us and of his teachings. **But it will be on the cross that his truth and the truth of his love will be endorsed forever.** His truth: only he who fully owns it can give it fully; his love: “There is no greater love than this, to give one’s life for one’s friends” (*Jn 15: 13*). Paul personalised the recipient and invites you to personalise it too: “He loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal 2:20*). (See Appendix 2: *The epidemic and the remedy*).

The story of Jesus giving does not end here, with a full-stop or some enigmatic suspension points. After Good Friday came the Lord’s Day and the unveiling of apparitions of the Risen One. And what happens in such encounters is essentially “the Lord’s gift of himself to his disciples, in which he surrenders himself, pouring out upon them his own new life, his forgiveness and his peace, his spirit of communion and thereby creating a community and a renewed fraternity” (*M. Gesteira*). A theologian summed up Easter with the following: “The cause of Jesus goes on.” It tells us little; but we can rephrase it as follows: “The self-sacrifice of Jesus goes on.” And beyond the Easter apparitions, which are of limited duration, we celebrate the continuing self-sacrifice of the Lord in the living Word, in the sacraments of his love, in fraternal communion, in mission work, in the work of justice and love.

**To give, to give of oneself, to surrender, to surrender oneself, to sow, to distribute, to pour out:** these are verbs that express the history

“Consecrated persons, who embrace the evangelical counsels, receive a new and special consecration which, without being sacramental, commits them to making their own — in chastity, poverty and obedience — the way of life practised personally by Jesus and proposed by him to his disciples.” (*Vita Consecrata, 31*).

of giving. In each person the gift of God shows through: there in the new-born child and the son freely given; there in those anointed by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom and to make it a reality through public proclamation, teaching and actions; there in the Last Supper with his brothers; there in his surrender and death on the cross; there in the Easter encounters, God uttered his last word. There is nothing more to say to you, nothing more *to give you*. Through the Son, the firstborn from amongst the dead, the first in everything, God has told you everything and *given* everything.

Christian Meditation has no purpose other than to repeat this story through the eyes of faith, allowing the heart of God to speak to our own hearts. It is a repetition in which the Spirit of God makes you aware of this self-giving love; from knowledge comes recognition, and from this, the answer.

## Exercise 1: Gratitude

*In some societies, people are expert at claiming their rights, and that’s fine. But it would be unwise to forget the gifts we receive or forget the words “thank you.” Jesus gives thanks to the Father repeatedly (*Mk 8:6, 14:23, Jn 11:41; etc.*). Paul also assiduously practised giving thanks to God. And in just three verses of the Letter to the Colossians (*Col 3:15-17*) there are three expressions of gratitude: “be thankful”, “Sing to God with a thankful heart,” “Giving thanks to the Father” through Christ himself.*

- Call to mind people that deserve your gratitude and **make a written account of some of the gifts you have received** from them.
- During this period **take the opportunity to thank them.**
- When do you feel moved to give thanks to God? No doubt there are times when the ministry seems like a thankless task (in the style of Jeremiah) or it feels like a burden (as with Paul). **How do you reaffirm in yourself your own vocation and mission?**

### 2.3. The list of gifts for the life and mission of the disciples

Jesus' hands have distributed gifts: he places them to heal, with them he takes and multiplies the loaves to feed the crowds, at the farewell supper he uses them to distribute the bread and share the cup, on the cross he extends them, in apparitions he again uses them to take the bread, breaks it and offers it (cf. *Lk 24:31*) or he simply shows his hands (cf. *Lk 24:40; Jn 19:20 a*). But this list does not itemise the plethora of gifts from Jesus; another list has been left on the keyboard: the one which details those gifts which, during his ministry or over Easter, he gave to his disciples.

Mark points it out when he lists the objectives Jesus had in creating the group of Twelve: "So he appointed twelve to be with him; and he called them apostles. He wanted to send them out to preach, and he gave them authority to drive out demons" (*Mk 3:14*). **The first gift is the call to live with Jesus.** The evangelist then highlights the flurry of intense activity that affects the deep dimensions of our personality; but if we extend our gaze to the gospels and letters, we see a whole entourage or list of gifts and abilities that the Lord gives his people and which come into our possession. We can organise them into four groups.

1. *Gifts in the line of communion.* A fundamental gift is one of entering the most intimate and "exclusive" family circle of Jesus himself: that of his filial relationship with the Father. You are given the grace to have the same God and Father that

he has (cf. *Jn 20:17*, cf. *Jn 1:12-13*, *1 Jn 3:1*; *Rom 8:29*; *Heb 2:11*), and if you have the same God and Father, you're licensed to call God "Abba" (Father), as he called him (*Rom 8:15*; *Gal 4:6*; cf. *1 Pt 1:17*).

2. *Gifts in the line of identification.* From the root of your filial reality, your individual humanity is fashioned within the different aspects that go to make it up: thinking, feeling and working. In the aspect of thinking you are offered this set of possibilities:

a) *Having the mindset of a Christian* (cf. *1 Cor 2:16*), with the good fortune that the truth of Christ has a majestic presence in you (cf. *2 Cor 11:10*). At the Last Supper Jesus tells his followers: "I shall not call you servants any more, because servants do not know what their master is about" (*Jn 15:15*), as if to say: "I have nothing to keep secret from you. I have revealed to you the most intimate aspects of my life. I have told you about family traits, that secret formula for living received from the Father. You are my confidants who will later become my messengers". As a confidant you receive the gift of the same words that Jesus received from the Father: "I have given them the teaching I received from you, and they received it" (*Jn 17:8*, cf. *17:14*); this is part of the legacy he bequeaths to his disciples in his "testament".

b) In your attitudes and interpersonal relationships it is given to you *to have the same feelings as Christ Jesus*, who, being of a divine nature,



stepped down from his divinity, took the form of a slave and became one like so many others (cf. *Phil* 2:5). These feelings translated into a kind of downgrading for him, a profound empathetic sharing of the condition (“slave”) and destiny (“death”) of others, without advocating for himself any level of superiority or primacy, except that of service: “Think of the Son of Man who has not come to be served but to serve and to give his life to redeem many” (*Mk* 10:45).

c) *It makes you share his joy*: “I have told you all this, that my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete” (*Jn* 15:11, cf. *Jn* 17:13); you will receive his peace: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (*Jn* 14:28), at the same time you are able to share in his sufferings, which for Paul was an honour and something he desired (cf. *Phil* 3:10).

Seeing it embedded in this litany of gifts, you’ll not consider the appearance of Christ as being vague and imprecise or see it as being blasphemous. **It is a gift-vocation that, in your own way, you become accustomed to and accept it wholeheartedly, with gratitude and a sense of responsibility.** On several occasions we will have wanted to make it in our own image and likeness, and link it with the vehicle of our own desires, just as the medieval writer proclaimed: “The venerated Christ will flutter like a banner in the breeze, flapping like a common piece of cloth... Conscious of the fact that they do with him whatever they want and fold him every which way, according to each person’s desire ... He is always what you make of him” (*Godfrey of Strasbourg*). But this Christ gives you his blessing to be like him. Such is the plan of God: “Those whom he knew beforehand, he has also predestined to be like his Son, similar to him, so that he may be the Firstborn among many brothers and sisters” (*Rom* 8:29). Through their willingness, they adapt themselves. St. Teresa of Avila puts it concisely: “He makes himself to our measure.”

3. *Gifts in the line of mission*. If you have received the teaching that Jesus received from the Father and which he passed on to his own people, you too can, according to your ability, continue his mission: you will name the gift, as he and the first disciples did; you will formulate positive dreams and apparitions that describe the profound identity of man, as he did in the Sermon on the Mount (*Mt* 5-7); you will drive out the ghosts and personal tensions that take control of people and groups; you will help to face up to the suffering and the cross of life with a positive attitude; you will be a



minister of reconciliation (cf. *2 Cor* 5:18-20); you will propagate the Church, both in him and after him, which inspired a congregational movement and established the roots of the Church in his ministry, at the Last Supper and his total surrender at Easter. In your state of weakness, you will be imbued with the strength of Christ (cf. *2 Cor* 12:9, *Eph* 6:10), you will not be of this world, as he wasn’t of the world (cf. *Jn* 17:16) and you will secure over the world the same victory that he obtained (cf. *Jn* 16:33, *1 Jn* 5:4). You will be the continuation, within the community, of his works (cf. *Jn* 14:12).

4. *Gifts in the line of fulfillment and final consummation*. Jesus is the Son glorified by the Father. And he will bestow on you (here/there) the glory and the majesty that the Father has given to him: “I have given them the glory you have given me, that they may be one as we are one[...] Father, since you have given them to me, I want them to be with me where I am and see the Glory you gave me ...” (*Jn* 17:22.24). In another letter it is stated: “To this end he called you through the gospel we preach, for he willed you to share the glory of Christ Jesus our Lord” (*2 Thes* 2:14, cf. *2 Cor* 3:18).

## Exercise 2: Configuration with Christ

*In future booklets, our vows will be considered as the corner stones of our devotion to Jesus. For now, we suggest the following exercise:*

- Meditate on those traits of Jesus the Son and Jesus sent by the Father which are most relevant to you. **Give thanks for the light of the Spirit that enables you to perceive them.** Look carefully at your daily life with these traits in mind and pray that your configuration with the Lord continues growing.
- As an alternative exercise, **you can review the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12).** They act as a self-portrait of Jesus. In your Forge notebook, make a note of the extent these are defining characteristics of your identity as a disciple.

### 2.4. Dedication: “I consecrate myself in the Holy Spirit to God the Father through Jesus Christ his Son”

Rank imposes obligation: it is an honour to receive so many gifts; and it is an honour to be deserving of so many gifts and to be obliged to be accountable: “To whom much is given, much is required”. God has made you a gift of things: “Everything is yours”; God has made you a gift of yourself: “He has left man free to make his own decisions” (*Sir 15:14*); God has made you a gift of himself: you are “partaker of the divine nature,” “son within the Son”, a collaborator in the mission of the Son.

God has called you and has given you the status of being a part of the chain of giving. Arising from your gratitude for such gifts, you yourself will be moved to give: gratitude is the key and the springboard for living our commitments fully.

We know the story of the beggar who, curiously, was asked for alms by the King of kings himself: the disappointed beggar took a grain of wheat out of his pocket and gave it to him; at dusk, when he emptied his pocket, he found a small grain of gold (*cf. Appendix 5*). But we also know another story, the one of the poor widow and her offering for the Temple: “Jesus sat down opposite the Temple treasury and watched the people dropping money into the treasury box; and many rich people put in large offerings. But a poor widow also came along and dropped in two small coins. Then Jesus called his disciples and said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all those who gave offerings. For all of them gave from their plenty, but she gave from her poverty and put in everything she had, her very living’” (*Mk 12:41-44*).

Everything she had, her very living. In the theology of religious life you may have been taught that consecration to God through your profession is an act of religion and that it is a real holocaust. The peculiarity of this kind of sacrifice is that the victim was burned completely (hence the word “holocaust”); in the same way, the religious makes a holocaust of his life giving himself completely to God, without reservations. **It is now understood that consecration is like an exercise of the theological virtues, which are shaped through the total and immediate surrender to God.**

In Scripture we find a principle that has been designated the principle of “everything” and that in the project of the Forge, it has been given the name of the rules of totality. This principle teaches that it is wrong to establish our theological life in terms of a lot or a little; what springs from that is seeing it in terms of all or nothing. As we have seen, this is how the Lord Jesus “presented” his own life: he sacrificed his life for us. He didn’t just give the surplus of his harvest, or a carefully calculated small offering from his pocket, nor a piece of advice from his excessive wisdom. He simply surrendered himself. Yes, he had already been giving himself in his teaching, his healing ministry, in gifts to the poor, in his close proximity to the people, in the quiet or hectic moments of his ministry, in the joyful encounters or the hard knocks in his dealings, in times of loneliness and at times when people, hail, rain or shine, never left him in peace, when he didn’t even have time to eat. At the Last Supper and on the cross, he gives of himself in person. He was unstinting in his work; he was unstinting in giving of himself. So it was, and so it still is now, a clear indication of his grace.

It is your turn now. The principle of everything features in the first and most important commandment, the love of God with all your heart: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” (*Dt* 6:4). We can highlight many resonances in Scripture and Tradition. Let us note a few: “The heart of the anointed belongs entirely to God” (*1 Kings* 11:4), “Love ... believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (*1 Cor* 13:7), “my God and my all” (St. Francis of Assisi [† 1226], and motto of the Franciscans), “Love him totally” (*Illum totaliter diligas*: Clare of Assisi), “Take, Lord, and accept all of my freedom, my memory, my understanding and my entire free will, all that I have and possess; you gave it all to me, and to you, Lord, I give it back; everything is yours, do with it what you will; give me your love and grace, which is enough for me” (Ignatius of Loyola [† 1556]), “I have surrendered to Him/And to such a great extent/That I am my Beloved’s/And my

Beloved is mine.” (Teresa of Avila [† 1582]), “All glory to God, all joy to our neighbours, to me, all sacrifices” (motto of St. Mary Bertila Boscardin [† 1922]). Fr. Claret ordains “all for the greater glory of God.” When you make your profession as a Claretian, you declare the very same. You do it in other words but rhyming in this sense: “I desire to seek the glory of God more earnestly, to devote myself to him more fully [...], pray for me, that I may reach the perfection of charity.”

In the daily Eucharist, taking part in the offering of Christ, reaffirm your own commitment. For by dying, he is dead to sin once and for all, and now the life that he lives is life with God (cf. *Rom* 6:10); and you can act on the very same message (cf. *Rom* 6:11). At the end of Eucharistic Prayer II, the priest pronounces this doxology: “Through him, and with him and in him, O God, almighty Father, all glory and honour is yours for ever and ever.” And we validate that with the *amen*.

## Exercise 3: The principle of everything

**Re-read the pronouncements of the Word of God which propose the rule of totality**, and the testimonies of the saints who observed this motto in life. Remember the formula of words used in your profession when you were consecrated to God as a Claretian Missionary. Meditate on each paragraph, recalling the personal battles and fatigue you suffered through the wording of the text. Cling to the goodness of the Lord, who lifts you up and drives you onwards. **You can write your own personal formula during this stage of your life.**

### 2.5. Detachment

We have reserved for this moment another testimony that brings to mind the rule of totality. One is the statement of Simon Peter: “We have given up everything to follow you” (*Mk* 10:28), which fits with what Luke relates: “So they brought their boats to land and followed him, leaving everything” (*Lk* 5:11). The word “all” reappears in two of Jesus’ parables: the man who finds the treasure in the field, sells all he has and buys that field and the parable of the man finding a pearl of great price, and he sells all that he has and buys it (cf. *Mt* 13:44-46).

Simon had left his boat and his fishing business behind, his livelihood in fact, and had said “good-bye” to his whole way of life. As he embarked on a new journey, he would have to deal with personal possessions and internal changes: to abandon certain ways of thinking and simplistic expectations about the Kingdom of God and the destiny

of Jesus (cf. *Mk* 8:31-33); to discard illusions about his own fate, presumably in line with his own expectations about Jesus (cf. *Mk* 10:35-41); to lay aside certain attitudes and aggressive behaviour (cf. *Mk* 14:36 par.); to give up certain ideas and laws supposedly governing forbidden foods (cf. *Acts* 19:9-16) and to expand the areas of mission (cf. *Acts* 10:17-48).

The detachment is clearly distinguished, therefore, in the shedding of tangible personal possessions and in other specific possessions, which have repercussions on this internal baggage of expectations, ideas, rules and plans which we use to deal with life, but all of which need careful examination. As in the art of sculpture, it is all about removing the excess; but if you are, perhaps, quite attached to what you have in excess, the detachment process will be painful for you. It is, however, the route you have to take, keeping your



eyes on the goal you are after, and making it truly your goal as you go along: it is not like a physical object that is out there and that, even if you have come a long way to almost touch it, it remains alien to you until you have it in your hands. There is vital growth in faith, hope and love, which always will be a journey from faith to faith, from hope to hope, from love to love.

The detachment may scare you; but take note that it all occurs in the most varied walks of life, and for the good. For example: on occasions, seafarers have to jettison ballast, and so too do hot air balloon travellers in order to rise into the sky; in literature, good writers remove excess foliage as if it were like fallen leaves; the child loses its baby teeth so that its permanent adult teeth might push through; frequently the beginning of good health is kicked off by detoxification, freeing us from harmful substances carrying the organisms. So we get rid of what weighs us down (the ballast), what is temporary (baby teeth) of what is harmful (toxic substances). Detachment is a positive step forward.

If we apply this same principle to the environment in which we live, the following needs to be noted: **the road towards truth requires that we go back on ourselves if we go wrong:** to get rid of superstitions (“the number thirteen is unlucky,” “the stars dictate your life” “do not cross in front of a black cat”), prejudice and unfounded opinions, ideologies dictated by cliques, caricatures of other people and the labels we give them (“So and so is this or that”) and generalizations about social class, ethnic or religious groups (“Muslims are violent”).

Also, the road to goodness demands that we free ourselves from vices and the works of our old selves or cliques that can take a hold in our religious family; the road to an orderly life demands that we break with the bad (addiction to smoking, compulsive gambling, dependence on the Internet, etc.); and the good road of hope demands that we stop being deluded and make appropriate adjustments to our expectations.

None of this can be achieved all at once. We have to be on the alert and not let new prejudices, new addictions and new “illusions”, that will lead inevitably to new disappointments, to take a hold. It will be good to extend this to the field of tangible personal possessions. **Outside the canonical visitation, it would do no harm to occasionally ‘pay a visit’ to our world of possessions and do some spring-cleaning.** We keep putting it all off, like Peter, but it is easy to gradually fill

every room in the house; the pantry with food; the wardrobe with clothes; the workshop with junk; the bookshelves with books (and our heads with relatively useless information, which also takes up space: “Better a well formed head than a full one,” said Montaigne). It therefore requires some vigilance and the practice of a healthy asceticism in matters of the soul and of the house. Moreover, both kinds of things can go together: the consumer society has been able to infect us and to inject into our veins of desire a certain yearning for material goods and the desire to accumulate them. Spring-cleaning, therefore, needs to be cyclical; periodic audits need be made. Who can say, “I need very little, and what little I have, I have little need of”?

In short: we are not experts, but apprentices

who make mistakes; and we are not yet free, but rather slaves moving towards freedom; we are not virtuous, but people who are “in search of virtue”; we are not “saints”, but sinners who are converting, and overcoming internal resistances to do it. Teresa of the Child Jesus recalled the words of the prophet: “All our righteousness is stained”; the wise person teaches you “the just person sins seven times a day”; and the liturgy will instill in you at all times, and at special moments, its penitential meaning. In any case, we hold on firmly to what we are destined to be, and from there we move forward, aware of our failings, but leaning especially on the infinite goodness of the one who knows that we are dust.

## Exercise 4: Detachment

Perhaps there is a tendency in you to make some object your own and that, after several years, it is still waiting for you to use it for the first time. You have discovered that you don't really need it. You may wonder why you have such a tendency. And **you can make a list of such things and get rid of some of them.**

Is it hard to get rid of prejudices, ingrained ideas that are short of the truth, or rather crude caricatures of other people?

### 2.6. The pain and the joy of detachment

Without a shadow of doubt, we have and we experience attachments that are very good and very healthy for people, but the call of the Lord and our consecration to Him demand some disruption and change to our world of relationships, making us aware that He has to be placed first in the order of our love. Teresa of Jesus alluded to the tearing apart which meant for her leaving her father when she entered the convent. And Teresa of Calcutta confesses that it was more painful to leave the Congregation of the Sisters of Loreto than to leave her own family at the age of 18. We feel these ruptures and separations as painful losses.

But, when you detach yourself from personal possessions or suffer a personal rupture, the final ‘bottom line’ is a feeling of joy. The rich young man of the gospel was gripped by the anxiety of what he had to leave behind, and the uncertainty of the adventure that he was embarking on. His decision to withdraw, in the end, left him feeling sad (cf. *Mk 10: 22*). Teresa of Calcutta said that sorrow or certain cases of sadness are due to the fact we have denied something of the Lord: that grief is the emotional resonance of a decision which is misguided, cowardly or lacking in generosity.

If you only consider the shedding of personal possessions, you will not accept detachment, or it may be very hard to accept. But in the profession of baptismal faith which you renew at the Easter Vigil, the renouncements demand an adherence to God, who sacrificed his Son, a commitment to Christ who emptied himself for you, a commitment to the Spirit, the giver of life. Shedding possessions leads us directly to a form of renewal which demands and justifies it: you clothe yourself with Christ (cf. *Gal 3:27*). And the shedding of possessions undertaken by the missionary leads him to clothe himself with the very nature of Christ, dispositions of tender mercy and compassion (according to the maxim that there is no prophecy without tenderness). So you become like the person who doesn't cut off the water jet or put out the burning wick. The clothing is not a facade or a mask, but a sense of identification. Paul said, “It is no longer me, Christ lives in me” (*Gal 2:20*).

When Peter says to Jesus that he and his companions have left everything and have followed him, Jesus responds with a statement of general truth: for every possession left behind, a hundred will be received (but along with persecution) and in the world to come, eternal life (cf. *Mk 10:29-30*). Paul echoes this affirmation, when he refers to per-

sonal property: “Everything belongs to you, Paul, Apollos, Cephas – life, death, the present and the future; everything is yours” (1 Cor 3:21-22). And John of the Cross likens this evangelical multiplication to enumerating the possessions of the loving soul: “My God, do not take away from me what your only Son Jesus Christ once gave, when you gave me everything I could want [...]. Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the nations. The righteous are mine, and mine the sinners. The angels are mine and the Mother of God and all things are mine. And God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me. Soul of mine, what do you seek and ask for? All this is yours, and everything is for you” (*Sayings of Light and Love*, No 26).

### 2.7. Dedication

“Dedication” is a word in common usage which means to be employed in something or to devote yourself to something. But the dictionary tells us that “dedicate” is synonymous with ‘consecrate’, as in the Latin. (Throughout the liturgical year we celebrate the dedication of several churches and basilicas). In our case we can join up both meanings. **To be consecrated to the Lord means to dedicate yourself body and soul to the affairs of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 7, 32.34), and to give yourself to the Lord means to give yourself to the cause.**

You commit to it with the words of your profession: complete dedication to God and our following of Christ are practised or performed “in the ministry of the salvation of men around the world.” The ‘for whom’ becomes a ‘for what reason’; our being, essentially becomes doing and suffering. You acknowledge and confess to the Lord showing yourself to be available for a mission, a ministry, being a listener and servant of his Word. You join the rank of servants of the Lord led by Moses, the prophets, Mary, the disciples of Jesus, Paul, Claret. We realize that the Lord’s affairs and cause are not just a thing, but ultimately and forever someone: the salvation of men, a task in whose performance we seek the glory of God. Just as a mother says of her children: “It’s a glorious thing to see them eat,” we want God the Father to be able to say: “It gives glory to see how men have life and have it abundantly” (*Jn 10:10*).

Also, here we get back to the principle of everything. It has been translated into various maxims and practices. The apostle Paul confesses: “So I made myself all things to all people to save,



by all possible means, some of them” (1 Cor 9:22), and in another letter says: “As for me, I am ready to spend whatever I have and even my whole self for all of you” (2 Cor 12:15). In a letter to the faithful of Colossae, he encouraged them with: “Whatever you do, do it wholeheartedly” (*Col 3: 23*). Ignatius of Loyola suggests the following: “In all things love and serve.” Fr. Claret was worn out in his service to the gospel, was indefatigable in preaching and prodigal in the dissemination of his writings, in line with the following intention: “For the love of God I will do my best to do all things well” (*Proposals*, 1865, no. 7).

At the same time, we come to realize that the gospel we are called to communicate always exceeds our personal lives. Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga confesses in this short poem:

*“It’s not me that acts  
But my word.  
What more do you want?  
I give you  
All that I believe  
Which is more than I am.”*

What you must take care about is that your words are interwoven with the words that the Father gave to the Son, and which the Son gave to his disciples (cf. *Jn 17:8*).

## Exercise 5: Be everything to everyone

*“Resilience” has now become fashionable, understood as the ability to face adversity, emerging stronger from it and confirming one’s adaptation and flexibility.*

**Reflect on your ability to adapt** when you become part of a new community or helping others to join in, when you are entrusted with a new mission, or when circumstances require changes (sometimes small changes in the community’s routine). Try to be aware of the reverberations that these changes cause you: provocation, resistance, protest, fatigue ...

### 2.8. Each according to his measure

The poor widow in the temple put a pitiful amount in the alms box. But Jesus’ gaze reaches deep inside and turns on its head our calculation of its worth; and he reveals that the widow, in such a financially precarious situation at that time because of her poverty and the loss of her husband, has given everything. Her gesture symbolizes her deep trust in God.

With the objective of collecting funds for the Christians in Jerusalem, Paul calls the Corinthians to be generous and reminds them “You know well the generosity of Christ Jesus our Lord. Although he was rich, he made himself poor to make you rich through his poverty” (2 Cor 8:9). At the same time he wisely adds: “I do not mean that others should be at ease and you burdened. Strive for equality; at present give from your abundance what they are short of, and in some way they also will give from their abundance what you lack” (2 Cor 8:13-14). And bear in mind the proportional difference between the sowing and the reaping: so that the latter is not too meagre you should be generous with the sowing.

No doubt, the principle of everything, the call to put heart and soul into what we do, and the motivation to be generous in our offerings is going to create stress. The apostle Paul also made the following statement: “Many run, but only one gets the prize. Run, therefore, intending to win it” (1 Cor 9:24). And about himself he confessed: “No, brothers and sisters, I do not claim to have claimed the prize yet. I say only this: forgetting what is behind me, I race forward and run towards the goal, my eyes on the prize to which God has called us from above in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14).

The comparison with athletic competition has its inspirational message, but also presents a measure of difficulty. In a sporting event there

is only one prize and one winner or, at best, a podium for three winners. Something similar happens in competitive examinations or a contest: many thousands may enter for only a few places. This requires each applicant to raise his performance to the maximum, apply one hundred percent, give of their very best; to back out of the contest would be suicidal. At the appropriate time, the jury or the court will say who the lucky few are who have won places in the contest. But the competition to which Paul refers is of another order: it is not amongst rivals who will necessarily eliminate each other; each one may receive his own prize, everyone can win and everyone should help each other on the road to victory. **Our configuration with Christ is not reserved for one or even three; it is offered to one and all. In this way, stress is allied with serenity.** Between both of them they say: don’t give in, avoid dealings and compromises, give the best of yourself; but handle the stress with confidence, and do not exhaust yourself.

### 2.9. Giving as we receive

You will know a certain prayer attributed to St Francis of Assisi, even though it would seem that they haven’t located documents prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century that will verify it. It’s not that important should it not be his, but we understand that it is attributed to him, because “to him who has, more will be given”: disciples will be receivers who learn in his school and maintain the tradition of the master’s teaching and praying; or letters will be published which expand on the actual correspondence of the writer, as in the case of Paul.

In the aforementioned prayer, the supplicant asks God to make him an instrument of his peace, not so much to be consoled as to console, to be loved as to love. Like one who tries to explain why such strange requests come out of his importu-

nate mouth and his soul, or like someone who listens at his side and is surprised at hearing such prayers, the supplicant can offer an explanation: "Because giving is like receiving (...) pardoning is like being pardoned." This reflection is an echo of evangelical teaching and leads us to recall Jesus' answer to Peter. Johann W. von Goethe described the gift as leaving the present in the hands of the giver: "It is the song that comes out of the throat/ that is the most elegant payment for him who sings." And Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross point out the fruit that the receiver of the gift purveys to the giver: "Love draws out love" wrote Teresa (*Life*, 22,14); "(...) where there is no love, put love, and it will draw out love" said John of the Cross in a letter to Mother Mary of the Incarnation.

We can highlight some instance in which the very act of giving converts the giver into being the receiver. The biologist and doctor, Alexis Carrell, thought that two or three child-births were an indispensable function for the optimal development of the woman. In some ways, she herself would be the daughter of her child during her own pregnancy. But this is also evident in bringing up children: the ups and the downs of an eagerly anticipated maternity will make her grow as a person and as a mother. And right from the beginning she will have some remarkable experiences, as this anecdote reflects: "A mother gives her baby a sweet for the first time. With visible pleasure the baby has a taste of the delicious sweet flavour. Suddenly, his hand goes to his mouth, he takes out a bit of the sweet and offers it to his mummy, so that she too can enjoy it."

So, there are gifts that come back on the giver at the very moment of the giving: the spiritual confessor who, perhaps, reluctantly enters the confessional, but on hearing other peoples' distressed states of mind compares them to his own, tries to impart some encouragement to his penitents and finds he actually gives the encouragement to himself; the teacher himself grows, discovers and learns in the very act of teaching. The nurse will be awake to her own ailments doing what she does about her patients' illnesses.

When the gift involves a loss or a sacrifice, we feel a certain internal resistance: giving out money to the needy is just another way of losing it; lending a listening ear to a difficult, boring person requires fortitude given by the Spirit: the power of 'yes'. There will be things we do from uncountable love; but on occasions, including in community life (with the disappointments, fatigue and difficulties



in reaching agreements), the saying of Teresa of Calcutta will be fulfilled: "For it to be authentic, love must cost us dearly." Well then, to retreat from giving for fear of the loss that it will bring, and to retreat from serving for fear of the wastage that missionary works generate, can be symptoms of disease. Let us remember the image of the grain of wheat that "does not die" and then does not bear fruit. Jesus makes a comment in the very next line: "those who love their life destroy it, and those who despise their life in this world keep it for everlasting life" (*Jn* 12:25).

### 2.10. Missionary note about giving

Jesus instills into his disciples the following in his discourse on mission: "You received this as a gift, so give it (freely) as a gift" (*Mt* 10:8). The emphasis falls on the adverb "freely", but let us also consider carefully the verbs that go with it. The Kingdom of God and the detailed list of gifts above are not created by us: we are in receipt of them, and we receive them to give them away. We continue the story of surrender as mouthpieces of the gospel. In the farewell speech given by Jesus on the last night, he says: "Now I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (*Jn* 13:34-35). Love and the exercise of giving is the mission: it speaks of Jesus, to whom we belong. It is a language that "everyone" understands, absolutely everyone.

The offering of ourselves in the daily Eucharist, the periodic shedding of possessions, our assiduous dedication to the specific mission we have committed to: these are the activities within which the giving of ourselves is embedded, our consecration to the Lord. "To make sure a lamp is always lit, we must continue to top it up with oil."

### 3. Suggestions for the community meeting

1. **You can start by reading the passage in Luke 6:31-38**, to be read aloud slowly. Have a moment of silence to let the hearing of the reading strike a chord in every member of the community.

2. After this, together you are invited to have four circles, **trying to locate and identify some signs and manifestations of giving and forgiveness** that occur in each of the following areas:

- a) in society (the so-called “economy of giving”, etc.),
- b) in the Church,
- c) in the Congregation or Organism to which the community belongs,
- d) in the community itself and in its most immediate context.

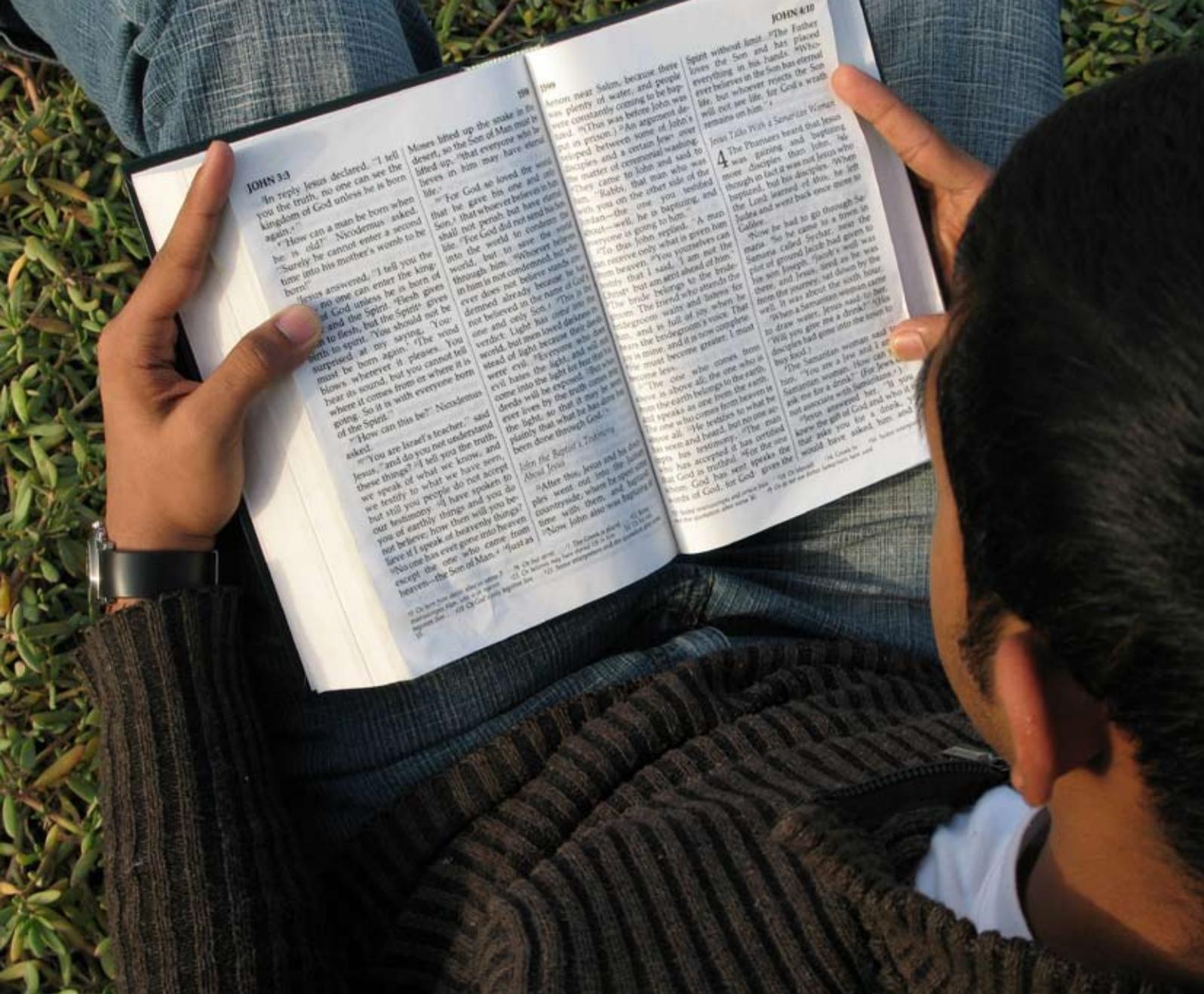
3. In connection with the community, **you can pose the following questions:** Do we get carried away by the tendency to accumulate personal possessions? What signs of detachment do we

accomplish outside the community? In what way could we grow in respect of exchanges and services in the ordinary life of the community?

4. You can conclude with the **reading from Lk 11:1-13**, with acts of thanksgiving, spontaneously incorporating reasons for giving thanks to the Lord.

*(You might find an appropriate time to renew your profession [CC 159]. It could be February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Day of Consecrated Life).*





## 5. Guidelines for the *lectio divina*

The liturgical year offers a new phase in the annual cycle: **Ordinary Time**, which is no less important. Because life is made up of smaller feasts and solemnities, and because the gospels are much more than just stories of passion preceded by a long preface. That is how it started, yes, but the Jesus of Easter and the Son born of Mary cannot be understood without reviewing his evidence, the “timetable” of his typical day, his choices in his evangelical ministry, his majesty, his gradual appearance in public; and Jesus of Easter tells us about those who responded to the call and were taking steps, amidst promptings and acts of resistance, amidst light and darkness, on their way to discipleship. This period is a Light between two Lights (Christmas and Easter). It reveals to us Jesus’ compassion and daily surrender.

## Monday, January 14, 2013

- Heb 1:1-6
- Psalm 96
- Mk 1:14-20

“The time has come; the kingdom of God is at hand. Change your ways... “: these are three important expressions of the Son for whom God has spoken during this final stage. He is an expert in God’s timing for his people; he reveals the definitive action of God; he comes up with the appropriate response to match the rhythm of the divine action. And the story of God’s following begins: for those who synchronise their clock with God’s.

## Tuesday, January 15, 2013

- Heb 2:5-12
- Psalm 8
- Mk 1:21-28

Jesus teaches and performs, puts together teaching groups and orders. And does so with authority. Sometimes we ask, “Who is in charge?”. Jesus makes it clear who’s in charge. He banishes the darkness: with his teaching, the darkness that dominates the mind; with his imperious command, the dark forces that have taken over a person. It’s all a celebration of light that John tells us about today. He invites you to be a part of it.

## Wednesday, January 16, 2013

- Heb 2:14-18
- Psalm 104
- Mk 1:29-39

The type of day Jesus has is a model to check against yours. To what extent do you live attending to others’ needs, like Jesus with Peter’s mother-in-law, and attending to the communities’ needs, as he did with the crowds? To what extent do you combine the growth in ministry with the contraction in time for personal and community worship? Consider also his way of uniting the life of an itinerant evangelist with having a presence at home.

## Thursday, January 17, 2013. Memorial of St. Anthony, Abbot. V. María Antonia París (Cal CMF, 27-32)

- Heb 3:7-14
- Psalm 94
- Mk 1:40-45

Let’s call to mind the kiss that Francis of Assisi gave the leper; it was another reason to designate him “another Christ” and “Jesus’ brother.” In the Gospel passage, Jesus reaches out, touches the sick man in quarantine, heals him and sends him to the institution that allows him to reintegrate himself into the life of Israel. Jesus embodies a charismatic purity and reveals how it is not the impurity that sticks, but the purity.

## Friday, January 18, 2013

- Heb 4:1-5.11
- Psalm 77
- Mk 2:1-12

Titles (like healer, exorcist) that we give to Jesus fall short. Today there appears an unexpected one which shows the depth of his activities: it is the Son of man with the power to forgive sins. No longer will the sacrifices of the Temple be the channel of healing grace; Jesus is the mediator ‘par excellence’ of this gift, the work of God’s saving justice. We pray, “Heal me, Lord, for I have sinned against you.”

## Saturday, January 19, 2013

- Heb 4:12-16
- Psalm 18
- Mk 2:13-17

One more facet of the Lord: he is the host to admit you without asking for a license of compliance. In his splendour, he does not create a sanitary cordon in order to isolate collectors and illegal migrants. Read their hearts, which may say “I am not worthy to enter your house, but say only the word and I shall be healed”, and they trust in his mercy, able to turn their lives around, as in the case of Levi.

## Sunday, January 20, 2013. Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Is 62:1-5
- Psalm 95
- 1 Cor 12:4-11
- Jn 2:1-12

Still the words of the Fourth Gospel reverberate, which we hear three times in the liturgy of Christmas: “We have seen his glory.” In Cana, Jesus performed his first wonderful sign, he manifests his glory and achieves the desired goal: his disciples believe (even more) in him. All these signs were recorded so that we, disciples of the 21st century, through the practice of the *lectio*, can believe in him and, in so doing, have life through him.

## Monday, January 21, 2013. Memorial of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr

- Heb 5:1-10
- Psalm 109
- Mk 2:18-22

“When he himself appeared, Jesus brought all kinds of surprises” (St. Irenaeus). We can sing: *nova sint omnia: corda, voces et opera* (everything is new: hearts, voices, work). Life is polyphonic. In it there are mysteries of joy, light, pain, glory, and each has its time. The important thing is to participate with your whole being in what it is your lot to live, enveloped by the Passover feast of the bridegroom.

## Tuesday, January 22, 2013. Memorial of St Vincent, Deacon and Martyr

- Heb 6:10-20
- Psalm 110
- Mk 2:23-28

Yesterday, the struggle was about the fast; today, about the Sabbath. We tend to reverse the order of things: man for the Sabbath; live to eat; ends justify the means; being is for having, etc. Let's get all of this the right side up. That the means are means and the ends, ends. Jesus says, “come with me into the kingdom of ends”. Because the long-awaited Sabbath bursts forth with him.

## Wednesday, January 23, 2013

- Heb 7:-3,15,17
- Psalm 109
- Mk 3:1-6

The struggle, except for the case of competitive people, is generally disliked, and we tend to avoid it. But it is inevitable, and we should not systematically try to escape it. Jesus even promotes it, with the risk that the other person, seeing himself exposed, might harden his stance. When we are gambling with the Kingdom of God, we should not shy away; we must face up to the clashes. Let us pray for wisdom to discern what is being disputed in each case and how to act.

## Thursday, January 24, 2013. Memorial of St. Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

- Heb 7:25-8,6
- Psalm 39
- Mk 3:7-12

The role of the disciples is still a minor one. Jesus had promised Simon and Andrew to make them fishers of men (Mk 1:17); and soon he would form the Twelve and name them the Apostles (Mk 3:14). For the time being they are with him, acting as his bodyguards. It will come to pass. No form of work is unworthy. The important thing is to do his will. Teresa of Jesus would say, “Sweet love, you see me here / what do you want of me?”

## Friday, January 25, 2013. Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle (Gal CMF, 33-38)

- Hch 22:3-16
- Psalm 116
- Mk 16:15-18

Christ's encounter with Saul was a profound experience and aroused in him a double incentive. First, Paul aspired to grow in his relationship with God and said, “I want to know him and the power of his resurrection and to share in his suffering.” The second and inseparable incentive was the ministry of the apostolate. In his passion to make Christ known to others, he said: “Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”

## Saturday, January 26, 2013. Memorial of St. Timothy and St. Titus, Bishops

- Heb 9,2-3,11-14
- Psalm 46
- Mk 3,20-21

“He was not in his right mind”: What a compliment! At that time the extended family was extremely important and sought the maximum cohesion; personal autonomy was carefully curtailed. Jesus, who has just created his own community, breaks the codes of the family clan. He knows very well who his Father is, and who are his brothers, sisters and mother; he has no doubt as to whom he owes obedience and to whom he owes proximity.

## Sunday, January 27, 2013. Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Neh 8:2-4a,5-6,8-10
- Psalm 18
- 1 Cor 12:12-30
- Lk 1:1-4; 4,14,21

“Today this scripture is fulfilled.” “Today”: a word which, in the unlimited number of days, marks out one, this very day when the Anointed One and his listeners are present. “This scriptural text”, not that one, nor the other one, from an almost infinitely long list. This Scripture is now having its day. Gone are the distances, the remoteness, and so much anticipation. Even the shortest arm can point out the present!

## Monday, January 28, 2013. Memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas, Priest and Doctor of the Church

- Heb 9:15,24-28
- Psalm 97
- Mk 3:22-30

The discouraging diagnosis of the day before yesterday now seems small up against this complaint against Jesus as the incarnation of the Evil One. As silence would seem to confer his consent, Jesus points to the contradictory and blasphemous nature of the charge: "He blasphemously rejects the offer of forgiveness when he defames the bearer of the divine Spirit, accusing him of demonic possession (*J. Gnillka*). Just as there is confirmation in grace, there seems to be an irreversible fixation on evil .

## Tuesday, January 29, 2013

- Heb 10:1-10
- Psalm 39
- Mk 3:31-35

No relationship takes absolute priority. Jesus is not in favour of nepotism nor privileges of birth. What really matters is that the life of God flows through our veins, and that it is the fount of knowledge and love, full of trust and obedience. Holiness is the union of wills; the union of ours with that of God is what unites us with God and with each other.

## Wednesday, January 30, 2013

- Heb 10:11-18
- Psalm 109
- Mk 4:1-20

We have been given the parable and the explanation. The latter presents us with the appropriate attitudes and feelings for receiving the word: joy for the precious gift that is (like Jeremiah); constancy in the midst of trials (as with Paul); the disciplining of desire (like hermits); fruitful acceptance (as with Mary). They are all opposed to indifference, early surrender, the voracious appetite for things, and indifference.

## Thursday, January 31, 2013. Memorial of St. John Bosco, Priest and Founder

- Heb 10:19-25
- Psalm 23
- Mk 4:21-25

Everything has its purpose. The candle is there to illuminate the room; the earth, to be fruitful, not to be barren; the bread to be eaten, not to be put in a glass case; talent to make money, not to keep in a sock; the witness of the gospel to spread its life-saving message. Do not hide the gift, do not allow it to rot away, polish it up and let it show its grace. Even though there is a price to pay.

## Friday, February 1, 2013. Attempt in Holguin (*Cal CMF, 41-46*)

- Heb 10:32-39
- Psalm 36
- Mk 4:26-34

"First the stems, then the ear, then the grain." Everything has its order. Watch the stem in its upward thrust! It breaks through the crust of the earth, stands above the ground, as if contradicting the law of gravity. The ear is the crown of fertility that beautifies the harvest; there is no column of smoke that rises up into the sky that doesn't fade away and disappear. Life that stretches upwards and is a fertile symbol of the Kingdom.

## Saturday, February 2, 2013. Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

- Mal 3:1-4
- Psalm 23
- Heb 2:14-18
- Lk 2:22-40

Glory of Israel ... and the reason for the fall and rise of many in Israel. Simeon stands in contrast with the ideal and the facts, what Jesus is in his own way, and what he actually will be, according to the attitude of each one. It is medicine, but there are drugs with paradoxical effects: "what we receive, we receive with the attitude of the receiver," according to the provision of his will. Like Simeon, wait and acknowledge your Saviour.

## Sunday, February 3, 2013. Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Jer 1:4-5,17-19
- Psalm 70
- 1 Cor 12:31-13,13
- Lk 4:21-30

Theologians say: "The grace of God is not chained to the sacraments." Nor in the past was his favour attached to a small group of the chosen. Israel had not been faithful to its vocation as light of the nations, a mission that Jesus will embody, God's unquestioned prophet, who connects with Elijah and Elisha. A missionary cannot have a parochial mentality, because the salvation which comes from God has no boundaries.

## Monday, February 4, 2013. Venerable Fr. Jaime Clotet (Cal CMF, 47-54)

- Heb 11:32-40
- Psalm 30
- Mk 5:1-20

Jesus had demonstrated his sovereignty over the rough seas through a kind of exorcism. With a new act of majesty, in the realms of death and in a pagan area infested with evil powers, he heals the possessed man. Not only does good sense return: far from imposing an order of silence, he becomes an evangelist among his own people. He is a new man: model of gratitude and mission for you.

## Tuesday, February 5, 2013. Memorial of St. Agatha, Virgin and Martyr

- Heb 12:1-4
- Psalm 21
- Mk 5:21-43

Others may press against Jesus and yet be light years away from him; this woman, who only touches his robe, experiences a real encounter. The communication link here is faith, not the mere contact of body against body. Jairus also, through his faith, bridges the gap which separates his daughter from an encounter with Jesus. To believe or not believe: that is the question.

## Wednesday, February 6, 2013. Memorial of St. Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs

- Heb 12:4-7.11-15
- Psalm 102
- Mk 6:1-6

There is a marked difference between the story of today and yesterday. We do not confer the role of Messiah on Jesus; but, when we believe in it, we open ourselves up to the power of his grace. If someone wants to make a gift to you and you close your fist, it defeats the object of the giving. Suspicion and distrust do not lead to a relationship with God.

## Thursday, February 7, 2013

- Heb 12:18-19.21-24
- Psalm 47
- Mk 6:7-13

Jesus "appointed Twelve (...) with the power to cast out demons" (Mk 3:14). In their mission the Twelve will expel many demons and cure many sick people. Jesus did not skimp on the power he conferred upon the Twelve; he was like a freely flowing fountain distributing inexhaustible wealth through twelve spouts. He knew no fear of meanness, nor meanness of fear itself. "Give and you shall receive."

## Friday, February 8, 2013

- Heb 13:1-8
- Psalm 26
- Mk 6:14-29

The end of the story refers to a series of commitments: the executioner to the girl, the girl to her mother. The head goes from hand to hand. We will not make heads roll, but we can circulate scandal with evil gossip that goes from mouth to mouth. The words of a missionary must be a blessing. Remember the importance of the word for Fr. Claret.

## Saturday, February 9, 2013

- Heb 13:15-17.120-21
- Psalm 22,1
- Mk 6:30-34

Jesus' plans were undergoing changes: life takes over, the needs of the people take charge. He, the Lord, becomes a servant. He never sends people away with a "come back again tomorrow." Nor does he deal with people hastily, as if they were a vexation, as in the situation that happens unexpectedly with the state of the crowd. Like a shepherd filled with messianic compassion, he guides people by what he says, protects people with the sign of the cross, and will feed people with his own body.

## Sunday, February 10, 2013. Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

- Is 6:1-2a.3-8
- Psalm 137
- 1 Cor 15:1-11
- Lk 5:1-11

We have before us a kind of vocational story: Jesus gives a sign, Simon is overwhelmed, Jesus assures him not to be afraid and gives him the mission, Simon Peter and his companions accept it and follow the Lord. He who continues calling, says: "Fear not." Leave behind your fears, your lack of trust, all that prevents you from following. Trust in his word and cast your net.

## Monday, February 11, 2013. Approval of the Constitutions (Cal CMF, 55-61)

- Gen 1:1-19
- Psalm 103
- Mk 6:53-56

It is said that touch is our real contact with reality: we touch to make sure we are not looking at a mirage. Children, in order to grow, need food, shelter ... and hugs. The sick in Lourdes, touch the rock and are submerged in water. How strange that these sick people cling on to Jesus, the rock-fountain of health. Our hands are not only a measuring stick of reality; they are carriers, channels and receptors of grace.

## Tuesday, February 12, 2013

- Gen 1:20-2,4
- Psalm 8
- Mk 7:1-13

Jesus had created some distance between himself and his family, and had placed the will of God above family commitments. Now he does not contradict himself here: it is again the will of God that lays down our inescapable duties towards parents who are getting older and are in need. Our traditions must not challenge God. And beware of false strategies of honourable piety to circumvent obligations!

## 5. Texts for reflection

### Appendix 1: Jn 1:14 (J. L. Borges)

The oriental histories tell a tale  
Of a bored king in ancient times who, fraught  
With tedium and splendour, went uncaught  
And secretly around the slums to sail  
Amid the crowds and lose himself in their  
Peasant rough hands, their humble obscure names;  
Today, like that Muslim Harum, Emeer  
Of the true faithful, God decides to claim  
His place on earth, born of a mother in  
A lineage that will dissolve in bones,  
And the whole world will have its origin  
With him: air, water, bread, mornings, stones,  
Lily. But soon the blood of martyrdom,  
The curse, the heavy spikes, the beams.



### Appendix 2: The epidemic and the remedy (C. G. Vallés)

In an unnamed, unmapped country they announce a deadly disease that is spreading, without anyone knowing how to cure it. First world countries begin to receive short news items about the plague, but nobody cares because the region is far away and it is a different race of people. And the epidemic spreads.

One day the media in the big countries give a start. A case of the disease has been detected in Europe. Another in the United States. Others in other industrialized countries. There is widespread alarm. They must urgently isolate the cases, prevent the epidemic spreading, and find a remedy.

The number of cases increases, there is panic, which speeds up research. They finally find that there is a cure for the plague, and this can be found in human blood, though with great difficulty, because no-one knows of anyone who

has the right kind of blood. Using this antidote, they could develop a vaccine immediately and save the entire human race. But where do we find the owner of the redeeming blood?

The entire population is checked, and finally they find a small child whose blood is the valuable antidote. But the father's permission is needed for the donation of the child's blood. The father gives his full cooperation, and asks the doctors how much blood his child will need to give to make the vaccine. The medical researchers look at each other in silence, because they know the answer to that question, until one of them says just one phrase very softly and clearly: "All of it". The Father looks at his Son. The Son looks at his Father. And the angels gather up the blood of his Calvary.

### Appendix 3: About possessing, giving and receiving (Jean-Guy Saint-Arnaud)

"What you give is all you possess" (J. Corbon). And so, far from possessing something, what we are incapable of giving away actually possesses us. This axiom leads to the delightful fable about how to catch a monkey. The procedure is simple: place a piece of fruit in a jar with an opening just big enough for the monkey to reach in and grab the fruit. When the monkey gets hold of it, he becomes a prisoner; for, not wanting to drop its prey, he'll not be able to extract his hand. So it would seem that possessing means you are, in fact, owned. Many authors have illustrated this idea, each in its own way. In his novel *Mr Ibrahim and the Flowers of the Koran*, Eric. Emmanuel Schmitt writes: "Whatever you give, Momo, it will be yours forever; what you keep for yourself ... will be lost forever". In the context of the multiplication of the loaves, Henri Nouwen observes that "what we give will multiply, and what we accumulate

will decrease." "You never possess more than you give away" explains Maurice Zundel, "you only save as much as you are prepared to lose. The gift is the measure of one's being". At the end of the film by Dominique Lapierre, *The City of Joy*, the following sentence describes the profound paradox of he who loses, wins: "Everything not given away is lost." Jacques Grand'Maison wrote the same thing: "When we leave this world, what remains of us will amount to what we have given away." And the same thought can be found in the wonderful tribute to generosity in the form of the film *Babette's Feast*, "You do not take to heaven more than you have given away."

To be able to give, first you need to know how to receive. There is a correlation between the giving and the receiving. What we give creates in us the space to continue receiving. "In the spiritual arena, you will not receive

more than you have given. And you don't give unless you know how to receive." This observation of Marcel Légaut is another way of expressing the proverb of the Upper Volta, according to which we must not give anything to anyone from whom we haven't asked for something. To help someone who is going through difficulties, we should ask them first for some favour. "Not to ask something of someone is as bad as not talking to them. To live without asking for anything is the same as saying you can do without others, which means to exclude others" The act of asking for a favour, someone's help, gives the opportunity to many to give the best of themselves.

So we really become ourselves through giving, and we are in control of ourselves to the extent that we give of

ourselves. We only develop as people through an attitude of benefaction. Our freedom consists precisely in living a life of benefaction, to exist in a world of thanksgiving, to go from being served to serving. A mother never shows herself more alive than when she gives birth to a child, to whom she gives life. And she loses nothing by sharing life; on the contrary, that's how she expresses her creativity. Life, it must be repeated, is all about giving. This is how we are. We could, at this point, develop a teaching programme about benefaction. In much the same way as that mother of Burundi that educated her son superbly in the art of generosity by playing with him in the same way as you play ball: after giving him an orange, she asked for it back, to teach him both how to give as well as to receive."

## Appendix 4: On giving (Khalil Gibran)

Then the rich man said: "Speak to us about giving". And he replied:

You give but little when you give of your possessions.

It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

For what are your possessions but things you keep and guard for fear you may need them tomorrow?

And tomorrow, what shall tomorrow bring to the over-prudent dog burying bones in the trackless sand as he follows the pilgrims to the holy city?

And what is fear of need but need itself?

Is not dread of thirst when your well is full, the thirst that is unquenchable?

There are those who give little of the much which they have--and they give it for recognition and their hidden desire makes their gifts unwholesome.

And there are those who have little and give it all.

These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty.

There are those who give with joy, and that joy is their reward.

And there are those who give with pain, and that pain is their baptism.

And there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue;

They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space.

Through the hands of such as these God speaks, and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth.

It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding;

And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving.

And is there aught you would withhold?

All you have shall some day be given;

Therefore give now, that the season of giving may be yours and not your inheritors'.

You often say, "I would give, but only to the deserving."

The trees in your orchard say not so, nor the flocks in your pasture.

They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish.

Surely he who is worthy to receive his days and his nights, is worthy of all else from you.

And he who has deserved to drink from the ocean of life deserves to fill his cup from your little stream.

And what desert greater shall there be, than that which lies in the courage and the confidence, nay the charity, of receiving?

And who are you that men should rend their bosom and unveil their pride, that you may see their worth naked and their pride unabashed?

See first that you yourself deserve to be a giver, and an instrument of giving.

For in truth it is life that gives unto life while you, who deem yourself a giver, are but a witness.

And you receivers... and you are all receivers... assume no weight of gratitude, lest you lay a yoke upon yourself and upon him who gives.

Rather rise together with the giver on his gifts as on wings;

For to be over-mindful of your debt, is to doubt his generosity who has the freehearted earth for mother, and God for father.

## Appendix 5: The King of kings and the beggar

From door to door, along the dusty street of the village, there was a man begging for a few grains of wheat to make himself some bread. There then came, at the other end of the street, like a magnificent dream, a golden chariot. It was much more than the chariot of a king. It was the King of kings.

The chariot stopped beside the beggar. The King of kings looked down at him smiling. This was happiness, at last, the height of joy, the end of his misery. The hopes of the beggar flew high into the sky, and he thought that his bad days were over and waited for the freely-given benefaction of

treasure spilled in the dust of the street.

Suddenly the King – imagine it! - stretched out his right hand and asked the beggar: "Can you give me something?" The poor man did not know what to do, he was puzzled. Completely confused, and somewhat reluctantly, from his little bag of the alms he had collected that day, he slowly withdrew a grain of wheat and handed it over.

Just imagine the surprise he had when he emptied the bag on the floor that afternoon, and found a grain of gold amongst the miserable lot of alms! He wept bitterly because he had not had the heart to give the King everything in his little bag!

*Hoc est corpus meum. Hic est calix Sanguinis mei novi et aeterni testamenti.  
Te igitur, clementissime Pater, per Iesum Christum, Filium tuum, Dominum nostrum, supplices  
rogamus ac petimus, uti accepta habeas et benedicas haec dona, haec munera,  
haec sancta sacrificia illibata.  
Memento, Domine, ...omnium circumstantium, quorum tibi fides cognita est et nota devotio, pro  
quibus tibi offerimus: vel qui tibi offerunt hoc sacrificium laudis.  
Hanc igitur oblationem servitutis nostrae, sed et cunctae familiae tuae ... (Eucharist Prayer I).  
Offerimus tibi, gratias referentes, hoc sacrificium vivum et sanctum (Eucharistic Prayer III).*

The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's Paschal sacrifice. From the moment of the Incarnation up until his last breath upon the Cross, the life of Jesus is an incessant holocaust, a constant handing over of himself to the Father's will. This sacrifice reaches its high point on Calvary: As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which *Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed* is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out (*Lumen Gentium*, 3; CCC, 1364). This unique and eternal sacrifice is made truly present in the Sacrament of the Altar. In truth, The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice (CCC, 1367). To this sacrifice, the Church adds its own sacrifice, so as to become one body and one spirit in Christ, of which sacramental Communion is a sign. Participation in the Eucharist, obedience to the Gospel we hear, eating the Lord's Body and drinking his Blood mean to make of our lives a pleasing sacrifice to God:  
*per Christum, et cum Christo et in Christo.*

Just as the ritual action of the Eucharist is based upon Christ's sacrifice, "offered once and for all during the days of his earthly existence" (cf. *Heb* 5:7-9), which it sacramentally represents, so our participation in the celebration should be accompanied by the offering of our very existence. In the Eucharist, the Church offers the sacrifice of Christ, offering itself together with him. The sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist is therefore a life commitment. From it stems the spirituality of sacrifice, of gift of self, of gratuity and of oblation demanded by authentic Christian living.

**The bread and wine we bring to the altar represent our existence: the sufferings and the pledge of living Christ-like lives, according to the commandment he gave his disciples.**

Our, "Here am I," by which we let him think, speak and work in us is represented by our communion in the Body and Blood of Christ. This is the root of the Eucharistic spirituality of sacrifice which should permeate our day: our work, our relationships, the thousand daily occupations; the commitment to live out our vocations as spouses, parents, children; the dedication to the entrusted ministry of our bishops, priests and deacons; the testimony of consecrated persons; the "Christian" sense of physical pain and moral sufferings; the responsibility to build up the earthly city in its various dimensions, according to the light of Gospel values.

# The Forge in Our Daily Life

## CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013

“

My Father, take this poor heart of mine and devour it as I do you, so that I may be changed totally into you. At the words of consecration the substance of bread and wine are changed into the substance of your body and blood. Almighty Lord, **consecrate me**; speak over me the words that will change me totally into you.” *(Aut 756)*