



# THE FORGE

in our daily life

PATRIS MEI  
"TO BE  
IN MY FATHER'S  
HOUSE"

9

Ordinary Time V

# Patris Mei

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE

### THE NATURE OF THE STAGE

The experience of fire in the symbolism of the Forge refers to the experience of God's love, maternally mediated by the immaculate Heart of Mary and also the action of the Holy Spirit pouring into us the gift of love.

The fire warms, cleanses, softens, glows. Our Fr. Founder often uses this symbol to speak of love and missionary zeal. The "men of God" always have their face glowing with fire, like Moses.

The *Patris Mei* stage expresses the relationship of Claret with God the Father. It condenses the experience of God's love that warms the cold iron and prepares it receive a new shape. It is, in short, a call to be "in my Father's business" (cf. *Lk* 2:49).

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

### OBJECTIVES OF "PATRIS MEI" STAGE

- Moving from superficial attitudes to deeper attitudes.
- Growing up in the experience of the love of God as a foundation of our missionary lives.
- Studying the issue of the images of God that underpin our behaviour, and the experience of the God of Jesus as a profound experience of grace.
- Developing, theoretically and practically, the experience of prayer.
- Understanding more deeply the Claretian dimension of the experience of God as Father.

- 1 The search for God  
(*Advent*)
- 2 The incarnation of God  
(*Christmas*)
- 3 The God of the Kingdom  
(*Ordinary Time I*)
- 4 The fatherhood of God  
(*Lent*)
- 5 The God of life  
(*Easter*)
- 6 The Word of God as the source of life  
(*Ordinary Time II*)
- 7 Faith as an answer to the love of God  
(*Ordinary Time III*)
- 8 Prayer as our encounter with God  
(*Ordinary Time IV*)
- 9 The Claretian experience of God  
(*Ordinary Time V*)

QUID PRODEST - 2011  
**PATRIS MEI - 2012**  
CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013  
SPIRITUS DOMINI – 2014



# 1. Introduction

The month of November coincides with the final weeks of the liturgical year and with the final phase of *Patris Mei*. Booklet 9 embarks upon a period marked by two solemnities: **All Saints** and **Jesus Christ, King of the Universe**. Both accentuate the character of the finality and universality of the Christian faith. The horizon of each believer is to be a saint. In Jesus Christ this is fully realized in the Kingdom of God.

It's possible, after eleven months on this journey, that you find yourself reinvigorated, but at the same time a little tired. Accordingly, this Booklet is not offering you a new theme, but instead, a recapitulation of the journey thus far from the experience of St. Anthony Mary Claret. Remember that this has been the "year of fire", an experience of the love of God which can rekindle our missionary life. You can begin by making a simple exercise that carries the same title which you did at the beginning of this stage.



## Exercise 1: The objectives of the *Patris Mei* stage

1. You can begin by re-reading exercise 1 in booklet 1, which dealt with the objectives previously seen in the *Patris Mei* stage.
2. Do you believe that these objectives have accompanied you throughout this stage? Which of them seem to be the most significant for you? Why?
3. Which three words would express your personal experience throughout the *Patris Mei* stage?

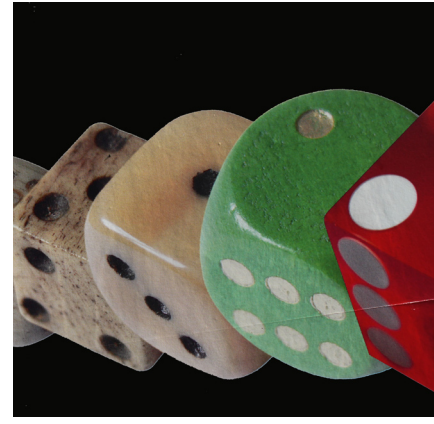
You are at the point of crossing the “equator” of The Forge. When you finish this step it will have been two years since the beginning of this project. Two more years remain. Maybe it is helpful to remember why we began this journey. The Forge wishes to be an attempt to respond to the problem of identity detected by the XXIV General Chapter. When the members of a religious institute do not understand well who they are, or why and for whom they exist in the Church, only with difficulty will they be able to develop their mission in the world with joy and invite others to embrace it.

**Do you think, after two years, the feeling of Claretian identity and your belonging to the Congregation has been reinforced? Do you perceive among the members of your community or your Province a more clear consciousness of who we are and a commitment to continue growing?**

During the month of November the liturgy invites us to fix our attention on ultimate realities. The remembrance of our brothers who have preceded us on the journey of faith accompanies us. The promises of God strengthen our hope and help us to give deeper meaning to everything we do each day. Paradoxically what results, it seems, is that one of the reasons why we live today with a growing disinterest in the transformation of this world is precisely because belief of a faith in the future life has evaporated in a significant number of believers. The Word of God serves in this case as powerful alarm clock. “Passion for life” keeps united the two shores of Christian existence, the great beyond and the very close. Through both flows the river of the experience of God who desires that all of his children be saved (in the fullest meaning of the word) and come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. *1 Tim 2:3*).







## 2. Reflection

### What does it mean “to be in my Father’s house”?

Within the itinerary of the Forge, the nucleus *Patris Mei* symbolizes the experience of the iron rod which is thrust into the fire. The spiritual itinerary of St. Anthony Mary Claret alludes to this experience of the fire of the love of God, the only one which can heat the cold iron and ready it to receive the form of Jesus Christ. Among the biblical texts which were most influential in the life of Claret, there is one which synthesizes his relationship with God the Father: “He answered them: Why are you looking for me? Don’t you know that I have to be in my Father’s house?” (*Lk* 2:49). This text appears in one of the lists of biblical texts written by Claret and also in the Constitutions (nn. 3 and 20).

Before deepening its significance for Claret, it is necessary to frame the text in the Gospel of Luke (**cf. appendix I**). After all, what Claret experiences has its origins in the experience of Jesus. He also lives and proposes the *Patris Mei* as the foundation of the new life of the Kingdom.

Throughout the year we have made reference to this passage on various occasions, especially in booklets 2 and 8. It is normal that it be thus: it deals with the text which lays the foundation for the step *Patris Mei*. We will return to it in closing this step.

The text, which appears only in the Gospel of Luke, gives us an account of the only infancy “saying” of Jesus in the Gospels: Why do you look for me...? It is clearly a “saying of revelation”: it deals with presenting the identity and mission of Jesus in embryonic form. Therefore, a “saying” clearly Christological and perfectly contextualized in the “Gospel of Infancy”, which, as is known, offers precise contents that prolong the Gospel which subsequently would be developed. Thus, the question: “Don’t you know...?” points to the mystery of Jesus and invites his earthly parents to remember and accept the fullness of the words of the Annunciation in which Jesus is clearly identified as “Son of God”... words which are difficult to understand (*cf. Lk* 2:50).

On the other hand, the expression “I need to concern myself”, which is better translated “it’s right that I be concerned”, constitutes a technical expression in Luke (in Greek: “*dêi*”; en Latin: “*oportet me*”: *cf. Lk* 9:22, 24, 26; *Heb* 17:3) to name the unavoidable “design” of the Father accepted by the Son (filial obedience). Jesus appears in the temple (“the House of Yahweh”) interested in the just interpretation of the law (faithful living of the Covenant, the full acceptance of the will of God).



Therefore, according to the third evangelist, the first word pronounced by Jesus – situated in a decisive moment of passing from childhood to maturity – shows the radicality of his filial obedience. In more academic terms, the letter to the Hebrews will say: “When he came into the world, he said: Behold, I come to do your will, O God.” (Heb 10:5-7). With this expression on the lips of the adolescent Jesus, Luke avoids saying that the Baptism narration (inherited from Mark) should be interpreted in terms of “Adoption” (“divinization”), presenting it rather as a public “manifestation” of what Jesus is from the beginning: “Son of God”.

Jesus, who much later will pray to God calling Him Abba/Father (cf. Lk 22:42) in this moment of “passing” into adulthood, has a clear understanding of the words of the Annunciation: “He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High...the Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Lk 1:31, 35).

It is important to take into account the play on words “your father/my Father”, an interesting juxtaposition which anticipates that which previously Jesus would establish between his physical

family and the family of faith: “My mother and my brothers are these: those who listen to the Word of God and act on it” (Lk 8:21). The Father “takes” Jesus from his natural family and asks radical fidelity to the task of “reuniting” the great family of faith.

Like the ancient prophets – Luke is the evangelist who has a special predilection for this title – prophet – for Jesus (cf. 7:16; 24:19). Jesus will break with his family, with his sociological and career stability... to dedicate himself exclusively to the “things of Yahweh”, continuously looking to do his will (cf. Lk 11:45; 20:1ff) to, later, invite everyone to respond to the will of the good Father God who dreams for a “New People”: the great family of faith.

Claret has read and assimilated the Gospel according to the charism received. He doesn’t have a new or original way of reading the Word; but rather a key of interpretation well defined. His reading is vocational (cf. Aut 114, 120). From it is born a clear understanding (cf. Aut 101) of the will of God. In it he discovers with clarity his vocational itinerary (cf. Aut 115).

## Exercise 2: The will of the Father

*Surely you will have meditated on various occasions and in various ways on the passage of Lk 2:29. Now it can serve you in recapitulating the lived experience lengthwise of this liturgical year which is at the point of concluding.*

1. Begin reading appendix 1: “To be in the house of the Father”: it will help you to understand and relish the passage which greatly marked-out the spiritual trajectory of Claret.

2. Later, respond in writing to these questions in your Forge Notebook:

- What does it signify for me, concretely, “to be in the house of the Father”?
- Do I see a basic coincidence between the values which are fundamental to my Claretian life and the interests which move me daily in my actions? Does there exist, on the other hand, a distance or disagreement? To what can I attribute this?





## How does Claret lived his relationship with God the Father?

Breaking open the Word, God the Father is, for Claret, the God who protects and accompanies him, is the Same to whom he must serve and whose will over him is always the ultimate reference point. He feels called at various times and situations to work for His glory. He understands his ministry as a force for which God is known by all and for which sinners who have left the house of the Father are converted and saved. Of special value is the affirmation of the paternity of God in moments of persecution, either attempted or when his possibilities of bringing his missionary word to many are felt limited.

This fundamental experience of Claret highlights various dimensions of God:

### *The providence of God*

Ever since he was a child, his confidence in the providence of God stood out: his “good Father” (*Aut 21*). In the background very positive living experiences seem to spring forth in relation to his grandfather (cf. *Aut 19*), and, above all with his father (cf. *Aut 25, 78*). He recognizes the qualities that God had given him for manufacturing, which later served him as well in his apostolic work: “God had given me so much understanding in this [manufacturing], that I did not have to do anything more than analyze any pattern, and in short

order a copy would emerge from the loom, exact to the last detail; or even with improvements if the employer desired” (*Aut 58*). He is aware of what one gentleman said about this: “News of the skills the Lord had given me in manufacturing spread throughout Barcelona” (*Aut 63*).

In the disillusionment he lived in Barcelona he would see providential signs which God made use of to uproot him from the world: “God dealt me all of these to wake me up and help me escape from the dangers of the world” (*Aut 73*); “My God, how good and wonderful you have been to me!... What strange means you used to uproot me from the world!” (*Aut 76*).

In his difficult period in Madrid he also recognized as a grace of God the disgust he felt about things of the palace: “I can only explain this enigma saying that this repugnance I feel is a grace God has sent me to prevent me from becoming attached to the prestige, honors, and riches of this world. For I can see clearly that this constant feeling of disgust for the things of the Court and this everlasting desire to escape from it have preserved me from envy and from setting my heart on things which the world holds dear” (*Aut 622*). In conclusion, this permanent dependence on the love of God will be a constant feature throughout his entire life.



“O my God and my Father, may I know you and make you known; love you and make you loved; serve you and make you served; praise you and make all creatures praise you.”

### To fulfill the will of God

It was like an experience of providence. Claret, however, seems to have a very active sense of this. It alludes to his disposition to do or suffer whatever God wants to save souls. This is a central point of his missionary life. Thus in Barcelona he is moved to opt for the will of God (to be formed as a priest) instead of respecting that of his earthly father (who is a manufacturer): “Just so, I had never been opposed to the intentions of my father. This was the first time that I did not do what he wanted, and it was because that God willed something else for me: He wanted me to be a priest, not a manufacturer, although at the time such ideas never entered my head” (*Aut* 64).

He discovered this will of God, overall, by means of the Divine Word: “What moved and excited me most was reading *the Holy Bible*, to which I have always been strongly attracted. There were passages that impressed me so deeply that I seemed to hear a voice telling me the message I was reading” (*Aut* 113-114).

Other important mediations on the will of God were *the Prelate*: “On several occasions Bishops from other dioceses asked my Bishop to preach missions in their dioceses. And if he consented I would go because it was my inflexible rule never to preach in any parish or diocese without the express order of my Bishop” (*Aut* 194); *other priests*: “It is worth noting that God has used three Fathers of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri to counsel and direct me at the most critical moments in my spiritual life” (*Aut* 85), “At the same time I called together Fathers Jaime Soler, Jaime Pasarell, Pedro Bach, and Esteban Sala, all of them very wise and virtuous priests whom I trusted

implicitly, and begged them to commend me to God. I told them that I hoped they would be good enough to tell me, on the last day of the retreat I was about to begin, what I should do: either to accept the appointment as the Bishop had commanded, or to resist it completely” (*Aut* 496); and the incidents (cf. *Aut* 76).

The will of God implies, on occasion, to accept difficult things: “In all of life’s disagreeable, painful, and humiliating events, I always remind myself that they come from God’s hand, for my betterment. And so, as soon as I think of it, I manage to turn to God in silent resignation to his holy will, remembering that our Lord has said that not a hair can fall from my head unless it is the will of the Heavenly Father, who loves me so much.” (*Aut* 420). The experience in Madrid was a Purgatory for him: “I have sometimes remarked that God sent me to this job as a kind of purgatory where I am supposed to pay for the sins of my past. I have also said that in all my life I have never suffered as much as I do here at court. I am always sighing to get away from it all. I’m like a caged bird that keeps looking through the bars of its cage for a way to escape, and I keep dreaming up ways to get out. I would almost have been glad if a revolution had come along and they had thrown me out” (*Aut* 621).

It was not only in the important events, but all the actions of the day that God creates to fulfill his will: “Before meals I will say, Lord, I am eating to gain the energy I need *to serve you better*. Before study I will say, Lord, I am studying *to know, love, and serve you and to help my neighbor*. Before retiring I will say, Lord, I am taking this rest to



build up the energy I have spent and to serve you better. I am doing this, my Lord and Father, because you have ordered me to" (*Aut* 744). Up until the final days in his role at Vatican I "the purposes for which God had for me have been fulfilled". He, simply, gave over his life to the holy will of God.

### **To work for His glory and the salvation of souls**

This is the purpose of his whole mission. He repeated it constantly. He intends to direct everything for His glory and the salvation of all men which remains expressed in the call "the apostolic prayer": "O my God and my Father, may I know you and make you known; love you and make you loved; serve you and make you served; praise you and make all creatures praise you. Grant, my Father, that all sinners be converted, all the just persevere in grace, and all of us attain to eternal glory" (*Aut* 233). As an apostolic missionary he feels that God has placed the salvation of many souls in his hands. He burns in this desire to save them for God. He feels he is His instrument: "I don't know how I could have managed to write so many different books. You must have done it, Lord. I know that even this is putting it badly; I haven't written anything; you have done it all. My God, You have made use of me, a worthless instrument without the knowledge, talent, or time to do all this. But, unknown to me, You were giving me all the help I needed. May you be blessed for it, my God!" (*Aut* 324).

He does everything for His glory, like Jesus: "He sought not his own glory, but that of his heav-

enly Father. Everything He did was done to fulfill his Father's will and to save souls, the beloved sheep for whom He, their Good Shepherd, gave his life. O my Jesus, give me your holy grace so that I may imitate you perfectly in practicing all the virtues. As you well know, I can do all things with you and absolutely nothing without you" (*Aut* 436-437).

He Works that God be known by all, so that they may love and serve Him: "My aim is to make God better known, loved, and served by everyone" (*Aut* 202); "My God, I wish that I could prevent anyone from offending you! Rather, I wish that I could make you known, loved, and served by all creation. This is my only desire; the rest is not worth bothering about" (*Aut* 641). "In this world – it goes to say – one loves God if it is pleasing that God be God and that He be loved and served by the whole world and has pain that He be offended and wronged". He tried, more than anything, to always give delight to God, though striving to avoid any pleasure in it: "In the first place, then, I strove to deprive myself of every pleasure in order to give pleasure to God. Without knowing how, I felt obliged to fulfill what was a mere proposal" (*Aut* 391). He didn't want anything in this world but the divine grace of God: "My God, I want nothing of this world, nothing but your grace, your holy love and heavenly glory" (*Aut* 636).

His *feelings toward God* express the type of personal relationship that Claret lived toward his father. The first is, without a doubt, *gratitude*. On





various occasions he gave Him thanks for his gifts: “My God, I want nothing of this world, nothing but your grace, your holy love and heavenly glory” (Aut 299); “May you be blessed, my God, for giving me the strength, health, and more besides, so that I was able to bear so great and continuous a burden of work” (Aut 305). It is offered to Him, he feels like His son, although a sinner. He experiences impulses to be humble before God. His relationship with Him comes with so much intimacy that he considers Him not only his Father, but “my brother, my spouse, my friend, and my

all” (Aut 755). Until he asks God – in a passionate and bold prayer – that He transubstantiate him and is fed by Him: “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).

### Exercise 3: The experience of Claret

*We are 150 years removed away the experience of Claret. If we do not situate it in its context and we make an effort of deepening it, we run the risk of misinterpreting what he lived or of thinking about something which pertains to an extraordinary epoch, that has nothing to do with us. This exercise attempts to help you to go into the nucleus of his experience through the text called “The Apostolic Prayer”.*

1. Begin by writing in your booklet the complete text of the prayer which Claret transcribes in number 233 of the Autobiography:

O my God and Father,  
May I know You and make You known;  
Love You and make You loved;  
Serve You and make you served;  
Praise You and make all creatures serve You.  
Grant, my Father, that all sinners be converted,  
All the just persevere in grace  
And all of us attain to eternal glory. Amen.”

2. The acrostic CASA (House) is formed with the four central verbs (Conocer [to know], Amar [to love], Servir [to serve], and Alabar [to praise]). This helps you to recall that for Claret “to be in the house of the Father” consists basically in knowing Him, loving Him, serving Him, and praising Him and to make sure that all are able to share in this same experience. Moreover, these four verbs constitute the four columns upon which the Church is built, the house of the Christian Community: To Know (*Kerygma*), To Love (*Koinonia*), To Serve (*Diakonia*), to Praise (*Leitourgia*).

3. Take some time to reflect on these verbs. You may respond in writing to the following questions or you can compose a prayer made-up of each one of them:

3.1 By means of what experiences have you known God in your life? How has it helped you to know the people in your environment?

3.2 How do you express your love for God? What does it mean to love Him “with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all of your strength”?

3.3 What does it mean to you “to serve” God the Father? How does this service relate to your self-giving to the people?

3.4 Do you spontaneously feel moved to praise God? What are your forms of prayer?

## How do we Claretians live-out our relationship with God the Father?

Our Constitutions also offer, with specific features, this Claretian experience of God the Father. The Constitutions mention God on 25 occasions, always with the meaning of Father, beyond the various ways it is expressed.

- **The Father** is the one who sends His Son to the world with a mission (CC 3); He is the God of love (CC 94). He is the loving Father lived by Claret. He is the God who chooses us (CC 51) and consecrates us (CC 5). He is the Same to whom we must always please (CC 49). In the Constitutions there are many biblical references which speak to us of the God of Jesus. Because God has loved us we need to respond to His love by loving Him (CC 10). The Claretian needs to live in this union with God harmonized with apostolic action: “He [the Master] should be concerned that the novices acquire that distinctive quality of missionary life wherein the spirit of union with God and apostolic action are perfectly integrated” (CC 68). Because God has consecrated us by His spirit he consecrates us publically to Him by means of the vows (CC 69). We call God – as Jesus – “Abba, Father”: “We have to cultivate the Spirit of adoptive sonship whereby we cry: “Abba, Father”. Guided by the light of faith, we should search for signs of His will in the events of our lives and by this means

we will be each day more responsive to our mission” (CC 34).

- **The expression “to fulfill the will of the Father”** appears, in different ways, thirteen times in the Constitutions. This “will” is the project of salvation. Our community is founded on this: “The chastity which we profess favors a new fraternal communion in Christ and creates a community which is not founded either on blood or carnal desire, but on the will of God” (CC 21). In a special way the superiors have to seek it: “They, therefore, seek before all the will of the Father and later propose it to the others” (CC 30). But it is a call directed to everyone: “We should search for signs of His will in the events of our lives and by this means we will be each day more responsive to our mission” (CC 34). This is connected to the search for the Kingdom of God (CC 24) which we need to announce to the whole world: “We, the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, called like that of the Apostles, have been granted the gift to follow Christ in a communion of life and to go out to the whole world to proclaim the Gospel to every creature” (CC 4). In this work, which exists among us fidelity and strength (CC 46), we are helpers to the Shepherds: “In the Church we are steadfast helpers of its Shepherds in the ministry of the Word, using all means possible to spread the Good News of the Kingdom throughout the





whole world. We profess love and obedience, by virtue of our vow, toward the Supreme Pastor for the good of the whole Body of Christ. In communion with the Bishops and under their direction we strive to serve in the building-up and growth of the Church” (CC 6).

- **We need to do it all for the glory of God.**

The Congregation needs to make sure that the glory of God is its principal objective: “The aim of our Congregation is to seek in all things the glory of God, the sanctification of our members and the salvation of people throughout the whole world in keeping with our missionary charism in the Church” (CC 2); “His only concern is how he may follow Christ in praying, suffering, and in seeking always and only the greater glory of God and the salvation of mankind” (CC 9). We glorify God if we are disposed to give our life for Him: They [the Missionary Deacons] should proclaim the Good News of Jesus to all people, so that in following Him, filled with grace and power, they may give effective witness to His glory” (CC 81). The objective is clear: “Driven by apostolic zeal and the joy of the Spirit, we too should bend every effort, using all means and resources possible, to make God known, loved, and served by everyone” (CC 40). These are always the same traits which we find in Claret.



## Exercise 4: Commentary on the Constitutions

*This exercise has as its objective to deepen, in the significance it has for us Claretians, the experience of God as Father as it is presented in our Constitutions.*

1. Begin reading thoroughly: CMF, *Our Project of Missionary Life* (Commentary on the Constitutions), vol 1, Rome 1992, pp 283-304. If you don't have this on hand, you may access it on-line at The Forge website. While reading, write in your booklet what seems most relevant to you at this time in your life.

2. To continue, respond in writing to this question: Do I believe my life is oriented by the Constitutions? What aspects do I live with the most intensity? In what areas do I need to deepen?

### What implications does the experience of *Patris Mei* have for today?

The experience *Patris Mei* has profound resonance for any Claretian who wants to encounter the root of his life and for the contemporary man, frequently lost in superficiality, lacking a foundation from which to establish his life, suspicious of the "great tales" (religious, philosophical, scientific); but, at the same time, in need of something solid, of unconditional welcome, in constant search of the transcendent.

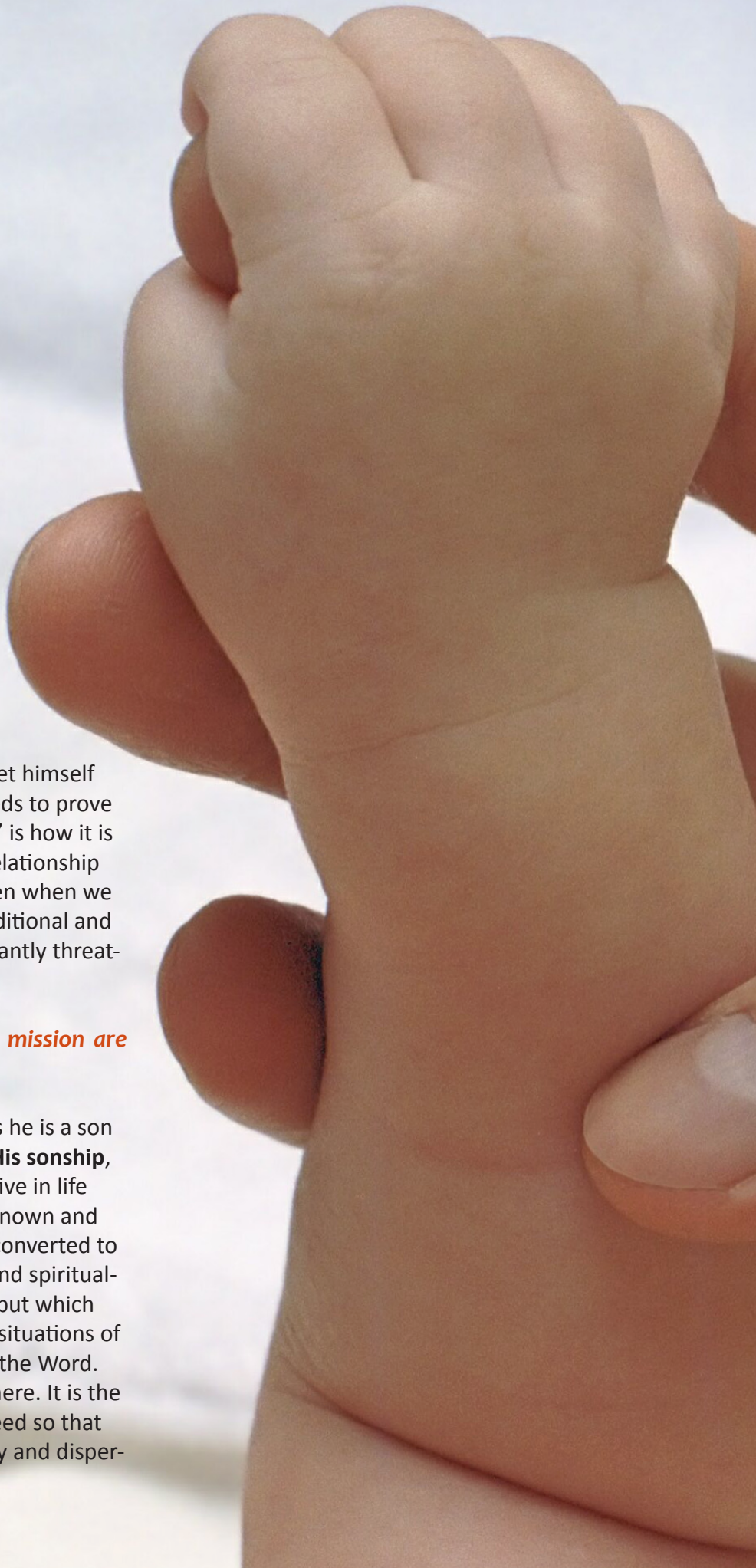
The *Patris Mei* accentuates some essential contents of the Christian message which respond to the challenges of the present. It is, for these reasons, an experience with strong missionary implications.

- **God created the world and each person in love.** God is, as Jesus reveals to us, the Father we are able to call Abba. The human being is not, then, an erratic entity, a product of chance, a slave of genetic determinism, or cultural manipulations, as so frequently appears in a superficial vision of reality. Man is a son loved by God, and therefore, brother of all men. He exists by origin in love and whose end is love.

- **God is, as is so lived by Claret, the providential Father** who does not abandon us to our own luck, but who cares for us (cf. *Lk* 12:22-34). His will is that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (cf. *1 Tim* 2:4). He is a God who intervenes in history making it a history of salvation. He does not wash Himself from the work of his hands, and at the same time, does not establish a rivalry from the autonomy of man, as western culture has interpreted it for the last two centuries. God has created the human being tied to Him, and simultaneously, creative: "The glory of God is that man lives; the life of man is the vision of God" (*St. Irenaeus*).

- What does not emerge in the superficiality of our assessment (because God is not an empirically verifiable problem) **is discovered as Mystery in the depths of our hearts.** God is not someone who would be away, this is furthest from the truth. He is, rather, as the root or the foundation of all that exists. Man, then, to carry out who he






is from a solid foundation, cannot forget himself among ordinary things but that he needs to prove that “being in the house of the Father” is how it is met and developed. We enter into a relationship with Him because He loves us first, even when we ignore or reject Him. His love is unconditional and thus He is able to encourage our constantly threatened maturity.

***Certain demands for our life and mission are also derived from this experience:***

- The missionary, like Claret, knows he is a son of the Father, **lives the experience of His sonship**, and desires to fulfill His will. His objective in life is to work for His glory, so that He be known and loved (cf. *Aut* 233), so that sinners be converted to His love. This is manifested in a profound spirituality that does not practice fuga mundi, but which scrutinizes the presence of God in the situations of men, especially those most in need of the Word. Our missionary prayer is rooted from here. It is the font to carry out the unity of life we need so that we don't lose ourselves in superficiality and dispersion.





- The missionary life is also called **to foster relationships ever more deeply**. This implies the unconditional acceptance of the brother, honest communication, as well as an exercise of the ministry of the Word to exhort, to correct, and to help. All of this will be seen fostered by an indispensable environment of silence and a reduction of the noise and stimuli which foster superficiality. The community, also, is the forge where the heart is rendered and prepared for relationships more and more self-giving.

- The greatness of the ministry of the Word and the cultural level of our society demand that **an atmosphere of study that is serious, personalized, and shared is created in formation**. This study, according to our specific charism, implies a deep knowledge of the *message* (biblical disciplines and theologies), of *man and his condition* (philosophical and anthropological disciplines), and the *channels of transmission* (sciences of communication and education).



## Exercise 5: : Brothers in the same Father

*The final exercise wishes to help you to relate your experience of God as Father with your missionary commitment in the work of justice, peace, the care of creation, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, etc; in everything you do by going out of yourself and entering into a relationship with other people.*

1. Which Scripture texts prove to be most illuminating at a time of introducing the Christian image of God? Make a list of them. Observe if there is any fundamental convergence.
2. Do you know other texts of other religious traditions which are also significant for you?
3. Through your experience of God as Father, how should you adjust your way of relating with those who are different from you (by race, color, manner, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, etc.)? Do you perceive prejudices of any kind in yourself?

## 3. Guidelines for the community meeting

This is the final meeting for the *Patris Mei* stage. It can have a double purpose: *evaluative* and *celebratory*. To avoid repeating the schemes utilized in previous phases, the following is suggested.

1. That each member of the community prepares a letter directed to the community in which he shares what he has learned throughout the year, and above all, what he considers relevant so that the community may continue to grow. At the meeting each one slowly reads his letter and gives a signed copy to the others. It is not necessary to make any further commentary.

2. The final celebration can be open to various people closest to the life of the community. It can be organized around the *symbol of fire*. It can be made up of a proclamation of various brief texts (so biblical like Claretians) in which you can allude to fire as a symbol of God or of love. The community responds with prayers of thanks and petition. (Also it might help to have the nine work booklets for the whole year to evoke the road travelled).

## 4. Guidelines for the “lectio divina”

### Thursday, 1 November 2010. Solemnity of All Saints

- Rev 7:2-4.9-14
  - Ps 23
  - 1 Jn 3:1-3
  - Mt 5,1-12
- We Christians are accused, at times, of going through life with a Messianic complex. We want to save everybody: the poor from their poverty, the sinners from sin, the unbelievers from atheism. There is no believable force of salvation without a joyful experience of having been saved. The forces that don't gush with an overabundance of joy are usually the fruit of resentment or self-sufficiency. They cannot, then, be an expression of the Good News. Less saviors and more saved! Fewer fighters and more saints! This seems to be the prophetic cry that echoes today.
- The saints that we commemorate today did not flee from life, but knew how to discover a life that never ends. Thus to be close to them is to be infected with the desire to live and to live it to the fullest. The saints are our best allies to continue creating a “culture of life” in an ambience of death which we often have to face.

### Thursday, 2 November 2012. Commemoration of All Souls

- Lam 3:17-26
  - Ps 129
  - Rm 6:3-9
  - Jn 14:1-6
- Comforted with joy in yesterday's feast, today we commemorate “all who have preceded us with the sign of faith and sleep in the sleep of peace.” The remembrance of the dead and their intercession goes beyond a pious and praiseworthy custom. It confronts us, once again, with the unfathomable mystery of our own death. We discover people in all their depth when they are no longer with us. Death has the power to reveal that which is deepest in each one. While we live we are very limited by our needs, our fears, and hurts. Upon dying we can give ourselves fully. And in this way inaugurates a true “communion of saints as is recognized by our Christian faith.

### Saturday, 3 November 2012

- Phil 1:18b-26
  - Ps 41/42
  - Lk 14:1-7-11
- On the occasion of a feast, Jesus proposes a series of tips on relationships with peers. The occasion offers the strategies which are observed among the companions to assure themselves privileged places. Jesus says that there is no honor in seeking only the praise of others. The text ends with a wise maxim in which appear two divine liabilities: (“to be humiliated”, “to be exalted”). These allude to the action of God, from whom comes the true honor, the true glory.

### Sunday, 3 November 2012. XXXI Sunday of Ordinary Time

- Dt 6:2-6
  - Ps 17/18
  - Hb 7:23-28
  - Mk 12:28-34
- The response of Jesus to the writing connects with the better Jewish tradition, and at the same time, contains something surprising. He connects with the tradition because it is limited to two classic texts of Scripture: that of Dt 6:4-5 (proclaimed in today's first Reading), referring to the total love of God and that of Lv 19:18, referring to the love of neighbor as oneself. The surprise proceeds from the connection established between the two, although the redaction of Mark is sober: it is limited to placing one after the other. It seems that what had saved Philo was that no one had placed both commandments at the same level; likewise, Mark does not affirm categorically that the second is the same as the first.

### Monday, 5 November 2012

- Phil 2:1-4
  - Ps 130/131
  - Lk 14:12-14
- The Italian monk Enzo Bianchi wrote that “the first way to love another is to give him something to eat.” And he adds: “To feed others signifies: I desire that you live.” Throughout His prophetic months Jesus made the meal a place of encounter and of the Good News. Just look at the Gospel of Luke which we are reading on the weekdays. Jesus appears eating in the house of Levi, in the house of Simon the Pharisee, in the house of Martha and Mary, and in the house of Zacchaeus. Each meal is a true revelation. The meals of Jesus inaugurate the Kingdom, not simply by being friendly, but by being open, by explaining with language the symbols that God uses with those who are excluded from all tables. It is not strange, then, that one of the companions would say: “Blessed is the one who will dine in the Kingdom of God” (Lk 14:15).



## Tuesday, 6 Novembre 2012

- Phil 6:5-11
- Ps 21/22
- Lk 14:15-24

The meaning of the parable of the great banquet seems clear: those who refuse the invitation to participate in it, when everything is ready, will be excluded. It is, therefore, an injunction. Jesus wants to provoke his followers. His objective is that they accept the invitation to participate in the novelty of the Kingdom. But to exclude is not his, it lies exclusively on the free will of those invited. We must not overlook the double “sending” to which he concludes the parable. The banquet is opened to new people: the margined within Judaism (those who live in the plazas and streets of the city) and the pagans (those who live by the streets and highways). Turning this parable into an allegory perfectly encompasses the salvific notion which runs through the entire Gospel of Luke.

## Wednesday, 7 November 2012

- Phil 2:12-18
- Ps 26/27
- Lk 14:25-33

The Gospel offers us the exaggerated words of Jesus. We are not in the presence of a calculating man, but before someone who brings everything to the limits. Jesus values family (he lived with Mary and Joseph for years), friendship (he has friends from all classes), marriage (He wants it to return to the original plan of God). But he always goes much further. There is nothing that stops Him. Because of this he asks His disciples to renounce all this. The three demands that Jesus plants in His disciples are: to willingly renounce emotional ties with family, the sincere acceptance to renounce all self-interest and material possessions. The expressions used by Luke are more radical than those of Matthew. Luke uses the verb (to hate). But it does not deal with demands that need to be fulfilled hastily allowing them to be carried with enthusiasm. These require discernment.

## Thursday, 8 November 2012

- Phil 3:3-8a
- Ps 104/105
- Lk 15:1-10

The parables of the sheep and the drachma (both lost and found) attempt to illustrate a teaching: the joy of God for the conversion of sinners. This teaching, in His time, reflects the historical conduct of Jesus, who “receives sinners and eats with them”. It thus breaks the understanding the thinking which relates salvation with the observance of the law and which forgets that it is always a gift of God.

The Forge in daily life is one of those ways by which God comes to our side so that we return home. The “joy of God” which God feels for our return is what can motivate us the most.

## Friday, 9 November 2012. Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

- 1 Kgs 8:22-23,27-30
- Ps 94/95
- 1 Pt 2:4-9
- Jn 4:19-24

The Synoptics place the expulsion of the merchants from the temple in the last week of Jesus life, moments before his passion. John, nevertheless, anticipated the narrative at the same beginning of Jesus’ activity by His programmed character. For the evangelist, what interests him is to show from the beginning of his Gospel, that with Jesus a new type of relationship with God is begun. Jesus replaces the old temple and everything that He implied (the law) about the temple is He himself. Indeed, only Jesus is the point of contact between God and men. What is now anticipated will be found in its culmination at Easter. The restoration of the destroyed temple (the triumph over death) will allow the definitive encounter with God.

## Saturday, 10 November 2012. Memorial of St. Leo the Great, doctor

- Phil 3:17 – 4:1
- Ps 121/122
- Lk 16:1-8

In the times of Jesus, the steward of a rich man (generally a landowner) was something more than a manager of the servants. He had powers to make all kinds of transactions: rent land, bestow credit, liquidate debts, keep accounts, etc. Why did the master praise the steward? Not for falsifying the accounts, which would have been against the Torah, but for his sagacity in ingratiating himself with the debtors, removing the total debt corresponding to his commission. The significance of the parable is not, then, a warning against the evil of material goods nor an approval of irregular conduct. What is central is the praise of the sagacity of a manager, who, in an embarrassing situation, knew how to profit from his own irregularities. So must the Christian do facing the demands of the Kingdom.



## Sunday, 11 November 2012. XXXII Sunday of Ordinary Time

- 1 Kgs 17:10-16
- Ps 145/146
- Hb 9:24-28
- Mk 12:38-44

Be authentic! Here is the attitude that Jesus wants to transmit to His disciples of the poor widow putting up resistance to the conduct of the Pharisees. The woman did not pretend. She lived her religiosity from the heart. She was not interested in looking good in front of the Pharisees. The Pharisees, on the other hand, lived a religion of external appearances: to walk around in their fancy robes, to look for praise, to sit in the best seats, to devour the goods of the widows, and to make big gestures at prayers in order to be seen. These five behaviors typify a religiosity which is purely exterior, which seeks more than anything public recognition. The praise of the widow accentuates the importance of authenticity, of giving your all. It is a parable transformed into an exemplary story.

## Monday, 12 November 2012. Memorial of St. Josaphat, bishop and martyr

- Ti 1:1-9
- Ps 23/24
- Lk 17:1-6

Don't scandalize the weak, forgive unconditionally, grow in faith. They are indispensable dynamics for living in Christian fraternity. They are also prophetic expressions. To scandalize means to place rocks on the road to make someone stumble. To pardon unconditionally means to believe in the future, to return to believe: "Whoever believes you creates you" (or re-creates you). Pardon is not reduced to special moments in our lives. It is a permanent way of life. To grow in faith is to grow in confidence. The force of faith is not measured by the intransigence of one's convictions but by the capacity to lose oneself in the One who can turn these rocks into the sons of Abraham.

## Tuesday, 13 November 2012

- Ti 2:1-8, 11-14
- Ps 36/37
- Lk 17:7-10

This parable is typical of Luke. In the context of the third Gospel, Jesus is presented with great clarity as a prophet of mercy. The parable seems to indicate to us that whoever is offered the Kingdom needs to do it without waiting for anything to change. It aims to combat the legalistic mentality of someone who always demands something in return for services rendered. Jesus wanted his followers to spread a new spirit. What counts is not the reward but the dedication to the cause of the Kingdom. The disciple, after doing his duty, should consider himself no more than a poor servant.

## Wednesday, 14 November 2012

- Ti 3:1-7
- Ps 22/23
- Lk 17:11-19

The objective of the narrative is to show the contrast between the gratefulness of someone (and the above Samaritan) and the ingratitude of the other nine. The Samaritan has returned (has been converted) to give thanks because faith has helped him to see. This parable should be titled "The thankful Samaritan" and not – as it has been seen traditionally – "The healing of the ten lepers. What is decisive is not the fact of being cured but the fact of seeing, recognizing healing as a sign of salvation.

## Thursday, 15 November 2012

- Phil 7-20
- Ps 145/146
- Lk 17:20-25

Today the Gospel offers two united episodes by Luke: a dialogue between Jesus and a group of Pharisees about the coming of the Kingdom of God, and an instruction to the disciples about the coming of the Son of Man. The response of Jesus to the Pharisees has an air of the polemic, leveling the field of false expectations they had about what the Kingdom was. Jesus rejects useless speculations about the "when". Immediately after, he offers the correct perspective: "The Kingdom is within you." The instruction to the disciples begins with a warning that the day of the Son of Man – in response to the Pharisees talking about the reign of God – is not going to come as soon as the disciples wish nor in a way they can imagine.



## Friday, 16 November 2012

- 2 Jn 1:3-9
  - Ps 118/119
  - Lk 17:26-37
- By means of apocalyptic language, using antithesis (one-another), Jesus wants to transmit a message of urgency. Before the coming of the Son of Man we must wake up and make a choice. The reference to the days of Lot and Noah is a warning against the neglect “of this generation.” The flood destroyed all except Noah and his family. The fire and the brimstone swept Sodom. Only Lot and his family escaped. The same will happen on the day of the coming of the Son of Man. So it is important that we don’t sleep, but to stay awake.

## Saturday, 17 November 2012. Memorial of St. Isabel of Hungary

- 3 Jn 5-8
  - Ps 111/112
  - Lk 18:1-8
- Today is the only day of the liturgical year in which is read at the Eucharist a fragment of the third letter of St. John, which, together with the second, constitutes the shortest writing of the NT. The author invites us to provide for those on the road who are dedicated to the itinerant proclamation of the Gospel. The message of Jesus is clear. If the insistence of the widow to grant her requests are met by an unjust judge, how much more will the disciple achieve with confident and insistent prayer. The question that closes this pericope is evidently rhetorical. Jesus says that the Son of Man is not going to find faith like that of the widow unless the disciples have learned to pray always, without ever being discouraged.

## Sunday, 18 November 2012. XXXIII Sunday of Ordinary Time

- Dt 12:1-3
  - Ps 15: 5, 8, 9-10: 11
  - Hb 10:11-14,18
  - Mk 13:24-32
- Today’s Gospel aims to respond to two questions that every disciple has: What exactly is the end, the day of the Lord? When will it take place? To the first question Jesus responds with images proceeding from the prophetic (cf Is 13:10; 34:4) and in the apocalyptic (cf Dn 7:13-14) traditions. The central message is very precise. What will happen at the end is simply the definitive triumph of the Son of Man and of all those who have been faithful. It is a message, then, of life and hope.
- Jesus responds to the second question regarding the “when” with a parable, that of the fig tree. The point is that it will happen (there will be an end), but one cannot make any forecasts or calculations. What is required is constant vigilance.

## Monday, 19 November 2012

- Rv 1:1-4; 2:1-5a
  - Ps 1
  - Lk 18:35-43
- From now until the end of the liturgical year we will be reading excerpts from the final book of the Bible: the book of Revelation. This is, without a doubt, one of the most enigmatic writings of the NT, but also one of the most attractive. Maybe this is why, in times of historical turbulence or great changes, it is used as a book of encrypted messages to interpret these situations.
- On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus comes to Jericho. Before entering the city (in the case of Mark and Matthew the event happens upon leaving), he meets a blind man sitting by the roadside. This man calls him with the invocation “Son of David” and asks for compassion. Jesus restores his sight. The event is an opportunity to give praise to God.

## Tuesday, 20 November 2012 (Cal, 449-453)

- Rv 3:1-6, 14-22
  - Ps 14/15
  - Lk 19:1-10
- The scene is developed in Jericho. Everything is born from the curiosity and desire. Zacchaeus, a rich man, “wanted to know Jesus”. He does everything he can to see Him: he runs to climb a fig tree. But the one who takes the initiative is Jesus, who invites Himself to eat in the house of Zacchaeus. This sequence is similar to the other encounters: gesture (he raised his eyes”) and words (Zacchaeus, come down immediately because today I want to stay at your house”). It is Jesus who goes out to meet another, even if it is the rich tax collector. There are no borders to His mercy. The key to understanding is what Jesus offers at the end of the story: “The Son of Man has come to find and save what was lost”. What resulted is that Zacchaeus begins to share what he has with the poor.



## Wednesday, 21 November 2012. Memorial of the Presentation of Mary

- Rv 4:1-11
- Ps 150
- Lk 19:11-28

The goal of the journey – which we now approach on this liturgical itinerary – is Jerusalem, the city where death on a cross takes place: “It is necessary that I go on my way, today, tomorrow, and the next day, because it is not possible that a prophet should die outside of Jerusalem.” The trip certainly has a missionary tinge (Jesus crosses the region of the Samaritans and seems to anticipate what in the book of Acts will be the mission of the Church among other peoples), but the fundamental reason is related to His death.

## Thursday, 22 November 2012. Memorial of St. Cecilia, virgin and martyr

- Rv 5:1-10
- Ps 149
- Lk 19:41-44

Although some have described this lament as a “post eventum” prediction, there are many probabilities that it is attributable to the historical Jesus. They had wanted to see the reference to peace as an allusion to the name of the city. According to certain popular etymologies, Jerusalem would signify the “city of peace.” The prediction of Jesus is paradoxical. What is called to be the symbol of peace will be the scene of devastation and wars. In the theological framework of Luke, if Jesus cries over Jerusalem it is because for Luke there exists a continuity between Judaism and Christianity. Jesus did not come to destroy the old city but to rebuild it. In the third Gospel there is not properly a triumphal entrance into the city of Jerusalem. Contact with it is established through his contemplation from the Mount of Olives.

## Friday, 23 November 2012

- Rv 10:8-11
- Ps 118/119
- Lk 19:45-48

The Gospel narrates the expulsion of the sellers in the temple and the reaction of the religious leaders before the teaching of Jesus. It's as if Jesus, before announcing the Good News, would have needed to purify the temple. This preaching in Jerusalem has the same programmed effect as that which Jesus had in the synagogue in Nazareth before His ministry in Galilee (cf Lk 4: 14-15). The positions to this preaching are radicalized: the people are awaiting His word while the leaders are plotting to put an end to Him.

## Saturday, 24 November 2012. Memorial of St. Andrew Dung-Lac and companions

- Rv 11:4-12
- Ps 143/144
- Lk 20:27-40

In a controversy with the Sadducees about the resurrection of the dead, Jesus speaks of the God of biblical tradition as a God of the living, “because for Him all are alive”. The first response of Jesus insists in presenting marriage as an institution of “this life”, with the objective of propagating. But in the “other life”, which will never end, marriage will not be necessary. In support of His thesis Jesus adds an argument of the OT (cf Ex 3:2) on resurrection which Luke converts into an argument in favor of immortality.

## Sunday, 25 November 2012. Solemnity of Christ the King

- Dt 7:13-14
- Ps 92
- Rev 1:5-8
- Jn 18:33-37

Twice Pilate asks Jesus if He is a King. The strategy of Jesus consists in describing what is not of the Kingdom, leaving to Pilate to draw out the consequences. They meet, face to face, two conceptions of kingship. The kingdom about which Jesus speaks is about truth, not political domination. Jesus immediately dispels Pilate's fears about political dangers, but goes much further: challenges Pilate to recognize the truth. And he, afraid and indecisive, just yields to political expediency rather than accept it. Pilate appears here as one who intuits the truth but does not have enough courage to be open to it.



## Monday, 26 November 2012

- Rv 14:1-5
  - Ps 23/24
  - Lk 21:1-4
- This is basically a biographical maxim which several lessons can be drawn: a) What truly measures as a gift is not the quantity that is given but what one reserves for himself; b) What is not so much the quantity but the spirit in which it is given; c) The true gift is to give everything one has; d) The offerings have to correspond to the possessions. It seems that the emphasis of Jesus is focused on the first. By praising the conduct of the widow, Jesus intended, basically, to criticize the behavior of the leaders who use religion for profit.

## Tuesday, 27 November 2012

- Rv 14:14-19
  - Ps 96/96
  - Lk 21:5-11
- The words uttered by Jesus in the Gospel today introduce the eschatological discourse of Luke in which - as with Matthew and Mark - Luke concludes the preaching of Jesus in Jerusalem. The beginning refers to the destruction of the temple which, in the prophetic tradition, is always a result of the breaking of the covenant by the people. (cf Ez 10:18). Then comes a message of warning, signs that will accompany the end. Some signs are clearly misleading: the appearance of false messiahs, the exact indication of the time. Facing these signs, the message of Luke is clear: the end will not come immediately. In this way the evangelist intended to correct the messianic fever that dominated in some sectors of the churches of his time.

## Wednesday, 28 November 2012

- Rv 15:1-4
  - Ps 97/98
  - Lk 21:12-19
- After speaking of the deceptive signs that will accompany the end, today's gospel talks about the true signs. The main one is persecution "because of the name of Jesus". Also in this case, Luke has a clear message. Facing a persecution it is not necessary to prepare a defense. Jesus Himself - Mark points out the Holy Spirit - will protect His community if they remain firm. In this way you will have time "to bear testimony". This favorite expression of Luke is equivalent to "preaching the Gospel", used by Mark in a parallel passage.

## Thursday, 29 November 2012

- Rv 18:1-2,21-23
  - Ps 99/100
  - Lk 21:20-28
- With the dramatic setting of the fall of Jerusalem, the Gospel wants to transmit a clear message of hope and encouragement: "You will see the Son of the man coming in a cloud surrounded by power and glory". Nothing is comparable to the triumph of the Christ who, like the city, will be destroyed, but will emerge triumphant. Therefore the Christian, each time he experiences the test, destruction, needs to maintain calm and hope: "Arise, lift your heads because your salvation is near" In Jesus, God declares that history never escapes from His hands.

## Friday, 30 November 2012. Feast of St. Andrew, apostle

- Rm 10:9-18
  - Ps 18/19
  - Mt 4:18-22
  -
- The Gospel tells of the calling of the first disciples according to Matthew's version. The evangelist situates the story before Jesus commences to preach the Kingdom. This way the disciples can be direct witnesses of this announcement and to go into training to continue it later.
- The story of Andrew and the first disciples is our own story. Jesus takes advantage of who we are and what we have ("They were fishermen") to put it to the service of the mission ("That you be fishers of men"). Andrew and his brother Simon "left their nets and followed Him immediately". The play of rupture-adhesion also marks our vocational history. What force dominates most in your life?

## Saturday, 1 December 2012

- Rv 22:1-7
  - Ps 94/95
  - Lk 21:34-36
- The Gospel concludes the eschatological discourse of Jesus before being entered into the story of the passion and resurrection. The final words are an energetic call to be awake like the servant who waits at any hour for the return of his master. In this way, with a vigilant attitude, the end should inspire no fear. On the contrary, it will be the time of the final encounter with the Lord.
- The conclusion of the eschatological discourse is peculiar to Luke. Jesus invites His listeners not to be dominated by vice, drink, or worry about Money, These preoccupations don't allow us to be vigilant before a universal event ("it will fall like a lasso over all the inhabitants of the earth"). The true attitude is condensed in vigilance and constant prayer.

## 5. Texts for further study

### Appendix I: “To be in my Father’s house” (Carlo M. Martini)

Let us reflect on verses 48-49 of chapter 2 of Luke, re-reading it slowly, trying to re-live the attitudes of Mary and listening to the response of Jesus. Then, after a moment of meditation, let us unfold it developing the question: Why didn’t Jesus say anything to his parents?

“When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him,

- “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.”

He answered them:

- “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (vs. 48-49)

1. Verse 48 refers to the behavior of his parents and the question of his mother.

a) His parents, upon seeing Jesus seated in the temple in the midst of the teachers, noting that his intelligence was appreciated by all, “they were astonished”.

But this reaction is also strange for us. Probably, if it had been us describing this episode, we would have been inspired by the expression that the evangelist Matthew used referring to the magi: “They were overjoyed at seeing the star” (Mt 2:10).

Luke, on the other hand, does not tell us that his parents were happy, but highlights their astonishment with the Greek verb – *exēplāghesan* – which signifies a profound stupor, a deep confusion. It is, generally, the verb which signals the reaction before a new, unforeseen, baffling teaching of Jesus. It is used, for example, incidentally by the people of Capernaum: “Jesus then went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee. He taught them on the Sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with authority” (Lk 4:31-32). Or another, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: “When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Mt 7:28-29). Also, in the Acts of the Apostles, to show the effect of the preaching and the miraculous power of Paul: “Then the proconsul (an adversary of Paul who fell into the darkness of gloom) believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord” (13:12).

So then, Joseph and Mary are surprised because, beyond the logical feeling of joy for having found the boy, they are astonished at the situation. Jesus, at 12 years of age, was not left in Jerusalem out of neglect, or for the pleasure of being with the people, or to stay there only to pray. It is a very deep mystery, a new and unforeseen event.

b) Then his mother expresses her pain, her grief: “Son, why have you done this to us”, without telling us, without saying anything? In the Greek text, “son” is the noun *teknon*: son, “begotten of me”, whom I have carried in my womb.

The conversation continues with a mention of his father: “Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety!” and what torture we feel inside!” The term “anguish” is very strong and shows great torment. Luke will use it in the story of Lazarus and the rich man to explain his situation in hell: “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in these flames” (Lk 16:24). This word expresses a very strong emotional feeling, which we also see in the greeting of Paul to the elderly of Ephesus: “They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him; what grieved them the most was that he said they would never see his face again” (Acts 20:38).

So then, the reaction of his parents is very complex: in the first place, it’s amazement before a divine revelation; secondly, it’s a heavy burden of human emotion which is two-edged: the love of the son and the suffering for having lost him; finally, the fear of having been unworthy of the trust that God had put in them, for not having cared sufficiently for the boy. The suffering of Mary and Joseph is very great to feel like incapable parents, inept in responding to their duty, to the trust that God had shown them.

What results is easy to understand because they felt disturbed and only had words of anguish: for three days they had been crying, feeling guilty about themselves, building-up an emotional load that exploded precisely at the moment of newly seeing their son.

2. Verse 49 records the response of the boy. After having tried to understand the feelings of his parents, this response seems to be very new to us, even disconcerting, partly incomprehensible; but later, actually reveals the mystery of God

In reality, the response is not a justification or an excuse, but a double question which clearly lays an aspect totally distinct from the matter, putting it back to front:



a) *Why are you looking for me?* At once certain connections come to our minds: “Why do you seek the living one among the dead?” (Lk 24:5); “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:25-26)

There is, then, a search which has a false premise – because, partly out of love, but which is misdirected – is based on a lack of understanding of the mystery of God; or even – as in the case of the disciples of Emmaus – is accompanied with anxiety, or confusion that lacks meaning; because Christ, to enter into His glory, had to suffer.

b) *“Don’t you know that I had to be in my Father’s house?”* Why don’t you know this?

*I had to:* is a very important verb for Luke, because it offers the key to the life of Jesus; always, when it appears, it indicates the historical-salvific need as to why the Son does what He does. It would be interesting to go through the entire Gospel of Luke highlighting “I must”, “He has to”, “I had to”. We would think, for example, in the episode of the people who went looking for Jesus, that he had withdrawn to the desert, and they wanted to hold him back: “To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent” (Lk 4:43). Also, the affirmation of Zacchaeus is very eloquent: “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house”: God’s design requires it for your salvation (Lk 19:5).

And as he approaches the passion, after having announced to the disciples what was going to happen, Jesus says: “For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me, namely, ‘He was counted among the wicked’; and indeed what is written about me is coming to fulfillment” (Lk 22:37). We have also remembered the words of the disciples of Emmaus, which appear at the end of the Gospel of Luke, when Jesus explains to His disciples: “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled” (Lk 24:44).

*I had to:* I understand that this is my vocation as Son. The question to Mary and Joseph, then, highlights this historical-salvific necessity which corresponds to the deepest roots of the vocation of Jesus: I have come for this; the Father has sent me for this; don’t crush – we could say – my identity. Because Jesus has an understanding of the Divine project. The understanding which filled those who heard it with astonishment (cf. v. 47) is of God’s design, which is translated “I must”.

3. If we reflect attentively we can report that the first “I must” of Jesus, the root of all his vocational and existential needs, is to be with the Father: I must be with the Father. John, at the beginning of his Gospel, will express it in a more contemplative way: “The Word was with God”.

The Father is the vocational secret of Jesus, from where his whole mission is derived: from the “I must” be in my Father’s house is born the “I must” walk today and tomorrow; the Scriptures “they must” be fulfilled in me; all of this “had to” happen; “I must” also preach the Kingdom of God to other cities...

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus, at the age of twelve, said the word “Father” for the first time so that Mary and Joseph would understand the deep roots of His vocation: He would repeat it for the last time on the cross, now at the point of death: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46).

Then, in the temple, Jesus assumed and expressed the consciousness of His vocational journey which ended with his total giving of self to the Father on the cross.

I suggest that you review other significant mentions of the presence of the Father in the life of Jesus, above all in the moments of His most difficult and hard choices. Review them in prayer and silence, asking the Lord to allow you to penetrate into His mystery. I think especially in the invocation at the Garden of Gethsemane: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42); in that joyful exclamation: “I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned You have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. Father, You have taught me everything”, You have given everything over to me, and I have given you my life (Lk 10:21-22); in the promise after the Resurrection: “And now I am going to send you what my Father has promised” (Lk 24:49).

“Jesus, You have said that you always do what pleases the Father; let us understand what in the Father is the definitive peace in our vocational choices. And You, Father, who has created me in Jesus, who has filled me with the Holy Spirit, who loves me, who judges me; lead me and carry me by your hand. You, who have made a covenant with me, permit me to entrust You with my life, in the certitude that You are my vocation; as You did with Jesus.”

4. In light of the reflections which we have made and the other Gospel passages of Luke, maybe we can give an answer to the exegetical question at the introduction: What is the significance of verse 49, “to be in my Father’s house”?

It is clear that these words refer, above all, to the temple, to the house of the Father.

If Mary and Joseph would have understood the mystery of this boy, his vocation and his life; after seeing him disappear, they would have known that he could be found in the temple.

Thus, to know Jesus is to know that He is where the Father is.

Nevertheless, if he had only wanted to say this, Luke would have written: *en tí oíko tou Patrós mou*, in the house of my Father. In reality, he did not write *en tó oíko*, but *en toís* (in the things), a vague term which can also mean “the house”.

Moreover, I believe that if Jesus had wanted to give an account himself only at the temple, he would have done it like Samuel: the parents would have returned home, and he would have stayed in the temple, serving the Lord day and night. But it is certain that he returned home with them.

“To be in my Father’s house” signifies, then, a way of being that accompanies him everywhere. That works for the temple and for Nazareth. For the preaching in Galilee and Judea. To walk the road by the lake of Genesareth and

to the cross, according to the demands which glorify the Father.

“To be in my Father’s house” is a way of existing, it is the identity of Jesus; it is the deepest vocational option to which we are all called, an option previously offered to all the rest.

The deepest option in which we can be at peace: to be with Jesus and like him in the things of the Father, in his will, in His salvific design of love for me and for all men, to be with Jesus and like Him together with the Father, in his design of love for all humanity, committing myself on His adventure for the salvation of all men and women in the world.

This is the fundamental decision which you have to ask for as a gift:

*“Lord, allow us to be with Jesus and like Jesus together with the Father, in His will, in his salvific project of love for us, to all men and women, to all of humanity.”*

*“Lord, allow us to be with Jesus and like Jesus together with the Father, in His will, in his salvific project of love for us, to all men and women, to all of humanity.”*

If we don’t have the courage of making certain concrete steps, of attaching ourselves to God, of risking ourselves for Him; it will signify that we are not with Jesus together with the Father.

Indeed, all other options express the fruits of this deep root, of this tree who is Jesus, who is the tree of life, of the cross, of the Resurrection; the tree which grows along the rivers of the celestial Jerusalem; any option shows the truth of this root and the courage to adhere to it.

## Appendix II: Circular “Witnesses and Messengers of the God of Life” (Fr J. Abella, 2006)

18. This is the first condition to construct a future full of life: **to live our Claretian missionary vocation enthusiastically.** How many times have we been called to love our vocation! To accept it as a precious gift, to take it on as this hidden treasure by him who made it worthwhile to sell all, to live it as a journey of personal realization that steers our life towards God and our brothers, and makes it fertile and generative of the new life; which are fundamental aspects of this love by the vocation received. The last General Chapter marked-out as one of the priorities for the sexennium: “Let us take on as a priority the cultivation of our own vocation in fidelity to our evangelical and charismatic roots as expressed in the Constitutions” (TMHL 48).

19. To be enthusiastic about the Claretian vocation signifies with joy the project of life which gives birth to the values which define it, and which is expressed in the Constitutions. I believe that we have to turn more frequently to this “book of life”. It is worth looking at, because with great frequency, it only remains as one of the texts that we study

during the novitiate, but does not continue to accompany us closely through the rest of our life. The Congregation, faithful to the directions of Vatican II, made a great effort to integrate into the constitutional text the fundamental elements of the spiritual and apostolic experience of St. Anthony Mary Claret, and offered it to us as a sure way to live in following Jesus in the community of evangelizers to which we have been called. The three volumes of the Commentary on the Constitutions, published many years ago under the title “Our Project of Missionary Life”, allows us to deepen, from a theological and historical perspective, the richness of the constitutional text and helps us to assimilate its contents in a very systematic way.





The nine booklets of this *Patris Mei* stage (2012) have been written by a group of Claretians from different Provinces:

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Layout:

Rai Adormeo (France), Gonzalo Fernández (Santiago).

Printing and distribution:

Claretian Publications (Bangalore, India).

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# The Forge in Our Daily Life

**PATRIS MEI** - 2012

“

My aim is to make God  
better known, loved, and served by  
everyone” (Claret)