

THE FORGE IN OUR DAILY LIFE

Quid Prodest

Ordinary Time I

3

CALLED TO BE SONS

The Forge in Our Daily Life

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

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

QUID PRODEST - 2011

PATRIS MEI - 2012

CARITAS CHRISTI - 2013

SPIRITUS DOMINI - 2014

OBJECTIVES OF *QUID PRODEST* STAGE

- To inspire an attitude of authenticity while seeking God's Will in one's own life, keeping in mind one's present experience of life.
- To calmly reread one's personal history, discerning it in the light of the Word of God.
- To learn to identify one's wounds in order to experience a process of healing.
- To recapture one's happiness in being a Claretian.
- To ground the search for a new response to God's Call, in a spirit of conversion in the light of the Claretian *Quid Prodest*.

- 1 The urgent thing is to wait (Advent)
- 2 And He dwelt among us (Christmas)
- 3 **Called to be sons (Ordinary Time I)**
- 4 On the road to Easter (Lent)
- 5 The new life in Christ (Easter)
- 6 Followers of Christ like Claret (Ordinary Time II)
- 7 Witnesses in the midst of the world (Ordinary Time III)
- 8 Born to love (Ordinary Time IV)
- 9 Looking back to look forward (Ordinary Time V)



1. Setting out on life

After the season of Christmas and Epiphany, you get into the rhythm of the liturgy of Ordinary Time, a laboratory for your growth as a person and as a follower of Jesus. Associated with “sharing family life and ministry with his brothers in a local community” (CC 11) you are invited to relive your baptismal experience every day: the call first to be a person, to be a son and a brother, and to be a missionary.

Each person (in our case, each Claretian), has his personal history. You, as the person and Claretian that you are, have yours. It has been carefully forged over time, through the interaction of three converging elements: your genetic makeup (the psychophysical characteristics you were born with), the situational element (because “you are you and your circumstances” and those facts affect you more than you imagine), and the very personal decision that you are taking in the use of your freedom, either constructive or not.

To this human infrastructure, you must add the influence of the grace of your vocation as God's

call (in the strong sense of the term) and as a personal response to all that it implies; a response which requires your insight ("What do you want from me, Lord? ") and faithfulness ("Here I am"), two moments which, according to the Bible, all the friends of God have lived through. That's how you live "answering the divine call" (CC 5).

Even though your experience is unique, there are processes that are similar to those of your brothers, even if everyone lives them in their own way. Therefore, in this new phase of *Quid Prodest*, this booklet tries to provide you help when asking yourself new questions and helping you in your reflection, sharing the enlightenment and the driving forces that you discover, as well as the projects you have in mind.

You also now understand social reality, as well as economic, ecclesiastical, religious, occupational, and Claretian reality ... You are now situated in the presence of that reality. That reality affects you, both positively and negatively, depending on your conscious and free reaction to it.

Here is an example, perhaps. All-pervading secularism, for the person who adopts it as a form of life, will put him outside the reach of God. It is fertile ground for the development of attitudes such as *eroticism* (as opposed to chastity) consu-

merism (as against poverty), *autonomy* (as opposed to obedience), *individualism* (as opposed to community), *hedonism* (versus the cross) ... As a Claretian, if you don't have a gospel-based answer to this, as your vocation requires of you, you will notice its consequences in the form of crisis and dislocation. These will only be healed if proper treatment is applied. Consider what, for various reasons, may be attacking your mental state or spirit.

The example above suggests many other situations. In particular, those that question you directly, and where you will place a personal interpretation on the impact they have on your life and, above all, on your way of coping with them spiritually. Think about how you use the Internet: news, opinions, pictures; or think about your awareness of extreme poverty in different places, etc. .. Without a solid and challenging period of formation, you will have great difficulty living the life of a Claretian. The experience of "**The Forge project in our daily life**" that you are living, endeavours to be a support in your personal growth in this direction.



2. Liturgical time: *Per annum*



This part of the *Quid Prodest* experience is at the beginning of Ordinary Time in the liturgical year, up to Lent.

Every liturgical period offers the chance of involving yourself in a new way in the fundamental happening of faith: the mystery of Christ. You live with brothers in a Claretian fraternity that "is nourished by prayer, especially liturgical prayer" (CC 12). So the liturgy should occupy a privileged place in the action of the Holy Spirit over your daily life. The liturgical year, considered both globally and what is experienced in each of the solemnities, feasts, memorials and ferias, is a continuous memento of a series of redemptive historical events which are made real by repeated encounters with Christ, the Lord of time, of people and of things by the power of the Spirit.

Ordinary time, the longest period of the liturgical year, offers a programme to penetrate the mystery of salvation. With its 34 (or 33) weeks, it forms a continuum of celebration from the feast of the baptism of the Lord. Each Sunday has its own value, which does not celebrate a specific aspect but rather the mystery of Christ in his fullness is remembered and lived.

Try to highlight in particular the reading of the gospel throughout ordinary time now that you have started. It makes you focus your inner life and your past history on Christ the Lord. And there you have to position yourself so as to live out very specific aspects of the *Quid Prodest* programme, like the mystery of your identity, your vocational experience, the injuries sustained along the road, your freedom and vulnerabilities. Use the *Lectio continua*, following it faithfully every day, as the major instrument of your experience during this period. Organize yourself to do it with care and diligence.

3. My identity: “You are a beloved son”

This section of the booklet starts with the Sunday of the Lord’s Baptism, the first of Ordinary Time. The gospel invites you once again to raise afresh the question of your own self-identity: Who are you fundamentally? What can you say about yourself? What can you expect? What are you beyond what you show to the outside world? What is hidden in the depths of your being? How do you understand the mystery that overpowers you?

In the light of experience, you are offered, as keys to your meditation, seven short theses. They are aids for seeking your own personal identity, which you are asked to study in depth at this particular point in the *Quid Prodest* programme.

a. You know yourself imperfectly and incompletely

Surely you've had occasion to hear the opinion of others about yourself. When this happened, did you recognize yourself in their description? It is possible that you will sometimes be surprised at being assessed differently from how you expect. That is one of the many signs that the knowledge you have of yourself is only partial and incomplete.

Not only that, at best it tends to grow and it never stops growing. You know aspects of your own personality that those who live with you can't even imagine. And vice versa.

In addition to being partial, your knowledge of your own identity is evolving. Your whole life is a progressive journey of getting to know yourself, something which is especially critical in taking important and definitive decisions.

b. To know yourself you need the cooperation of others

To know yourself you need the assistance of those who know certain aspects about you that you are unaware of. Therefore, make sure that others, for whatever reason, are not afraid to be honest with you and reveal what they see and understand about you. Such collaboration requires trust, transparency and clarity, especially if you're

6 Called to be sons.

looking for knowledge about yourself that makes you grow and is not reduced to a mere character analysis.

c. When you get to know yourself, there will a surprise in store for you

On the road to self-knowledge, surprises will emerge, which are sometimes bitter. Some may lead you to conclusions like this: "I never thought I was so weak, so sensitive, so susceptible, so unable to control my anger, ..."

Sometimes the surprise carries another message, for example when you check your behaviour during a physical test: "I was convinced that I couldn't endure the suffering but, on the contrary, I am delighted to discover that I could."

You are, indeed, in for a surprise, especially in the emotional domain. For example, you knew, only theoretically perhaps, that such friendship could lead to passive dependence, but did not believe that one day you would fall into it ... Today you face the challenge of achieving more independence.

d. You know yourself better through reflection than through self-contemplation

Just as, looking at yourself in the mirror, you become more aware of parts of your body, so too you know who you are by acting and reflecting on what you do, more so than by losing yourself in thought and scrutinizing your interior self.

Getting to know yourself happens after you become aware of everything that comes into play in your daily life: the cognitive, the emotional and the volitional. In every decision you make you will find data that allows you to learn more about yourself.



e. To know yourself better, take advantage of feedback

Feedback is the information you get from others about something you have said or done (e.g. public criticism or praise). Feedback is a very useful tool for getting to know yourself. Therefore, take advantage of the feedback, even the criticism, without getting cross and rejecting it, even if it is unfair. Taking it into account can help, amongst other things, to remove the irritation that will be caused by what others think of you, which you may consider to be inaccurate.

To grow in your own self-awareness, you need to think calmly and objectively, not only on the negative, but also on the positive feedback from others; also you will need more than a small dose of humble acceptance of the bitter surprises.

f. Beware of the negative effects of knowing about yourself!

Being an intelligent person, you run the risk of the negative effects brought about by self-knowledge. Indeed, there is the danger of excessive subjectivity. Certain environments may encourage you instinctively to put yourself under the spotlight, to look at yourself exclusively and become narcissistic.

By contrast, look for your more authentic self by avoiding subjectivism, which reduces your iden-

tity to what you believe you are, without further verification. Common phenomena and self-deception, amongst other things, make a person believe himself to be better than he really is; or the reverse, worse than how others see him. Some people are incapable of self-criticism; they are both scrupulous and blind ...

g. Listen to God: "You are my beloved son"

The seventh principle is condensed in the statement that God says to Jesus at the time of his baptism: "You are my beloved son."

It is the last and most significant word that can be said about self-knowledge. At a key moment, Jesus is revealed and he also reveals his deepest identity as the beloved Son.

At the summit of your knowledge of your own identity is the revelation of God's plans for you. When you recognize it, you will understand that it is a gift from God, an act of invaluable love. This demonstrates the transcendent aspect of the second proposed thesis: Getting to know yourself requires collaboration with others, most notably, that of God, who speaks to you through his Word.

We present here below two possible exercises that can help you personalize what is shown here. Simply choose one of them.

Exercise 1: Dual personality?

Self-esteem, daughter of self-knowledge, frequently fluctuates, sometimes dramatically changes the person and often swings to and fro, even during the course of the day. You can move from self-appreciation to self-contempt in seconds. This exercise can help you identify and control these alternating experiences.

- On a sheet divided into two columns by a vertical line, write down on the left side **how you feel, think and act** when you feel good about yourself. On the right side, how you feel, think and act when you feel bad about yourself. Write down what comes into your head..
- Understand that these two states are part of your make-up. You are both. **Imagine a name for each one of them, or perhaps a symbol.**
- Then **try identifying what kind of situations, experiences, people or events affect you** in ways that might raise or lower your state of well-being and sense of fulfilment. Specify what causes you to feel good or bad about yourself. Pay particular attention to the influence exerted by others on your self-knowledge.
- When you have finished **present your findings to the Lord ...** In his presence read the result of your work. And occasionally stop and listen to God, who in the silence of your conscience repeats: "You are my beloved son."

Exercise 2: You are the fruit of love

Your life is not the result of chance or error. It originated through the personal love of your parents and has been created by God.

This exercise can be done by discussing in pairs, both speaking and listening to each other. But perhaps it is most important to listen.

Fact of life

You've probably met someone who knows they were an unwanted child. Perhaps you can even remember a conversation with him. Try to appreciate his lack of a sense of belonging which results from that, as if his life had been the result of a mistake or as if it should not have happened.

Analysis

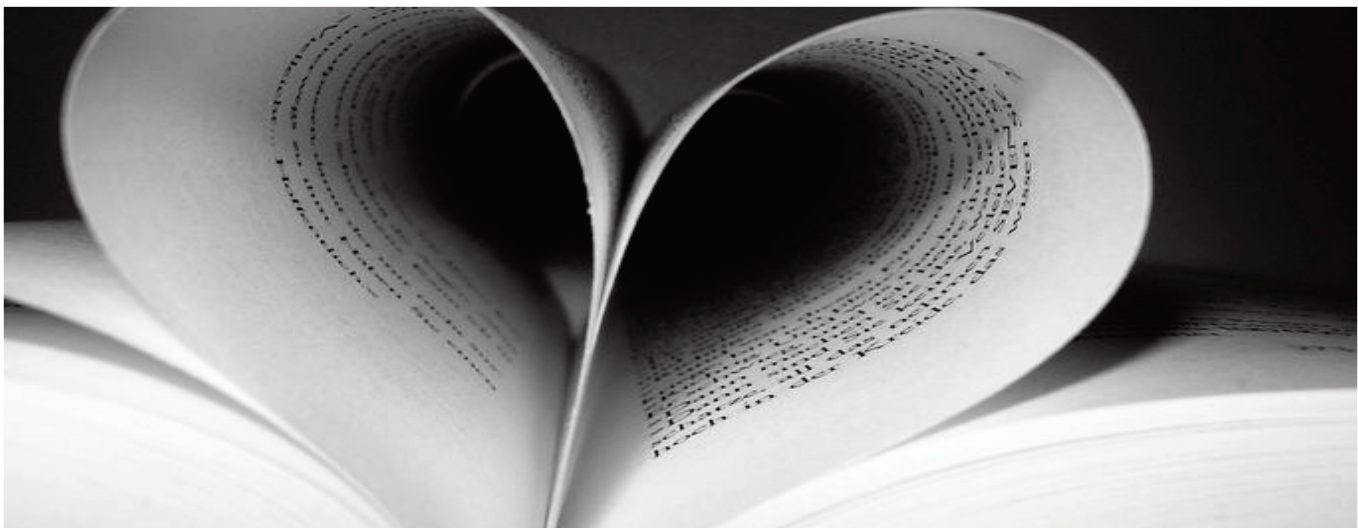
This way of perceiving reality itself is very commonplace. As you have heard the testimony of an unwanted child, you could hear stories of people who feel as if they are living an absurd existence, or surviving in the midst of a difficult environment, as if they were adrift, without a why and wherefore, without a sense of belonging within a family or a community. Have you ever felt that way? Why is it that you experienced these feelings?

The example of Jesus

Jesus lived in some very difficult situations. He had been rejected by his community and his family. He was persecuted and murdered. However, amidst all these difficulties, he hung on to the knowledge of his origin in the Father, whom he addressed with true intimacy using the term "Abba." At every moment of his life, and especially at the hardest moments, he found in the Father a sense of belonging and life. At the final moment on the cross he came to feel, like you and like so many others, abandoned by the Father: My God, my God, why have you deserted me? (Mk 15:36), yet he retains the memory of his surrender: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit (Luke 23:46). How does the example of Jesus tell you about your personal experience of identity and belonging?

Mahatma Gandhi's prayer

You will find it in **Appendix II**. No doubt you can make the prayer your own, a focus for your own personal prayer before the Lord of life.



4. My vocation: “your calling and first

The third Sunday in Ordinary Time of Cycle A presents the vocational story that Jesus tells of two sets of brothers by the lake (cf. Mt 4:12-23). It is worth spending some time meditating on it. You have here two parallel stories: first, the call of Peter and Andrew, and then ("going further"), the call of James and John. The repetition allows the evangelist to emphasize what interests him. It is an opportunity to revisit your vocation. The important thing is not to take anything for granted. Vocation is a thing of utmost importance, as it touches the root and the destiny of life. The gospel reminds you of some principles which in the light of *Quid Prodest* lead you to strengthen your vocational consistency in daily life. This is all about you achieving "the greatest care in bolstering your own vocation and choice through good works" (CC 60).

- **Jesus is always in the centre as the protagonist.** The initiative is his ("he saw", "he told them", "he called them"); it is not the person who proclaims himself a disciple, but Jesus who transforms him into a disciple. If you lose this centrality of Jesus in your life or it is replaced by another, your vocation is put at risk.

- **The disciple is not called to absorb a doctrine.** It's got nothing to do with living an insular life. The first objective is to make friends, link up with someone ("follow me"). Never forget that. How can you live out your vocation without being with Him, without being his friend?

- **Attachment to the person of Jesus is central.** So much so that it's not the disciple himself who determines whether he will become a master. On the contrary, he will always remain a disciple. The Master is one and forever. Do not dispense with Jesus the Master. Do not replace him with anything or anyone. Your wisdom lies with him.

- **Following Jesus requires a major land shift.** The call to Peter and Andrew and to James and John is built around the same structure, and substantially the same language. There is, however, an important difference; in the first account it is said that they left "their nets", in the second they left "their boats and their parents." Therefore, it seems like a crescendo: from their occupation to the family. The occupation represents one's security and social identity, the parent represents one's roots.



Ask yourself sincerely about your own occupation, your family, your feelings ... do they have more hold over you than Jesus or not. Do you detect this in anything?

- **“Following” is a journey.** Starting with Jesus' calling, it is encapsulated by two actions (to leave and to follow), indicating a shift from the central area of life. Jesus' calling is not a state of being, but a journey. To follow the calling of Jesus means to move from (insert the name of the situation ...) to (to where?).

- **“Following” is a mission.** There are two coordinates of discipleship: communion with Christ ("follow me") and a route towards the world ("I will make you fishers of men"). The second stems from the first. Jesus does not put his disciples in a separate and isolated space; they are sent along the roads to be amongst men.

- Later Jesus will show that **the road of the disciple is the cross.** It will be a hard lesson, the most difficult one to understand.

Ejercicio 3: Phrases on vocation

The reading is suggestive of a Claretian vocational experience (see Appendix IV). Complete it with this exercise: you are offered a number of statements about vocation. If you agree with them, try to explain and justify each one of them with a personal detail taken from your own life:

- **My vocation is not a marginal**, unimportant issue but the most important matter of my life.
- **My vocation is not only a personal and private choice**, but is primarily to do with God and with other people.
- **My vocation is not a matter of choice** which I may, or may not, consider for myself, but there have been times when I have had to reflect on it in depth and, frequently, I have to update that decision. I can't always take it for granted.
- **My vocation is not something visible**, but something I have to constantly discover through experience and regular contact with God in prayer.
- **My vocation has to do with my tastes and concerns**, but not only them. God's calling does not identify it with my desires and dreams, but often makes me suffer and forego beautiful things.
- **I can not live my vocation alone**. Other people are very important for better or worse. Influences are critical in its development. It would not be the same if I were to ignore people with whom I have interacted.

5. Learn once again how to live as a son, not as a servant

Any learning process involves having a good teacher and a diligent student. To learn how to live you need to have recourse to an expert teacher in the art of living and you need to be a diligent student. The latter is expressed in the Gospel with the words "become as a child."

Educators say that childhood stands out notably as the period of great learning, when what is learned is very difficult to erase. When the gospel says, "Unless you become like children ...", far from idealizing childhood, which would be a mistake, we are talking about adopting the best disposition for learning .

Jesus is a teacher with his own life-story. Everything in his life is converted into a paradigm and model for learning. You would have to devote yourself to imitating it, seeking your own interior identification, as referred to by Fr Claret: "Look and copy. A look at Christ, and then at yourself."⁽¹⁾

During the Tuesday and Wednesday of the first week of our ordinary time, the Gospel of Mark, which is read out in the liturgy, provides details of Jesus' daily life. These allow us to reconstruct, in broad strokes, how Jesus organized his day to day missionary life. These pages of the Gospel invite us to live like him, going beyond the simple acquisition of theoretical knowledge. The following table helps us locate where Jesus went and what he did.

¹ (1) This is indicated textually by Fr Founder: "Since everyone in meditation should remember the words that God said to Moses: " See that you do everything according to the example shown to us on the mountain". The person meditating should act like someone learning how to draw or write. He first takes a look at the original and then copies it onto the paper. So too he will look at the original, which is Jesus Christ, and begin to copy his virtues "(ANTHONY MARY CLARET," Talent of virtues ": *The Well-Instructed School Boy I*, p. 136 s.)

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

TEXT	LOCATION	ACTIVITIES
Mk 1:21-28	In the synagogue	<p><i>Capernaum is a fishing village north of Lake Galilee. In its synagogue, Jesus teaches and begins his head-on struggle against the spirit of evil that tortures human beings. With authority, not in the manner of that of the scribes, but which comes from above, Jesus frees man from evil. Such authority astonishes everyone.</i></p>
Mk 1:29-34	At home	<p><i>The house of Andrew and Simon is a place of privacy, service and healing. Everyone's dignity is respected there, even the old, sick women. It attracts the admiration of everyone and the news spreads rapidly.</i></p>
Mk 1:35-39	In the open countryside	<p><i>Remote places are places of prayer. Before beginning his day of missionary work, Jesus goes to a secluded place to talk to Abba. So he confirms what will be repeated many times: "I do not speak for myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing the work" This relationship comforts him and tries to purify the intentions of those who seek him.</i></p>

Following the same format, also try to draw up the geographical framework which encompasses a typical day of your life and the activities that fill your time. You yourself will have to fill in the grid in the form of an autobiography.

A DAY IN MY LIFE	
LOCATION	ACTIVITIES

Finally, **draw your own conclusions**. Do not forget that it is all about "following Jesus", and "having the same feelings", not so much about repeating them.

6. Injuries along the way and their healing

Although you may not know how to define them, you know perfectly well what injuries are. Your vocation is a high risk profession. You may already display scars on your body or your soul. There are wounds on three levels: physical, mental and spiritual. All three are different but their importance can be categorized in that order.

Each has its own process. So, in the first case you go to the doctor, the second, the psychologist or psychiatrist, and the third ... to God, often through intercession. This might suggest that you operate within watertight compartments. It's not like that. The three levels are interrelated: there is psychological damage which is expressed externally (a lie that makes you blush) physical injury that alters your mental state (deafness alters your mood and makes you suspicious). Your spiritual wounds (those which are done to you and which you do to yourself) are of different order, although they affect the other levels.

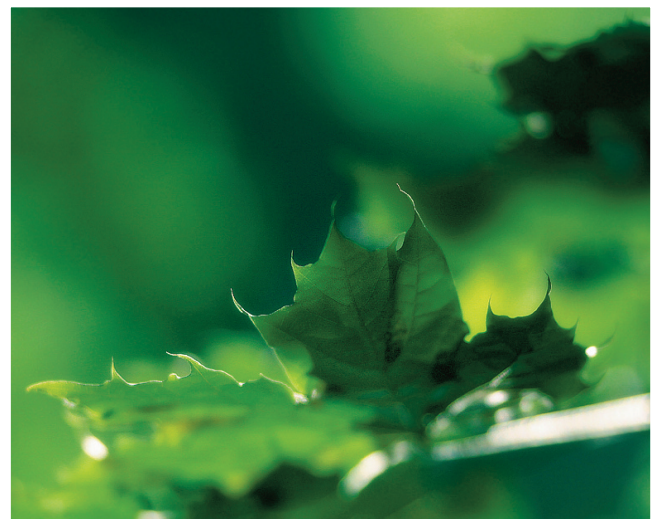
But it is important to know that there are wounds caused by sin and others born of love. Sin leaves you with wounds which should be healed (the bitterness of infidelity, discomfort caused by hatred, remorse after committing an offense, sadness resulting from selfishness) The love of God, referred to by the mystics, can also hurt ("Oh flame of love alive, that you wound tenderly ..."). But the latter are wounds that purify and heal.

Do not focus your attention only on the first of these. You can heal them if they are properly treated, always relying on grace, a pure gift of God. Remember that God's forgiveness destroys guilt.

And you can also heal the wounds in the second category, climbing to a high level of spiritual maturity. Mystics, those who have had the experience, know it well.

Both the healing of the former as well as the maturation of the latter allows you to look with new eyes at all those wounds which you might be dragging along, and the most important of all, death, in order to discover the meaning of renewal.

In the spiritual domain, as well as in the psychological and, up to a point, in the physical as well, you will find nothing so healing as genuine love. It is an indisputable principle. Those who talk about education in love know it's possible to make a gradual start at learning the art of love. We are thus at the heart of the message of the gospel.



Healing wounds

Healing is often a long and complex process. It requires patience and perseverance. And a lot of help from others. Dr. Kübler-Ross, speaking of the serene acceptance of death, indicates that the process through which grief develops passes through five stages, which she termed as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

In a sense, the healing of wounds is much like accepting death. There are wounds that can be, and indeed are, as painful, difficult, and distressing ... just like death itself. Therefore we can categorize the healing process in the same five stages.

1) First of all, at the first signs of the pain which the injury causes you, the first thing you do is reject it: "Impossible," you say to yourself, "that never happened to me." Sometimes you do not credit it with any importance. Stage 1: one of **repression and denial**.

2) But the reality is there and cannot be denied. Then you rail against the "culprits" about what has happened to you and you enter into the stage of anger. You turn to thoughts of **resentment and revenge**.

3) But the reality is still inexorably there; anger and irritation do not improve your situation in any way; your feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, guilt ... still there prodding and poking at you. And you think: "Can't I do anything to get rid of them?"-



Though, of course, without accepting them as being yours and a part of your life. That's when you begin the phase of **bargaining**.

4) As the pain continues, your inward reflection grows and grows. Gradually you are persuaded that nothing is gained by avoidance or flight. Then, as the pain becomes greater than your endurance, you give in to **depression and sadness**. The fourth stage.

5) Finally, you live through a useless and damaging stage of depression, and you open up very slowly (but not necessarily) to a fresh perspective, and you begin **to accept the experience**, seeing it as part of your own life, even as something positive. It is the fifth and final stage. You accept this suffering, which caused you such grief,, first as tolerable, then as acceptable, and finally as beneficial and good. The process is complete.

If you were overwhelmed before, now you feel free again, able to accept and live happily with yourself, and consequently able to surrender yourself to the service of others.

Before finalizing this point, you should be aware of the following: these stages are only conceptual approximations, not exact descriptions. How could they be accurate descriptions when dealing with a human process, which is inevitably complex? But you will have help in understanding your inner struggle when faced with a painful memory and your personal decision between the yes and no of acceptance, until finally you find peace. The stages often get mixed up, confused, speed up or slow down; but they will still enlighten your personal struggle and help you to understand your own inner turmoil of decision-making.

Can you compare the acceptance of a painful memory with the acceptance of death? Undoubtedly yes. And we must emphasize it to avoid superficiality, especially when dealing with others, to minimize the struggle. But you must also learn to be sympathetic with yourself.

Exercise 4: Three wounds

Slowly read aloud this beautiful poem by the Spanish poet Miguel Hernandez. Read it three or four times ...

HE ARRIVED WITH THREE WOUNDS

He arrived with three wounds:

That of love,
That of death,
That of life.

He comes with three wounds:

That of life
That of love,
That of death.

There I am, with three wounds:

That of life
That of death,
That of love.

Miguel Hernández

- Try to identify your wounds of love ... death ... life ...
- Review the previous paragraph referring to "Healing wounds," address the symptoms and draw your own conclusions.
- Pray about them before the wounded Lord on the cross.

7. Freedom and dependence

Freedom is a way of life. A prerequisite for being free is to understand properly what the word means, then you have to live your life accordingly. Sometimes we play around with the word giving it a different meaning, at least in practice. I am free, you might say, when I do what I please. However, there are cravings that enslave us. In this instance we speak, not of freedom, but of dependence (which is precisely the opposite of freedom). An addiction that panders to our whims does not make us free but enslaves us. Within us, the old man wants to impose his 'values'. This is why Paul insists on the need to kill the 'old man' inside us, for he is our worst enemy. He who takes his own life 'because he wants to' is not acting out of freedom but under pressure from an inner force that

enslaves him and leads to his death. Free is the person who overcomes the obstacles that spring up along the way and is able to do good and allow his liberated self to act.

What are the ways of increasing your freedom? How can you renovate your perception of freedom? The experience of *Quid Prodest* suggests putting two restrictions on your freedom. The first is one of expedience. And the second is what builds the community. With both, you answer a key question: What good is it to always do what you like if, in the end, it leaves you unsatisfied and enslaved? Let's look at them in detail.

- **Learn how to choose what is appropriate.** The consumer society encourages your decisions

to revolve around the satisfaction of your tastes or inclinations. This is because when someone depends on this as a reward, it is very easy to cheat. It creates a need which enslaves other people and you can take advantage of them and make good profit. We all get it into our heads to buy things we do not need, because at that particular moment, under the heavy pressure of advertising, you decide to buy something driven on by an impulse. If this way of doing things went no further than that, it wouldn't be so bad. The problem is that the continuing rewards create a habit, which focuses the whole person around his needs and prevents him coming out of himself. He gradually becomes capricious and fickle in his decision-making.

It has been emphasized throughout this booklet that the call of Christ requires that you come out of yourself. The same occurs at any human level: to live according to one's values, to commit socially, to offer a service, or simply to hold on to an option, it is essential to stop encouraging habits of self-indulgence, and find other deeper reasons to substantiate your decisions: reasons related to the meaning that you confer on things. The *Quid Prodest* invites you to take a step away from the "what I like" to "what is expedient". This step is a step forward in your ability to be free. Choose wisely, knowing the benefits that it brings you, not be simply governed by impulse. If you choose this path you will create a habit, one who is master of himself, who deliberately seeks what is good, who has reasons for doing things and therefore stands by his decisions with greater steadfastness.

Faced with some forms of behaviour in the community of the Corinthians, Paul offers this explicit criterion, outlining a lifestyle for the Christian: "Everything is lawful for me, but not everything is to my profit. Everything is lawful for me, but I will not become a slave of anything". (1 Cor 6, 12).

• **Learn how to choose what builds.** The second way proposed to increase your freedom is to choose what builds the community. The *Quid Prodest* again invites you to jump from the "I want" to "I am building the community." In the same letter, a little further on, Paul makes another brief statement about freedom: So feeling free with everybody, I have become everybody's slave in order to gain a greater number.....So I made myself all things to all people in order to save, by all possible

means, some of them (1 Cor 9, 19.22-23). We are talking about overcoming your own selfish tendencies to open up to others in their specific needs. You can do little trials in your own community. For example, in the community, instead of "winning" control over the television, watch the programmes that your brothers want to watch. This attitude will ultimately be more satisfying than getting your own way because it has an important meaning for you. Another example would be, at home or at your place of work, provide unobtrusive service so that you do something good but without being noticed by others; this will give you a deep sense of satisfaction, something which corresponds with the person who feels greater freedom. When you give of your time, for example, to teach others patiently, you will experience the happiness of someone who is growing from within. Jesus' invitation to greater freedom is clear: Do not store up treasure for yourself here on earth where moth and rust destroy it, and where thieves can steal it. Store up treasure for yourself with God where no moth or rust can destroy nor thief come and steal it.(Mt 6, 19-20).

When you limit your freedom like that, though it seems paradoxical, it does increase, because what is desirable and constructive helps you to grow and helps others to grow too.

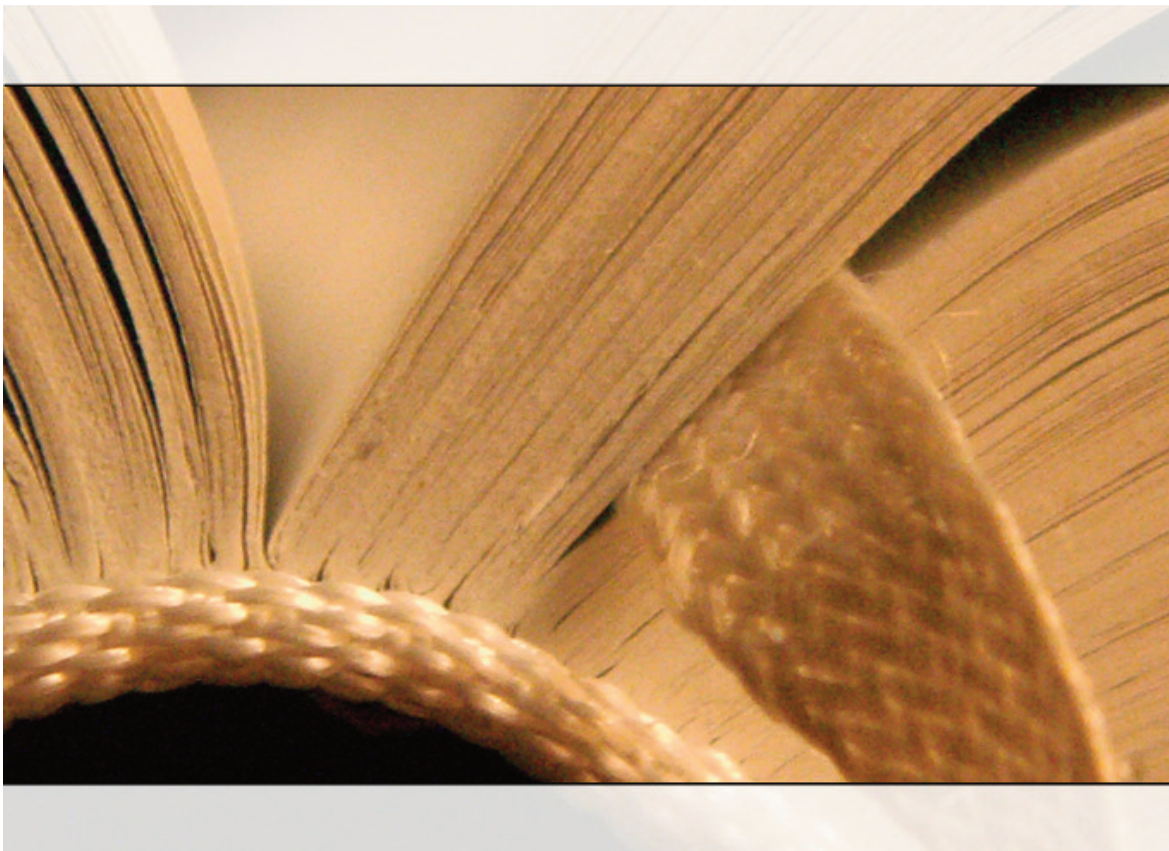
Exercise 6: What is desirable and what is constructive

In the light of your personal schedule (remember you have already worked with it in the first booklet) make a double list, analyzing a typical day in your life:

- Indicate what does and does not suit you.
- Write down what builds others up and what drags them down.
- Draw your conclusions. Discuss this with your director.

8. Guidance notes for the *Lectio Divina*

The Forge experience must always be guided by the liturgy and the practice of the *Lectio Divina*. It requires you to listen to your inner self: "If you hear his voice today, harden not your hearts." To listen to the Word you must silence your internal chatter. Fr Sebastian Moore OSB, said: "To hear what God says, you have to stop the noise of the mind completely. And this is easier than you think; all you have to do is to realize that talking to yourself, you become two people, you and yourself, and that can't be right; so you must let this "you-to-you" be reduced to only "you", and let God be, where he has been, from the very beginning. You are not a dual personality: love makes you one. It's a little shocking at first, but you can take in a couple of deep breaths and say, "Okay, Lord, here I am. Now you make a move". As you can see, the Word, encompassed by the liturgy and the *Lectio Divina*, leads you to build up your own identity.



<p>Sunday 9th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is 42,1.4.6-7 • Act 10.34-38 • Mt 3.13-17 	<p>Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord</p> <p>It is good to fulfil all that God wants. Jesus convinces John with this reasoning so that he should be brave enough to baptise him. When you do what God wants, you experience joy and love. If you do not feel loved, ... dare to do what God tells you in your heart.</p>
<p>Monday 10th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 1.1-6 • Mk 1.14-20 	<p>Jesus spoke first and then called the first disciples to follow him. His powerful word reveals possibilities and has the potential to rally people. It is able to put you on the road, to unsettle and de-focus you.</p>
<p>Tuesday 11th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 2.5-1 • Mk 1.21-28 	<p>Behold today the authority of Jesus. He dazzles us with his teachings and shows his power over evil. He knows more than you, let yourself be taught by him. He is more powerful than you; position yourself next to him as soon as possible. You will be strong in your weakness.</p>
<p>Wednesday 12th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 2.14-18 • Mk 1.29-39 	<p>Jesus knew how to move from action to prayer, from apostolic work to meeting with Abba. He knew how to say "yes" and "no." He differentiated priorities and took decisions. He was "captain of his soul." Learn from him how to organize yourself.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 3.7-14 • Mk 1.40-45 	<p>"To feel sorry for", "to reach out" and "to touch": Three verbs that express the way Jesus heals. The leper was healed by being watchful, putting himself within reaching distance and by touching. How could you do the same?</p>
<p>Friday 14th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 4.1-5.11 • Mk 2.1-12 	<p>To get out of the paralysis of entrenchment, you must dare to be influenced by others, try something completely new, overcome the tyranny of social opinion, and find creative ways of getting closer to Jesus. Take care with your own sense of propriety and the susceptibilities of others.</p>
<p>Saturday 15th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 4.12-16 • Mk 2.13-17 	<p>Matthew doesn't even think about it. He hears the call of the Master, and not only does he follow him immediately, but also organizes a party to celebrate it. Do not think too much about it, go with Jesus. Do not try to understand it, trust in him. It will all turn out fine.</p>

<p>Sunday 16th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is 49.3.5-6 • 1 Cor 1.1-3 • Jn 1.29-34 	<p>2nd Sunday of ordinary time</p>	<p>You are called to become the index finger of John the Baptist to point out to others where to find Jesus, the Holy Lamb. You are called to look to where those, who know him well, say he is. What good is there in saying that you are a follower of Jesus if you don't reveal first that you are his disciple, and to then become his witness?</p>
<p>Monday 17th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 5.1-10 • Mk 2.18-22 	<p>Memorial of St Anthony Abbot</p> <p>Venerable M. Antonia París. (<i>Calendario</i>, pp. 27-32)</p>	<p>You have to place yourself before Jesus with a simple and open heart. It is not he who has to connect to you. It is you who has to allow him in. The new wine that you bring with you cannot be contained in the old wineskins of your whims, your prejudices, your habits, your old comforts, and your narrow-mindedness.</p>
<p>Tuesday 18th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 6.10-20 • Mk 2.23-28 		<p>To get along with others you need to see eye to eye with them. Your agreements will become laws that you must obey. But above and below them, you should always place the person. Jesus shows that God is always love. And God always puts the person before the law.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 7.1-3.15-17 • Mk 3.1-6 		<p>"Stretch out your arm" ... an arm may be paralyzed by sloth, selfishness, violence. What's the point of having an arm if it is paralysed and it has no use for serving others, sharing, caressing...?</p>
<p>Thursday 20th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 7.25-8,6 • Mk 3.7-12 		<p>Jesus is a powerful magnet that attracts and draws many people. But he is totally honest and cannot be manipulated. Look for Jesus, get to know him better, love him more ardently, worship him saying "You are the Son of God" ... and do not leave him when you are disappointed with him!</p>
<p>Friday 21st January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 8.6-13 • Mk 3.13-19 	<p>Memorial of St Agnes, virgin and martyr.</p>	<p>"To be with him" and "to be sent out with power." This is why Jesus called. That's why he is calling you. That's why he keeps calling you. That's why he is calling you today ... How many times must it be repeated that it is this key, and no other key, that will open the portal of your life?</p>
<p>Saturday 22nd January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 9.2-3.11-14 • Mk 3.20-21 		<p>Without food and misunderstood by his own people. In such a short gospel reading as today's, you can appreciate the hardships of the gospel, the toughest hardships (poverty and disaffection). Behold them now and ... stop complaining!</p>

<p>Sunday 23rd January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is 8,23b-9,3 • 1 Cor 1.10-13.17 • Mt 4.12-23 	<p>3rd Sunday of ordinary time</p>	<p>The beginning of Jesus' preaching is of paramount importance: "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near." The nearness of the kingdom is what makes change possible (but it's so difficult, so hard ...). He who has not been converted is not a follower of Jesus. Faith is always the result of a transformation. Although not even the person involved knows how to explain it.</p>
<p>Monday 24th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 9.15.24-28 • Mk 3.22-30 	<p>Memorial of St Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor of the Church.</p>	<p>One of the evil enemy's strategies is to confuse and muddle: to present evil as good and vice versa. To make the jump from dishonesty to truthfulness, one must rely on Jesus and trust in his Spirit. You're not Jesus' judge. But you can be his disciple, if you want.</p>
<p>Tuesday 25th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act 22.3-16 • Mk 16.15-18 	<p>Feast of St Paul's conversion (<i>Calendario</i>, pp. 33-38)</p>	<p>Stand once again under the gaze of Jesus who walks around the circle of people and, pointing you out, says, "You are my mother and my brother. You fulfil the will of God." And he allows his will to be accomplished in you, as he did in Mary.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 10.11-18 • Mk 4.1-20 	<p>Memorial of Sts Timothy and Titus</p>	<p>The parables of Jesus are like the surface of the sea. The water glistens beneath the sun, but your gaze cannot penetrate deeply into the abyss. He speaks to everyone, in simple words, but those whose lives are separated from him, do not understand.</p>
<p>Thursday 27th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 10.19-25 • Mk 4.21-28 		<p>You have been blessed from the moment of your baptism. You have the Light. You're not in the darkness. Put the Light inside you, and illuminate your judgement. How does it profit you if you put your light under the bushel of your unconsciousness or under the bed of your forgetfulness?</p>
<p>Friday 28th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 10.32-39 • Mk 4.26-34 	<p>Memorial of St Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church</p>	<p>In The Forge you are sowing the "smallest seed." Anything can spoil it. But it has unimaginable power. Let it grow. What good is it having the seed of the Word if you do not plant it in your life, because you do not think it is worth it?</p>
<p>Saturday 29th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 11.1-2.8-19 • Mk 4.35-40 		<p>Jesus commands the hurricane of fear and the waves of dread to be silent. He orders them to be quiet. Let Jesus himself, with the force of his authority, command silence in your agitation, your anger, your resentment, your curses, your complaints ... Let him bring you peace.</p>

<p>Sunday 30th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sof 2.3,3,12-13 • 1 Cor 1.26-31 • Mt 5.1-12a 	<p>4th Sunday of ordinary time</p>	<p>You know it in theory: Being poor and meek, being able to weep, being hungry and thirsty for righteousness, being merciful and clean of heart, being peace-loving ... are cause of fulfilment and perfect joy. But they have a price: persecution; and a reward: to share in the bliss of the Almighty. You know this and you can make it part of your life.</p>
<p>Monday 31st January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 11.32-40 • Mk 5.1-20 	<p>Memorial of St John Bosco, shepherd.</p>	<p>Who has no need to be freed from a legion of bad habits: pride, sensuality, ambition, jealousy, selfishness, violence, intolerance, greed, fear? Jesus wants to rid the evil that afflicts you, if you let him. You really want to be saved? Repeat your request seriously, "deliver us from evil"</p>
<p>Tuesday 1st February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 12.1-4 • Mk 5.21-45 	<p>Assault against Fr Claret in Holguín. (<i>Calendario</i>, pp. 41-46)</p>	<p>Both Jairus and the sick woman who was losing blood openly or secretly looked for Jesus. It was their faith that brought the miracle they sought. What clues of faith can be seen in both characters? Carefully read the passage ... Discover something new. Apply what you come to understand.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mal 3.1-4 • Heb 2.14-18 • Lk 2.24-40 	<p>Feast of the presentation of Our Lord</p>	<p>Simeon's motto might well be: "To live in order to see." He knew that during his life the Messiah would come. Expectation was his daily bread, the manna for the road. When they take him to the child, he feels the fulfilment of the promise in that tiny child. Will the people of Israel accept him? Will the nations accept his light? Will you accept it?</p>
<p>Thursday 3rd February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 12.18-19.21-24 • Mk 6.7-13 		<p>The Twelve were sent out in poverty, but with authority over unclean spirits. That is all the baggage they required, the essentials. Equip yourself too with what is essential: the ability to resist evil defiantly and to do good things well.</p>
<p>Friday 4th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 13.1-8 • Mk 6.14-29 	<p>Venerable Fr James Clotet, co-founder. (<i>Calendario</i>, pp. 47-54)</p>	<p>Herod is the prototype of the "anti-<i>Quid Prodest</i>." On the surface he is strong and powerful, but in reality he is very weak, capricious and easily influenced. His weak personality makes him incapable of making decisions. He always ends up killing the voice of the prophet who speaks of God.</p>
<p>Saturday 5th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 13.15-17.20-21 • Mk 6.30-34 	<p>Memory of St Águeda, virgin and martyr.</p>	<p>Being alone with Jesus in a quiet place to rest is good. Feeling sorry for the crowd who go about like sheep without a shepherd is also good. Reconciling both is best. Discerning when to do the former or when the latter is a decision you must come to, listening to the Master.</p>

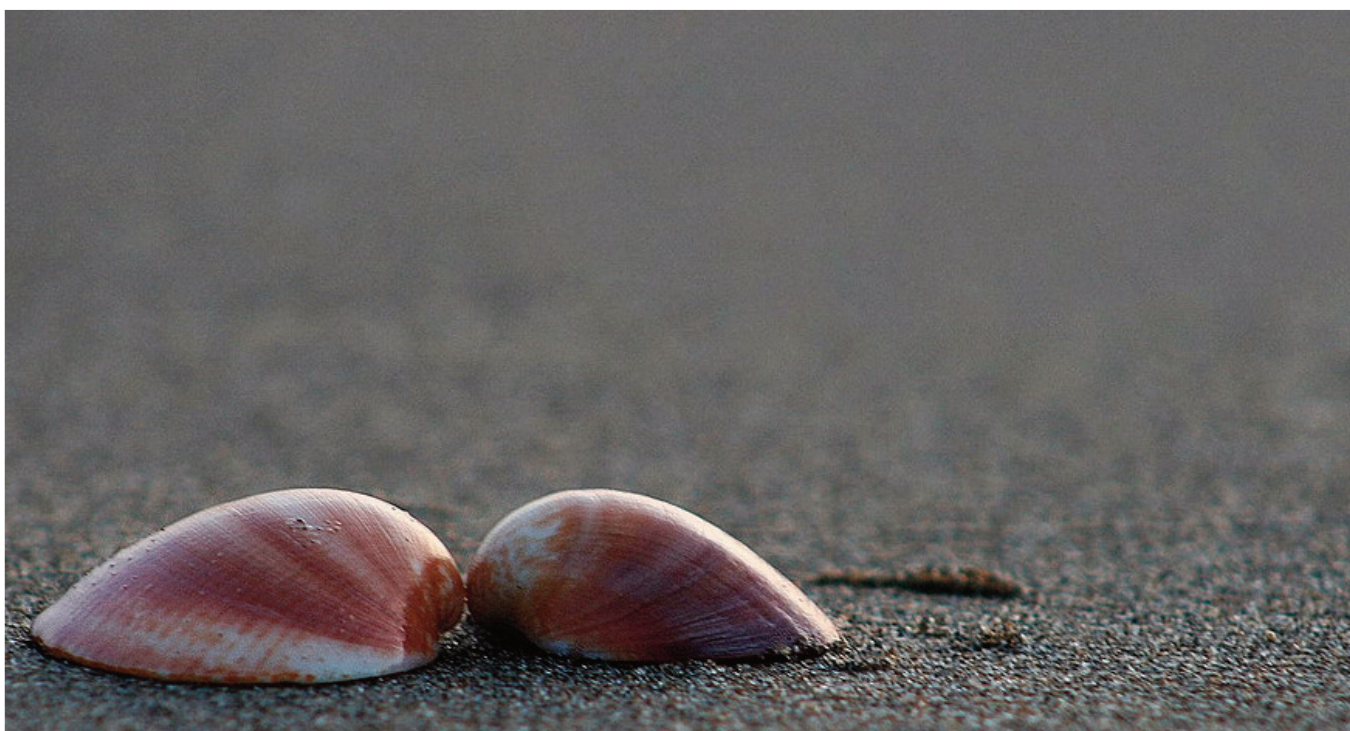
<p>Sunday 6th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is 58.7-10 • 1 Cor 2.1-5 • Mt 5.13-16 	<p>5th Sunday of ordinary time</p>	<p>Jesus does not say: "You must be the salt and the light ..." but "you are already the salt and the light" You are more than what you think. What you don't have you don't need. Just don't hide it under the cloth of your complexes, cowardice or convenience. You are made to burn and shine out.</p>
<p>Monday 7th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 1.1-19 • Mk 6.53-56 		<p>"Those who touched Jesus were made clean" How would you interpret the concept of "touching Jesus"? Do you remember any "direct experience of Jesus" whose touch has healed you? How could you restore the memory of that and make it effective today? Your proximity to Jesus will give you access to all kinds of healing.</p>
<p>Tuesday 8th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 1.20-2,4a • Mk 7.1-13 		<p>The maturity towards which Jesus is pushing us is not simply cosmetic or superficial. It does not exclude the external, of course, because love must be comprehensive. But its essence lies in the conversion of the heart; that is not something private, but eminently public, dynamic, and fundamental.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 2.4b-9.15.17 • Mk 7.14-23 		<p>Although sometimes they say that evil comes from outside oneself, everyone is himself a agent of evil. So you have to address what is going on "inside" you, something that might hurt others and even hurt you yourself. To control it, you first have to acknowledge it with humility and truth.</p>
<p>Thursday 10th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 2.18-25 • Mk 7.24-30 	<p>Memorial of St Escolástica, virgin.</p>	<p>The woman in the Gospel belongs to that group that St. Francis de Sales called "of good stock". But beware: in the presence of Jesus she is not demanding, but she is tenacious. She is not impressionable, but she is trusting. She doesn't give up in the light of rejection, but puts up a good fight. She is one of the great women of the gospel.</p>
<p>Friday 11th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 3.1-8 • Mk 7.31-37 	<p>Approval of our Constitution. (<i>Calendario</i>, pp. 55-61)</p>	<p>He neither listens nor speaks. This man was the epitome of isolation. Jesus should be used full time as a therapist: take him to one side, touch him with your fingers, rub spittle, sigh, looking up at the sky and, finally, say: Open up. And when the healing occurs, fall silent. He does everything well. Let him do the same</p>
<p>Saturday 12th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 3.9-24 • Mk 8.1-10 		<p>"How many loaves do you have?". Faced with a serious problem, Jesus requests your generosity and willingness. Although it may seem otherwise, solutions are usually embodied in the fundamental attitudes adopted by the mediators. How much of yourself are you willing to put into the hands of Christ?</p>

<p>Sunday 13th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 15.16-21 • 1 Cor 2.6-10 • Mt 5.17-37 	<p>6th Sunday of ordinary time</p> <p>"If you are not better than ...". It is not a recommendation. It is an express command from Jesus. To follow him implies a drive towards improvement, an inclination towards holiness. That inclination does not seek public acknowledgement, but the authenticity of love for God and for your neighbour. Do not settle for half measures.</p>
<p>Monday 14th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 4.1-15.25 • Mk 8.11-13 	<p>Memory of los Sts Cirilo and Metodio.</p> <p>Asking for obvious signs is to put Jesus to the test, to tempt him. In the presence of Jesus have only trust and believe in him. Have faith in him. Trust in him. The only sign is his life, which you humbly try to contemplate so you can follow it. May your trust always be above and beyond the evidence.</p>
<p>Tuesday 15th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 6.5-8, 7,1-5.10 • Mk 8.14-21 	<p>Jesus is annoyed by the difficulty his disciples are having in understanding his words, because of their blindness. They have before them many signs of the kingdom but they don't fully recognize the newness of it all. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to look and see, to hear and understand.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 8.6-13.20-22 • Mk 8.22-26 	<p>The healing of the blind man is an example. A blind person is one who sees everything as dark –he might be pessimistic-; or who does not see what is before him- he might be unconscious-. Jesus, using an strange ointment, helps him to gradually recover his sight. Ask Jesus now for light and hope, the cure to blindness.</p>
<p>Thursday 17th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 9.1-13 • Mk 8.27-33 	<p>It is not easy to confess to Jesus when faced with a trying circumstance or difficulty. It is tempting to follow Christ without his cross. But the cross is by no means the final goal. What is the point of enduring the hardship of being a follower if you are propelled into the experience of resurrection? Repeat to him: "I believe in you, Jesus, crucified and risen ..."</p>
<p>Friday 18th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gen 11.1-9 • Mk 8.34-39 	<p>Today we are proclaiming the gospel of <i>Quid Prodest</i>. You are living an experience around this focal point. With all your strength and without letting up, ask that the question "what purpose does it serve...?" be a diving board that makes you take the plunge and move in the direction of Christ, without being diverted or stopping on the path through life.</p>
<p>Saturday 19th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heb 11.1-7 • Mk 9.1-12 	<p>With a flash of light, Jesus reveals who he is, the significance of his life, his death and resurrection. When deep in prayer, let God's voice sound in your heart: "This is my beloved Son, listen to him." Look at him, heed him ... do not fall sleep!</p>

<p>Sunday 20th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lev 19.1-2.17-18 • 1 Cor 3.16-23 • Mt 5.38-48 	<p>7th Sunday of ordinary time</p>	<p>You may or may not agree with Jesus. But don't fall into the trap of seeing him as a simplistic theorist. The only way to build peace in fellowship is to love until it hurts. Fr Claret interpreted it with these words: "To love is to do and suffer." The worst thing for love is to reduce it to romanticism.</p>
<p>Monday 21st February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 1.1-10 • Mk 9.13-28 		<p>Everything is possible when you have faith." Absolutely everything. The deepest roots of evil and violence can be disabled with the power of faith. A faith that is adorned with trust, patience, tenacity, humility and obedience. Never consider yourself as irredeemable.</p>
<p>Martes 22nd February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Pe 5.1-4 • Mt 16.13-19 	<p>Feast of the Chair of St Peter.</p>	<p>The community of Jesus, the Church, your community, are built with the living stones of faith, with an inner knowledge of Christ. That faith is the revelation of the Father. What's the purpose of our communities if they have no believers? What's the point of our human groups if there are no witnesses to sustain them?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 4.12-22 • Mk 9.37-39 	<p>Memorial of St Polycarp, Bishop and martyr.</p>	<p>Morality differentiates the good, the bad and the indifferent. In discipleship it's not like that: You're either with him or you're against him. There is no neutral position. The fundamental thing is to be with him, doing good, even though you don't know through whom you do it, and not preventing anyone else from doing good, even if he is not one of "us".</p>
<p>Thursday 24th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 5.1-10 • Mk 9.40-49 	<p>Fr Nicholas García, Superior General. (<i>Calendario</i>, pp. 63-69)</p>	<p>What is the value of boasting about freedom or wisdom, if you use them to make others stumble or separate them from Jesus? What value is there in having hands or feet, or enjoying perfect eyesight ... if they are prejudicial to others or they positively do harm to yourself? How will you get to live in the place where the fire is never quenched?</p>
<p>Friday 25th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 6. 5,17 • Mk 10.1-12 	<p>Beatification of Fr Founder (<i>Calendario</i>, pp. 71-76)</p>	<p>Perhaps loyalty is the most difficult thing to achieve. The Bible consistently shows that a person, relying only on his own efforts, is unable to be faithful. To be faithful, God must change his heart and give him a heart of flesh. This applies to every human being, everyone who demands pure love.</p>
<p>Saturday 26th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 17.1-13 • Mk 10.13-16 		<p>Becoming a child is essential for growth in the Kingdom. But do not idealize childhood. Jesus recommends it very carefully. He knows that childhood is the most propitious time of great learning. He experienced it in his own life. Anthropologists and educators today can vouch for it. Childhood and discipleship are, in that sense, synonymous.</p>

<p>Sunday 27th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is 49.14-15 • 1 Cor 4.1-5 • Mt 6.24-34 	<p>8th Sunday of ordinary time</p> <p>The gospel for this Sunday is a beautiful invitation to trust in and surrender ourselves to God: why worry about anything if God holds you in his hands? Why oppress yourself if he is your guardian and your providence? Why not place him in the centre of your heart if you know that all others will let you down ...?</p>
<p>Monday 28th February</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 17.20-28 • Mk 10.17-27 	<p>Why be rich if you sadden Jesus? What purpose is there in being good and reliable, if you do not surrender yourself to him? What good is there putting yourself in the presence of the Master if you are not willing to obey him? Why not go the whole way? In the end, not to risk anything is the worst risk you can take.</p>
<p>Tuesday 1st March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 35.1-15 • Mk 10.28-31 	<p>What had Peter given up to follow Jesus? An old fisherman's boat! Others have given up much more important things! The principal thing is not "what" is given up for Christ, but "in what spirit" you have done it. Isn't Jesus asking you to give up something small ... and that is what keeps you from moving forward?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 36.1-2a.5-6.13-19 • Mk 10.32-45 	<p>Fr Martin Al-sina, Superior General. (<i>Calendario</i>, pp.79-84)</p> <p>Can you drink from the cup that Jesus had to drink from? Are you able now to go back to tell Jesus that, despite everything, you want to accompany him to Jerusalem? Can you tell him that without comparing your lot with that of others? Can you do it by committing yourself to humbly work on behalf of others?</p>
<p>Thursday 3rd March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 45.15-26 • Mk 10.46-52 	<p>Talking loudly is a sign of poor education, which encourages criticism from others. To do so in the presence of Jesus is a pompous way of praying. It proclaims his passing by, an expression of poverty, tenacity, freedom from external pressures ... and Jesus ends up being moved and taking action.</p>
<p>Friday 4th March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 44.1-9.12 • Mk 11.21-26 	<p>It makes you shudder to contemplate Jesus cursing a fig tree. It was all a matter of appearance: foliage without fruit. It makes you shudder to think of Jesus being scorned in the presence of sentimental religiosity: superficial form and habit; vanity without solidarity; sentimentality without a change of heart.</p>
<p>Saturday 5th March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Si 51.17-27 • Mk 11.27-33 	<p>Don't ever judge Jesus. Don't even try to ask for explanations or evidence. Doing so is to fall into a trap. You either trust or you don't. Fear the thought of the possibility that Jesus ever becomes unimportant for you. Tell Jesus, "Sometimes I do not understand you, but I accept you as you are. Accept me as I am. Please, Lord. "</p>

<p>Sunday 6th March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dt 11. 18.26-28 • Rom 3. 21-25a.28 • Mt 7.21-27 	<p>9th Sunday of ordinary time</p> <p>It is not about "saying" but "doing". The gospel is to be lived, not just to be learned by heart. What good is there in having so many degrees in theology or being very devout if, through the needs and pressures that surround you, you don't understand the message of what God is asking you?</p>
<p>Monday 7th March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tb 1,1a-2, 2,1-9 • Mk 12.1-12 	<p>Memorial of Sts Felicity and Perpetua, martyrs.</p> <p>The message of this parable, which the liturgy reminds us of today, would have been borne out very early in the life of Jesus. He knew it. His listeners also understood it. Don't send Jesus away empty handed, telling him to keep out of your life ... what is the point of shielding yourself from him if, in the end, you will have to be accountable for what belongs to you?</p>
<p>Tuesday 8th March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tb 2.10-23 • Mk 12.13-17 	<p>Jesus is a master of reasoning. No one can obscure the clarity of his arguments. Even with the finest rhetorical traps. Not even you can do it. Neither attack him nor defend yourself. Just listen to him. We must give back to God what is God's. Specifically, your own heart.</p>



9. For the community meeting

1. INITIAL MOTIVATION

After a short prayer (*Spiritual Directory* no. 137) the person leading the community meeting will prepare the way for listening and participation. A good atmosphere should be created before embarking on the essence of the meeting. We suggest, if necessary, starting with a simple relaxation exercise:

- Have a long period of silence (1 or 2 minutes), asking people to close their eyes and breathe slowly, with a suitable body posture that eliminates physical tension.
- In silence everyone is invited to ask God, in his own words, to guide this meeting, to remove suspicion, mistrust, shyness, ... to make us simple and transparent.
- Following the silence, everyone is asked to briefly pray for their brothers. May God direct their lives.

2. TOPICS FOR FRATERNAL DIALOGUE

It should begin with a brief sharing of the work covered by this third Booklet of *Quid Prodest*. The dialogue can focus on two main points:

- What discoveries has my own personal work on *The Forge Project in our Daily Life* produced?
- What are my current overriding feelings?

The leader should ensure that the tone is one of positive sharing, to build up, motivate and edify one another.

3. CONCLUSION

The meeting is finished with prayer no. 139 from the *Spiritual Directory*.

10. Notes for guidance

Do you already have a director in your spiritual journey? Have you juggled with a few possibilities? John of the Cross says: "The soul on its own, without a good teacher, is like a piece of burning coal that stands on its own: rather than get warmer, it will cool down." It is not about looking for someone to take on your responsibilities. Your decisions have to be made judiciously by you. But it is important to have someone who, from their studies and experience, can enlighten your way, especially in the difficult sections, which can occur at any time. The following is the only danger: "Unfortunate he who is alone" (Eccles 4:10).

• **To create the right environment for guidance on your spiritual journey you must have trust, transparency, humility, and availability.** It is very important that you become aware of the importance of this support if you don't want to give up at the first hurdle, without forgetting that the primary responsibility for this task is in your hands.

Remember the meaningful words of Gregory of Nyssa: "We are in a sense, our own parents when, through the willingness of our spirit and our free will, we form our own selves, we conceive and give birth."

• **A confessor is not enough**, listening to your faults, giving some advice about what he's heard about you and pronounces the formula of absolution. A guide performs a different mission, even though it is possible that both functions coincide in the same person. Sensibly discard from your thinking any suggestion of 'anything goes', or 'no one quite fits the bill' or 'let's wait and see'.

• **Not just anyone should be your spiritual director, but nor should you fall into the trap of perfectionism by seeking a perfect director that can only exist in your imagination.** Experience shows that, at this point, leaving it till 'tomorrow' is to leave it till next year, and leaving it till next year is

to leave it sine die. How Claret related to his spiritual director gives us very specific references. Chapter VI of Continuation of the Autobiography is entitled Account of Conscience to my Spiritual Director toward the end of 1862. The *Quid Prodest* represents a great opportunity for you to seriously re-commit yourself to these types of decisions.

- In the first two months of Ordinary Time, **it is good to arrange an interview without delay**, ready and prepared to discuss with your spiritual guide any of the topics drawn from the work that present themselves:

- Your current personal situation and the foreseeable targets for this short period.

- Personal practice of the Lectio Divina (rhythm, difficulties, enlightenment, etc.).

- Your current vocational frame of mind (stability, motivation, temptation, freedom, etc.).

- Your psychological and spiritual wounds that are still open (to recognize and verbalize them, and agree together a way of dealing with them)

- How and when can we continue this simple communication within the first period of this liturgical time (there are those who maintain occasional communication with their director, perhaps every 10-15 days, by email).

11. To go deeper

Appendix I: GROWTH BEGINS WHERE ACCUSATION ENDS (John Powell, SJ)

The final step toward human maturity is to assume full responsibility for all our actions, including our emotional and behavioural reactions to all of life's situations. However, the tendency to blame our reactions on other people or things is as old as the human race. Many of us have grown up with a reproachful attitude and we have been defensive about our own unacceptable behaviour: "You made it happen"; "You did the same to me"; "I'm just giving you a taste of your own medicine" ... We have learned to justify our failures, on the pretext that we did not have the appropriate materials for the job, or even claiming that "our stars were not aligned properly, and the moon was not in the right phase." The really sad part is that those

who blame others are not in contact with reality and as a result, fail to know themselves, and do not mature and grow. It is a fact of life: growth begins where accusation ends.

The opposite of this tendency to blame is to accept full responsibility for our lives, accept our own actions and proffer no blame. The people who take responsibility for their own actions know that there is something in them that explains their emotional and behavioural responses to life. It is clear that this is the definitive step toward human maturity. Personal responsibility guarantees our own growth.

Appendix II: HELP ME TO BE AS I AM (M. Gandhi)

Help me to be as I am.
 Help me tell
 the truth in front of the strong
 and not to tell lies
 to earn the applause of the weak.
 If you give me good fortune,
 don't take away my sense of reason.
 If you give me success, don't take away my humility.
 If you give me humility, don't take away my dignity.
 Help me always to see
 the other side of the coin,
 let me not accuse others of treason,
 so that they don't think the like of me.

Teach me to love people as I love myself,
 and not to judge myself as I judge others.
 Do not let me fall into the sin of pride if I triumph.
 Teach me that forgiveness is a sign of greatness
 and that revenge is a sign of meanness.
 If you take away my success
 Grant me strength to learn from failure.
 If I offend people,
 give me courage to apologize.
 And if people offend me,
 give me courage to forgive.
 Lord ... if I forget thee,
 never forget me!

Appendix III: TOMMY'S STORY

The first day I saw Tommy, both my eyes and my mind gave a start. It was the first time that I had seen a boy with such long hair. My mind tells me that the story is not about what is on his head but what is inside it. I immediately classed Tommy as weird.....very weird.

Tommy turned out to be the "official atheist" on my Theology of Faith course. He always criticised and mocked the idea of an unconditionally loving God the Father. We remained on relatively friendly terms during the term, although I understand it was a serious burden to him. Towards the end of the course, he asked me in a slightly cynical tone: "Do you think I will find God one day?". "No" I said forcefully. "Well, well...!" he answered "I thought that was the product you usually promoted". Then I said to him: "Tommy! I don't think you will ever find him, but I am absolutely sure that he will find you!" He shrugged his shoulders and he left the class and my life, temporarily at least. I felt slightly disappointed at the thought that he had not appreciated the subtlety of my observation: "He will find you!" At least I thought it was subtle.

Later I heard that Tom had qualified. Then a sad piece of news came my way: Tommy had terminal cancer. Before I could find him, he came to see me. His body was emaciated, but his eyes were shining, and his voice was strong, at first. "Tommy, I've often thought about you. I've heard that you're ill" I let slip.

"Yes, very ill. I have cancer in both lungs. It's just a matter of weeks"

"Do you want to talk about it, Tom?"

"Of course. What would you like to know?"

"What are your feelings as a 24 year old approaching death?"

"Well, it could be worse"

"How?"

"Well I could be 50 years old and have no values or ideals; I could be 50 years old and think that alcohol, women and money are the truly important things in life".

I began to leaf through the "W" section of my mental file, where I had filed Tom away as weird. (I swear that every person I try to classify and reject, God sends them back to me to instruct me).

"But the real reason I've come to see you" Tom said "is because of something you said to me on the last day of classes" (He remembered it!).

He continued:

"I asked you if you thought that one day I would find God, and you said "No!", which was something that really surprised me. Then you added: "But he will find you". I thought a lot about this, even though my search for God was not very serious in those days. But when the doctors cut away a growth in my groin and told me it was malignant, that's when I seriously began looking

for God. And when the disease spread to my other vital organs, that's when I really began to knock hard at the bronze doors of heaven. But God didn't answer. In fact, nothing happened. Have you had the experience of trying over a long period and nothing has happened? You feel mentally drained with all the effort. Then you give up. Well, one day I woke up and, instead of making a few more useless appeals to a God who may or may not be there, I simply gave up. I decided that it really didn't bother me..... either about God or my future life or about anything that had to do with it. I decided to use the time left to me doing something more valuable. I thought about you and about your class and I remembered something you had told us: "Real sadness is to go through life without loving. But it would be equally sad to go through life and leave this world without ever having said to our loved ones that we love them".

So I began with the most difficult person: my father. He was reading the newspaper when I went up to him. "Dad....."

"Yes?" he asked without looking up from the paper. "Dad, I would like to talk to you". "Fine, go ahead".

"I mean it is very important". He lowered the paper a few inches. "What's bothering you?"

"Dad, I love you. I only wanted you to know that". Tom smiled and said, with obvious satisfaction, as if he felt a warm, secret pleasure inside him: "The paper fell to the ground. Then my Dad did two things which I had never seen him do before: he cried and he hugged me. We chatted the whole night even though he had to go to work the next day. Being near my Dad made me feel so good, seeing his tears, feeling his hug, hearing him say that he loved me....."

It was easier with my mother and my little brother. They too cried with me and we hugged and we began to say some really nice things to each other. We chatted about things that we had kept hidden for years. Only one thing saddened me: having waited so long to do this. There was I, on the verge of death, and I was just beginning to open up to everyone from whom I had kept my distance.

Then one day I turned round and God was there. He didn't come to me when I asked him to. I suppose I was some kind of animal trainer with his hoop: "Come on, jump. Come on, I'll give you three days.... three weeks". It would seem that God does things in his own way at his own pace.

But the most important thing is that he was there. He found me. You were right. He even found me when I had given up looking for him".

Appendix IV: WITH MY BACKPACK AND MY HEART ON FIRE (Carlos E. Sánchez, cmf)

Hi, I'm Carlos Sanchez Miranda, and I want to share my vocational story with you. I live in Peru, I am 33 years of age, and have spent 13 as a missionary and 8 as a priest. I am happy to have been called and hope that by sharing our stories we are encouraged in our daily missionary work.

A friend that draws near

I was born in Chepén, a village in the north of Perú, where I grew up with my sisters in a hard-working, but happy family atmosphere. My parents took us all to church every Sunday to attend Mass and, from the age of 7, I helped Fr Fernando Rojas as an altar server. I couldn't help noticing the way he prayed before the Blessed Sacrament before Mass started. One day I asked him why he spent so much time there, and he told me he was enjoying the company of his best Friend. It left a deep impression on me and I was anxious to live the same sort of life.

Another key experience in my childhood was to see other altar servers taking communion, but I didn't. One day I asked Father why I couldn't receive communion and he told me I wasn't baptized. He told me what the sacrament was all about and the importance of receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. After several weeks of catechetical preparation, I went to my parents and, being all of ten years of age, I told them that I had decided to be baptized. Despite their opposition, because they want to invite godparents who lived a long way away, on November 29th 1982 I received both sacraments; I think that day was the culmination of a period marked by the happy feeling that I had discovered the friendship of Jesus and the overpowering desire to become a priest, just like the person who helped me discover the nearness of Jesus.

A Friend who hides himself, but who remains close by

Looking for a better education, at 12 I moved to Trujillo to study in the Claretian School. My two years living in this town were difficult for me during my teenage years because I suffered from homesickness, missing my family and friends, but at the same time they were joyful years because I enjoyed the loving care of my aunt and uncle, and meeting new friends. Amongst all these needs and distractions I gradually withdrew from receiving communion and, what is more, it just became an obligation imposed by the school. Gradually I forgot about wanting to be a priest, and other dreams and plans surfaced. In spite of my spiritual reluctance and my rebelliousness, I continued to benefit from Jesus' friendship which gave me strength and encouragement without me realising it.

A Lord who charms and beckons

When I was 14, my parents moved to Lima. This

meant I completed my 3rd year of secondary school at the Claretian School. The first year was difficult because we, as a family, had to adapt to the size and differences of a city. My relationship with God grew cooler, although I continued to receive communion on Sundays, which often involved travelling far from home.

The following year things changed significantly. The priest in pastoral charge of the School, Fr Sigifredo López, invited a few pupils to help with activity days for children. I answered the invitation, without realising that it would be the beginning of a new phase of my life. I enjoyed what we did during the day so much so that, from then on, Sunday after Sunday, I gave my full, unstinting attention to these tasks.

As a teenager, I devoted my life to my family, to my friends in the neighbourhood, to my studies and to pastoral work in the school. This pastoral work gradually filled my heart and, through it, I regained the freshness of my friendship with Jesus in prayer, and the spark of a desire to become a priest was rekindled in me. But this desire was different to the desire I had as a child because now I wanted to be a Missionary priest. I remember one day, Fr Victorio Robles gave me a copy of the Autobiography of Fr Claret. I "consumed" it in a couple of days. It made such an impression on me that, at 16 years of age, I wondered what I had to do to dedicate my life, like Claret, to help people know and love God.

An answer which commits you for the rest of your life

Without realizing it, when I finished school I found myself at a crossroad: to devote myself to the expectations of my parents' dreams for the future, or take notice of this fire which was kindling inside me to further my contact with God and his apostolate. Happily there was no shortage of Claretians near at hand, who helped me to decipher the will of God and encouraged me to answer him with courage and optimism. It was an intensive and decisive period. On January 3rd 1989, with my backpack on my back and my heart burning with the desire to set the whole world alight, I entered Magdalena del Mar as a postulant.

The excitement and sense of expectation embodied in this response was to solidify over the following years. Study, prayer, pastoral work, brotherhood.....they all helped me to grow in maturity. Contact with the reality lived by our needy people challenged my response and filled it with anxiety. But the difficulties and the upsets did not extinguish it; quite the opposite, they made it more humane, more certain of itself, and kindled it more within the faithful, freely-given love of God. I am grateful for this love, and I want my whole life, with its riches and its limitations, to be completely dedicated to following Jesus, the missionary, along with my brothers, in the footsteps of Claret.

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The Forge in our daily life

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